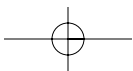
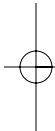
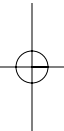


HOW CANADIANS COMMUNICATE III



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Contexts of Canadian Popular Culture

EDITED BY
Bart Beaty
Derek Briton
Gloria Filax
and
Rebecca Sullivan



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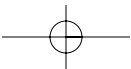
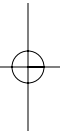
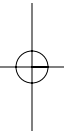
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FOREWORD

How Canadians Communicate: Contexts of Popular Culture David Taras

How Canadians Communicate: Contexts of Popular Culture is the third in a series of books meant both to chronicle and to contribute to our understanding of the Canadian experience. The first volume focused on the challenges that Canadian media and communication industries faced as they entered the first years of the twenty-first century. The second volume dealt with the impact of globalization on Canadian media and culture and how Canadians both adapt to and resist these influences. This third volume describes not only the sites of popular culture—social media, video games, art, memory institutions, cinema, sports, and so on—but the seeds and sparks that create these explosions of expression and creativity. But these experiences intersect with gender, social class, language, region, ethnic heritage, and age, among

other factors and conditions to determine how we use and give meaning to popular culture. The book raises critical issues about our uses of myths and stereotypes, how we define beauty, how we deal with our darkest visions, the role of violence in society, how culture is used both to enforce and to push the boundaries of convention and social control and how we express our many identities. The hope is that *Contexts of Popular Culture* will both illuminate this complex and multi-textured landscape, and become a catalyst for research and discussion.

Contexts of Popular Culture is a joint undertaking between Athabasca University and the Alberta Global Forum (AGF) at the University of Calgary. The volume emerged out of a conference that brought the authors together for far-reaching discussions and exchanges on the emerging trends and meanings of popular culture. We are grateful to the editors, Bart Beaty, Derek Briton, Gloria Filax, and Rebecca Sullivan, for selecting the contributors, for mapping the intellectual terrain, for being exceptional hosts, and for carrying the project through to completion with the highest professional standards. We owe a special debt to Toby Miller, who came as the CanWest Global Visiting Scholar, for providing leadership, congenial company, and stimulating ideas. Gina Grosenick did much of the organizing work with her usual combination of efficiency, smarts, and good cheer.

The goal of the AGF is to act as a bridge between the University of Calgary and the community by sponsoring and participating in discussions of critical issues and by undertaking focused research and community partnerships. The AGF takes great pride in its partnership with Athabasca University and would like to thank President Frits Pannekoek and the Director of Athabasca University Press, Walter Hildebrandt, for their vision and commitment. We could not have a better partner. The AGF would like to thank the members of its board and especially its chair, Greg Forrest, for their leadership, and Jeannette Nicholls for her wisdom and faith.

DAVID TARAS

INTRODUCTION

Contexts of Popular Culture

**Bart Beaty and
Rebecca Sullivan**

In the months leading up to the October 2008 federal election—Canada’s fourth of the twenty-first century—the minority government of Stephen Harper’s Conservatives introduced a series of acts that were seen to negatively impact arts, media, and cultural groups on multiple levels. Among the more controversial was Bill C-61, a dramatic reappraisal of copyright legislation that put severe restrictions on the principle of “fair use” for mass-mediated and digital materials and gave priority to the industry holders of the encoding technology. In other words, Bill C-61 abrogated existing standards for fair dealing and cultural production that favoured creators and audiences and replaced them with ones that privileged manufacturers and distributors. On another front, nestled in the back pages of an intricate and lengthy bill to update the federal

tax codes, was a caveat that film and television productions that contained content “contrary to public policy” would have its public funding withheld. Since it is highly unlikely that any film or television production could happen without some form of public funding, the spectre of moral censorship of culture was raised. Claims of a hidden ideological agenda were furthered when the government cut the PromArts program, which funded international travel and foreign exchange among artists and journalists. In this case, there was a near refreshing honesty coming from government officials who identified journalists and artists like Avi Lewis and Gwynne Dyer as people who “were not necessarily ones we thought Canadians would agree were the best choices to be representing them internationally.”¹ While the Tories weathered the controversy and managed to return to government with another minority, pundits argued that the party’s apparent disdain for cultural industries alongside a suspicious moral agenda prevented them from breaking through in urban regions and saw them lose ground in Quebec.² This perception was revived when Diane Albonczy, the junior minister for small business and tourism, had removed from her portfolio the Marquee Tourism Events Program, as punishment for a high-profile grant to Toronto Pride Week.³ Again, media reports framed this story in a way that pit ideologies, regions (Calgary Stampede, it was noted by many, received \$2 million from the same program), and cultural identities against each other. In the midst of all these controversies, it seems harder than ever to proclaim anything close to a unified Canadian culture. Yet, at the same time, they point to unique configurations in the way that various forms of culture are defined and valued within the Canadian context.

In terms of public policy, there is an increasing economic imperative that values big industry, corporate ownership, and technological control over audience and artist innovation. However, there has also seeped into contemporary debates a return to a moral imperative that views alternative, critical, or marginalized voices as suspiciously un-Canadian. Furthermore, sociological and technological transformations in the way culture is produced and consumed has blurred the boundaries between art, media, and culture, making it increasingly difficult to define what qualifies as appropriate Canadian culture to be supported by public policies and, more crucially, public funding. Old distinctions between high art and mass culture that depended on specific media (painting versus television), homogenous audiences (museum goers versus couch potatoes), and accessibility—intellectual, economic, and geographic—have collapsed. Increasingly, art, media, and culture

seem bound together in a homogenous but not always coherent system of public discourse. This volume of *How Canadians Communicate* seeks to explore these definitional and value concerns about culture by focusing on what we have termed the contexts of popular culture.

In this book, we are not defining popular culture in any of the conventional senses as being mass produced, having diminished aesthetic character, or rooted in a localized folk tradition. In his 1975 updating of the classic essay, "The Culture Industry: Mass Culture as Enlightened Deception," Theodor Adorno argues for a somewhat mollified version of his critique of mass culture. Allowing that "something like a culture could arise spontaneously from the masses themselves,"⁴ he nonetheless insists that the kind of reproducible, technologized, and industrialized culture distributed through commercialized networks remains, as he argued in 1947, "infected with sameness."⁵ It is a seductive argument, rooted in a romantic notion of intellectual elites and naïve folk that simultaneously bemoans the loss of the seriousness of high art and points to the resistant potentiality of low culture. However, it too readily discards the stuff of urbanized, industrialized reality. In other words, the forms of mass-mediated culture to which we are most exposed in our daily lives—television, radio, film, video games, the Internet—are denied any political potential. Furthermore, it entraps the institutions and practices of high art—museums, galleries, theatres—in a static system where accessibility is seen as capitulation. By way of a contemporary response to this pessimistic attitude is the more egalitarian notion of the cultural omnivore. As Richard Peterson and Richard Kern argue, the boundaries of high-, low-, and middlebrow are increasingly being breached, rendering such distinctions meaningless. However, they acknowledge that cultural mobility remains a privilege largely of the economic and cultural elite. By not probing this finding deeply enough, the argument ends up reifying rather than reducing the significance of cultural hierarchies.⁶ In both cases, the emphasis remains on the aesthetic character of genres and forms and the relative sophistication of audiences. Our goal begins from a different set of assumptions in order to engage with forms of Canadian popular culture as process as much as product. We wish to account for the ways that notions of the popular are negotiated across the different terrains upon which a sense of national identity is built: between producers and audiences, government and industry, history and geography, notions of shared identity and cultural difference. We interrogate Canadian popular culture not merely as discrete texts, but also as mediated

communities, as cultural industries, and as praxis in engaging new forms of national identity within larger networks of globalization.

Within our framework, then, definitional questions about what, exactly, is popular culture becomes less about the aesthetic attributes of any given content and more about the way in which a sense of the popular is enacted by various cultural industries and institutions in tandem with public policy to reproduce the cultural citizen along specific political, economic, and social lines. Furthermore, it is about the elusiveness of that citizen, and the increasing difficulty of presenting a unified or homogenous version of national cultural identity. On the one hand, there are arts and heritage institutions that have traditionally assumed a position above the popular at least in terms of mass mediated commercial products, but which are fast changing that perspective for both economic and ethical reasons. On the other hand are those mass cultural products for which popular means mass audience appeal and massive profits. Yet, with the fragmentation of mass audiences and a shift from institution to event, popular can just as easily mean prestigious. Yet another definition of the popular connotes a nostalgic sense of pre-industrial or locally developed “folk” culture, distilled as a signifier of a simpler time. In setting the parameters of this project not around culture per se but specifically in terms of the contexts of popular culture, we are considering these and other kinds of judgments made about the popular in the construction of a national cultural identity. Thus, it is not so much about whether a particular text could be counted as “popular” and according to what criteria, but more about the way that varying notions of “popular”—economic, political, aesthetic—are enacted by different stakeholders and to what ends. As part of our exploration here, comes a belief that the “popular” has evolved into an important category of value in public discourses about culture, one that inflects both the economic and ethical imperative governing cultural policy and regulation today.

As the third iteration of *How Canadians Communicate*, this project shares some goals with the previous two volumes but seeks to reframe the question in light of new critical and interdisciplinary methods to move beyond defining the “state of Canadian media.” The previous two projects gathered mostly media and political science scholars to discuss industry practices, new media technologies, and government regulations. For this volume, we wanted to take that model further by considering the ways notions of the popular are implicated in the production of culture according to different industrial, political, and technological

contexts, and how different popular cultures in different geographical and ideological contexts mediate larger concerns about identity and national belonging. Thus, our work for this volume was organized around four primary lines of inquiry, addressing what we determined to be the most pressing issues facing the contemporary cultural debate in Canada: national identities; audiences and publics; locating the popular; and globalization. Obviously, none of the papers presented here is able to cover all of these factors, but each makes an important contribution to one or more.

National Identities

As Heather Devine observes in this volume, Canadian cultural policies are enacted against a backdrop of a national policy of liberal multiculturalism, whose three stated principles are diversity, openness, and tolerance. Yet, it remains to be asked just how and to what degree Canada's cultural framework genuinely reflects these principles. To take the issue of diversity, as do the chapters by Gloria Filax, Michelle Helstein, and Patricia Hughes-Fuller, it seems clear that there is currently a greater level of diversity in cultural products, and of cultural producers and audiences, than at any time in Canadian history. On the level of sheer gross output, Canada now produces more cultural material in more forms than at any time in its history. In the film industry, for example, the days in which only the occasional Canadian feature film was produced are long gone. Film festivals, which now take place annually in every major metropolitan area in the country, are able to boast large numbers of Canadian films, and, in Quebec, the industry has matured to a point, as André Loiselle points out in his chapter, that Quebecois films are among the top-grossing movies released in that province each year. In the field of television, we can note that Canada has licensed more channels than any other country in the world (although the delivery of the entire range of channels is often curtailed by regional cable and national satellite carriers), thus suggesting that the days of media scarcity are long past. Will Straw highlights the phenomenon of free daily newspapers in major centres, a new development that is at once transforming the industry by returning to its origins. The same can be said, of course, for any number of media and cultural industries from broadcasting to art galleries. Some would say that these examples do not highlight genuine diversity, but mere expansiveness. These critics would suggest that, in the wake of wide-scale consolidation

of ownership and media conglomeration over the past several decades, Canada only maintains an appearance of diversity, but the crucial question of openness to different and otherwise marginal voices has not been addressed.

Even as media and cultural products expand, the issue of openness becomes one of degrees. With media industries in particular, Canada is witnessing an increasingly high degree of conglomeration and concentration. Take, for example, the case of CTV Globemedia. Collectively, CTVgm accounts for twenty-one broadcast channels under the CTV banner, including the A-Channel network, Access (the educational channel in Alberta), and even a CBC affiliate in Brandon, Manitoba. They also own and operate a plethora of cable and digital specialty stations, including The Sports Network (TSN), Réseau des sports (RDS), MuchMusic, Star!, MTV, CablePulse 24, CTV Newsnet, The Comedy Network, The Discovery Channel and others. In addition, they have agreements with Bell Canada Enterprise (BCE, which owns 20 percent of CTVgm) to provide access to content for Bell satellite and Sympatico internet systems. The CHUM Radio division, acquired in 2007, makes it the fourth largest radio broadcaster in Canada, with thirty-five stations across Canada. Finally, it also owns the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's largest national newspaper. All this consolidation, however, is beginning to over-burden the industry. CTVgm has closed newsrooms in previously CHUM-owned broadcasters across the country, thereby eliminating a local news source in a large number of communities. While CanWest Global Communications—the second largest conglomerate in the country—stands on the brink of bankruptcy in 2009, threatening even more closures of local newspapers and broadcast stations.

At the same time as this big business media conglomeration, new communication technologies have allowed for a greater range of Do-It-Yourself and small-market cultural forms to compete with these national megaliths. One need only mention the innumerable personal blogs launched by Canadians in recent years to note how conventional media industries are being challenged by new sources of information and culture. Indeed, as Ira Wagman suggests in this volume, the tendency towards “brief encounters” with media seems increasingly to favour “bite-sized” media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. Thus, despite the drive to mass production and distribution of culture, which makes access a troubling and difficult issue, a new kind of media-engaged audience is being created that belies any arguments for a unified national culture, a question that has plagued nationalist politicians, scholars, and activists for generations.

In a society of cultural expansion and fragmented audiences, the parameters of tolerance are in play as much as, if not more than, diversity and openness. We might emphasize the fact that censorship standards, while restrictive in some areas, are now considerably more relaxed than in many nations, including the United States. At the same time, however, Canada has strict policies about the importation of certain types of pornography, and has aggressively used those policies against marginal businesses such as the Little Sisters bookstore in Vancouver.⁷ Moreover, multiculturalism has particularly highlighted increasing tensions concerning tolerance issues where ethnic and religious minorities are concerned. Restrictions placed on the broadcasting license for Al-Jazeera by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) in 2004 required broadcast carriers to monitor the foreign station at all times and delete any content that may contravene the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—a ruling that applies to no other foreign news service broadcast in Canada. After an international outcry in 2005 over Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*'s decision to run a series of inflammatory cartoons that mocked Islamic religious values, the *Western Standard* magazine chose to re-print them, while Indigo bookstores withdrew from sale an issue of the American magazines *Harper's* that did the same. These examples demonstrate how much free speech issues can fly against the principles of multiculturalism and challenge Canada's framework for culture. At the same time, the recent success of CBC's television show *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, which has aired for three seasons and been exported to numerous countries in Europe and the middle-East suggests that in other ways Canada may be ahead of the curve on integration issues. Scholars such as Erin Manning,⁸ Eve Mackey,⁹ and Larissa Lai¹⁰ have raised questions about the limits of multiculturalism as a framework for a national cultural identity. Our point by reviewing its three values here—openness, tolerance, and diversity—is neither to reaffirm them nor to dismiss them as outmoded. Rather, it is to ask again what those values mean and how they are enacted—or not—in the current cultural climate. Regardless of its success or lack thereof, the fact remains that multiculturalism is a nationalist myth of deep resonance in Canadian public discourse, and popular culture is the prevailing system by which multiculturalism is enacted in this country. Thus, what might be dismissed as mere entertainment actually carries with it serious and lasting concerns about how our popular cultural forms help to organize audiences into publics.

Audiences and Publics

In thinking through the issues that surround the question of cultural audiences at present, we have tried to frame the issue with attention to the way that audiences are conceptualized and privileged. Which is to say that we have placed an emphasis on practices of cultural value and legitimation to transform audiences into imaginary publics for a nation-building project. In this, we are clearly influenced by Benedict Anderson's seminal work on modern nationalism, *Imagined Communities*.¹¹ However, we are taking a step back from his conclusions to suggest not so much that the nation is comprised of this imagined community but simply that the concept of an imagined audience is a necessary one in the production of culture. Furthermore, in a sector with intricate ties to public funding and regulation, the value of culture is then determined less by its profitability than by a host of other intangible factors that re-define the audience as a public. Just how that public is defined within different facets of the cultural sector—industry, government, activists, and creators—is a question posed by this volume. In arriving at an answer, somewhat inefficiently, there arose a second and related question about how culture is valued when the cultural sector itself has been transformed by a generation of neo-liberal economic policies, globalization, diasporic migration, a blurring of high and low cultural boundaries, and media abundance. One way to answer that question would be to note that, in recent years, the conceptualization of cultural value has become increasingly economic. From this standpoint, we can point out that, in terms of funding and as a market, culture is taking on increasing significance in Canada, even as successive federal governments have cut funding for it in various ways and for various reasons. Since 1961, Canada has increased spending on cultural infrastructure by 3.8 percent, with Quebec and British Columbia being the biggest spenders in this area.¹² Indeed, the culture gap between Quebec and the rest of the country has been steadily increasing for the past forty years. This development has greatly contributed to the maturity of the film industry that Loiselle diagnoses along with a sense of cultural apartness and even superiority to the rest of English Canada. In the arena of cultural funding, the federal government has been the most important contributor. Outside of Quebec, provincial cultural funding has been on the decline so that in some instances it no longer even matches that provided by municipal governments. Further, cultural GDP remains a small part of Canada's overall GDP (3.8 percent in 2002), but, in the period since 1996, it has been rising faster than the economy as

a whole (3.4 percent growth compared to 2.3 percent), and, overall, culture represents a \$43 billion contribution to the Canadian economy. Specifically, 31 percent of all Canadian cultural workers work in the print industries, 14 percent in film, and 10 percent in broadcasting.¹³ Not surprisingly, these are also the largest of Canada's mass media industries, and offer the greatest potential for expansion into global and international markets, as Serra Tinic points out in this volume. Overall, 4 percent of all Canadians work in the culture industry, thus providing at least an economic rationale for its maintenance even though a greater percentage of workers in this sector are either "self-employed" (a euphemism for no income security) or part-time.

Any political posturing that cultural dollars are wasted dollars, therefore, may seem out of sync given how easy it is to marshal numbers touting its economic importance. While culture was an important political issue from the 1960s through the 1980s, with wide-ranging debates about cultural protection, cultural nationalism, and the importance of institution building, the debate largely shifted in the 1990s as the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien accelerated the underfunding of cultural institutions, including huge cuts to the CBC. As neo-liberal economic policies favouring free markets and consumer choices became the dominant model in the 2000s, cultural issues increasingly dropped off the political table. During the 2004 federal election, ACTRA struggled to introduce cultural issues into the campaign, but their efforts barely resonated. While campaigning for the 2006 and 2008 elections the ruling Conservative party openly sneered at artists and educators as not reflective of the nation. Stephen Harper dismissed the arts as a "niche issue" that does not interest "ordinary Canadians." He later went on to claim that "ordinary working people were unable to relate to taxpayer-subsidized cultural elites when they see them at a rich gala on television."¹⁴ This was a notable shift from, for instance, the 1980s, where cultural issues played a key role in mobilizing opposition to Free Trade with the United States as it was promoted by the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney. Yet it is also telling that critics felt compelled to make economic arguments for continued public support of culture, as actor Art Hindle did when he argued, "this industry more than pays its way and like every other industry, it must have the active support of its government."¹⁵ Similarly, an editorial that ran in the usually conservative-supporting CanWest's roster of newspapers across the country criticized the Conservative party's reaction to the

funding of Toronto Pride Week by noting the economic benefits accrued to the city.¹⁶ The emphasis on culture's economic importance, therefore, seems to have an almost backlash effect as it becomes harder to marshal arguments for culture for culture's sake, and emphasis on fiscal issues turn culture into any other industry where the bottom line is all that matters.

If Canadian culture has been increasingly legitimated through reference to its economic value, it is fair to wonder where that leaves the idea that culture is a conduit of shared ideas and beliefs. It is easy to suggest that the classical notion of the importance of Canadian culture as a unifying force across vast regional differences is in sharp decline because of audience fragmentation and the instrumentalization of culture as an economic factor, two trends that have accelerated over the past two decades. If this is the case, the question arises: what is the difference between "culture" and "popular culture" in this new order? Such distinctions can be tenuous at best. However, at least as far as this volume is concerned, we take culture to mean a wide range of artistic, mass-mediated, and institutional endeavours that have as their goal the creation of something that provides both inherent communicative value as well as more instrumental, economic value. It is in the balance between these two goals that we direct our attentions, and where we believe the notion of "the popular" has become paramount. In defining what makes a culture popular, the question is less about aesthetic value than about the imagined audience. In other words, and as Johanne Sloan demonstrates in her chapter, taking the popular into consideration has become a significant factor for all forms of cultural work to varying degrees. As culture takes on a predominantly economic role in our society, it seems inevitable that the "popular" will take on a stronger public force, and the logics of the marketplace seem to hold sway in light of an increasing erosion of autonomous aesthetic values. At the same time, it opens up a space for the democratization of culture, as the popular penetrates the previously inviolate walls of hallowed cultural institutions. In this volume, Frits Pannekoek, Helen Clarke, and Mary Hemmings show how librarians and other memory professionals, once the very bastions of high culture, have become implicated in the logic of ownership and restricted access imposed on them by, for instance, new copyright regimes. These developments threaten to alter the relations of culture in this country fundamentally. Further, as high, or "edifying," culture becomes increasingly defined by the traditional yardsticks of popular culture (audience numbers, awards, media profile), the possibility of asserting the traditional value of culture

—its ability to bridge disparate populations in the construction of a nation—seem increasingly remote. This has the aftershock effect of making it harder to dismiss cultural forms and, more crucially, their audiences that do not meet the specific ideological goals of policy makers and industry leaders.

Locating the Popular

The increasingly accelerating change in Canadian society from populations based in small, isolated, and rural communities, to large metropolitan centres (with suburban and exurban communities dependent on them), resonates not only in the themes and narratives of Canada's contemporary popular culture, but also in contemporary approaches to cultural policy as a public concern. With the depopulation of rural areas, certain key myths of Canada are losing their historical and geographical specificity. Given this trend, it is no surprise that some popular culture traditions are slowly dying while others are accelerating and embracing alternative forms of identity, for example gender and sexuality or within diasporic communities. Essays in this volume by Gloria Filax, Michele Helstein, and Patricia Hughes-Fuller each deal with differing ways that two cherished national myths that traditionally invoke an image of white, working class masculinity—beer and hockey—have become highly contested sites. As the cultural landscape of the country changes, we are forced to ask, has the valence of traditional tropes of Canadian culture changed along with it? Importantly, who is it that produces and consumes culture and where does this happen?

According to a 2001 study, a rural–urban divide for culture continues to persist.¹⁷ The bulk of Canadian popular culture continues to be created in large, urban centres, and, further, that culture primarily targets local audiences. Where “culture clusters” exist in smaller communities they tend to be uni-dimensional and geared toward an exported or transient audience, as is the case with Nunavut stone carving (largely crafted for sale outside of Nunavut) or the Stratford Shakespeare Festival (catering primarily to tourists). As Serra Tinic notes, for the most part, large scale and expensive cultural productions, such as film and television production, gravitate to major urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. From this standpoint, representations of diversity in popular culture tend to rely on different identity formations within cosmopolitan urban enclaves rather than representing the broad spectrum of Canadian regional identities. This

is another key shift in the way Canada is imagined as a nation, resulting in increased rivalries for cultural cachet between cities rather than provinces.

For much of our history, regionalism was one of the key lenses through which Canadian culture has been theorized. In recent years, this ideology has found common cause with the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, and their desire to de-centralize Canadian culture beyond central Canada generally, and Ottawa specifically. For example, discussions about moving the not-yet-existing Portrait Gallery of Canada from Ottawa to Harper's hometown of Calgary required halting the ongoing renovations of 100 Wellington Street in Ottawa in 2006, and opening negotiations with the EnCana Corporation about funding and housing the collection in their new office tower in downtown Calgary. When EnCana announced, in 2007, that they would not be accommodating the museum, a three-way struggle ensued between Ottawa, Calgary, and Edmonton to play host to the museum that highlighted the relationships between federal, regional, and municipal governments as culture becomes more of an economic and political imperative. The fact that it ended in a stalemate with the Conservative government claiming the downturn in the economy made the portrait gallery too expensive a project to pursue only served to anger and frustrate municipal governments, business, and cultural leaders further. As one bidder for Edmonton argued, not only was their bid "100 per cent funded by the private sector" but it also would have allowed "the rest of the country to enjoy some pride of ownership in our national treasures."¹⁸ This combination of the economic and heritage value of the project highlights the way culture is being redefined as a valuable commodity.

Richard Florida's seminal argument for the "creative class" in attracting all kinds of entrepreneurial talent to urban centres can be seen as influencing the thinking about municipalities around arts questions, but only in certain strategic ways that do not necessarily fall into line with the values of openness, tolerance, and diversity nor improve the welfare of cultural workers.¹⁹ Local governments have seized upon Florida's privileging of cultural consumers over producers as a justification for gentrification, while at the same time continuously under-funding culture (with the notable exception of Quebec). The argument over the Portrait Gallery highlights the perceived importance of cultural institutions as markers of economic and political status. Nonetheless, it is ironic that this particular struggle should be played out between Alberta and Ontario, two of the provinces that

contribute the least per capita to culture but whose populations are the most avid cultural consumers.²⁰ This fundamental disconnect between the population and their representatives is indicative of the kind of cultural schizophrenia that grips Canadian debates about cultural value and national identity.

One final change in the location of culture bears mentioning, which are the demographic shifts in cultural consumption. Since the end of the Second World War, we have lived with a popular culture presumed to have been targeted towards young people. As Derek Briton points out in his contribution to this volume, popular culture tends to seek out the new, follow trends, and pursue youth markets that are the most volatile and prone to changing interests and tastes. Now, of course, the logics of cultural funding are requiring that all cultural institutions pursue a trend towards the popular, and the question necessarily arises: who are the imagined audiences now? One trend is towards family entertainment. Indeed, according to a 2006 study, families with children are the highest spenders on culture outside the home, as they account for the spending of both parents and children combined. Family spending on culture is dominated by cinema, sports, and heritage institutions, while the performing arts are preferred only by senior citizens and the childless.²¹ Similar trends can be seen with regard to in-home entertainment and culture, with strong correlations between wealth and urbanity connected to things like print magazine and newspaper subscriptions, satellite and cable television penetrations, and the prevalence of home entertainment systems. Thus, despite arguments that Canadian culture is “levelling out” and embracing the ethos of popular culture with its emphasis on youth-oriented, mass audiences, both geographic and demographic trends continue to show that culture remains a right of the economically and socially privileged. Indeed, the cost of access to even the most mass-mediated, disparaged cultural forms like video games requires at least an HD television, a computer, high-speed internet access, gaming console, and peripherals. Family entertainment has come a long way from Trivial Pursuit.

Globalization

Of the four factors influencing our thinking about how Canadians communicate, globalization somehow seems least difficult to prove. Indeed, we take for granted that the process of globalization is ongoing, and, further, that it has significant impacts on Canadian culture generally. As an example, David Gregory argues in

his paper that folk music and radio offer discourses of Canada and Canadian identity that resist globalization. Canada, of course, has long been a globalized culture, having developed first in relation to imperial domination by Britain and the cultural domination of the United States, and then later through successive waves of immigration from outside the Western European context. For example, the Canadian market is treated by the American domestic box-office reporting as simply another state. Tendencies such as these have meant that Canadian cultural policies have been traditionally marked by anxieties over cultural domination, in particular by protectionist policies intent on stopping the infiltration of foreign culture at our borders. The free trade era, ushered in by the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney, opened the cultural economy to increased foreign ownership, and emphasized a neo-liberal model of open markets and consumer choice that has become a hallmark of contemporary cultural industries. At the same time, it can be noted that protectionism is no longer solely the domain of the government, but is a policy strongly advocated by cultural and media industries attempting to limit audience access to culture. As Pannekoek, Hemmings, and Clarke point out in this volume, copyright, particularly under Bill C-61, has become a cudgel with which Canadian audiences are constantly beaten. As any Canadian who has tried to access television clips via American network websites can attest, IP identifications thwart the possibility. Foreign cultural producers, notably Hollywood, contend that Canada is a piracy haven, and this talking point has been regularly regurgitated by the successive Liberal and Conservative governments of the past eight years. The result has been to redefine Canadian audiences as no more than petty criminals stealing away the profits of the cultural industries.

While governmental approaches to such issues as grey-market satellite ownership—where a Canadian household uses an international address to subscribe to a foreign television service—and pirated DVDs constitute Canadian audiences as threats to Canadian culture, they might actually show some promise for the idea of culture as made up not of one national public but a series of inter-related counter-publics, to use Nancy Fraser's term.²² By this she means otherwise marginalized or disenfranchised groups who establish alternative systems of communication and meaning making to contest the official cultural discourses maintained by the nation-state. Asking why government and industry leaders view certain cultural practices as a threat opens up other questions about how a

multicultural and fragmented audience actually accesses culture in ways that opposed their imaginary status. One key transformation has been that culture is increasingly presented or made accessible in a fluid and transitory fashion rather than through static institutions or systems. Wagman's discussion of media "snacking" is one such example. Even outside the home, as Zoë Druick notes here, cultural festivals are the single fastest growing aspect of the Canadian cultural scene. They constitute an event-specific, rather than institutionalized, culture, a transformation from the heretofore dominant model of "institution building" that carries with it major repercussions for the way that culture is defined in public discourse. Indeed, the debate over the location of the Portrait Gallery notwithstanding, Canada's era of "institution building," initiated by the Massey-Levesque Commission of 1951, seems to be drawing to a close. In its place are smaller and more localized forms of "event building" where governments put their declining cultural dollars into events like Toronto Pride Week or the Calgary Stampede that will hopefully prompt a sharp spike in tourism and consumer spending and provide the host city with some specific cultural markers that would connote their status as a "creative city."²³ Declining commitments from the provinces and municipalities have arguably contributed to a diminishment of institutionalized culture in Canada, reducing their place in general elections, while refocusing attention on an increasingly urban conception of culture rooted in the spectacle and transience of the annual festival or cultural event. In this way, the impact of popular culture can be seen across various cultural forms and media, as a logic of hype increasingly displaces the historical trajectory of the edification model. This is not an insignificant change but goes to the heart of Canadian cultural discourses as they relate to an imagination of the nation as a unified set of values, beliefs, and aesthetic practices that befit, to use Stephen Harper's own words, "ordinary Canadians," whom he declines to define but implies that they are most definitely not artists or cultural workers. Thus, this volume emphasizes the contexts of popular culture in order to get at the historical, geographic, political, economic, and technological ways that the idea of "Canadian culture" has not been eradicated so much as altered beyond recognition to many. However, we do not want to raise our voices in a lament for the nation, but rather in a chorus of promise and potential for re-visioning culture, publics, and nation in ways that reflect the actual practices of both industry and audiences.

About this volume

It might seem strange that we have chosen to open this volume with an essay by a scholar who is not Canadian, and who does not work in this country. We asked Toby Miller to keynote this project because we felt that his work crossed over into many of the domains we wished to touch upon over the course of our investigations. As he argues in *Cultural Citizenship*, there exists a palpable crisis in belonging that is enacted in “the practices of government, consumption, risk, and moral panic in popular culture.”²⁴ While he was referring specifically to the United States, we feel that his argument applies as much if not more to Canada; thus, we hoped that he would help provide some international perspective to our efforts to re-frame the cultural debate in Canada. We were not disappointed. Toby Miller’s essay, “A Future For Media Studies: Cultural Labour, Cultural Relations, Cultural Politics” sets the stage for much of what is to follow in this volume with its engaging and often polemical call for a re-evaluation of the direction of media studies. Surveying the history of media scholarship over the course of the twentieth-century, Miller argues that the field has been characterized by two broad trends, which he defines as Media Studies 1.0 and Media Studies 2.0. In the simplest terms, he suggests that the legacy of Media Studies 1.0 has been a *panic* about citizens and consumers as media audiences, a tendency that was over-corrected by Media Studies 2.0’s tendency to *celebrate* the power and creative agency of those same audiences. Drawing on the example of video game studies, Miller outlines a vision of Media Studies 3.0, a project that he conceptualizes as breaking down the binary between the earlier models. Significantly, Media Studies 3.0 would blend “ethnographic, political-economic, and aesthetic analyses in a global and local way, establishing links between the key areas of cultural production around the world ... and diasporic/dispossessed communities engaged in their own cultural production.” It is by no means true that all of the works in this book support Miller’s call for this particular conception of cultural critique, it is nonetheless fair to say that, taken together, the essays collected here seek to bridge disciplinary traditions within a particular focus on Canadian cultural production and its resultant production(s) of dispossessed communities.

Ira Wagman’s work on Facebook and the daily rhythms of Canadian internet use may not focus on a traditionally dispossessed group (office workers with Internet access) but is concerned with the feelings of powerlessness that contemporary capitalism instils in workers nonetheless. Noting that Facebook is the

third-most popular website amongst Canadians, Wagman offers an analysis of the social-networking site that frequently blurs the distinction between arenas that are all too often conceptualized as distinct: work and play. Wagman builds on Michael Newman's conception of web video as an "interstitial form," emphasizing the way that use of the site commonly takes the form of a brief respite from other, often larger, tasks. Wagman characterizes these uses as "brief encounters" akin to "snacking" or more traditional "coffee breaks."

Ephemeral culture is also the subject of Will Straw's contribution to this volume, which takes note of the increasing number of free daily newspapers distributed along the transit lines of Canada's major urban centres. Straw counters the dominant conception that the newspaper industry is in a state of crisis by highlighting the growing number of new dailies launched by national newspaper conglomerates in recent years. His essay is not concerned with the commercial viability of these enterprises, which, of course, remains to be seen, but with the new arrangements of spaces, people, and practices that have taken shape around them and the social conflicts that they have rendered visible. Positioning free newspapers in the context of graffiti, mega-concerts, illegal raves, and urban festivals as examples of cultural forms that occupy urban space in ways contrary to its intended purpose illuminates the tension between individualized media consumption and collective claims on the urban environment.

The free commuter daily is, as Straw notes, an innovation imported to Canada from abroad, and the relationship of Canadian culture to international marketplaces is a central concern of Serra Tinic. In "Walking a Tightrope: The Global Cultural Economy of Canadian Television," Tinic examines the tension in English Canadian television production between demands for cultural specificity and the need to universalize. Drawing on three case studies of international television co-productions, Tinic explores the conflicts between nation-building discourses and economic contingencies in a transnational media environment. Specifically, she stresses the tension between genre-based material derived from American and other international sources, and the publicly financed television programming that is freer to take aesthetic risks.

"To engage in a pedagogy of popular culture is to 'do' popular culture," Gloria Filax reminds us. Filax draws on the ethics of Michel Foucault in order to highlight what a pedagogy of popular culture is and to interrogate the relationship between popular cultural forms and her own historicized engagement with the

socially conservative ideologies of Alberta. Specifically, she is interested in the particular ways that Alberta is distinguished as a region within the Canadian nation through the mobilization of cowboy imagery. Filax juxtaposes close readings of several consumer goods, with an emphasis on the reaction of the right wing magazine *Alberta Report* to gender ambiguity in Molson beer advertising, their subsequent unwitting celebration of Red Neck beer, as well as on the politics of the cattle industry as they were implicated in the sexuality and vegetarianism of Alberta-born singer/songwriter k. d. lang, and the collective drag king group, Alberta Beef.

In his contribution, André Loiselle assesses the impact that an increasingly fragmented and divided French Canadian nation has had on film production in Quebec. Noting that, over the past several years, a number of directors have turned away from the twin axes of Quebecois cinema—realism and auteurism—Loiselle reflects on the implications of emphasis now on genre in contemporary French Canadian filmmaking. Specifically, he examines the emerging case of horror cinema in Quebec, providing a reading of three films that render rural spaces problematic. With reference to the Bouchard–Taylor Commission and the meteoric rise of Mario Dumont’s right wing, anti-immigration Action Démocratique du Québec, he argues that the distinction between the secular multiculturalism of Montreal and the religious conservatism of rural Quebec has rarely been so pronounced, and, further, that this distinction has become rich source material for contemporary cinematic production.

Zoë Druick provides a counterpoint for Loiselle’s analysis of contemporary Quebecois cinema, arguing, that recent developments within the English Canadian film industry have led to a new genre: the hoser mockumentary. Druick addresses the near-omnipresence of the film festival as an important site, perhaps even the only site, of English Canadian film exhibition, and notes how the focus on festival audiences has spawned a genre of filmmaking that mocks traditional conceptions of both Canadian masculinity and Canadian filmmaking. The effect of this shift, she argues, has been to disrupt cinema’s perceived role in the context of citizenship formation. Druick argues that film festivals are particularly productive zones in which cultural products and national arts policies can be seen working in tandem, even as their logics often contradict each other.

The focus on cultural genres found in the work of Loiselle and Druick can also be seen in the essay by Johanne Sloan. She looks closely at contemporary

artists like Ron Terada and Lynne Marsh who freely borrow, quote, or paraphrase aspects of popular culture that they encounter in their everyday life. Sloan suggests that contemporary visual arts practices represent a break from Umberto Eco's conception of the raising of "kitsch" to a "new state of aesthetic dignity" in Pop Art, arguing that pop culture now permeates Canadian art in ways that are better conceptualized without the restrictive framework of the hierarchy of forms. Specifically, Sloan is concerned with the ways that contemporary visual artists transform existing cultural artefacts according to the specific circumstances and desires of the artists—a line of thinking that, she argues, has implications for all Canadians insofar as we spend much of our lives consuming American popular culture.

Like Sloan's, the essay by Frits Pannekoek, Mary Hemmings, and Helen Clarke draws on the writing of Umberto Eco to provide its orientation. Librarians by training, the authors offer a highly charged essay about the role of memory institutions in an increasingly digital world of information. Decrying the tendency to implicate these institutions in the criminalization of popular culture, the authors trace the history of Canadian libraries in order to draw attention to the ways that they have historically marginalized popular cultural forms like comic books, pulp, juvenile, and romance fiction by stressing the ideals of "good taste." At the current cultural moment, they argue, memory professionals are in the process of redressing the historical wrongs of their predecessors, but they are increasingly hamstrung by a new set of problems brought on by new digital archiving technologies and the criminalization of digital copying in contemporary copyright legislation. Rather than assuming a role in decriminalizing information sharing, the authors argue that libraries and museums too often reinforce their roles as guardians by insisting that patrons obey the logics of authorization.

Heather Devine is also interested in assessing the role of heritage spaces in the current Canadian cultural landscape. Examining the shifting terrain in the areas of acquisition, preservation, display and interpretation of indigenous heritage objects by Canadian museums, Devine asks whether or not meaningful institutional change has accompanied the escalating debate between colonized "source communities" and what she terms the "Western Museum Establishment." Beginning with the controversy that surrounded *The Spirit Sings* exhibition at Calgary's Glenbow Museum in 1988, Devine positions current museum practice in relation to evolving Canadian policies around liberal and folkloristic multiculturalism.

Devine emphasizes the challenge of reconciling past and present dealings with Aboriginal people in a way that satisfies demands for autonomy while, at the same time, preserving the cohesion of the larger community.

Negotiating dominant, and often exclusionary, cultural policies is also the subject of Michelle Helstein's contribution. Helstein examines the circulation of the image of the female Canadian athlete in relation to the intersection of a masculine sports culture, public sports policy, changing funding regimes and increased private sponsorship of sport in order to demonstrate how sports remain an ongoing site of cultural labour. Using the examples of Canadian Women's Olympic gold medal-winning hockey team members Cassie Campbell and Hayley Wickenheiser, Helstein notes that, in a context driven by a concentrated media system governed by profit motives, women's sports are more adversely impacted than are men's.

Hockey is also a concern for Patricia Hughes-Fuller. Drawing on her background in comparative literature, Hughes-Fuller discusses how certain representations of hockey contribute to what Benedict Anderson has termed the "deep horizontal comradeship" necessary to imagining community.²⁵ Beginning with an analysis of the game that is most commonly seen to unite disparate Canadian audiences, she draws attention to the largely unexpected way in which hockey can be tied to a gothic horror genre in Canadian fiction. Hughes-Fuller's analysis of the fictionalization of hockey weaves together two novels, a television series, and the persistent folklore about the "ghosts" of the Montreal Forum in order to develop her conception of the "hockey gothic." For Hughes-Fuller, the gothic elements in the four tales under consideration signal the need for cultural continuity and persistent, ongoing links to home and history.

Countering the cultural studies trend towards looking at urbanization and the increasing technologization (industrializing) of culture, both noted earlier in this introduction, David Gregory argues that older cultural forms, like folk music and radio, while changing, continue to invoke notions of shared national identity and shared values, even when these may express highly specific cultural differences. Rather than "an inevitable victim of globalization" or as an "exhausted commodity,"²⁶ Gregory argues that the "resurgence of traditional music" is an expression of localizing and regionalizing identities as national discourses of resistance. These then work counter to the homogenizing tendencies of globalization and also to academic work that ignores the continuing presence and relevance of the rural and

the non-digital in the production of culture in Canada.

Finally, Derek Briton brings many of the issues raised in the volume full circle with his analysis of online gaming spaces and the issues that they raise. Like Miller, Briton concerns himself with labour practices in the gaming industry highlighted by the blogger “ea_spouse,” and also by the concept of the “precarariat,” a rebuttal to the euphoria of the creative class that notes the precarious status of most cultural workers.²⁷ Briton emphasizes the ways that virtual spaces bring Canadians into contact with increasingly globalized and virtualized workers, allowing a fundamental rethinking of the issues raised in a volume such as this one.

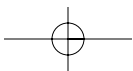
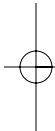
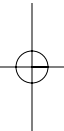
Conclusion: Contexts and Content

In recent years, there has been a growing body of scholarship on Canadian popular culture, largely focused on recuperating key texts and proving by example that Canada does, indeed, have a popular culture distinct from other nations, most specifically the United States. Works such as *Slippery Pastimes*,²⁸ *Mondo Canuck*,²⁹ *PopCan*,³⁰ and *Canadian Cultural Poesis*³¹ provide valuable insights into the textual practices of Canadian popular culture. The work of these anthologies is both timely and important, yet we feel that it is time to move forward in our analyses to consider not so much the texts of popular culture but rather the contexts. In other words, the contribution of *How Canadians Communicate* to this discussion is its exploration of the social, political, and economic milieu for the production, circulation, and reception of Canadian popular culture across media and genres. Our question is not “does Canada have a popular culture?” but “what does Canadian popular culture have to say about the construction and negotiation of Canadian national identity?” Our intention is not to proclaim one, unified and holistic form of national identity but to begin from the premise that popular culture informs a network of inter-related identity positions. Contesting recent political opinion that culture is somehow outside the purview of “ordinary Canadians,” then, we present these papers as part of a larger argument that culture is precisely the terrain upon which that ordinariness is defined. Thus, culture continues to be one of the most significant and serious factors in the enactment of citizenship.

NOTES

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A FUTURE FOR MEDIA STUDIES

*Cultural Labour, Cultural
Relations, Cultural Politics*

Toby Miller

Media studies has been dominated by three topics: infrastructure, content, and audiences. Approaches to infrastructure vary between neo-liberal endorsements of limited regulation of ownership by the state to facilitate market entry by new competitors, Marxist critiques of the bourgeois media for controlling the socio-political agenda, and nationalist interventions to protect local commerce and culture. Approaches to content vary between hermeneutics, which unearths the meaning of individual texts and links them to broader social formations and problems, and content analysis, which establishes patterns across significant numbers of similar texts, rather than close readings of individual ones. And approaches to audiences vary between social-psychological and culturalist attempts to correlate audiovisual consumption with social

conduct and policy critiques of imported audiovisual material threatening national and regional autonomy. These three components, fractured by politics, nation, discipline, theory, and method, are embodied in what I call Media Studies 1.0 and Media Studies 2.0. Both are ultimately to do with audiences. Media Studies 1.0 *panics* about citizens and consumers as audiences, whereas Media Studies 2.0 *celebrates* them. I investigate their histories here and make a case for generating a panic-free, critical, internationalist Media Studies 3.0, taking electronic gaming and the international precariat movement as examples of how we might do so. Throughout, I draw on the four core concepts that inform this volume.¹

Media Studies 1.0

Media Studies 1.0 derived from the spread of new media technologies over the past two centuries into the lives of urbanizing populations and the policing questions they posed to both state and capital: What would be the effects on cultural publics of these developments, and how would they vary between those with a stake in the social order versus those seeking to transform it? By the early twentieth century, academic experts had decreed media audiences to be passive consumers, thanks to the missions of literary criticism (distinguishing the aesthetically cultivated from others) and psychology (distinguishing the socially competent from others).² The origins of social psychology can be traced to anxieties about “the crowd” in a suddenly urbanized and educated Western Europe that raised the prospect of a long-feared “ochlocracy” of “the worthless mob”³ able to share popular texts. In the wake of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke was animated by the need to limit collective exuberance via restraint on popular passions.⁴ Elite theorists emerged from both right and left to argue that newly literate publics were vulnerable to manipulation by demagogues. The founder of the “American Dream,” the Latino James Truslow Adams, saw “[t]he mob mentality of the city crowd” as “one of the menaces to modern civilization.” He was particularly disparaging about “the prostitution of the moving-picture industry.”⁵ These critics were frightened of socialism; they were frightened of democracy; and they were frightened of popular reason.⁶ With civil society growing restive, the emergence of radical politics was explained away in socio-psychological terms rather than political-economic ones. The psy-function warmed itself by campus fires, far from the

crowding mass. In the U.S., Harvard took charge of theorizing, Chicago observing, and Columbia enumerating the great unwashed.⁷

The famous U.S. Payne-Fund studies of the 1930s investigated the impact of films on what a gaggle of sociologists labelled “‘superior’ adults” (this expression referred to “young college professors, graduate students and their wives”) versus children from juvenile centres. Researchers wanted to know: “what effect do motion pictures have upon children of different ages?” especially on what were known as the “retarded.” These pioneering scholars boldly set out to discover whether “the onset of puberty is or is not affected by motion pictures” by what they called “The Big Three” narrative themes: love, crime, and sex (sound familiar?) pondering “demonstrations of satisfying love techniques” to see whether “sexual passions are aroused and amateur prostitution ... aggravated” by the screen. They gauged reactions through “autobiographical case studies,” questionnaires asking whether “All Most Many Some Few No Chinese are cunning and underhand,” and “skin response” measured by psychogalvanometers attached to young people in cinemas and hypnographs and polygraphs wired to them in their beds.⁸

The Payne-Fund studies birthed seven decades of obsessive social-scientific attempts to correlate youthful consumption of popular culture with anti-social conduct, scrutinizing audiences in terms of where they came from, how many there were, and what they did as a consequence of participating. In 1951, Dallas Smythe wrote of this effects research, “Everybody seems to be doing it, especially those who are best qualified by virtue of the fact that ‘they wouldn’t have a television set in the house.’”⁹ Recalling the 1960s in Greenwich Village, Bob Dylan remembers, “Sociologists were saying that tv had deadly intentions and was destroying the minds and imaginations of the young—that their attention span was being dragged down.” The other dominant site of knowledge Dylan encountered was the “psychology professor, a good performer, but originality not his long suit.”¹⁰

Purveyors of normal science continue to cast a shadow across that village, and many others. The pattern is that when cultural technologies and genres emerge, young people are identified as both pioneers and victims, simultaneously endowed by marketers and critics with power and vulnerability. They are held to be the first to know and the last to understand the media—the grand paradox of youth, latterly on display in the digital sublime of technological determinism, as always with the super-added valence of a future citizenship in peril. Concerns about

supposedly unprecedented and unholy risks from new media recur. Damnation was sure to follow cheap novels during the 1900s, silent then sound film of the teens and 1920s, radio in the 1930s, comic books from the 1940s and 50s, pop music and television as per the 1950s and 60s, satanic rock and video cassette recorders of the 1970s and 80s, and rap music, video games, the Internet, and sexting since the 1990s. The satirical paper *The Onion* cleverly mocked these interdependent phenomena of moral panic and commodification via a *faux* study of the impact on U.S. youth of seeing Janet Jackson's breast in a 2004 Super Bowl broadcast.¹¹

Effects studies suffer all the disadvantages of ideal-typical psychological reasoning. They rely on methodological individualism, failing to account for cultural norms, let alone the arcs of history that establish patterns of text and response inside politics, war, ideology, and discourse. Each laboratory test, based on, as the refrain goes, "a large university in the mid-West [of the United States]," is countered by a similar experiment, with conflicting results. As politicians, grant-givers, and jeremiad-wielding pundits call for more and more research to prove that the media make you stupid, violent, and apathetic—or the opposite—academics line up at the trough to indulge their contempt for popular culture, and their rent-seeking urge for public money. Media Studies 1.0 rarely interrogates its own conditions of existence—namely, that governments, religious groups, and the media themselves use it to account for social problems by diverting blame onto popular culture. And it takes each new medium and genre as an opportunity to affirm its omniscient agenda. Consider Dorothy G. Singer and Jerome L. Singer's febrile twenty-first-century call for centring media effects within the study of child development: "can we ignore the impact on children of their exposure through television and films or, more recently, to computer games and arcade video games that involve vast amounts of violent actions?"¹²

Whereas effects research focuses on the cognition and emotion of individual human subjects via observation and experimentation, another way of considering audiences looks to the customs and patriotic feelings exhibited by collective human subjects, the grout of national culture. In place of psychology, it is concerned with politics. The media do not make you a well- or ill-educated person, a wild or self-controlled one. Rather, they make you a knowledgeable and loyal national subject, or a *naïf* who is ignorant of local tradition and history. Cultural belonging, not psychic wholeness, is the touchstone of this model. Instead of

measuring responses electronically or behaviourally, it interrogates the geopolitical origin of popular texts and the themes and styles they embody, with particular attention to the putatively nation-building genres of drama, news, sport, and current affairs. Adherents hold that local citizens should control television, for instance, because they can be counted on in the event of war.

Canadians have a unique purchase on anxieties about U.S. screen domination. Even before the inception of television in 1952, affection for Yankee culture was officially derided as unpatriotic, because 150,000 tv sets in Canada were tuned to U.S. signals. There has been over half a century of battling what is perceived as “an ideological misrecognition whereby Canadians mistake American television for what they really like while simultaneously neglecting the Canadian television that they ought to like.”¹³ This is not always about protecting one form of cultural nationalism (Canadian) against another (U.S.). It can also offer services that supply and demand cannot. For example, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network enables the maintenance of Native culture by targeting viewers across a massive country, often in small clusters and different language groups. The only way the Network could exist is via a mandate from regulators—market economics would probably see the spectrum space go to a U.S.-programmed network.¹⁴

In addition to audience research and cultural policy, Media Studies 1.0 includes political economy, which focuses on infrastructure rather than audiences but also works from the *nostrum* that the media are all-powerful, and critical theory, which is concerned that the audiovisual sector turns people away from artistic and social traces of authentic intersubjectivity and towards control of individual consciousness. Political economy is more policy-oriented and political in its focus on institutional power, whereas critical theory is more philosophical and aesthetic in its desire to develop modernism and the avant-garde. But they began as one with lamentations for the triumph of industrialized cultural production and the loss of a self-critical philosophical address. The two approaches are linked via distaste for what they deride as mass culture. Because demand is dispersed and supply centralized, the media supposedly operate via an administrative logic. Far from reflecting already-established and -revealed preferences of consumers in reaction to tastes and desires, they manipulate audiences from the apex of production. Coercion is mistaken for free will, and culture is one more industrial process subordinated to dominant economic forces within society that seek standardization. The only element that might stand against their levelling sameness is said to be

individual consciousness. But that consciousness has itself been customized to efficient media production.¹⁵ We are all familiar with this account, thanks to latter-day Frankfurters who continue to offer it to us, and their scornful critics from Media Studies 2.0, who continue to denounce its pessimism and snobbery in the name of populism.

Media Studies 2.0

For Media Studies 2.0, popular culture represents the apex of modernity. Far from being supremely alienating, it embodies the expansion of civil society, the first moment in history when political and commercial organs and agendas became receptive to, and part of, the popular classes; when the general population counted as part of the social, rather than being excluded from political-economic calculations. At the same time, there was a lessening of authority, the promulgation of individual rights and respect, and the development of intense but large-scale human interaction. This perspective has offered a way in to media audiences that differs from Media Studies 1.0 and its faith in the all-powerful agency of the media. For in Media Studies 2.0, the all-powerful agent is the audience. 2.0 claims that the public is so clever and able that it makes its own meanings, outwitting institutions of the state, academia, and capitalism that seek to measure and control it. In the case of children and the media, a new culturalist perspective has challenged anxieties from 1.0 about turning Edenic innocents into rabid monsters, capitalist dupes, or mental Americans. This formation has, for example, animated research into how children distinguish between fact and fiction; the generic features and intertexts of children's news, drama, action-adventure, education, cartooning, and play; and how talking about the media makes for social interaction.¹⁶

Faith in the active audience can reach cosmic proportions. It has been a *donnée* of 2.0 that the media are not responsible for anything. This position is a virtual *nostrum* in some research into fans, who are thought to construct connections with celebrities and actants in ways that mimic friendship, make sense of human interaction, and ignite cultural politics. The critique commonly attacks opponents of commercial culture for misrecognizing its capacity to subvert patriarchy, capitalism, and other forms of oppression. The popular is held to have progressive effects, because it is decoded by people in keeping with their social situations. The

active audience is said to be weak at the level of cultural production, but strong as an interpretative community. All this is supposedly evident to scholars from their perusal of audience conventions, web pages, discussion groups, quizzes, and rankings, or by staring at screens with their children. Consumption is the key to Media Studies 2.0—with production discounted, labour forgotten, consumers sovereign, and governments there to protect them.

Cybertarian technophiles, struck by the “digital sublime,” attribute magical properties to contemporary communications and cultural technologies that obliterate geography, sovereignty, and hierarchy in an alchemy of truth and beauty. A deregulated, individuated media world supposedly makes consumers into producers, frees the disabled from confinement, encourages new subjectivities, rewards intellect and competitiveness, links people across cultures, and allows billions of flowers to bloom in a post-political cornucopia. It’s a kind of Marxist/Godardian wet dream, where people fish, hunt, film, and write cheques from morning to midnight. In his survey of this work, Vincent Mosco rightly argues that such “myths are important both for what they reveal (including a genuine desire for community and democracy) and for what they conceal (including the growing concentration of communication power in a handful of transnational media businesses).”¹⁷ At such moments, we can say that what Terry Eagleton sardonically named The Reader’s Liberation Movement is in the house.¹⁸

The Movement informs quasi-libertarian critiques of Canadian cultural policy for condescending attitudes to the earthy choices made by “ordinary” consumers, maintaining that viewers should be trusted rather than countered by elites, whose desire to strengthen the nation through culture is said to be self-serving and impossible.¹⁹ In the case of white settler colonies such as Canada, Will Kymlicka argues that culture aids individual autonomy through engagement with collective as well as individual histories.²⁰ It can allocate preferences effectively on a market basis, provided that collective inequality does not distort history and life chances. He suggests that majority settlers and their offspring should trust in market dynamics. They don’t merit cultural rights. Recent voluntary migrants deserve some cultural rights. First Peoples, the dispossessed, and the enslaved deserve many. Yet the much-vaunted organic capacity of, for example, hockey to bind Canadians together on a market basis rather than a policy one has been dwarfed by the desire of television networks to target specific territories through localizing technologies, which has seen them tailor coverage to particular audiences. That

desire has neither reflected nor encouraged multiculturalism, as is evident from the routine racism and sexism of commentators.²¹

The fundamental dilemma for the political claims of Media Studies 2.0 is this: Can fans be said to engage in labour exploitation, patriarchy, racism, and neo-imperialism, or in some specifiable way make a difference to politics beyond their own selves, when they interpret TV unusually, SMS (short message service) each other about romantic frustrations, or play pirated versions of *Scrabble* on Facebook? Have we gone too far in supplanting the panicky Woody Allen nebbishness of 1.0 (“I’m kind of bothered that...”) with the Panglossian Pollyanna nerdiness of 2.0 (“Cool stuff”)? Virginia Postrel, then editor of the libertarian *Reason* magazine and later a *New York Times* economics journalist, wrote a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed welcoming 2.0 as “deeply threatening to traditional leftist views of commerce ... lending support to the corporate enemy and even training graduate students who wind up doing market research.”²² That should give us pause.

Consider the juncture of 1.0 and 2.0 in games studies. A powerful binary situates at one antinomy (1.0) omnipotent corporate technocrats plotting to control the emotions and thoughts of young people around the world and turn them into malleable consumers, workers, and killers through electronic games; at the other antinomy (2.0) all-powerful desiring machines, called players, are satisfied by malleable producers. But the fantasy that innovation comes from supply-and-demand mechanics is misleading. The state—specifically the military—is at the core. 2.0 fails to explain the long-standing imbrication of electronic games and the U.S. military.²³

2.0 *savants* are fond of invoking pre-capitalist philosophers, dodging questions of labour exploitation by heading for texts. High aesthetics and high technology are brokered through high neo-liberalism. 2.0 refers to ludology (but ignores the work of the Association for the Study of Play and the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport) and narratology, returning to the non-materialist, non-medium-specific work of literary studies (but ignoring work undertaken by the International Association for Media and Communication Research, the Canadian Communications Association, and the Union for Democratic Communications). Drawing on the possessive individualism of neoclassical economics, game analysts study virtual environments as ways of understanding “whole societies under controlled conditions,” neglecting or caricaturing history and ethnography in the process.²⁴ 1.0 and 2.0 met unhappily in a U.S. law case over a commercial

ordinance that required games manufacturers to advise parents that their products were risky for young people, with 2.0 *savants* supporting corporate interests.²⁵

Media Studies 3.0

We need more *frottage* between Media Studies 1.0 and 2.0, breaking down the binary between them. 1.0 should register struggle, and 2.0 should register structure. Currently, 1.0 draws our attention to audience inoculation and corporate control, but leaves out productive labour—the key place where value is made. 2.0 draws our attention to uptake and response, but again marginalizes work. 1.0 misses moments of crisis and hope, presenting a subject-free picture with structure but no agency, other than psychological response, shareholder maximization, and managerial rationality. Its nationalistic cultural policies often deny the banality of protected cinema, the futility of quota-driven television, and the partiality of who is chosen to create national images and appear in them. 2.0 misses forms of domination and exploitation, presenting an institution-free picture with agency but no structure, other than fan creativity and reader imagination. Both 1.0 and 2.0 are doggedly tied to nativist epistemologies that must be transcended. The nativism is especially powerful in the U.S., Britain, and their academic satellites such as Israel and Australia, where effortless extrapolations from very limited experiences support totalizing theories and norms, due to the hegemony of English-language publishing and scholarly links to the warfare, welfare, and cultural bureaucracies. To transcend these pitfalls, we need Media Studies 3.0.

3.0 must blend ethnographic, political-economic, and aesthetic analyses in a global and local way, establishing links between the key areas of cultural production around the world (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East) and diasporic/dispossessed communities engaged in their own cultural production (Native peoples, African and Asian diasporas, Latinos, and Middle-Eastern peoples). 3.0 needs to be a media-centred version of area studies, with diasporas as important as regions. It must be animated by collective identity and power, by how human subjects are formed and how they experience cultural and social space. Taking its agenda from social movements as well as intellectual ones, and its methods from economics, politics, communications, sociology, literature, law, science, medicine, anthropology, history, and art, it should focus on gender, race, class, sexuality, sustainability, and pleasure, across national lines.

We can gain some tips on how to do this from the history of theorizing culture. Culture has usually been studied in two registers, via the social sciences and the humanities—truth versus beauty. It has been a marker of differences and similarities in taste and status, as explored interpretatively or methodically. In the humanities, cultural texts have long been judged by criteria of quality, as practiced critically and historically. For their part, the social sciences have focused on religions, customs, times, and spaces, as explored ethnographically or statistically. So whereas the humanities articulate differences through symbolic norms (for example, which class has the cultural capital to appreciate high culture, and which does not) the social sciences articulate differences through social norms (for example, which people cultivate agriculture in keeping with spirituality, and which do not).²⁶ This distinction feeds into the Cartesian dualism separating thought from work, which presumes that humans have two distinct natures: the intelligent and the corporeal. One is focused on action, the other on reason. That binary has dominated media studies through oppositions it poses between society versus economy and audience versus meaning. It haunts 1.0 and 2.0.

I suggest that this bifurcation and subsequent silencing of labour and culture, for all its sticky origins in Cartesianism, cannot and should not hold. Historically, the best critical political economy and the best cultural studies have worked through the imbrication of power and signification. Blending them can heal the fissure between fact and interpretation, between the social sciences and the humanities, between truth and beauty, under the sign of a principled approach to cultural democracy. Lawrence Grossberg recommends “politicizing theory and theorizing politics” by combining abstraction and grounded analysis.²⁷ That requires a focus on the contradictions of organizational structures, their articulations with everyday living and textuality, and their intrication with the polity and economy, addressing production, consumption, and social stratification. Half a century ago, Smythe studied TV texts as “a group of symbols” that “serve as a medium of exchange between the mass media and the audience.” He recognized that analyses of infrastructure and content must be supplemented by an account of the conditions under which culture is made, circulated, received, interpreted, and criticized: “The produced program is ... more than the sum of the program ingredients” because it is encrusted with “contextual and explicit layers of meaning” that emerge during its creation and consumption.²⁸

Such work is already underway. Arvind Rajagopal notes that because television,

the telephone, the Internet, and the neo-liberal are all new to India, “markets and media generate new kinds of rights and new kinds of imagination ... novel ways of exercising citizenship rights and conceiving politics.”²⁹ For Rosalía Winocur, women’s talkback radio in Latin America since the fall of U.S.-backed dictatorships has offered a simultaneously individual and social forum for new expressions of citizenship in the context of decentred politics, emergent identities, minority rights, and gender issues—a public space that transcends the subordination of difference and the privileging of elite experience.³⁰ And Mosco starts from the power of mythology then “builds a bridge to political economy” in his investigation of neo-liberal *doxa* about empowerment, insisting on “the mutually constitutive relationship between political economy and cultural studies” as each mounts “a critique of the other.”³¹ We can see similar intent animating such innovations as Sarai, the Free Software Foundation, and the Alternative Law Forum, exemplary instances of Media Studies 3.0 in formation. They blend internationalism, political economy, ethnography, and textual analysis, and resist the binarism of 1.0 and 2.0.

To understand media infrastructure, we must address technological innovation, regulation, labour, ownership, and control, utilizing ethnographic, political-economic, and public-policy research to establish how the media came to be as they are. To understand content, we must address production and undertake both content and textual analysis, combining statistical and hermeneutic methods to establish patterns of meaning. To understand audiences, we must address ratings, uses-and-gratifications, effects, active-audience, ethnographic, and psychoanalytic traditions, combining quantitative and qualitative measures to establish the audience’s composition and conduct in the wake of media consumption. This incarnates a simultaneously top-down and bottom-up approach, undertaken always with an eye to labour issues.

Gamework and the Precariat

Let me exemplify a labour focus. Electronic Arts (EA) is based in California with “worldwide studios” in British Columbia and offshoots in Montreal, Hong Kong, Tokyo, China, and Britain, *inter alia*. EA makes *The Sims*, National Hockey League games, *FIFA World Cup*, and the John Madden “football” franchise. The company was founded in 1982 by Trip Hawkins. He bought into Media Studies

1.0 and 2.0 simultaneously, dismissing broadcast television as “brain-deadening” and embracing “interactive media” as a development “that would connect people and help them grow.” EA’s name derived from a desire to emphasize art and technology under the sign of publishing, with developers initially promoted as authors. Its first games, such as *M.U.L.E.* and *Murder on the Zinderneuf*, were marketed through their designers’ names—rather like rock albums of the day. These shining young white design geeks were celebrated in a famous 1983 advertisement called “We See Farther.” But geek authorship was soon supplanted. By the mid-1980s, the “authors” of key games were no longer dweebs in black polo necks, but Doctor J. and Larry Bird, basketball celebrities brought in as endorsers and *faux* designers. Creators lost their moment of fame as authors. A stream of sports stories drew on promotions underwritten by others’ creativity and money, displacing what were regarded as the esoteric pursuits of the first innovators.³²

The labour process became fetishized as EA bought development studios and set up design teams on an industrial model. At the same time, the corporation sought to undermine the existing political economy of the industry by cutting the discount given to distributors of software, thereby building up revenues. Its next move was to deal directly with retailers, writing games for personal computers and consoles and becoming a distributor. In addition to continuing with console options, in the late 1990s it entered virtual worlds and awakened to female consumers, buying advertising space and time across fashion periodicals and girly TV. EA is massively successful—2007 revenues were US\$3.091 billion, the company boasts almost 8000 employees, and it is buying other studios.³³

In 2004, however, the firm became a byword for the poor labour practices that characterize the sector when the blogger *ea_spouse* pseudonymously posted a vibrant account of the exploitation experienced by her fiancé and others working at the firm.³⁴ Eloquently ripping back the veneer of joyous cybertarianism from games development, she disclosed that EA’s claim to blend aesthetics and technology, as per its name and corporate trademark—“Challenge Everything”—belied both the company’s treatment of employees and its products. Regarding labour, she wrote, “To any EA executive that happens to read this, I have a good challenge for you: how about safe and sane labour practices for the people on whose backs you walk for your millions?” Regarding texts: “Churning out one licensed football game after another doesn’t sound like challenging much of anything to me; it sounds like a money farm.” The nature of this exploitation is that a putatively

limited “pre-crunch” is announced in the period prior to release of a new game. Forty-eight hour weeks are required, with the alibi that months of this will obviate the need for a real “crunch” at the conclusion of development. The pre-crunch goes on beyond its deadline, and 72-hour weeks are mandated. That crunch passes its promised end, illness, and irritability strike, and a new crunch is announced. Everyone must work 85 to 91-hour weeks, 9 am to 10 pm Monday to Sunday inclusive, with the (occasional) Saturday evening off, after 6:30 pm. There is no overtime or leave in return for this massive expenditure of talent and time.

At the very moment that ea_spouse blew the whistle on the corporation, *Fortune* magazine ranked EA among the “100 Best Companies to Work For.” Today, the firm ranks sixty-second in the magazine’s “List of Industry Stars” and ninety-first amongst firms that “try hard to do right by their staff” as measured by the Great Place to Work³⁵ Institute in San Francisco. EA calls itself “a one-class society,” and its Vice-President of Human Resources, Rusty Rueff, operates with the following (astonishing) dictum: “Most creativity comes at one of two times: When your back is up against the wall or in a time of calm.” In case readers find this firing squad analogy alarming, *Fortune* reassures them that workers can “refresh their energy with free espresso or by playing volleyball and basketball.” But the exploitation begat a class-action lawsuit.³⁶ EA’s website boasts about its labour record, but not in terms of the class action—rather, that it fares well on the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index.³⁷

The bold intervention (as we say in cultural studies) or outburst (as they say elsewhere) by ea_spouse generated febrile and substantial responses, such as calls for unionization, appeals to federal and state labour machinery, confirmation that EA was horrendous but by no means aberrant, frustration that the bourgeois press was disinclined to investigate or even report the situation, denunciations of asinine managerialism and private-sector bureaucracy (for example, “The average game company manager is quite possibly the worst qualified leader of people in the world”) and a recognition that intellectual property rights make labour disposable (“I’m beginning to think that EA is really nothing more than a licensing warehouse. They’ll always be able to recruit naïve talent to slave away ... alienating talent is not a big problem for them”). Ea_spouse now runs a website that is bombarded with horror stories by angry former idealists from all over the globe who thought they were doing “cool stuff” until they experienced web-shop horror.³⁸

We inhabit a world where flexibility is the mega-sign of affluence, and precariousness its flipside; where one person's calculated risk is another's burden of labour; where inequality is represented as the outcome of a moral test; and the young are supposed to calculate that insecurity is an opportunity rather than a constraint. Cue Electronic Arts. But not everyone succumbs to Media Studies 1.0's sense of helplessness or Media Studies 2.0's rhetoric of empowerment. Cue *ea_spouse* and a developing discourse about flexible labour amongst cultural workers who are segmented through deregulation and new technology.

In Western Europe and Japan, this group is naming itself. The precariat/*précaires/precari@s/precari* go under the signs of "San Precario" and "Our Lady of the Precariat," who guard the spirit of the "flashing lights of life." The movement embodies a new style, a new identity struggling for security against neo-liberalism that has been formed from young, female, mobile, international workers within the culture industries, services, and the knowledge sector. Antonio Negri refers to this group as the *cognitariat*: people with high levels of educational attainment and great facility with cultural and communications technologies and genres.³⁸ A new breed of productive workers, they play key roles in the production and circulation of goods and services, through both creation and coordination. This new proletariat is not defined in terms of factories and manufactures opposed to ruling-class force and ideology. Instead, it is formed from those whose immediate forebears, with similar or lesser cultural capital, were the salariat, and confident of guaranteed health care and retirement income. The new group lacks both the organization of the traditional working class and the political *entrée* of the old middle class. Today's "culturalisation of production" both *enables* these intellectuals, by placing them at the centre of world economies; and *disables* them, by doing so under conditions of flexible production and ideologies of "freedom."

Since 2001, the Euromayday Network has organized Precariat parades in twenty European cities, featuring "contortionists of flexibility ... high-wire artists of mobility ... jugglers of credit," along with apparitions by San Precario to protect his children against evil bosses.³⁹ In 2005, San Precario appeared in the form of a worker uniformed and suppliant on his knees, with a neon sign on his head. Participants note the instability of working life today, and hail a new class of sex workers, domestic servants, and media creators at <maydaysur.org>. Their manifesto reads:

Somos precarios y precarias, atípicos, temporales, móviles, flexibles
 Somos la gente que está en la cuerda floja, en equilibrio inestable
 Somos la gente deslocalizada y reconvertida

We are the precariat, atypical, temporary, mobile, flexible
 We are the people on the high wire, in unstable equilibrium
 We are the displaced and made-over people

The Precariat recognizes the complex connection between “eslóganes de los movimientos sociales, reapropiados por el neoliberalismo” [social-movement slogans reappropriated for neo-liberalism]. It realizes that concepts like diversity, culture, and sustainability create spectacles, manage workers, and enable gentrification. Similarly, Espai en blanc “afirma que vivimos en la sociedad del conocimiento y en cambio no existen ideas” [affirms that we live in a society of knowledge and change where ideas barely exist] (espaienblanc.net). Adbusters and cultural jamming work in cognate ways (adbusters.org). When the Precariat and culture jammers analyze globalization and declare a new “phenomenology of labor,” a “world horizon of production,” they are reoccupying and resignifying the space of corporate-driven divisions of labour in ways that 1.0 and 2.0 have simply ignored. *Pace* apologists for the creative industries, who argue that the precariat is a fabrication of nostalgic leftist academics in need of theoretical makeovers this is an organic movement of recognition and resistance.⁴⁰

There are wider implications than labour itself. For example, a scandal engulfed British reality-TV promotions in 2007 because the BBC, and more overtly capitalistic enterprises, deceived viewers to cut costs and increase excitement. This critique soon turned into an appreciation of what happens to the public interest when programs are made on a project basis by businesses without a commitment to anything but profit, whose employees lack security and integrity. The British media executive Dawn Airey (once the author of a television business plan orchestrated around “films, football, and fucking”) now warns against “the casualisation of the industry.”⁴¹ Similar debates have emerged over the exploitation of child workers in U.S. reality TV at the hands of sub-contractors—who again eschew organized labour.

Conclusion

To summarize, Media Studies 1.0 is misleadingly functionalist on its effects and political-economy side, and 2.0 is misleadingly conflictual on its active-audience side. Work done on audience effects and political economy has neglected struggle, dissonance, and conflict in favour of a totalizing narrative in which the media dominate everyday life. Work done on active audiences has over-emphasized struggle, dissonance, and conflict, neglecting infrastructural analysis in favour of a totalizing narrative in which consumers dominate everyday life.

Immanuel Kant envisaged our “emergence from ... self-incurred immaturity” and independence from religious, governmental, and commercial direction.⁴² To help make that possible, critical scholars and activists need to account for the post-industrial standing of cultural workers and reject a neo-liberal embrace of casualized labour.⁴³ Media Studies 3.0 should synthesize and improve 1.0 and 2.0 through a labour emphasis. This returns us to the origins of social theory: Adam Smith’s ethnography of work, John Stuart Mill’s account of the liberal individual, Karl Marx’s observations on the fetishization of commodities, and W. E. B. Du Bois, Rabindranath Tagore, and José Martí’s encounters with subjectivities split between production, consumption, and citizenship. There would be no culture, no media, without labour.⁴⁴ Labour is central to humanity, but largely absent from media studies. Let’s change that.

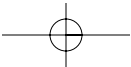
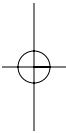
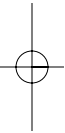
Notes

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<2>

LOG ON, GOOF OFF, AND LOOK UP

*Facebook and the Rhythms
of Canadian Internet Use*

Ira Wagman

The act of logging into, out of, and back into Facebook is part of the daily rhythm of Internet use for a large number of Canadians. One major Internet traffic monitoring company recently claimed that Facebook was the second-most popular website among Canadians, just behind Google.¹ A recent article claimed that close to three out of five Canadians have a Facebook account.² According to statistics posted on its blog, the company claims that Canada has the third-highest number of subscribers, behind the United States and the United Kingdom and ahead of countries such as Turkey, Australia, France, and Columbia.³ Like a number of Internet applications, Facebook is accessible on a range of devices, from desktops and laptops to cellphones and iPods.

Facebook's transition from novel to normal occurred over a relatively brief period. The site launched in 2004 but has only been available to Canadians since the end of 2005. Facebook was originally available to students at universities; since 2007, it has been open to anyone with an email address. Until recently, users had to affiliate themselves with a regional or institutional network in order to join the site. At present, every major Canadian city from Victoria to St. John's is represented along with colleges, workplaces, and thousands of high schools scattered across the country.

The Canadian presence within Facebook seems to have mitigated what would be a familiar chorus about the need for a national equivalent, a media technology that is distinctly Canadian. This is despite the fact that the proliferation of sites like Facebook threatens the potential for the kinds of national audiences so treasured by cultural nationalists. In the absence of such rhetoric, one can appreciate the delightful pleasures Canadians take from media products produced by American (or international) firms without any of the usual guilt that accompanied similar practices associated with what we now clumsily call "traditional media." The difficulties in locating the popular are also a spatial concern; as this essay will show, an appreciation of Facebook draws attention to sites of media consumption that exist outside of domestic spheres.

This chapter begins with an overview of Facebook including a brief history of its development, an outline of some of its key features, and a discussion of the phenomenon attributed to it known as social networking. I then consider Facebook as an invitation to reflect broadly on the place of the Internet within the everyday lives of Canadians. I focus my attention here on the use of Facebook by adults (rather than younger users) in order to make three observations: First, I want to initiate a rethinking of our notion of time spent online by arguing that Facebook capitalizes upon the dominant mode of Internet use among many Canadians, a mode I call the brief encounter. Second, I argue that Facebook's popularity as a distraction from work allows for a consideration of office spaces as sites of media exhibition and for an understanding of how media technologies facilitate the blurring of lines between work and play. I conclude by arguing that social networking sites need to be considered as media forms as much as they are considered socially or politically in order to shed light on some of the key issues facing our understanding of new media, most notably that of privacy. Although Facebook makes possible the coming together of range of different media forms, from photographs to retro

video games, I also want to suggest that it raises questions about the historical *uses* of those forms within Canadian life. An examination of a number of controversies involving Facebook serves two purposes: As a reminder of the durability of one of modern society's most powerful informational forms, the directory, and as a reflection of contemporary anxieties about a practice that many of us take for granted when applied to non-digital contexts: The act of looking people up.

To some extent these observations are guided by my own experience as a Facebook user who finds himself drawn to his computer's browser for distractions and who uses the Internet "to Google" people, places, and things. At the same time, however, what follows emerges from the realization that scholars pursue a number of established analytical routes when studying the social role of media technologies, especially the Internet, while leaving others behind. While it may be true that Facebook is the product of a society characterized by narcissism, diversion, and surveillance, such concerns reflect the tendency to equate changes to the technological landscape with transformations of the social world. With those changes come the attendant anxieties about how such transformations will have a lasting effect on established mores. My purpose here is not to counter the position that digital technologies offer prospects for new kinds of creativity, protest, and forms of social interaction, part of a broader *zeitgeist* that Henry Jenkins characterizes as "convergence culture."⁴ Instead, this article serves as a reminder that such developments also serve as platforms for the carrying out of a number of rather banal things, like making plans with friends, checking the weather, or paying the bills. With that in mind, the questions the present paper proposes can be useful to account for the variety of practices and contexts for consumption made possible by new media forms beyond the spectacular ones with which we commonly associate them.

Opening Up Facebook

Facebook began in 2003 when the company's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, developed an application to facilitate communication among his fellow students at Harvard University. From there the company offered Facebook to other universities, before inviting high schools, workplaces, and eventually, members of the general public to join the site. The company's tremendous growth has attracted an incredible amount of media attention and has made Zuckerberg an e-commerce

media darling. However, the hagiographic treatment of Facebook's founding has been contested by a series of lawsuits from Harvard colleagues who argue that Zuckerberg's version of Facebook was adapted from two other services, an online dating site, and a site offering a range of services to fellow students.⁵

Facebook is one of an expansive number of sites offering versions of social networking. A partial list of the current generation of social networking sites popular to varying degrees in Canada includes sites like Orkut, LinkedIn, Bebo, Cyworld, Mixi, Ning, Hi5, Skyrock, and one of the originators of social networking, Friendster. Although the numbers for Facebook's primary competition, MySpace, have been traditionally larger in terms of dedicated users in the United States, the two sites now appear to be neck-and-neck and Facebook is considered to be more popular than MySpace in Canada. It bears noting, however, that users may have accounts with both services, and that different services offer different capabilities. For example, MySpace has emerged as a premier site for accessing music from established artists to newer acts. Many musicians establish MySpace pages as a way to distribute music to users in hopes that it will cultivate fan communities, stimulate radio play, album purchases, or appearances and concerts.

While there is considerable variation among the sites themselves danah boyd and Nicole Ellison suggest social networking sites share three general characteristics: They allow users to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, such as within the Facebook "universe"; they allow users to generate a list of other "friends" with whom they wish to share connections within that universe, and they allow those connected to that universe to examine connections made by other friends within the system. As useful as this may be, for our purposes here it is important to point out that even this characterization should be considered as a placeholder since social networking sites, like websites in general, routinely adjust their capabilities and are therefore in a constant state of flux.⁶

One of the reasons for the changing nature of social networking has to do with the continued process of adaptation and adjustment of the Internet into everyday life. While it was not the first of its kind, Facebook emerged out of the rubble of the dot-com bubble that burst towards the beginning of the new century. Coming out of that downturn, social media websites, themselves part of a discourse around "Web 2.0," highlight the ability of users to create, share, and provide direct forms of interaction and collaboration through a range of different websites, from Wikipedia to YouTube. The move here is part of the broader reconstruction of

websites from interactive interfaces into all-in-one portals that perform a range of different operations in one place, from search engines and email to news services, and from communications hub to a place to display photographs. A major precondition for developments in Web 2.0 has been significant improvements across a range of media technologies and interfaces—from digital cameras to websites—that make it easier for users possessing basic computer knowledge to perform previously complicated tasks without any prior knowledge of computer programming language or, in many cases, without downloading software.

One's Facebook experience usually begins with the creation of a profile that acts as the user's personal page within the site's internal universe. The profile can contain information ranging from the personal to the preferential:



Figure 1: Author's profile page on Facebook, screen capture.

A standard profile will usually contain a user's network or city of residence, date of birth, religious views, marital status, political leanings, and a list of favourite bands, movies, and memorable quotes. The profile page also allows users to type a brief message telling others what they are doing at any given moment; this is called updating one's "status." Most information contained in the profile is hyperlinked; for example, clicking on a movie title in one's profile generates a list of all other users in Facebook who share the same taste. From this or any other range of connections, one is able to create a social network of "friends" with whom one could share messages, photographs, videos, and the names of each other's friends.

Since its initial release in 2005, Facebook's capabilities have expanded. The site now contains a "newsfeed" that informs all of the user's "friends" about one's activities within the site, such as updating one's profile page, status, commenting on someone else's photographs, and so on. The company also allowed third-party software developers to create applications that users download to adorn their profile page. There are thousands of these applications, many of which are intended to encourage various levels of participation or attract attention from a user's circle of friends. These range from trivia challenges to weather updates, and from tests that reveal aspects of one's personality (which German philosopher are you?) to those that determine one's "hotness." One of the more popular classes of applications are those that promote users to engage in virtually gestural forms of communication to get more attention, an act made possible through poking, hugging, sending gifts or good karma, or by throwing animals, giving vampire bites, or unleashing werewolves onto other users. Other popular applications offer diversions such as retro video games or opportunities to play chess or "Scrabulous," an unsanctioned version of the popular board game.

Many Canadian institutions and a number of political parties have become intimately involved, producing a range of different applications for Facebook users: fans of the Conservative Party can download the "I Support Stephen Harper" application, featuring a collage of images of the current Prime Minister. In Vancouver, the South Coast British Columbia Transit Authority now operates Translink NextBus, an application that provides users with bus schedules. One of the country's largest banks, TD Canada Trust, has an application for users to organize their monthly budgets. Finally, with a move reminiscent of one of the first uses for radio—to spread religion—the Evangel Church of Kelowna allows

users to download an application giving access to the weekly sermon, along with notes to allow users to follow along with the recording.

In an interview with *Time* magazine, Zuckerberg described Facebook not as “social networking” but as a “social utility,” one based not on establishing new connections between strangers, but on increasing the efficiency of communication with pre-existing connections.⁷ Given what I have already said about the promise offered by companies working in a Web 2.0. environment, one might conclude that Zuckerberg’s choice of wording here is part of a corporate strategy where Facebook serves as a broader platform for various kinds of computing applications. Such a description also serves as a branding strategy, one that differentiates Facebook from its competition. If we approach this description from a non-commercial perspective, however, the explanation of Facebook as a utility built on communicative efficiency working within a bounded social sphere—what some call “walled gardens”—is an important feature of its popularity. In other words, Facebook’s success with users comes not from the prospects of random engagements with cyber-strangers (although I imagine this depends on the user’s age), but through its ability to encourage connections from within one’s social world, even a world comprised of people from one’s distant past. As I will explain in the next two sections these features also facilitate a kind of Internet experience that is consistent with a pace of Internet use experienced by many Canadians, one marked by frequent checking in between various tasks, quick forms of communication, and contact with people from one’s offline social domain, usually in the context of work.

Brief Encounters and Heavy Checking: Characterizing Internet Use

The question of how to consider the temporalities of the Internet has attracted a range of different opinions. One of the more popular conceptions is offered by Manuel Castells who argues that networked societies represent spaces of “flows.”⁸ However Castells’ excellent topographical account of the structure of information societies does not provide much assistance for understanding the ways individual users tap into those flows. To accomplish this I want to build on Michael Newman’s recent characterization of web video as an “interstitial form” by arguing that sites like Facebook, as well as a number of popular Internet applications, capitalize on a particular form of online engagement, a quick hit undertaken usually

in-between different tasks.⁹ It argues that considering one's use of the Internet as a series of brief encounters sheds light on some of the formal properties of a number of popular web applications, including Facebook.

This question of media pacing, the rate of engagement with media forms, is rarely considered in studies of Canadian Internet use. One might argue that this is true with other media forms as well. This is because we have fairly established assumptions about how audiences engage with media forms. Radio, we are told, is a more intimate but also an ambient media form, facilitating what we now call "multi-tasking" in which one can perform another action while listening. Television is more demanding in that sense, but still allows for more distracted engagement. The dim lights and theatrical settings of movie theatres result in a singularly focused engagement on the screen and, we are taught, with the screen itself. Each of these models make certain assumptions about investment and duration, that one is always "into" whatever form they are engaged in, even if they are doing other things. While popular discussion on the Internet would tend to avoid this problem because a language of simultaneity is part of the social construction of new media, ironically our attempts to measure the pace of Internet use tend to rely on assumptions about investment drawn from previous media forms, as problematic as they may be.

This is reflected by the tendency to measure Internet use through a temporal measurement that centres on the 7-day week. Weekly Internet use has been the measurement used by Statistics Canada over the course of the last two studies of national Internet behaviour.¹⁰ Another major study, undertaken by a number of scholars associated with the Canadian Internet Project (CIP), reflected roughly the same tendency. A review of the results of that CIP study finds questions asking survey participants to disclose the number of occurrences per week listening to recorded music; playing video games; reading or searching for medical information; or reading newspapers or magazines.¹¹ Neither study asked questions about frequency or duration: How many times do people check their email every day? How long does each session online take? Do more people send emails on weekends than at the beginning of the week? How long do they typically take reading email, watching videos, listening to music, and, for my purposes, checking their Facebook accounts? The absence of these questions by survey designers reflects a disconnect between the choice of measurement methodologies and a pattern of use that is typically characterized by repeated checking of a small number of sites

(email, news, weather, social networking, and so on) for small amounts of time.

To a certain degree, the popularity of the “weekly” measurement is a testament to the durability of the week as a socially constructed measurement, one that Eviatar Zerubavel characterizes as promoting “the structuredness and orderliness of human life making it more regular and thus more predictable.”¹² At the same time, however, the prevalence of weekly use is also tied to the ways measurements of media use are tied to broader narratives about other aspects of social life. For example, the “weekly use” measurement is usually located within a set of discourses that positions one’s investment in media against other kinds of activities, like time spent with family. This kind of logic is preoccupied with questions of media impact and results in relative comparisons placing weekly consumption of media versus other, more productive activities such as exercise, work, or reading books or newspapers in their offline form. A recent story relating Internet and television use to childhood obesity posted on the CBC’s website is a perfect case in point.¹³ Once again, the story points to the same measurement—weekly use—for its interpretive focus. As a result, such figures are located within a moralistic calculus that places media consumption as an intrusion into or unfair competition with the unmediated life and within a discussion about the consequences of wasting time.

Despite its ubiquity, the weekly use measurement does not capture what I consider to be the quicker, more ephemeral uses of the Internet in everyday life. To illustrate what I mean let us consider two different studies that discuss what people say they do when they are online. The Pew Internet and American Life Project found that the top six uses of the Internet are for email, to look things up, to get driving directions, health information, and, of course, the weather.¹⁴ In Canada, the results are remarkably similar, with one additional feature: the act of banking or bill payment online appears to be much more popular here.¹⁵ Near the bottom of both surveys are the activities that seem to garner the most media attention and scholarly analysis, namely blogging, uploading videos, downloading podcasts, and working on one’s personal webpage.

Even if one wishes to take these findings with a grain of salt, both the Pew and StatsCan studies point to a dominant tendency towards a mode of Internet use geared towards efficient means of communication or task completion, engagements with friends, family, and other personal contacts, and quick acts of consultation. In other words, most users experience the Internet through a series of brief

encounters, episodic “hops” online for a range of purposes, only to return to some other aspect of life or to leave whatever was online on the screen for future consultation. They also use the Internet for a series of disconnected brief activities, such as a 15-minute encounter that involves reading and replying to email, looking up directions to a party, paying a bill, and checking a Facebook account. In these scenarios no one activity is sustained over the long term, only its memory is preserved in the history function of a user’s browser, deep within the computer’s technical infrastructure, or on a server farm located far away.

Some of the most popular web applications capitalize on the interstitial rhythms of Internet use outlined here to provide brevity and efficiency. These include forms of messaging to be sure, from email to text messaging. However, many of the most popular video applications, most notably those that appear on YouTube, are typically less than five minutes in length. This has spawned both a new artistic form—the user-generated web video that strives for maximum visual pleasure in a reasonably short period of time, earning them the moniker of a kind of content useful for “snacking.”¹⁶ Other popular web video content like the practical joke, the animal act, the cute baby, and tricks involving soft drinks and Mentos candies all fall into a stylistic category Newman calls “short and sweet, in the slang sense.”

Facebook’s interface, then, can be read as reflecting the assumptions about tempo and the short and sweet implicit in Newman’s comment on web video. The site’s architecture, including its status updates, newsfeed and mini-feed, profile pages, online games, and mail messages, encourages regularized checking in for a series of quick hits—replying to an email, commenting on someone’s posted photograph, watching a short music video, or listening to a music clip on someone else’s page—and then jumping to a different activity. This also explains the popularity of some of the forms of communication I indicated above, such as throwing zombies or giving bouquets of flowers, or dedicating songs to friends along with practices like “super-poking,” kissing or hugging, or writing brief notes on a user’s wall. These are all attempts to convey multi-sensory forms of communication that emphasize the short and the sweet, in both slang and literal senses.

These activities occur within the rhythms of quotidian life in which interstitial moments serve as opportunities for communication. Students update their Facebook status after writing an exam, or to make plans with other friends; others announce home purchases, arrivals at airports, or appearances on television, usually

before or after something happens; others return to the work on the screen, writing memos, crunching numbers, or completing business plans. This author routinely shuttles back and forth between the Internet and writing through keystroke shortcuts or mouse-clicks. The interstitial nature of Facebook is reflective, then, of the ways in which many people use digital technologies both as machines for work and play and as megaphones for the announcement of personal details to friends and others, usually in very small doses.

I want to address the question of Facebook as a diversionary force for work in a moment. However, I want to conclude this section by underlining the point that attention to pacing and an Internet experience constituted by brief encounters and heavy checking represents a fundamentally important step towards understanding both the popularity of Facebook specifically, but also toward a more textured understanding of a number of applications on the Internet more generally. One might argue that a turn towards frequency may naturally lead toward another problematic conclusion—that relating media consumption to addictive behaviour. But it may also be the case that a move toward heavy checking might more accurately locate the Internet within a set of routine actions that make up a big part of social life. Here then, Internet use may be located not against various kinds of social activities, like exercise, that are good for you. Instead, media consumption should be seen as a complement to daily activities, where television watching may be a prelude for slumber, where newspapers complement breakfast, iPod use is tied to burning calories on a treadmill, and updating your Facebook status serves as a temporary cure for a range of activities, from sitting in a lecture hall to punching the clock at work, a subject to which we shall now turn.

Facebook, Workspaces, and the Digital Distraction

In the run-up to the provincial election of 2007, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty made headlines for banning civil servants from accessing Facebook at the office. While McGuinty's actions may have been the result of the heat of the election and a way to protect against claims that the province's workers were "wasting taxpayer dollars," he was not acting in a vacuum. The increasing place of networked communication in workplaces has raised a number of anxieties about the unproductive ways employees are making use of their time in the office. A number of companies have blocked access to the site, arguing that the site makes

it either too easy for people to share company secrets or to be drawn away from the other responsibilities on their screens.¹⁷ One might argue that it is not competitive issues but rather the dissemination of images that take place during company hours that may be the problem. Such was the case late last year, when pictures of partying recruits of Canada's Border Services Agency were posted by disgruntled co-workers on a Facebook page, quickly making the headlines and raising questions about the way the agency was going about adding to its ranks. A report in the *Toronto Star* claimed that an internal audit of Toronto's municipal employees found that a small number of employees working at City Hall had been spending a number of hours idling online.¹⁸ Along with another key form of communication, the press release, the Facebook site represents an important challenge for organizations struggling with image management.

However expansive the literature on media representations of work has been, very little reflection has been undertaken about media technologies *for play at work* in both official and non-official forms. Indeed, there exists a rich literature that focuses on the role of new technologies in the restructuring of companies and the deskilling of labour or the subjection of office workers to more elaborate regimes of panoptic surveillance and of the impact of businesses processes like the consolidation of media ownership on the "work environments" of Canadian news organizations.¹⁹ Left largely unaddressed, however, is the question of workplaces as *mediaspaces*, sites in which the specific social and political dynamics of work intersect with Internet activity.²⁰ We tend to take for granted the extent to which the rhythms of the Internet mimic the temporalities of the working day. I can say empirically here that email traffic decreases considerably after work or on weekends. I can also say empirically that postings to blogs appear to follow similar rhythms; my RSS (Really Simple Syndication) reader or Twitter feed does not overflow between 6 pm and 6 am unless messages are being sent from places in the world where the workday is proceeding along.

Such neglect is also unfortunate because media forms serve a number of different purposes within workplaces. On the one hand, workplaces are profoundly mediated environments, with unique forms of communication such as the memo, the executive summary, the business plan, or the audit report as well as technologies that promise administrative efficiency such as the telephone, fax machine, the website, interactive calendar systems, and email. At the same time, however, workplaces are also spaces for the production, consumption, and dissemination of a

range of media and information genres. Radio stations like Toronto's E-Z Rock, Sarnia's "The Fox" or Medicine Hat's "My96FM" position themselves as the "at work radio station," while companies seen as "forward looking" install video arcades or games rooms. While these may work in the name of encouraging camaraderie and developing a healthy corporate culture, the individual use of such technologies usually symbolizes the level of trust an organization might have for its employees. While giving someone a telephone in the 1950s might be seen as part of an employee's "sense of striving and hope," as C. Wright Mills once observed,²¹ and symbolizes one's move up the corporate ladder, where one has more time to goof off (as opposed to manual labourers, for example) such professional and technological mobility comes with an assumption that the employee won't abuse that privilege by using it for non-work purposes. Technological innovations, like the Internet and sites such as Facebook, then, are only the latest in use at work for non-work purposes and a fascinating backdrop against which to view some of the characteristic features of the Internet both in facilitating brief encounters and as an important part of what the industrial sociologist Donald Roy once called the "game of work."²²

Most of this modern technological use occurs against the backdrop of the precariousness of twenty-first century work. Writers from Jeremy Rifkin to Pietro Basso have noted the change in the notion of work.²³ Zygmunt Bauman notes the key tenets of the work ethic that drove much of industrialization, such as delayed gratification and long-term commitments both to an employer and a work project, have fallen astray in an era of shareholder value and flexible work. "Getting attached to the job in hand," he writes, "falling in love with what the job requires its holder to do, identifying one's place in the world with the work performed or the skills deployed means becoming a hostage to fate... given the short-lived nature of any employment."²⁴ Others, like Richard Sennett, point out that changes in corporate culture, where departments now work against each other to achieve institutional cost savings—with the stakes as high as one's own job in some cases—mean that interpersonal relationships at work have become more fraught and complex. This is coupled with the change in organizational structure of many working environments, one that Sennett characterizes as a move from pyramid-shaped system with centralized control by a few, to one resembling an MP3 player, where aspects of the organization are shuffled and reconstituted for projects oriented in the short term, where management is spread across a number

of different middle management positions, and where much of the policing takes place around technological forms, like computerized databases, auditing systems, and so on, that perform institutional surveillance functions.²⁵ The actual office space itself has declined, a product of companies trying to save on real estate costs, as a result of office sharing, and, through telecommuting, the very extinction of the need for an office itself. An article published in an online real estate magazine notes that for the Toronto market, office space has decreased from 240 square feet to 190 square feet per employee and that similar declining figures can be found in other Canadian cities, such as Vancouver and Calgary.²⁶ The effect on shrinking space alters the character of the workplace itself, as David Franz suggests:

This shrinkage not only saves space, but time as well—time wasted walking to restrooms, the coffee pot, and the marketing department, for example. Supervision is made more efficient too: with no walls to hide behind, slackers have to work or at least imitate work in a convincing way.²⁷

Here, I think, Franz needs a little history lesson on the art of slacking in the workplace. Modes of distraction involving media technologies have always sought to imitate work in a convincing way: the agreement between those engaged in a personal call that the subject matter may switch to something more “official” if someone walks by the office; the chit-chat around the water cooler; the hand over the ear to mask listening to the game on the radio; the magazine under the annual report; and now, the gentle turn towards the palm of your hand to see if one has sent a text message to your phone or the “alt-tab” shortcut to return from your Facebook page to more officially sanctioned activities.

This has manifested itself in a number of different Internet applications that, like Facebook, make brief diversions possible. Sites like *ishouldbeworking.com*, *boredatwork.com*, or *wasteaminute.com* offer games, jokes, funny video clips, Sudoku puzzles, and other activities aimed at taking someone away for a few minutes. A genre of viral videos—many of which are staged—involving people being shown exhibiting “office rage” and destroying office furniture, computers, or photocopiers circulates through forwarded mass emails and are uploaded on sites like YouTube. The popular acronym *NSFW* helps to warn employees about the consequences of their procrastination, by telling users that an attachment or hyperlink may be “not safe for work.” For those managing to engage in *NSFW* activities, some sites offer a “panic button” that transports the user away from the site towards something more anodyne, like the weather, with the click of a button. A

site like readatwork.com, an initiative of the New Zealand Book Council, mimics the Microsoft Office environment so that users can read literature while appearing to be doing other things.

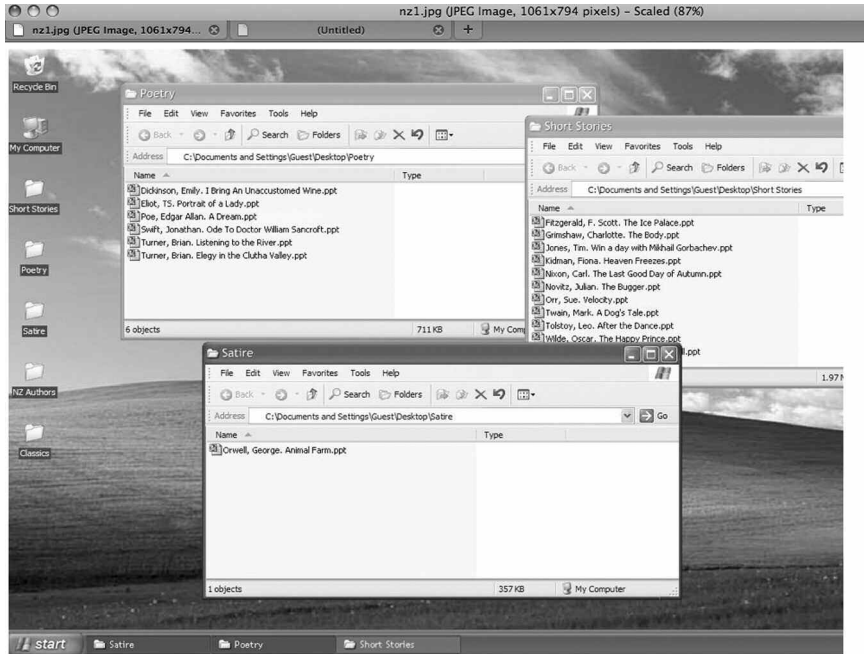


Figure 2: Screen capture of opening page of *www.readatwork.com*, New Zealand Book Council.

It is also important to note the ways that workplace media consumption has also had an effect on more established media forms. In the United States, one of the effects of workplace computer use has been to watch network television during the lunch hour, as the hours between noon and 2 pm represent peak viewing hours for online viewers.²⁸ It is unlikely that similar numbers are evident in the Canadian context, but here the reason may not be that Canadians are more serious about their work and less liable to distraction: copyright agreements and cultural policy regulations forbid Canadians from accessing American television websites out of region.

Seen a different way, however, concerns over the distractive capabilities of media technologies in workplace also reproduce a very common line of argument

about the relationship between media forms and cognitive abilities, such as the ability to concentrate on more serious issues. However, these kind of diagnostics need to be considered within their context. The impact of short-term “project-based” work, the need for public companies to deliver profitable results to appease aggressive shareholders, and the continuous concern over job evaporation gives work in the digital era its precarious nature but it also makes for a distracted work environment as well. This is why the attention to Facebook use in the workplace as negatively affecting productivity is the kind of red herring that technological determinism typically presents. The presence of computer terminals that permit data processing but also permit online gambling or status updates on Facebook represents one of a range of distractions Canadian workers must now deal with in order to get any work done.

In the preceding chapter, Toby Miller identifies a “labour focus” as an essential component of a revitalized approach to communication studies. I expand on Miller’s call by suggesting that there are important scholarly benefits that can be derived by examining the rich interplay between media technologies and a range of conceptions of work, in particular, the places where people perform work and the ways media technologies have always offered both the promise for greater productivity and surveillance on the one hand, but also for the potential for workers to goof off. Seeing office spaces as media spaces, then, can continue what has been a fascinating line of work concerned with media consumption in non-traditional settings, and continue to challenge the pre-existing spatial biases that have driven the study of media technologies either to the public square or into the domestic spaces, thereby broadening the study of the interplay between communication technologies, architecture, and the changing nature of work.²⁹

At the same time, however, through its use as a momentary diversion, Facebook also serves a reminder of the persistence of media-related forms of diversion in workplaces, such as the personal call, or the magazine or newspaper under the desk. On one hand, the increasing prevalence of surveillance technologies used to monitor employee Internet activity represents an articulation of the mistrust that exists between employees and employers and of the tense conditions under which many people are forced to work. From a different perspective, however, if we see interruptions as key vantage points in which to engage in ethical reflection, as Amit Pinchevski suggests, than perhaps considering the use of Internet to goof off at work is an effective way for making sense of the changing contexts in which

many Canadians work and the ethical questions raised by practices commonly associated with the notion of “stealing time.”³⁰ Being able to step out for a moment, to connect with the outside world, to bring your friends to work with you even virtually, offers a gentle moment of resistance to the expectations placed on modern workers, but one that is inherently fleeting, for there is always more work to be done.

Here’s Looking You Up, Canada

Having outlined how Facebook facilitates a certain mode of Internet experience as well as having provided a context for understanding where a considerable amount of “Facebooking” might take place, I want to conclude this chapter by speculating in a different way as to why Facebook has achieved the popularity and popular scrutiny it has to date. To do this, I want to suggest that we briefly consider Facebook not just as a form of social networking or a form of the cyber-public sphere, but rather to consider the way the site helps us appreciate another particular media form, one that has been so ubiquitous in modern life as to be virtually unnoticeable: the directory. I want to conclude on this point because I suggest that one of the key concerns around the digitization of contemporary life, the concept of privacy, needs to account not only for the power of digital technologies to facilitate surveillance, but also the ways a number of previously existing forms have served to play similar roles, with a significantly different scope, as sites on the Internet. Rather than seeing Facebook as a tool for narcissists and voyeurs one might also see the site’s popularity as symbolic of one of the Internet’s most notable effects—the mass distribution of directories—and its most powerful function, to facilitate looking things up. Seen this way, a number of the controversies facing the company are representative of the inherent tensions long associated with various iterations of what we now call “the information society.”

Consider the following range of stories about the promise and perils of Facebook use. As danah boyd explains, the company attracted a lot of negative attention when it allowed users to see when their friends updated their newsfeeds.³¹ An attempt to integrate a form of advertising, known as Beacon, which would notify all of a user’s friends of one’s purchases with a select group of retailers, also backfired. Some stories circulating in the Canadian press concern the more creative uses of the site to mobilize a constituency to protest changes to

Canadian copyright law, or as a means to memorialize lost friends of community leaders. However, the majority of stories I have found pertaining to Facebook deal with controversies that stem from misuse of the site. An informal survey of newspaper stories found pieces on Facebook being used for bullying; for potentially cheating on exams; and, in the case of British Columbia's Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, for ensuring potential welfare recipients were submitting truthful applications.³² Most recently, a group of law students at the University of Ottawa filed a formal complaint with Canada's Privacy Commissioner against Facebook, arguing that a number of the company's policies violated Canadian privacy law.

Seen from a legal or regulatory perspective, the controversies at Facebook represent the fact that social networking sites operate under what Susan Barnes calls the "privacy paradox," in which users freely give up information about themselves, and yet there remain certain expectations that the giving up of one's privacy might have its limitations.³³ However, seen from a different perspective, one operating under a media studies rubric, the Facebook controversies over privacy reveal anxieties over new media itself. To put it a different way, discourses around privacy serve as convenient shorthand for long-standing concerns about media technologies: their potential for manipulation and exploitation; the relationship between a public right to privacy and a robust sense of citizenship, and, since many of Facebook's users are teenagers and students, moral panics around the corruption of young people through media technologies. More importantly, such developments are stark reminders of technologies run amok, a result of the temporal imbalance between the rapid introduction of new interfaces and devices and society's ability to make sense of them in any meaningful way. Since this disconnect impacts upon the ways technologies like Facebook are framed, used, and potentially regulated, there needs to be some appreciation of where Facebook sits as a media form vis-à-vis other media technologies present within the public sphere. The story of Facebook, then, is not only a reminder of the importance of considering how the resonances of old forms persist in an age of new media but also about the way those media forms come to be put into use.

It is important to consider Facebook's offline influences to see that the porous boundaries between private information and public dissemination are not just inherent to media forms, but are located within their operationalization through a number of different informational forms. The site was created in order to repre-

sent an electronic and hyperlinked derivation of facebook, publications made available to incoming university students on a number of American university campuses. While there is considerable variation in the content of facebook from institution to institution, generally speaking the publication would include a profile with a student's name and photograph, date of birth, home addresses or residence locations, hometowns, and other personal information. The books may also contain the photographs and personal information of a school's faculty, administrative staff, and other faces on campus. In this offline version, the facebook acted as a stimulant for sociality and a deterrent against shyness by theoretically providing an image of the student so that they could be recognizable and enough information about other students to act as a conversation starter.

In this way, the facebook acted like an inverted yearbook, one distributed at the beginning of the school year rather than at its end. Like the facebook, the yearbook acts as a kind of register of faces, often containing information about a student's hobbies or activities in school as well as inside jokes, lists of likes and dislikes, and prognostications for the future. In its design and in the uses it encourages, Facebook draws on a number of different other versions of the directory, such as the dating service, the white or yellow pages, the office directory, the professional directory, as well as publications like the almost century-old *Canadian Who's Who*, whose publisher, the University of Toronto Press, markets as "the most comprehensive biographical information available on leading and influential Canadians."

Each one of these derivations on the directory involves publicizing aspects of your personal and/or professional life so that it can be accessed by members of the public. In this way, privacy is transactional: one surrenders personal information for some common purpose. One chooses to list in the white pages in case someone would like to find you; one gives up information to a dating service in hopes of finding a mate; one "mugs" for a school yearbook in the name of rebellion; one's information can be found in a professional directory or one found in office buildings to make it easy for people to find you. This kind of "publicness" has its other side, too. One can be solicited by telemarketers or crank callers; one can be "profiled" based on how one looks, and so on. Knowing where one can be found, then, represents a profoundly liberal conundrum: How to be open and accessible to others but not to the point of terror. The Internet, and digital technologies such as Facebook then, test the limits of our comfort level with the dissemination of

information about ourselves and others sent through the network.

The ways that Facebook, the Internet, and other media forms from the digital and pre-digital era have facilitated “checking people out” may well be a practice associated with stalking; however, in its more mundane and banal uses, it is also a practice associated with research, to ensure that the decisions one makes about where to travel, where to attend university, which doctor to use, what party to vote for, are the most individually optimal. The drive for one to “take a gander” also reflects a certain sense of curiosity; when one looks for people from the past to see if they have a Facebook page they are likely driven by a question—I wonder what they are doing these days?—which is as much about nostalgia as it is about surveillance. It may also be a pre-emptive move, one “reads up” on something or someone in order to avoid awkwardness associated with ignorance on a range of issues. Is the popularity of such activities part of a thirst for knowledge? A reflection of Canadian shyness, where one can ask questions without direct face-to-face contact? Does the fact that, with only a series of brief encounters, one’s decisions are based on information derived from the top of a Google search, from a colleague’s Facebook page, or from an audit of one’s office computer? These are the kinds of questions that obviously one cannot answer here, but they emerge when we focus on the range of practices that new social media forms make possible.

As in each of the previous sections, what I offer here should be seen as a provocation for further research. With that said, however, I also offer that an appreciation of the place of Facebook and other “looking up media” in digital, analog, and textual forms sheds considerable light not only on the tensions between surveillance and democracy that are inherent in various forms of information technologies, but also the way Canada’s legal and regulatory system has sought to address those diverse uses, from the nefarious to the banal. At the same time, a closer look at Facebook might also help to shed light on the ways in which the anonymous act of looking people up has been a largely unnoticed aspect of Canadian life. It is an aspect of life that is part of the way Canadians use the Internet, as well as a vital means through which information has flowed throughout this country’s modern and digital eras. Furthermore, it is an act made possible, with all of its ethical bumps and bruises, through a diverse range of informational forms that have historically contained a little bit of information about all of us.

The key questions for further research may not only be how to protect our privacy from its abuse by a surveillance state, nor a question of the incredible unease

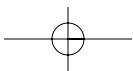
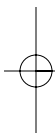
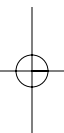
caused by the blurring of lines between private and public spheres. Instead, as this section has shown, there are richer analytical gains to be made by starting from the position that the concept of privacy is a historically contingent concept, one that plays out in a number of places and contexts in a number of different ways. At the same time however, the task for the researcher may well be to appreciate the ways in which we publicize our private lives, the ways that we opt in, by selecting the most pertinent information, by selecting music videos from bands our friends think are cool; by publicizing friendships to increase our social status; by uploading photos showing only our good sides, and by occasionally working within the machine, managing to stick out from the list, even for a moment, to become the brightest face in the crowd before having to get back to work.

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<3>

HAWKERS AND
PUBLIC SPACE*Free Commuter Newspapers
in Canada*¹

Will Straw

... this cancer has spread not just across Canada, but is a global chimera, news across all borders reduced to its component parts and presented without adjectives, invectives, or life.

KEN ALEXANDER²

In his 2004 book *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age*, Philip Meyer offers a diagnosis of factors threatening the future of the newspaper as a meaningful and commercially viable cultural form.³ These factors include the reduction of editorial staff due to pressures from stockholders, and a weakened engagement on the part of newspapers with their communities. All of these, in Meyer's analysis, have led to a broad decline in the credibility, readability, and editorial vigorousness of mainstream

newspapers. This decline has weakened newspapers just as they face what may be the most powerful competitor in their history, the Internet. Like many other recent treatments of the contemporary newspaper industry, *The Vanishing Newspaper* defines the battle for that industry's survival as one between the traditional newspaper, which must rediscover its core virtues, and a range of electronic news sources now available online.⁴

While Meyer's book is generally wide-ranging in its coverage of recent trends in the newspaper industry, only once does he acknowledge another development that has been gathering momentum since the late 1990s: the rise on a global scale of the free, commuter-oriented newspaper.⁵ The free newspaper has been, arguably, just as significant a transformative force in the medium's recent history as has the Internet, though the latter has been the object of much more attention. The rushed introduction of new, free commuter newspapers has brought an unaccustomed level of turbulence to urban newspaper markets, which had seemed for many years to have settled into a situation of relative stasis (or slow, steady deterioration). In Germany, for example, in 2005, more newspapers were launched than during any comparable period in the previous 60 years. Indeed, the rate of introduction of new newspapers in Europe has been matched in modern times only by the explosion of new titles that followed the rebuilding of civil society at the end of World War II.⁶ Virtually all of these newspapers are new, free commuter dailies, a form that has, in the words of one analyst, "completely restructured" the low and middle ranges of the European newspaper industry.⁷

Canada, much more than the United States, has become a lively terrain for the introduction of these new newspapers. Four of our major, national newspaper conglomerates (Quebecor, Transcontinental, Torstar, and CanWest) have been involved in the launch of free newspapers, often in cities where they publish long-standing traditional dailies. Montreal now has at least six daily newspapers; Toronto, with only one official language, has just as many. As of February 2008, Edmonton had three more daily newspapers than a half-decade ago.⁸ Quebecor's *24 Hours/24 heures*, the Canadian versions of *Metro* published in joint ventures involving Torstar or Transcontinental, and CanWest's *RushHour* have become widely recognizable features of the media ecologies of Canadian cities.

It is the purpose of this article neither to determine the commercial viability of free commuter newspapers nor to judge whether they offer a means of extending the newspaper's life as a cultural form. Rather, I am concerned here with the new

arrangements of space, people, and practice that have taken shape around the commuter newspaper, and the social conflicts that such arrangements have created or rendered visible. Some of these conflicts, as we shall see, are over public property and the extent of its acceptable privatization by publishers seeking exclusive access to municipal transportation systems. Others have to do with the ecological threat posed by commuter newspapers, whose methods of distribution are often considered wasteful and intrusive. More complex tensions have arisen over the ethical status of newspapers that service low-paid, immigrant populations by offering forms of news widely believed to be insufficient for the effective functioning of democracy and citizenship.

Background

In 1995, the Metro International Corporation, based in Stockholm, Sweden, launched the first incarnation of a newspaper it called *Metro*. *Metro* was given free to people as they moved within cities, rather than delivered to their homes or sold from news kiosks. It was supported by advertising rather than subscriptions, and so, while it competed with other newspapers for readers, it did not compete for those readers' money. The strategy of free distribution for newspapers had been used for at least two decades to build readership for the culturally-oriented weeklies that had emerged in most Western cities in the 1980s, many of them (like Vancouver's *Georgia Strait*, the Montreal *Mirror*, and New York City's *Village Voice*) representing mutations of the "underground" or politically activist community newspaper. In Canada, free distribution has also been the means by which commercially oriented, neighbourhood or community weekly newspapers have built their circulation. *Metro* was distinct from these predecessors because of its daily publication, and in its claims to publish news that was both international and local. These characteristics positioned it in direct competition with the traditional metropolitan daily.

Following the success of *Metro* in Sweden, the same company introduced a second edition of *Metro* in 1997, in Prague. By 2008, the Metro International Company, now based in Luxembourg, published 58 editions, in 119 cities of the world, 19 countries, and 15 languages.⁹ Rather than consider all of these as distinct newspapers based on a shared model, the Metro International Company prefers to see them as local editions of a single newspaper. As a result, the *Guinness*

Book of Records has named Metro the world's largest global newspaper, as if its Toronto and London editions were no more distinct than the versions of the *New York Times* produced for that city's different boroughs. The subsequent spread of free commuter newspapers has come with the entry of other new publishers into the field, but it has been propelled most markedly by the decision of long-standing publishers of so-called "paid newspapers" to launch free titles and participate in this new market.

It is difficult to disentangle the rise of the free newspaper from a variety of other phenomena within the world of newspaper publishing and of media more generally. The first of these involves the ongoing commodification of attention, the transformation of attention into what communications scholar Dallas Smyth once famously called the "audience commodity."¹⁰ Media analyst Robert Picard has expressed this in coldly economic terms: the time spent by people on public transport systems, on subways or buses is, from an economic viewpoint, a wasted resource.¹¹ The free daily newspaper was created to give economic value to that time. Newspapers like the global title *Metro* are designed to be read in 20 minutes, the estimated average time of a city dweller's ride on the public transportation system.¹² (Indeed, one of the most successful European free newspapers is called *20 Minutes*.) Like the television screens in doctor's offices that commodify the bored attention of waiting patients, the free commuter newspaper harvests the otherwise uncaptured attention of people travelling to or from their place of work.

The free commuter newspaper participates in another contemporary trend as well: the move on the part of almost all newspapers to become smaller, more portable, and with reduced content. *The Times* of London, the British *Independent*, and the European edition of the *Wall Street Journal* have all been made smaller in recent years through redesign. This large-scale transformation echoes an earlier move, a century or so ago, to produce newspapers that lent themselves to reading in crowded public conveyances. In justifying these recent moves, the British *Independent*, like the publishers of *Metro* and other free dailies, invokes its focus on the youth market, and a perception of that market which has become conventional wisdom within the newspaper industry: one that claims younger people have shorter attention spans and narrower spheres of interest, and therefore must be catered to with short, telegraphic reporting.¹³

Media and Transportation

In a 2003 study of the challenges facing newspaper publishers in France, analyst Vincent Létang noted the steady desertion by middle class workers of trains and buses in their travel to and from work. As white-collar workers and managers relied more and more on their own automobiles for their commutes, their patterns of media consumption during this crucial portion of the workday were transformed. While they had once read newspapers on trains or buses, middle class workers now received most of their news from the radios in their automobiles.¹⁴ Media habits—and, indirectly, forms of civic engagement—have thus been transformed, as patterns of transportation have shifted across social classes. One dimension of these transformations has been the slow displacement of a culture of public reading by the privatized, aural culture of radios, iPods, and cellphones, in automobiles that rarely carry more than one passenger. In her exhaustive analysis of radio listening in Mexico City, Rosalia Winocur writes of the new forms of public speech and civic involvement made possible by the conjoining of cellphones, automobiles, and talk radio programs.¹⁵ Within a new complex of interconnected practices, Mexico City's drivers, stuck in traffic, speak to talk radio hosts via their cellphones, commenting on the practical problems of life in Mexico City in the very moments in which they wrestle with them. The patterns of mobility and circuits of *intermediality* traced here are ones with no obvious place for the metropolitan newspaper.

The notion of commuting and communication as inextricably bound up with each other is hardly foreign to Canadian traditions of thinking about media. Nevertheless, the case of the free commuter newspaper urges us to see these things as interdependent in the most concrete of ways (and not just conceptually, as a function of their shared etymologies). The distribution of free newspapers is made possible by the regulation of human mobility that comes with the organization of public transit systems around points of access and switching nodes. These points and nodes typically channel people past points at which their attention may be seized or solicited. Cities with relatively low rates of usage of public transit systems, like Vancouver or Calgary, are sometimes seen as weak markets for commuter newspapers. Ottawa, on the other hand, possesses a highly rationalized public transit system that exports workers outwards, at day's end, from a centralized cluster of workplaces. That city has become, as a result, a closely monitored testing ground for free newspapers and the distribution strategies that

will determine their acceptance. In November 2006, CanWest (owner of the *Ottawa Citizen*) introduced *RushHour*, the first evening newspaper produced in Ottawa since the end of the 1970s (when the *Ottawa Journal* was closed). *RushHour* was available in hard copy at 120 distribution points, which reached commuters at those points where they boarded public transit vehicles for the ride home from work. Commuters were also invited to subscribe to email delivery of PDF versions of the paper, which they might download and print themselves for reading during their commutes.¹⁶ In the smoothly integrated assemblage of people and technologies imagined for *RushHour*, workers concentrated in downtown government office buildings would use their workplace computer/printer systems to produce the reading material that would occupy their attention during their post-work travelling time.

The Newshawker and the Kiosk

The most common ways in which free newspapers reach their readers' hands have little to do, however, with office workers covertly stealing time and toner from their office printers. In the late 1990s, men and women with bags of newspapers began appearing at the entrances to subways and at bus exchange points throughout the Western world, seeking, through shouts and physical gesture, to make travellers take their newspapers. With the rise of the commuter newspaper, we have seen the reappearance of a social figure that had disappeared, for the most part, from the streets of Western cities. This figure was the newshawker, fabled within media histories, sentimental novels of social advancement, and progressivist studies of nineteenth century child labour.¹⁷ A decade before the rise of the free commuter newspaper, Western cities had witnessed the spread of the "street newspaper," the weekly or monthly publication sold by the homeless or unemployed, but the hawking of these publications was usually less vocal or bureaucratically organized than the distribution of free commuter dailies.¹⁸

In 2005, the *Vancouver Sun* interviewed city residents who saw these distributors of free commuter newspapers as irritants within a broader landscape of solicitation. "With all the people out there asking for money and all the charities that have people with clipboards, it just gets to be a little too much," one commented.¹⁹ In other cities, the aggressiveness of those distributing free commuter newspapers has been the focus of commentary veering between angry complaint

and amusement at the return of so antiquated a figure as the newshawker.²⁰ A whole body of social-psychological thought has taken shape around this activity of newshawking. The publishers of *CityAM*, a free daily in London, England, train their staff to stand at some distance from the exits to subways, to give otherwise uninterested commuters time to convince themselves that they should take a copy of the paper. To reach young executives who might be embarrassed to be seen taking a free paper from newshawkers, they have installed distribution racks in office buildings.²¹

By the early decades of the twentieth century, the original newshawker had lost its pre-eminence to two more genteel institutions for the distribution of newspapers. One of these was the neighbourhood-based “newspaper boy,” with his home delivery routes and grounding in middle-class ideas of thrift and character building.²² The “newspaper boy” persists, but in recent years has been gradually displaced by an immigrant labour force (dominated by adults), which, in cities like Montreal, uses automobiles to deliver papers across geographical areas much larger than the mid-century “paper route.” The other institution leading to the demise of the newshawker in the early twentieth century was the newsstand, the street-corner kiosk from which foot travellers could purchase newspapers alongside chewing gum, cigarettes, and other amenities of urban life.

In the 1920s, the German theorist Siegfried Kracauer wrote that the newspaper kiosk offered an image of the city’s capacity to hold different views of the world in harmony. That harmony was made concrete in the capacity of newsstands to hold newspapers and periodicals of very different, even opposed political opinions in comfortable proximity:

Out of the hubbub rise the newspaper kiosks, tiny temples in which the publications of the entire world get together for a rendezvous. Foes in real life, they lie here in printed form side by side; the harmony could not be greater. Wherever Yiddish papers supported by Arabic texts come into contact with large headlines in Polish, peace is assured. But, alas, these newspapers do not know one another. Each copy is folded in on itself, and is content to read its own columns. Regardless of the close physical relations that the papers cultivate, their news is so completely lacking in any contact that they are uninformed about one another.²³

Writing many years later, but of roughly the same period, Adrian Rifkin would see the news kiosk’s array of offerings “ordered by their price and appearance [as] itself a version of the social space of the city, of its day-to-day circulations and

crossing tracks of physical proximity and social distance.”²⁴

Recognizing the political divisions endemic to the periods described here (Berlin in the 1920s for Kracauer, Paris in the 1930s for Rifkin), we might see the newsstand as an agent of mystification, hiding conflict within the comfortable juxtaposition that it makes possible. Alternately, in the spirit Kracauer offers, we may see it as an emblem of the city’s tolerance, of its reduction of political conflict to the silent proximity of multiple voices. In our age, in any case, we are witnessing the death of the newsstand. In Canadian cities, its disappearance began in the 1950s and 60s, with the move towards suburban living and the home delivery of newspapers. The decline in the number of urban newspapers from mid-century onwards has been a further cause of the newsstands’ decline, as has the rise of the supermarket as an outlet for periodicals (and the related rise of the supermarket tabloid, in the early 1960s). In Montreal, outdoor newsstands, like other forms of street commerce, have long been outlawed by the city government, which has capitulated to the pressures of storeowners who resent their competition. News kiosks persist, in some Canadian cities, typically located well inside subway stations, but their role in the circulation of newspapers and other periodicals is much diminished.

The reintroduction of the newshawker has come to seem, in many Canadian cities, like an unwelcome challenge to metropolitan gentility. This has been the case, in particular, in the Vancouver region, where free dailies struggle for attention at particularly strategic nodes of urban circulation, like the ferry docks. The proliferation of newshawkers and newspaper boxes was described, in one tense moment in Vancouver, as another sign of the Torontoization of Vancouver, its subjection to an exhausting barrage of competitive voices and signs.²⁵ Indeed, the effects of the free daily newspaper on the broader ecologies of urban life have been the focus of intense debate in several Canadian cities. For example, the huge numbers of newspapers discarded by commuters have been blamed for fires on the Toronto subway.²⁶

“Project Free Sheet” is a U.K.-based activist group devoted to reducing the amount of paper waste produced by the aggressive distribution of free newspapers by newshawkers, as its website announces:

An end to street vendors handing out free newspapers. We want to see all free newspapers distributed via “dumb” vendors, or bins, so that the free papers are taken only by people who actually want them. This will limit circulation numbers

to more realistic levels, so that our recycling infrastructure is able to divert as many papers from landfill as possible.²⁷

While the newspaper box, with its passive relationship to street traffic, is embraced here as an antidote to the insistent newshawker, the spreading of such boxes is elsewhere viewed as a greater problem. Since the early 1990s, North American cities have sought ways of stopping the proliferation on city streets of boxes holding alternative, commercial, or community newspapers. In 1998, in a move observed and copied by other cities, Chicago experimented with so-called multi-title news boxes, which gathered many titles in a single box.²⁸ Those who complained most about these devices were the publishers of alternative, cultural weeklies and non-dominant language community newspapers. With their papers now hidden amidst dozens of others, reduced to a kind of equivalent abundance and wastefulness, these papers had no way of signalling their distinctive historical rootedness in tradition or community.²⁹ In 2006, the Vancouver city council called for the introduction of similar multi-newspaper boxes, after the number of newspaper boxes in the city doubled between 2004 and 2005, following the introduction of free dailies.³⁰

Free Newspaper and the Commodification of Public Space

This profusion of newspaper boxes in public space seems relatively benign compared to the commercialization of public transit systems by the publishers of free dailies. Since the early 2000s, the publishers of free daily newspapers have sought agreements with city transit authorities that would guarantee them exclusivity over strategically important spaces. It is important to note that, in Canada, all versions of *Metro* are co-ventures with strong Canadian partners. Foreign ownership of newspapers in Canada is not illegal, but tax regulations make it highly unprofitable for foreign companies to buy them; as a result, all mainstream Canadian newspapers are predominantly owned by Canadian firms. The free dailies are testing the limits of foreign investment in the Canadian press through the participation of Metro International in the launch of *Metro* in cities across Canada. In 2005, the Torstar and CanWest entered a joint venture with Metro International to launch free daily newspapers in English Canadian cities.³¹ (Each partner owned one-third of the resulting partnership.) In May 2007, shortly after launches of its own *Rush-Hour* paper in Canadian cities, CanWest sold its share in the Metro partnership to

the two remaining partners, Torstar and Metro International. Each of these now retain approximately 50 percent ownership of the resulting venture.³²

Montreal's version of the global title *Métro* launched in 2001, as a co-venture between Transcontinental, Canada's largest printing company, which has been, like its rival Quebecor, moving into media ownership, and the Luxembourg-based Metro International. At the time of its launch, the publishers of the Montreal *Métro* signed a deal with the Montreal Urban Community Transit Commission, giving the paper the exclusive right to distribute its newspaper within metro stations; this deal, in its first three years, brought the Commission almost a million dollars in revenues.³³ Quebecor, publishers of the *Journal de Montréal*, quickly launched its own competitor to *Métro*, the free daily newspaper *24 heures*. Quebecor then initiated a lawsuit to force the Montreal Urban Community Transit Commission to allow its own newspapers to be distributed upon Transit Commission property. This suit was turned down, but that decision, in turn, was appealed. In 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the transit commission could maintain its exclusive agreement with the publishers of Montreal *Metro*. Those who managed the subway, in other words, were under no obligation to make that space open to competing voices.³⁴ The case was a complicated one, nonetheless. If *24 heures* was denied access to the city's transportation system, it nevertheless enjoyed exclusive distribution in Videotron video stores, Archambault music and bookstores, and innumerable outlets within the vast Quebecor corporate family. If *Métro* had exclusive rights to public space, *24 Heures* benefited from its attachment to the notoriously synergistic Quebecor Corporation, a major player within every facet of Quebec media and entertainment.

Contracts guaranteeing exclusivity to newspapers for distribution within transit systems have become commonplace around the world. In Toronto, in a more indirect arrangement, the Metro chain signed an exclusive agreement with the Gateway Newsstand Corporation, which operates 149 franchise stories within stations of the Toronto Transit Commission and GO train system. Covering these developments, journalist Michael McCullough noted that Boston had banned the distribution of free newspapers within transit systems, while the owners of paid-circulation newspapers in Philadelphia sued that city's transit system for entering into an exclusive deal with the Metro chain for use of its stations.³⁵ The free daily newspaper has made explicit the competition between newspapers for readers, a

competition that had become invisible within the civic life of Western cities over the past several decades. A century ago, that competition had often organized itself around different political perspectives, as in the battles between reform-minded and political-machine-owned newspapers in New York City. Now, that competition is embodied in the struggle for those public spaces in which the newshawker stands.

Conclusion

To those who publish free daily newspapers, the crucial battles for readership have to do with age and with the future of the newspaper in its competition with the Internet. A widely circulated statistic notes that the readership of newspapers among those aged 18–24 dropped 55 percent over the past 20 years in the United States.³⁶ The publishers of mainstream daily newspapers set up free cultural weeklies in the 1990s as a way of holding onto youth markets for their advertisers. (*Hour* and *Ici*, in Montreal, both owned by Quebecor, are the result of such moves.) The more recent move of traditional newspaper publishers into the free daily field is usually justified as an attempt to hold onto youthful readers—to train them, as industry hopes express it, in the practice of newspaper reading, so that, as they age they will move towards the traditional dailies for which they will pay or subscribe.³⁷ These claims are faulty and distorting in two ways, I would suggest. One is that few really believe anymore that people will graduate from free to subscription newspapers as they grow older, forsaking the Internet for the traditional pleasures of the mainstream newspaper. More importantly, I think, the publishers of free newspapers talk about age because they do not want to talk about ethnicity, immigration, and class. These demographic variables, I would argue, are much more determining of the free newspapers' current and future readership.

The most awkward questions surrounding the free daily newspaper, then, have to do with newspaper literacy and its relationship to both social class and ethnicity. In 1833, Benjamin Day inaugurated one revolution in newspapers with his introduction of the daily newspaper, the *New York Sun*. The *New York Sun* was distinctive in three ways. First, it was sold for three cents a copy, rendering it much cheaper than the existing newspapers in New York. Second, it was sold on street corners, to be bought on impulse by those travelling to work, rather than being delivered to the homes of the city's middle class populations. In this, the *Sun*

became intimately interconnected with the broader circulation of populations within urban life. And, finally, the *New York Sun* differed from existing newspapers in that it was not explicitly partisan in a political sense. Indeed, it aimed at a readership it presumed was marginal to political processes and to the reasoned exchange of political ideas. With time, of course, the popular tabloid newspaper became a powerful force for political reform, in ways that both reinforced and undermined the power of established political interests.

The *New York Sun*, and its successors, helped to democratize the reading of newspapers. In doing so, these newspapers helped to integrate immigrant populations within the target audiences of advertisers and into the embryonic industries of media-based sensation. The new free daily commuter newspapers seek in similar fashion to extend newspaper access and habits of reading, but they are also engaged in something more insidious. Arguably, they are looking to extract value from those populations who, for a few years at least, will lack the time, money, or skills required for access to online sources of information, at least during their commuting time. (Others will, more and more, use their iPhones, Blackberries, and other devices for the information and Sudoku puzzles that will hold their attention on their commutes to and from work.) The commuting worker with the low paid job, for whom English or French may well be a second or third language, has long been abandoned by other advertising-based media. As classified advertisements move to Craig's List, movie listings and stock market data to the Internet, and journalistic opinion to blogs or the online versions of established newspapers, the free commuter newspaper is left with a readership for which only certain kinds of news and advertising seem appropriate. Despite widely disseminated rhetoric about free newspapers training people to read traditional newspapers, to which, it is assumed, they will one day graduate, free newspapers—in North America, at least—appear interested principally in milking the last available revenues from what many consider a dying cultural form.

The broader cultural shifts of which the free commuter newspaper is a symptom are many. Free newspapers sit within a series of cultural phenomena that includes graffiti, mega-concerts, illegal dance music parties, urban festivals, and giant electronic display screens. All of these are concrete, situated expressions of contemporary culture whose blatant and often contested occupation of urban space has grown in an era dominated by talk of virtualization and intangibility. We may see, in the free commuter newspaper, the fundamental cultural tension of

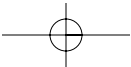
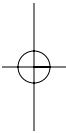
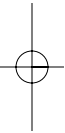
our time: that between the highly individualized consumption of electronic media, on the one hand, and the collective claims on a physical, urban environment that grows ever denser in material and semiotic terms. The free daily newspaper is interesting because the political and cultural collisions that surround it have little to do with the civic role of journalism or with the traditional problems that are the focus of press studies. They are much more about the ownership and occupation of public space, about the degrees to which that space may be commercialized, and about the right of diverse voices to register that presence within public space.

Notes

1. This article represents an updating and substantial revision of an earlier article, "Global Metro: The Rise of the Free Commuter Newspaper" published in *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Canadienses* 13 (Spring 2007): 45–53. I am grateful to Graciela Martinez-Zalce for the opportunity to engage with this topic and for advice and encouragement. "Newspaper Innovation," a blog maintained by Dr. Piet Bakker of the Netherlands, at www.newspaperinnovation.com, is an invaluable source of regularly updated information and commentary on the free commuter newspaper phenomena. A similarly titled site, "Innovations in Newspapers," at <http://www.innovationsinnewspapers.com>, offers daily snapshots of newspapers from the world, tracking changes in design and format during this turbulent period in the medium's history. Both these sites are necessary visits for anyone interested in the phenomena dealt with in this article.
2. Ken Alexander, "The Shrinking News," *Walrus*, June 2006, <http://www.walrus-magazine.com/articles/2006.06-sightings-ken-alexander-newspaper-editorials/> (accessed 15 June 2008).
3. Philip Meyer, *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2004).
4. For a more recent and pessimistic analysis, see Bernard Poulet, *La fin des journaux et l'avenir de l'information* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).
5. That single mention comes when Meyer refers to "[d]irect mail, free distribution, and Web products" as new ways by which newspapers are reaching out to what he calls niche markets (Meyer 2004, 218). In his defence, we may note that free newspapers have been less of a force in United States (the focus of Meyer's book) than in the markets of Europe and Canada. As well, their impact throughout the world was just becoming visible in the early 2000s, when Meyer conducted much of his research.
6. Jason Deign, "Campaign," *Teddington*, 9 September 2005, 34.

7. "Newspaper Design: Small is Beautiful." *Design Week*, London, 10 November 2005, 18.
8. There are two "national" dailies in Canada, both based in Toronto, the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post*, which are available throughout the country. Montreal has long-standing dailies—*The Gazette*, *le Devoir*, *la Presse*, and *le Journal de Montréal*—plus *24 Heures* and *Métro*, free commuter newspapers; Toronto has the *Toronto Star*, *Toronto Sun*, *Metro*, and *24 Hours*; Edmonton had, as of 28 February 2009—in addition to the *Edmonton Journal* and *Edmonton Sun*—*24 Hours*, *Metro*, and *RushHour*.
9. The 2008 Annual Report of Metro International S.A., which marshals a wide variety of statistics to demonstrate the ongoing spread of the Metro "phenomenon," is available online at <http://www.metro.lu/files/ANNUAL%20REPORT%202008.pdf> (accessed 14 June 2009). These statistics represent declines from 2007, though the extent to which such declines represent new trends or the effects of the global economic crisis is unclear.
10. Dallas Smyth, *Dependency Road* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1981).
11. Robert G. Picard, "Strategic Responses to Free Distribution Daily Newspapers," *International Journal on Media Management* 2:3 (2001): 167–172.
12. Jo Bowman, "A Free Shot in the Arm," *Media*, 8 September 2006: A12.
13. "Newspaper Design" 2005, 18.
14. "Les tendances et les perspectives," in *Les Comptes du Groupe* (Paris: Le Monde, 2004): 2.
15. Rosalia Winocur, *Ciudadanos Mediáticos: La construcción de lo público en la radio* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2002).
16. Torstar's *Star PM* pursued a similar strategy of joint hardcopy and PDF/email distribution in the Toronto market, before folding in 2007, after one year. *RushHour* Ottawa appears to have folded, with no announcement, in April 2008.
17. Jon Bekken, "Crumbs from the Publishers' Golden Tables: The Plight of the Chicago Newsboy," *Media History* 6:1, 1 June 2000: 45–57. Todd Alexander Postol, "Creating the American Newspaper Boy: Middle-Class Route Service and Juvenile Salesmanship in the Great Depression," *Journal of Social History* 31:2 (Winter 1997): 327–345. Joe Sharkey, "Word for Word/Newsboy Nostalgia," *New York Times*, 17 September 2000: WK9.
18. Kevin Howley, "A Poverty of Voices: Street Papers as Communicative Democracy," *Journalism* 4 (2003): 273–292.
19. "Hawkers Handing Out Free Newspapers Annoy Pedestrians," *Vancouver Sun*, 25 August 2005: B3.
20. See, for example, "Starts and Stops: Extra! Extra! Inconvenience on the T," *Boston Globe*, 13 May 2007, http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/05/13/extra_extra_inconvenience_on_the_t/ (accessed 1 June 2008).
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22. Postol 1997.

23. Siegfried Kracauer, "Analysis of a City Map," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995): 43.
24. Adrian Rifkin, *Street Noises: Parisian Pleasure 1900–40* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995): 109.
25. Beth Seaton, "Paper Boxes another Step on Way to 'Torontoization,'" *Vancouver Courier*, 6 April 2005: 11.
26. Richard Blackwell, "Free Tabloid Hits Vancouver News Scene," *Globe and Mail*, 15 March 2005: B2; Bruce DeMara, "Papers may Pay for TTC Trash Woes: Free Dailies could Face Annual Fees," *Toronto Star*, 12 September 2002: B4.
27. "Project Freesheet—Our Mission Statement," <http://www.projectfreesheet.org/mission.php> (accessed 2 June 2008).
28. Mark Fitzgerald, "Chicago Papers in City News Rack Compromise," *Editor & Publisher* 131:23 (6 June 1993): 11.
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30. Bermingham 2006, A20.
31. "Torstar, CanWest and Metro Form Joint Venture and Launch Metro Vancouver," Metro press release 2005, <http://www.metro.lu/node/76/story/92> (accessed 2 June 2008).
32. "TorStar/Metro Buys Out CanWest Share of Freebies," Canadian Journalism Project, j.source-ca, 31 May 2007, http://www.j-source.ca/english_new/blogs.php?id=1553 (accessed 3 June 2008).
33. "Quebecor to Ask for Metro Rights," *The Gazette*, 8 May 2001: A4.
34. See, among many accounts of these battles, François Shalom, "Transcontinental Wins Subway Battle," *The Gazette*, 18 February 2005: B3.
35. Michael McCullough, "Transit on Track for Free Newspapers: Swedish Company, CanWest have Shown Interest in Project Before Call for Proposals," *Vancouver Sun*, 10 February 2001: C1.
36. Lauren Gard, "Free Press Gets a Whole New Meaning," *Business Week*, 31 January 2005: 74.
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WALKING A
TIGHTROPE*The Global Cultural Economy
of Canadian Television*

Serra Tinic

In 2003, Alliance Atlantis Communications Inc. (AAC)—Canada's largest vertically integrated television and film production company—announced that it was moving out of dramatic television series production due to the decreasing profit potential of this programming sector. The exception to the company's long-range strategy would be the number-one-rated *American* franchise series *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. At the same time, AAC announced that it would be closing down its recently acquired production company, Salter Street Films. The highly regarded Salter Street had been an important contributor to the Canadian television arena with its incredibly popular sketch comedy *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and had dispelled the industry notion that Canadians had no interest in homegrown television content. Salter Street entrenched its

risk-taking reputation when it produced Michael Moore's Oscar-winning documentary *Bowling for Columbine*, a project that was too controversial for production in the Hollywood system.

The Alliance Atlantis decision is indicative of larger global production strategies wherein economic objectives increasingly take precedence over creative and cultural concerns. As members of a small-market nation, Canadian television producers have come to rely on access to global markets as a means to generate revenue for domestic productions. This has sometimes led to the dilution of cultural specificity due to the perceived need to universalize (often read as "Americanizing") televisual stories for greater international distribution. The presence of the few large companies like Alliance Atlantis had, to some extent, militated against this process by offering alternative avenues of support for television series production that emphasized the local cultural narratives of the national community. Thus, with an eye to shareholders' profit potential, the company dealt a serious blow to the Canadian television production community.

This chapter explores the contemporary landscape of the Canadian television industry wherein longstanding goals of nation building compete with economic contingencies in a transnational media environment. It examines the tensions between television series based on the model of the "global generic" and those that speak to the cultural specificity of the domestic market. The emphasis here is not on a false dichotomy between global and local cultural forces but rather on the ways in which market considerations infuse and inform cultural decisions in television production. Consequently, the discussion focuses on the emergent global framework of the television industry and illustrates the impacts of strategies such as format purchasing and international co-production agreements on Canadian television. Consideration is also given to the ways that the global restructuring of national broadcasting policies and practices has changed the production and programming strategies of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the impact that this has had on the domestic television industry. It should be noted that the emphasis throughout is on the production of Anglo-television drama as this has long been the weak link in English Canadian broadcasting.¹

Given the parameters of this essay, what follows is neither an in-depth research analysis of current Canadian television programming nor a close reading of policy discourse. Rather it is a broad overview of the potential possibilities and pitfalls facing the Canadian television industry within the context of global, neo-liberal

strategies to subsume political, social, and cultural spheres into economic decision-making models. Consequently, its objective is to sustain debate about the present and future directions of Canadian television in an era of increasing transnational media commercialization. The discussion begins with an overview of the tensions between market and cultural development goals as evidenced in two dominant forms of global drama programming: international format purchases and co-productions. Set within the context of the different structural constraints of public and private broadcasting sectors, this section argues that there is no inevitable outcome in terms of cultural homogeneity or hybridity in these types of programs. The central problematic, rather, is one of diversity of cultural representations as opposed to mere plurality of domestic incarnations of global forms and the importance of different modes of audience address. The second half of the essay brings the issue of global cultural diversity into sharper relief through a consideration of the challenges facing domestic broadcasting policy measures within the framework of multilateral trade agreements and organizations. As many nations, and most notably the United States, seek to define media content as just another commodity form to be “freely” traded across borders, policymakers must now contend with the fact that cultural decisions are subject to arbitration outside the borders of the nation and within the halls of WTO (World Trade Organization) meeting rooms. As the conclusion indicates, the recent global success of explicitly domestic Canadian television dramas should be seen as a direct result of federal funding and cultural regulations.

Trading in Culture: Global Markets versus Global Publics?

It has been noted that television is a “contradictory industry” in that it is both a site of artistic expression as well as a business concerned with the maximization of markets and profits.² The reference here is, of course, to the American model of private broadcasting where creative decision-making is always tempered by considerations of advertiser and shareholder interests. As this commercial model is becoming increasingly prevalent worldwide, countries whose systems had once been predominantly public and national are now experiencing the tensions of a landscape where public and private broadcasting goals compete on an unequal economic terrain. A problem that becomes ever more acute as governments globally retrench from investing in the public sphere in general and the cultural

industries in particular. This is not, however, a new dilemma for the Canadian television industry. It is, in fact, the story of the history of Canadian broadcasting. Since the 1960s, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has been in direct competition with national commercial television networks. Moreover, this dual market/public model is replicated within the structure of the CBC itself, as the national broadcaster is also expected to generate 30 percent of its revenue from advertising support. The expectation that the CBC produce culturally relevant programming while simultaneously competing for advertisers with private networks, who are able to more cheaply import popular American programs for broadcast, has placed unique structural constraints on cultural production at the national public network. The problem is exacerbated by the small domestic audience “market” for both private and public broadcasters. Consequently, global program sales and production strategies have long been crucial to Canadian television producers—a situation that has marked Canada as a model of the contemporary television industry in a global media arena.

In March 2005, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), arguably one of the strongest national public broadcasters internationally, announced that it would be cutting 4000 jobs in an effort to streamline the institution and reduce overhead costs. The resulting protests and labour strikes eerily echoed similar events during the drastic cutbacks at the CBC throughout the 1980s. The question now facing the BBC is the same one that CBC personnel encountered twenty-five years ago: how will “content” be developed and produced with fewer workers, less funding, and a new television environment with hundreds of competing channels in need of “product?” Similar to its colonial offspring, the BBC has found the answer in the move to out-of-house production agreements with independent drama production companies.

The CBC’s experience with out-of-house production should provide some reassurance to BBC staff who argued that their own: “savage cuts ... will damage programming as well as the organization and will unravel British broadcasting traditions. The BBC is a unifying British institution which acts as the nation’s conscience, but these redundancies will damage the U.K. at its core.”³ Indeed, over the past decade some of the CBC’s most lauded (and watched!) programs were developed in partnership with independent producers whose programs ushered in a greater diversity of domestic regional voices to the national public network. The aforementioned Salter Street Films is one of the penultimate examples of these

new out-of-house production partnerships. Yet, Salter Street's experience under the ownership of AAC is instructive to the new dilemmas facing national broadcasters, for it is no longer solely the whims of government funding bodies that determine the level of support for public institutions but also the overall financial health of the domestic independent production community that largely affects the future of culturally specific programming. It is here that global diversification strategies, in both private and public television production strategies, have come to shape the Canadian industry.

There is a growing body of literature on the rationales behind, and relative successes of, Canadian international television co-productions measured in both market and cultural terms.⁴ Despite this recent interest in the proliferation of international joint ventures, they are not a strikingly new global phenomenon, as their origins can be traced back to the postwar period in which the nations of Europe developed partnerships to rebuild their film and cultural industries during a time of economic devastation.⁵ Today, they provide a means for independent producers in small-market nations both to share the high costs of dramatic television production and to access transnational audience markets in territories often circumscribed by national cultural content regulation measures. Having signed official co-production treaties or agreements with fifty nations, Canada has become a world leader in the area of international joint ventures (IJVs). Because of these partnerships, the sheer amount of Canadian television programming increased to the extent that by the early 1990s, Canada was the second-largest exporter of audiovisual products after the United States.⁶ The fact that between 2002 and 2008 Canadian producers were involved in 343 new and continuing international television projects underlines the significance of the transnational production sector.⁷

Employing such quantitative output measures as barometers of success could lead us to believe that Canada had overcome the long-standing issue of cultural representation in a domestic television arena long dominated by American programming. However, a closer examination of the *types* of programs often produced through IJVs tells a different story—one that often leans toward the business, rather than the creative side of the contradictory institution of television. IJVs are an integral production strategy for independent Canadian drama producers who have very few domestic television networks at which to pitch their program ideas. For those who seek to develop projects deemed highly culturally

specific or “proximate” to Canadian experiences then the CBC is often the only game in town. Although the private television networks, of which only CTV and Global can be seen as *national* in scope, are governed by Canadian content regulations (CanCon), they prefer to satisfy these requirements with less expensive news and sports programs. This programming practice became further entrenched after 1999 when the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) relaxed the rules concerning the specific amount of dramatic television programming required to fulfill CanCon guidelines. Consequently, there are few dramas produced for private television that speak to the specificity of Canadian settings, issues, and social processes. Despite a few recent exceptions—such as CTV’s *Corner Gas*—when the commercial broadcast networks do purchase Canadian dramas, they often prefer the globally generic form produced through IJVs with the goal of reaching an international market. These types of international co-productions are marked by their tendency to follow established Hollywood television formulas and set their stories in American cities although they are usually filmed in Vancouver or Toronto. They qualify as Canadian content through the citizenship of the key creative participants in the production agreement. Some examples include *StarHunter 2003* (Canada/U.K.), *Riverworld* (Canada/U.K./New Zealand), *Queen of Swords* (Canada/U.K./Spain), *Relic Hunter* (Canada/France/U.K.), and *Stormworld* (Canada/Australia). The advantages of this type of market-oriented productions are manifold. First, as science-fiction/fantasy or action-adventure genres they escape the “cultural discount” that affects dramas too closely tied to the social, political, and linguistic experiences of a particular country.⁸ Second, they operate as mimetics of dominant American television narratives that have increasingly become the *lingua franca* of global television markets. Together, these factors enhance the global sales value of these forms of IJVs which, in turn, allows for production cost amortization and a lower selling price. This makes them particularly appealing to private Canadian broadcasters who seek to fulfill CanCon regulations with less expensive “product.”

A newer and increasingly popular variant of these globally generic productions is the format program, which is the licensing and sale of a television program that has achieved success in one country. Here, the complete production “recipe” from sets to story organization is packaged and sold to producers in other nations. Examples of these format programs abound in the proliferation of reality TV, game shows, and makeover programs. Consequently, some of the more popular

programs on Canadian television screens are *Canadian Idol*, *Canada's Next Top Model*, *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*, and *Project Runway Canada*. Format products hold a special attraction to broadcasters due to the low cost of production and their ability to draw sizeable audience cross sections, thereby attracting greater advertiser interest.

Market-oriented IJVs and format television purchasing fuel the fires of ongoing debates over cultural homogenization in contemporary studies of media globalization. Unlike older charges of cultural imperialism wherein the film and television programs of cultural superpowers, such as the United States, were seen to dominate the media landscape of small-market nations (and Canada is often the most cited example in this regard), these new production arrangements find producers throughout the world contributing to the generation of standardized television genres and narratives. Moran presents a more optimistic perspective of this process in his comparative analysis of national variants of formats ranging from soap operas to game shows. He argues that despite the generic rigidity of licensed formats, these programs are subject to adaptation to local cultural experiences to militate against their "foreignness" and make them more appealing to domestic audiences.⁹ His conclusions correspond with Robins' conceptualization of "structures of common difference" whereby audiences across national borders increasingly engage with the same *types* of programs but see localized variation in the treatment of issues and thematics.¹⁰ In many respects, these arguments present a production-side version of the cultural hybridity argument wherein cultural resistance is written into the dominance of genre and format structures. This negation of the influence of format structure over cultural content, however, elides the standardizing impact that often follows market models of cultural production. A parallel example from the global magazine industry is instructive here. In their study of international versions of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, Machin and Van Leeuwen found that the overall "formula" of the magazine and its emphasis on individually based problem-solution case presentations affected a discursive closure of alternative cultural framings:

[T]he local becomes an adornment or decoration which is embedded in a basic architecture of the global ... this kind of globalization is the deliberate strategic embedding of certain local discourses into Western/capitalist models. ... Global corporate media may tell stories set in different settings

and dealing with people that have slightly different values and looks, but the fundamental structural reasons for how they behave, for what they want and how they might attain it will follow the same logic.¹¹

Whether or not we agree that local cultures are “deliberately” incorporated into Westernized discourses of global capital, it is evident that the structures of commercial television provide specific constraints as to the types of stories produced and how they will be told. Moving away from reductionist theories of cultural imperialism, Barker argues that television as an institution formed within the context of industrial modernization is also a cultural forum for the generation of narratives supportive of capitalist modernity; and with the transnational encroachment of commercial television, these narratives become the global cultural currency.¹² Herein, homogenization is not about the erasure of cultural differences but, instead, the synchronization of bounded discourses underlining modernity and the merits of capital accumulation, such as rugged individualism, consumption, and the importance of personal success. So, yes, *Canadian Idol* localizes a format by placing Canadians into the pop music game show genre but once there they follow the same steps as British, American, Italian, and all other “idols” to compete their way to the brass ring of a recording contract with a multinational music company.

This is intended neither to cast dispersion on commercialized television programming nor to enter into debates about “quality” television. Rather, it is to highlight the different structural constraints that govern private and public broadcasting. In brief, different organizational and purposive logics result in different types of televisual storytelling. As it is Hollywood that has perfected the market model of television entertainment it can be said that the story of U.S. television is also, largely, the story of the private Canadian broadcasters. It has become a truism that the market model of television treats audiences as consumers, as opposed to the public model’s emphasis on audiences as citizens. However, as most contemporary global audiences engage with both types of broadcasting simultaneously, this bifurcation of modes of address becomes significantly more complex. In a mixed media system like Canada’s, audiences more closely approximate Miller et al.’s depiction of the hybrid “citsumer,” doubly hailed into national cultural belonging as well as popular participation in the global market of consumption.¹³ The “consumer” side is invoked in classical economic arguments of supply and demand that assert that specific television programs are produced because

audiences desire them. The implication is that the invisible hand of the market will satisfy the diversity of audience demand and thus the consumer is sovereign. However, this is not how commercial television works. The real target audience for private network executives are advertisers and shareholders—viewers are crucial to the extent that they can attract advertisers whose financing will generate profits for shareholders. Profits, in turn, are dependent on minimizing production cost and risk in an uncertain creative environment. This strategy actually militates against diversity in television storytelling as commercial network executives develop defensive strategies to reduce the odds of producing programs that will fail to fulfill the economic logic of the industry. Here we return to the centrality of the “formula” or “format” in private television.

To speak to cultural diversity by providing a range of cultural representations and methods of incorporating them into innovative narrative forms would be an incalculable risk for commercial broadcasters who seek never to divide the potential audiences available to advertisers. The reliance on television formulas becomes a means by which to control the volume of failed programs (read as ratings flops). Following the adage that “nothing succeeds like success,” commercial television at times resembles a manufacturing assembly line where all networks schedule virtually identical programs because of high ratings experienced by particular genres or story premises. The 2004–05 television schedule in the United States exemplified this standardization process and how the system of risk aversion proved to be an imperfect gauge of audience programming tastes. In preparing their schedules for the 2004–05 season, network executives felt secure in their decisions that franchise television (four *Law and Order* programs and three versions of *CSI* as examples) and a heavy schedule of reality programming would guarantee ratings success. The bonus of low production cost in the genre of reality programming combined with track-record genre programming spoke to the conservative tendencies of the major broadcasters. Consequently, CBS and NBC decided to pass on the character drama that would be the only breakout audience hit of the season, *Desperate Housewives*. ABC found itself the overall winner of the television season due to its decision to air the series—a risk taken because the network trailed CBS and NBC and, thereby, had little to lose in taking a chance on the series. In the end, *Desperate Housewives* showed that the death of drama predicted by the major networks had been greatly exaggerated. Interestingly, it was the perceived lack of profit potential in the sector of original dramatic television that led to the AAC

decision mentioned at the outset of the chapter. And, not surprisingly, the success of ABC's new series eventually led to the proliferation of a host of new dramas on the 2005–06 schedules of all the American networks—many of which interestingly resembled *Desperate Housewives* or ABC's other ratings' winner, *Lost*.¹⁴

As Richard Williams comments, commercial television is a conservative industry when it comes to taking chances with new or untested ideas and: “the trouble with television ... is that even at the fringes it is staffed by people who think of themselves as radical, yet whose idea of progress is to clone the last thing their peers raved about. ... This is perhaps not surprising, in view of television's wholesale capitulation over the past decade to the imperatives of market forces.”¹⁵ The particular manifestation of homogeneity, mixed with moments of creativity and innovation, evidenced in American network programming strategies replicates itself at the global level of television production. It is the type of decision-making that sets the foundation for the more generic forms of IJVs that I have outlined. Globally, market-oriented programs produce not “diversity but plurality” wherein there are “more products but they're spin-offs of a limited set of master templates.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, success in global terms continues to be measured in economic terms of output and scope of presence in media buying markets, regardless of cultural content. In fact, Marc Doyle emphasized this business logic in his praise for Canada's leading presence in the field of international co-productions.¹⁷ In a study for the (American) National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE), Doyle invoked the supply and demand argument in his prediction that the proliferation of Canadian IJVs would translate into a substantial increase of domestic programs on Canadian television networks. Unfortunately, sixteen years later, Doyle's prediction has yet to be realized. The Canadian private networks have long known that the financial bottom-line is better served by purchasing original American programming for prime-time scheduling as opposed to cheap Canadian imitations of these shows. As such, Global and CTV found themselves in a race to have the most shows in the “Top 20” as they went on a buying frenzy of the new American successors to *Desperate Housewives* and *Lost* for their own 2005–06 season schedules.¹⁸ Meanwhile, there remained a dearth of culturally proximate programming on Canadian network television despite the quantity of Canadian co-productions circulating globally. In fact, there were approximately 16 domestic dramas set explicitly in Canada on the three national English networks that season and nine of those were broadcast on CBC.

Turning to national public broadcasting provides us with another perspective as to how Canada's global presence in television might develop in ways that need not sacrifice issues of cultural specificity while simultaneously providing domestic audiences with stories that dramatize the conditions of their own society. The CBC's mandate to "reflect Canada to Canadians" provides the public broadcaster with a different set of structural constraints from those of its private network counterparts. The expectation that the public broadcaster would be home to culturally proximate programming while, at the same time, generating advertising revenue for part of its production budget has meant that the CBC addresses its audience as the ultimate "citsumers." In an era of government cutbacks and competition with private broadcasters for audiences, the CBC has had to develop new types of programming and production strategies to remain a relevant presence in the Canadian broadcasting and cultural arena. These measures have included developing out-of-house production partnerships, limiting the number of episodes per dramatic series (as well as the numbers of ongoing dramatic series, in general), and more aggressively pursuing international sales of its programming. It is in the area of co-productions and international sales that the CBC experience provides a different vantage point from which to view globalizing processes in television. It shows how, with some measure of government support, the turn to global markets does not necessarily mean that all television production must be homogenized into standardized generic "products." Three examples will be briefly discussed here to illustrate the relevance, indeed importance, of global public broadcasters to the maintenance of alternatives to the global generic versions of dramatic television. The first two are domestic co-productions with independent Canadian production companies: *Da Vinci's Inquest* and *Human Cargo*. The third is *Sex Traffic*, an international co-production with Britain's Channel 4—a television movie that illustrates promising possibilities of work between transnational broadcasters with similar cultural mandates.

As mentioned earlier, the CBC had the dubious advantage of a head start in the government cutbacks that would eventually also affect public broadcasters in other countries. When it was announced that dramatic production would have to move "out-of-house," people began to predict the demise of the nation's public network. However, over the past decade, these domestic co-productions have resulted in some of the most popular Canadian programs in the country's broadcast history as well as provided indications as to how the CBC might begin to

resolve some of the tensions between the market and cultural development goals that define its structure. In this regard, the CBC's partnership with the former Salter Street Films generated domestic comedy programming that frequently won audiences away from the private network's broadcasts of American programs; and its much earlier partnership with Sullivan Enterprises resulted in extraordinary international sales of the period drama *Road to Avonlea*. More recently, the CBC's partnership with Barna-Alper Productions and Haddock Entertainment gave the public broadcaster the top-rated Canadian television drama *Da Vinci's Inquest*. *Da Vinci's Inquest* was based loosely on the "real-life" of former Vancouver coroner and current mayor, Larry Campbell. The character of Dominic Da Vinci drew on Campbell's actual crusade for the poor and marginalized living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and when the series headed into its eighth season in 2005 it was renamed *Da Vinci's City Hall*, following Campbell's own career trajectory into the mayor's office. At first glance, it would be easy to define *Da Vinci's* success in generic terms as an urban crime drama—a popular formula with audiences. However, what distinguished the series from its commercial equivalents was the direct referencing of the lived experiences of its location, Vancouver, as a source of storytelling. There was no attempt to erase the cultural markers of its domestic setting and, given the show's premise, it engaged with the issues of crime, poverty, and class struggle within this globalizing metropolis. It was also a relatively expensive production, in Canadian terms, at over \$1-million an episode.¹⁹ The production value and genre factored into the show's international success and it was quickly sold to over twenty-five countries after the first season. *Da Vinci* also exhibits other aspects of domestic cultural production that go against the grain of the American commercial mode of storytelling—notably, the ambiguity of good and evil in central characters and the lack of happy endings that wind up the episode's hour. These subtle cultural differences actually enhance the global sales of Canadian dramas, particularly in European markets where buyers enjoy Hollywood genres with less of an American cultural sensibility.²⁰

Government funding for the CBC thus provides a buffer that allows the national public broadcaster to avoid complete capitulation to advertising interests and thereby produce projects that address controversial issues in all their complexity (and in recognizable Canadian contexts). The result is that public broadcasting is able to take greater risks in all aspects of the production process

from story selection to narrative development. Two of the CBC's co-produced dramatic mini-series elaborate this point: *Human Cargo* and *Sex Traffic*. Similar to *Da Vinci's Inquest*, these two programs make no attempts to mask their production origins and they have garnered critical acclaim, both domestically and internationally, while simultaneously drawing a sizeable viewership. What is particularly striking about these two mini-series is the fact that while they speak from a specific and recognizable cultural positioning, they both address the human costs of globalizing forces at the intersection of national borders. *Human Cargo*, a CBC partnership with Canadian producers Force Four Entertainment and Howe Sound Films is a stark dramatization of the lives of refugees beginning with the experiences of their persecution in their homelands to the tribulations they endure as they negotiate their way through the labyrinthine mechanisms of the Canadian immigration system. Kate Nelligan, one of the lead actors in the project, described *Human Cargo* as something she had "never seen before"—a mini-series that would "scare most networks with its content." *Sex Traffic*, a CBC co-production with Britain's Channel 4, pursues a similar theme in its dramatization of the plights of East European women sold into the global sex trade in the post-Soviet era. We probably should not be astonished that two productions that explicitly address the darker side of global capital would find little purchase in commercial broadcasting.²¹ Indeed, John Yorke, the former Head of Drama at Channel 4 and current Head of Independent Production at the BBC, described *Sex Traffic* as "controversial and provocative ... a big talking thing that rarely gets made these days" and which is the "job as public broadcasters to make."²² What is most striking about productions like *Human Cargo* and *Sex Traffic* is that they underline that national public broadcasting does not mean a retreat into parochial, isolationist dramas that invent the nation as a bounded cultural terrain that is immune from competing definitions of what it means to be a citizen of that place. Rather, unlike IJVs that seek to exploit market borders by homogenizing cultural narratives into the global generic, these types of projects speak forthrightly to the intersections of global and local processes and emphasize the subnational tensions and fissures that characterize the experiences of people of all nations. While never losing sight of the local, or the "idea" of the national, these types of public broadcasting productions exemplify "diversity" in contrast to the forms of "plurality" generated within commercial television.

Yet, the future of national public broadcasting in Canada and elsewhere remains precarious. As Murdock notes, we live in a climate of increasing “marketization” where market measurements of success [are] the yardsticks against which all institutions are judged, including those still formally in the public sector.”²³ It, therefore, becomes imperative to keep issues of the exclusionary aspects of market forces at the forefront of public and policy discourse; continually to remind decision makers that publicly funded institutions produce and distribute the cultural “products” that do not appeal to the commercial imperatives of market logic. Rather, they redress “the market’s failures.”²⁴

In the meantime, the story of Canadian public broadcasting remains one of “two steps forward, one step back.” There have been promising signs in terms of the rhetoric of ensuring domestic cultural representation in the tightening of guidelines governing the subsidization of Canadian television production. For example, Telefilm Canada, as the primary government granting institution, has recently stipulated stricter rules for accessing the Canadian Television Fund (CTF) that supports domestic production. Herein, the guidelines posted on Telefilm’s website (www.telefilm.gc.ca) now insist that productions must meet the “spirit and intent” of Canadian content regulations and, therefore: 1) must “reflect Canadian themes and subject matter; 2) must achieve 10/10 points on the content regulation scale; 3) “the project may not be based on foreign television productions, foreign format buys, foreign feature films... or foreign fully developed final-version scripts” and; 4) the project must be “shot and set primarily in Canada.” Another positive step forward is the revival of Salter Street Films after its closure by AAC. Now reconstituted as the Halifax Film Company (HFC), this strong contributor to the domestic television scene underscores the importance of independent production companies being committed to diversity in their willingness to produce television and films that may be political and economic anathema to the powers that be both at home and internationally (as was the case with the company’s support of the work of Michael Moore). However, Telefilm guidelines and the presence of innovative, risk-taking independent producers are moot points without the concomitant government will, politically and financially, to support both the CBC, as the primary broadcaster of culturally specific programming, and the CTF. This support continues to be lacking in Canadian cultural policy decisions and becomes even more crucial as new transnational trade agreements attempt to reduce culture to the category of a general commodity exempt

from protectionist measures. The following section, therefore, provides a very brief glimpse of the challenges facing Canadian cultural policy in an age of cultural and economic globalization.

Cultural Exchange or Trading Away Culture?

McChesney argues that “neoliberalism is a superior term to globalization” in describing the transnational momentum of capital encroachment into all aspects of public life, including corporate domination in the global media sphere.²⁵ I am not quite prepared to evacuate the term globalization despite my general agreement about the prevalence of neo-liberal philosophies governing the decisions of most contemporary Western nations. Globalization also encompasses transnational activism, resistance, and cultural sharing that militate against atrocities that can be committed within the “iron walls” of isolated nation-states and, therefore, I would caution against reducing all conceptualizations of globalization to the conservative forces of neo-liberal economic strategies. I do agree, however, that the discourses of neo-liberalism have been executed in the attempt to place cultural productions under the purview of transnational bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and, thereby, subject them to unprotected free trade policies.²⁶ If governments capitulate to the strictures of these organizations, then the sustenance of national public broadcasting institutions and support for non-market-oriented television programming will inevitably be termed economic protectionism and thus open to arbitration under GATT and GATS regulations. Indeed, Canada again provides an important case of foreshadowing here, when the government’s attempt to support the domestic magazine industry was deemed an unfair trade practice against the United States under NAFTA. As McDowell (2001) underlines, current efforts to use principles of “cultural exemption” in global trade negotiations have failed to garner the support of countries that seek to exploit the market potential for their own cultural products across national borders. As such, McDowell argues for a new rhetoric in global media trade debates that emphasize the need for “cultural diversity” as a driving principle in WTO negotiations.²⁷ His statements parallel my preceding analysis of the contradictory forces between market and public structures in the broadcasting industries. The goal here is to convince cultural power brokers, such as the United States, that investments in the public media sector are not intended as trade barriers but, rather, as correctives

to market imperfections. Magder's conceptualization of "media and cultural products as public goods" is particularly compelling and provides a framework for effective negotiating at the transnational level. In persuasive terms, he uses the analogy of public parks—a customarily non-negotiable trade sector—to explain the value of national measures to support domestic media forms:

Public parks are public goods, goods for which one's personal use or benefit does not affect its use or benefit for another person (littering aside). Public goods have another aspect: while the benefit they provide may be significant, generally speaking no single person is able to pay the full costs for their production. This too is an obvious characteristic of many media products and cultural goods, from news to drama and entertainment. The strongest version of this argument begins with the acknowledgment that a robust and diverse sphere of public expression is a fundamental prerequisite for a healthy democratic polity. We don't rely on markets to provide us with an efficient allocation of parks; we shouldn't rely on the market to provide us with a sufficient supply of media or cultural diversity.²⁸

The force of Magder's analogy is strengthened in his implication that national subsidization of cultural industries is not intended to bar entry of another nation's cultural products but, instead, is put into place to ensure that alternative modes of cultural expression are allowed to exist and flourish in a globally competitive economic environment. This is especially instructive to the Canadian case as the increased permeability of borders to the flow of media products has been an integral component of the growth of the Canadian television industry, both public and private. Indeed, the ability to maintain a thriving global presence through the generic forms of IJVs has generated significant ancillary benefits to domestic—and more culturally proximate—television production.²⁹ Canada also holds a stronger bargaining chip than many other countries in that policy emphasis has always focused on domestic content regulations as opposed to import quotas. This is crucial to trade negotiations in that you cannot argue for protecting cultural diversity (as a democratic measure) while denying Canadians the right to engage with media products from all over the world. And there is much to be learned from the cautionary tale of New Zealand, which after trading away cultural subsidization measures under GATS, lost in its attempt to later resurrect national content quotas in broadcasting.³⁰

Thus far, Canada, in co-operation with France in particular, has been one of the leading nations to keep culture off the free-trade block in transnational economic negotiations.³¹ Through the efforts of ministers of culture and media

professionals, a global cooperative—the International Network on Cultural Policy (INCP)—was formed and with the tentative support of UNESCO hoped to set the framework for future rounds of debate on cultural production within the WTO.³² However, such international efforts are undermined if the Canadian government fails to support existing measures to foster culturally specific programming and institutions on home territory. Without a funding structure to support independent producers who want to challenge market formulas and speak to the cultural experiences (both global and local) of a “small-market” nation, there will be little incentive to produce programs that fulfill the spirit of Telefilm guidelines. As the concluding section indicates, the combination of government regulation and funding, albeit never ideal, has enabled the cultural and industrial growth of a domestic television industry that is now in a position to compete globally without necessarily sacrificing a sense of place or socio-cultural specificity. The question, as always, is whether policymakers see the benefit of continuing to foster an industry that some producers argue is as important a resource as “water and wheat.”³³

Back to the Future: Opportunity in Uncertain Times

The proliferation of new technologies, distribution channels, and the concomitant fragmentation of audiences has led to an environment of “indeterminacy” in the global television industries. In the transition to the “neo-network era,” there is a new momentum to “organize and exploit diverse forms of creativity toward profitable ends.”³⁴ Here we see even American program buyers, working in one of the most closed import markets, competing to purchase programs with an “edge” that allow them to compete against upstart U.S. specialty channels buffered from the more conservative influence of advertising support. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of these programs originate in countries with strong histories of public broadcasting. Canadian producers, due to their cultural proximity to the United States and extensive experience in global production, have benefited greatly from Hollywood’s content crises over the past several years. The reliance on reality programming, in the previously mentioned 2004–05 American network schedule, resulted in a dearth of syndicated scripted programming available to fill the off-prime-time schedule. Consequently, CBS took a calculated risk and purchased *Da Vinci’s Inquest* for broadcast in 98 percent of its market during the 2005 television

season. The series was a major ratings success for the network and defied Hollywood's conventional wisdom that American audiences would not watch programs set in other countries and particularly those that did not follow the rigid formula structures of American television genres. CBS renewed *Da Vinci* through the 2007–08 season and the network's confidence in the series eventually opened the door to other Canadian programs. In fact, when the Writers' Guild of America (WGA) went on strike in 2007, the American networks quickly turned to the Canadian television industry in anticipation of a lack of prime-time programming. A bidding war amongst the networks resulted in CTV successfully selling two domestic dramas: *Flashpoint* and *The Listener*, to CBS and NBS. In the end, the networks did not need to rely on these insurance policies. However, CBS decided to air *Flashpoint* as part of its prime-time summer schedule and the series not only won the night but also continued to dominate the ratings throughout its run. *Flashpoint's* unforeseen success led *MediaWeek's* Marc Berman to state: "There is every reason to now believe the broadcast networks will rely more on quality Canadian programming in the future."³⁵

Hollywood's recognition of "quality Canadian programming" may prove to be a double-edged sword for domestic producers. It inspires a new sense of confidence about the maturation of the industry to the extent that masking cultural references may no longer be required to access the world's largest single-language market. However, it also provides politicians with a rationale to divest themselves further from supporting domestic production and broadcasting. The fact remains that these programs probably would not have been produced if it were not for the combination of government financing, content regulations for private broadcasters, and the maintenance of a national public broadcaster. Moreover, there is no guarantee that American interest in Canadian television will continue; this may be a liminal moment in the restructuring of their broadcasting strategies in an era of "indeterminacy." There remains one insurmountable fact in Canadian television: the potential domestic audience will never be large enough to sustain drama of high production quality. As this chapter has indicated, the globalization of the Canadian television industry is rife with both opportunity and constraint but it is too soon to dismantle the infrastructure that ensures a site of domestic cultural expression in television. It is fitting to conclude here with a statement from Laszlo Barna, one of the executive producers *Da Vinci's Inquest*:

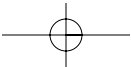
Are people entitled to see 100-percent Canadian [content] if it doesn't sell in Yemen? I say absolutely. The day we only make shows that are for export would spell the end to highly personal Canadian storytelling. And that would be a tragedy.³⁶

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36. MacDonald 2001.



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PEDAGOGY OF POPULAR CULTURE

*"Doing" Canadian
Popular Culture*

Gloria Filax

Consumption of popular culture involves complex negotiations that vary according to personal histories and affective investments and cannot be fixed "in terms of a collection of objects or practices or in terms of a single group."¹ Coming to understand that forms of popular culture are not fully achieved, that identities are not fixed or real, and that one is actively engaged with popular culture as it produces social inequalities involves a learning process; what I refer to as a pedagogy of popular culture.

In this paper, I accept Giroux's insight that pedagogy is the "doing"² or one aspect of the labour³ of Cultural Studies. I elaborate what this "doing" might look like by using a pedagogy of popular culture informed by Michel Foucault's ethics to explore intersections of national and regional identity, gender, and sexuality.⁴ I use the

Alberta Report's representation of Molson beer commercials from the 1990s, the promotions of Alley Kat beer, a small brewery in Edmonton, and marketing campaign posters and text from the Alberta Beef Producers. I juxtapose these with alternative performances of regional identity, gender, and sexuality by k. d. lang and a collective drag king group, *Alberta Beef*. By utilizing these examples, I show how a pedagogy of popular culture can allow consumers to be aware of their negotiations with popular culture and how it is possible to produce intentional, alternative popular cultures of national and regional identity, gender, and sexuality.

Pedagogy of Popular Culture: The Influence of Foucault's Ethics

Michel Foucault was interested in the emergence of modern institutions and how they constrained participation in modern life.⁵ Emerging in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, institutions such as factories, schools, armies, hospitals, and prisons used technologies of time, space, and movement to manage growing populations efficiently. Standards of achievement or behaviour were established for tasks in relation to particular physical and social spaces and these abilities and behaviours were assessed by experts in relation to these standards. Experts also intervened to correct individuals who did not meet the standards of the particular enterprise. This created a "constant pressure to conform to the same model, so that they might all be... like one another."⁶ These technologies of homogenization that subject individuals to the standards, codes, and norms of modern institutions are characteristic of what Foucault referred to as a "society of normalization."⁷

Foucault's ethics is a way to contend with technologies that normalize individuals by imposing homogeneity in relation to standards or codes. Whereas morality is concerned with how individuals subject themselves to codes,⁸ Foucault reserved the term "ethics" for "the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the... code."⁹ Foucault argued that there are four components to whether someone might conform to or reject a standard or code, each of which relates to aspects of formation of the ethical self. First, one must ask what part of one's behaviour is concerned with adherence to codes of conduct. Is one faithful, for example, because one conforms to the rule, feelings for one's partner, or the mastery of desires?¹⁰ Second, one attempts to understand the source of his or her obligations: "be it by obeying a divine or natural law, by following a rational and universal rule, or by fashioning their existence beauti-

fully.”¹¹ The third aspect of Foucault’s ethics is “the means by which we can change ourselves”¹² and the fourth is what kind of self one aspires to be. These four aspects are in relation to moral codes but they can be adapted, as I do in this chapter, to other codes or standards, such as national, regional, and sexual identities that homogenize the self.

Ethics asks questions about “the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying”¹³ so that “we [can] refuse what we are.”¹⁴ Rather than conformity to standards and codes, the emphasis is on the relationship with the self and on the methods and techniques through which this relationship is developed.¹⁵ Refusing a passive involvement in the standards of a culture, including representations of what counts as a standard or normal Canadian or Albertan, allows one to meet what Foucault believed to be an obligation to face the endless task of reinventing oneself. Exposing the limits of identity categories through questioning standards and norms, and then refusing to passively engage these standards and norms, makes it possible to push these limits and create other ways of engaging.¹⁶

There is a pedagogical component to Foucault’s ethics—a component that encourages an active and ongoing questioning of the ways in which one is implicated in cultural practices.¹⁷ Utilizing Foucault’s ethics as a template, I propose that a pedagogy of popular culture allows consumers of popular culture to recognize when there is dissonance between their experiences of culture and the codified expectations of that culture; to question how this dissonance has occurred; and to refuse and rework cultural expectations in certain instances. Importantly, it allows consumers of popular culture to recognize that everyone else around them is also negotiating multiple expectations.

To engage in a pedagogy of popular culture is to “do” popular culture. Doing occurs at each step: questioning the relationship of representations from popular culture to one’s own historicized engagement with dominant discourses or stories from one’s culture; refusing those representations that bind one to a code or standard of identity to which, upon reflection one cannot give consent; and creating something new out of alternative readings or other engagements. But “doing” first involves recognizing that one actively negotiates the expectations of a culture and is not just a passive recipient of that culture. This recognition of one’s engagement with popular culture may be experienced as a kind of dissonance between standards of a culture and the way in which one takes up these standards or, for

example, as a conflict between the accepted or even alternative readings of a popular culture form and one's own reading, or as I discuss in the next section, how one's engagement is often split between or among competing commitments. Since it is as a split subject that popular culture is consumed, recognizing this split subjectivity is an important part of the pedagogical process.

Pedagogy of Popular Culture: The Split Subject

The idea of a natural, essential, unified, and coherent human subject is a legacy of modernism that continues to inform how individuals think of themselves. Pedagogy of popular culture starts from the position that identity is continually in process, incomplete, and indeterminate. Miller¹⁸ describes this incompleteness or indeterminacy in terms of split subjectivity. Split subjectivity is a consequence of engagement with competing demands and interests and ways of participating in a culture while questing for completeness. A quest to become a "well-tempered" or harmonious human compared by Miller to Bach's well-tempered "harmonious" clavier/keyboard, from which Bach banished unruly notes through his musical compositions.¹⁹ A drive for harmony or completeness is reflected in attempts to adhere to, as examples, dominant ideas about national or regional identity, making good consumer choices, or adhering more closely to gender and sexuality norms. Understood in relation to Foucault's ethics, a quest for harmony is a quest to adhere to the norms and standards of a culture; for example, a quest to meet cultural expectations that bodies, behaviour, desire, and sexual activity should cohere in a two-sex, two-gender, one-sexuality determination.

Unlike Bach's well-tempered keyboard, a quest to live harmoniously with the codes and standards of a culture is undermined because it is not possible to banish all the contradictions, ambiguities, and paradoxes with which one lives. As we eat into or consume²⁰ popular culture, we consume or take up multiple subject positions, some of which are contradictory. Judith Butler captures the inevitability of this incompleteness when she writes of expectations of femininity that "to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker, in sum to signify a multiplicity of guarantees in response to a variety of demands all at once"²¹ produces "necessary failures."²² Split subjectivity or incompleteness in relation to the codes of a culture, in turn, leads to multiple ways to engage with one's culture, producing yet more indeterminacy.

Miller is interested in subjectivity that is split between a desire to promote oneself and a desire to be civic-minded. These desires, in turn, are split since ways to make one's own life better are varied and often contradictory, and, in the case of a desire to be civic-minded, there are often competing ideas of what good citizenship entails in relation to competing stories or discourses²³ of national identity. In Canada, this split in relation to national identity is between identities based in common history, geography, and values and those based in difference and plurality. Consequently, desire for sameness in civic responsibilities compete or split with desire to honour differences.

Notions that Canadian identity is based on sameness come from long-told stories about struggles with "wilderness" and inhospitable weather and geography²⁴ and about shared Canadian values in relation to fairness and peacekeeping.²⁵ According to this latter story, Canada's "tenacity" for peacekeeping, is part of what Canadians believe to be their national character.²⁶ The assumption that there is a unified, coherent Canadian identity is taken up in a number of ways, including commercials; Molson's "I am Canadian," commercials between 1994 and 1998 and then again between 2000 and 2005 are some of the more notorious of these.

Competing with stories of Canadians who share common experiences and values are stories of Canada marked by plurality and difference. This notion of Canada and Canadian identity is supported by a complex of public policies and celebrations of cultural heritage. In this competing story about Canada and Canadian identity, it is acknowledged that individual Canadians experience life differently according to a diverse mix of age, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and physical ability and that these are further complicated by regional differences. In this story, acknowledgement of differences among Canadians as individuals and as they are recognized within groups is important because these differences are the source of social inequalities.

Official multiculturalism²⁷ and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms have complicated the notion of a common set of Canadian values and experiences by acknowledging different histories, competing values, and discrimination and inequalities among Canadians. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial human rights codes contribute to experiences of split subjectivity by Canadians by focusing on individual rights even as they assign these individuals a group identity. In Alberta, for example, the Individual Rights Protection Act protects individuals according to their status within a group category such as gender,

age, or ethnicity. Those seeking redress for discrimination must approach rights tribunals as individuals while claiming a group status. In turn, each of these group categories challenges the notion that there is a coherent, unified Canadian citizen or regional community member.²⁸

It is to regional differences that I now turn in order to demonstrate in the last sections of the chapter the work of pedagogy of popular culture. I am interested in how the province of Alberta is distinguished as a region within Canada. While “Alberta is a modern, urbanized province, deeply integrated with national, continental and international commercial and political networks” in popular accounts, “it is portrayed as a maverick agrarian region that is distinct, politically, socially and economically, from the rest of Canada.”²⁹ Sydney Sharpe argues that Albertans are, on the one hand, contrarians and doubters; “the wealthy westerners who question national habits and search for other paths” but who, on the other hand, are proud Canadians who want to take a central role in Canada’s affairs. She believes the Alberta spirit “springs from a well of independence and self sufficiency: ...we want to control our own destiny and march to our own beat.” On the other hand, Sharpe argues that Albertans have a communal pride of place and deep-rooted sense of responsibility.³⁰ Governor General Michaëlle Jean built on this characterization of Alberta in her 2006 address to the Alberta legislative assembly when she proclaimed: “The pioneer spirit of independence and resourcefulness in the province is legendary, yet your deserved reputation for fierce individualism and economic self-reliance belie another, lesser known aspect of Alberta: your people are the most generous of Canadians. Eighty-five percent of you make financial contributions to charitable and non-profit organizations.”³¹

While these accounts represent Albertans as split between their regional and national identities and between desires of individualism and civic responsibility, they also cast Albertans as a unified whole. Albertans are also often represented in national media as, among other things, homogenous in their support of provincial government initiatives to withdraw from fiscal and ethical responsibility towards, for example, public education, affordable housing, health and welfare, the environment, non-human life forms, and infrastructure funding.³²

Canadian and regional identities are disrupted by discourses of difference and by individual rights understood in relation to group identities. In the following sections, I return to a pedagogy of popular culture, using popular culture in

Alberta as an example to illustrate how recognition, questioning, refusal, and creating something new can make it possible to recognize split subjectivity and from this, cultivate a kind of unruliness³³ rather than a conformity with a vision of a harmonious self.

Pedagogy of Popular Culture: The Labour of Recognition

Recognition is central to the work of a pedagogy of popular culture. A first step in the process of learning from one's engagement with popular culture is the recognition that this is an active not a passive engagement—that one negotiates popular culture and that one's negotiation is often as a split or indeterminate subject. This noticing may not be explicit—indeed it may involve quite complex psychical investments—but it is required on some level if consuming popular culture is to be a critical practice; that is, if one is to proceed with attempting to understand how one does engage.

It is unlikely that recognition *that* one actively engages popular culture or *how* one engages will be undertaken, even with prompting, without some discord experienced between popular cultural representations of cultural codes and one's own beliefs and investments, or between one's own negotiations of popular culture and others' negotiations, or internally in relation to one's own competing or split allegiances. Dissonance may be experienced as everyday trauma that arises from daily, ordinary experiences of inequality and discrimination because of not conforming to cultural codes of citizenship, gender, or sexuality.³⁴ This trauma from everyday actions of exclusion rather than sensational moments of harm is a sense "that something is wrong here, and that what's wrong is a matter of national trauma, not because they are isolated or extraordinary events but because these are the kinds of things that happen all the time."³⁵

It is by recognizing discord, trauma, and inconsistencies that consumers of popular culture can begin to question how they are implicated in their consumption of it and subsequently how they confirm, refuse, and/or rework their engagement relative to the level of dissonance experienced. As an example of the importance of recognition in the work of pedagogy of popular culture, I turn to how the *Alberta Report*, a weekly newsmagazine that published for 30 years until 2003, represented Molson commercials from the late 1980s and early 1990s and the juxtaposition of these commercials with an image of a cowboy on Redneck

beer, a beer from an Alberta brewery, Alley Kat brewery. But first, I want to say something about the cowboy.

The cowboy is often mobilized as a symbol of Alberta-ness that gestures to a common past. The cowboy as representative of Alberta-ness is taken up by those in and outside the province. A standing exhibit at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary celebrates the important place of the cowboy in Alberta's short history and the Calgary Stampede is a world famous exhibition celebrating cowboy culture. Festivals celebrating cowboy poetry proliferate in towns and communities across the prairies and the image is consumed through products and services like hairstyling, car care, beef, blue jeans and other clothing, trucks, bars, bumper stickers, and beer.

Cowboys are essentially cow-herders ranging over wide-open spaces—the ranch and beyond—spaces of unfettered possibility, representing an unfettered freedom. Van Herk writes of this time as “before barbed wire”³⁶; a time prior to fences and forms of governance that closed off possibility.³⁷ According to this familiar story, cowboys were free in their isolated lives; often a “cowboy's only company was the soft ballad he sang to lull the animals.”³⁸ Cowboys had to be self-reliant and independent; they had to think on their horses. Cowboys were hard-workers—quintessential rednecks, earning their red necks from physical work under a strong Alberta sun. Cowboys were a tough breed and yet had a “restless charm.” They were known for their “determined bachelorhood... the cowboy code of neighbourliness, loyalty, independence, and uncomplaining persistence became a part of the West's code... [although] now pickup trucks have replaced horses.”³⁹

Much of the idealism associated with the cowboy has been achieved via exclusions, even while the cowboy has come to signal a homogenous Alberta-ness. Cowboys are able-bodied, physically hard-working individuals. They are men and cowboy virtue is a white man's virtue. Cowboys, like all good male Albertans, are heterosexual. In an article, “No Queer Beer Here,” the *Alberta Report* described Molson's as “the official beer of gender ambiguity.”⁴⁰ The Molson Canadian commercials from this period showed men and women in a range of activities and often in homo-social settings. These commercials are not as flamboyantly patriotic in their attempts to define Canadian-ness as are the more recent “I Am Canadian” commercials but they do complicate gendered and sexualized identity.⁴¹ *Alberta Report's* criticism of the Molson's commercials contrasted with their praise of Alley Kat's Redneck beer. *Alberta Report* was effusive in its praise of Redneck beer as a

beer “targeted at westerners”; at “Albertans proud to stick out their red necks.”⁴²

What is at stake here and in so much of what the *Alberta Report* published, especially in the 1990s, is what counts as a true Albertan in the context of Canada. *Alberta Report* was committed during this time to distinguishing Alberta and its interests from the rest of Canada, particularly central Canada.⁴³ To the *Alberta Report*, the Molson beer commercials represented the worst of central Canadian-ness—“hyper-urbane,” self-centered, and decadent. Albertans, on the other hand, as represented by *Alberta Report* were alienated-from-the-rest-of-Canada, right-thinking individuals, in support of a particular sense of family values, business and free enterprise, unfettered economic growth, and small-g government. Not only did these characteristics distinguish Albertans from other Canadians, anyone living in Alberta not matching these characteristics was cast as an outsider—as not a true Albertan.

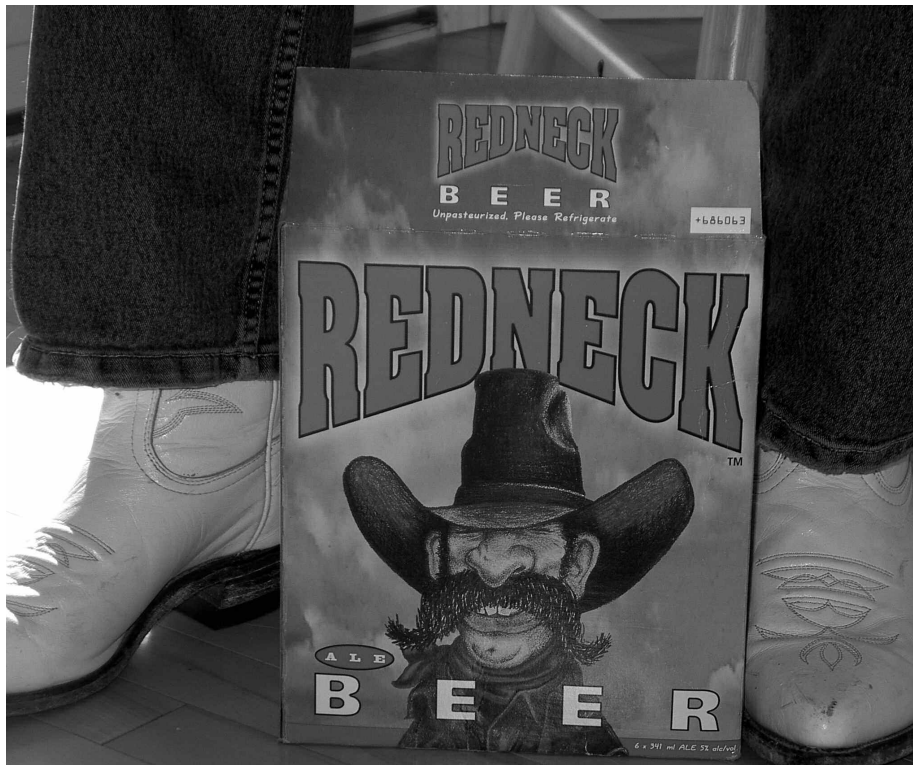


Photo Credit: G. Filax.

The label on Alley Kat's Redneck beer features a cowboy, dressed in traditional denim shirt and a large western style cowboy hat. He sports a large handlebar moustache. He is white, and, in *Alberta Report's* reading of the Redneck cowboy juxtaposed with Molson's gender ambiguous Canadians, he is decidedly straight. In Alberta, beer can announce the ideal of Alberta-ness.

There is no apparent recognition on the part of the writers for *Alberta Report* of their reification of Alberta-ness. In a later column, editor, Paul Bunner, wrote that he had since discovered that Alley Kat Brewery, described without irony as "proud makers of Redneck Beer," hosted a fundraiser for Gay Pride Week in Edmonton. Rather than recognize that the *Alberta Report's* representation of red necks and, by implication, Albertans as heterosexual might be problematic, Bunner's response was "memo to real rednecks: choose your beverages carefully."⁴⁴

I have argued that one of the ways that pedagogy of popular culture gets started is through recognizing dissonance or discord between what is being depicted and personal histories and investments. As is apparent from *Alberta Report's* literal, conservative reading of both the Molson Canadian commercials and the Redneck beer image, there is no dissonance recognized by the writers of *Alberta Report*, even in the face of contradiction, or, if dissonance is recognized, it is denied or explained away as the fault of outsiders.

It is hard to know what kind of dissonance could have shaken the writers of *Alberta Report* into recognizing inconsistencies in their portrayal of Albertans as unified in their values and identity, including their sexuality. Pedagogy of popular culture has limits for those who are committed to the realness and homogeneity of identity and hence who fail to recognize their own negotiations with popular cultural representations of identity and their own split allegiances. Noticing or recognizing internal dissonance or discord between one's values and beliefs and how others live their lives does not necessarily lead to questioning one's beliefs and values. As is evident with the writers for *Alberta Report*, recognizing dissonance can also lead to solidification of the positions one holds. If the writers of *Alberta Report* recognized that a homogenous Albertan identity is contradicted by other ways of living in the province, they did not use this dissonance to question their values and beliefs. Instead, their reaction was to cast these others as outsiders. Contradictions, in this case, served to solidify the *Alberta Report's* position, not undermine it.

The example from the *Alberta Report* shows that conflict in the face of contradiction may not trigger dissonance or if there is dissonance, it may solidify rather than change values. How else, then, might a pedagogy of popular culture get started? When one's position is entrenched nothing short of a major personal upheaval is likely to evoke change but recognition of dissonance can also be facilitated by what Kellner refers to as "critical-oppositional"⁴⁵ public intellectuals who serve as pedagogues. Critical-oppositional public intellectuals can "mobilize desires" by introducing popular culture in ways so that "conflict will emerge"⁴⁶ and then by generating questions and suggestions about how representations of the codes and standards of one's culture may not coincide with personal histories and investments. This creation of discord and its recognition by public intellectuals can occur in a number of ways. Kellner argues that public intellectuals can no longer rely on written texts to generate debate. Instead, he says, public intellectuals must be engaged in community and low-power radio, public access television, computer bulletin boards, and discussion groups. Interventions can also be into chat rooms and discussion boards about popular culture. For example, YouTube is a site ripe for critical public intervention. Many of the Molson commercials from the last five to ten years can be found on YouTube and these and other videos beg for public critical intervention. In the case of *Alberta Report*, university professors did intervene on *Alberta Report's* letters pages about various issues and readers were often faced with dissonance between *Alberta Report's* staunch positions and the critique in the letters.

Pedagogy of Popular Culture: The Labour of Questioning

If learning is to occur from recognition of ambiguity, dissonance, and contradiction, recognition must be followed by questions about how one's engagement with popular culture is so different in certain instances from that of others and/or how one's split engagement with the cultural stories that identify a nation, region, sexuality or other identity categories contribute to these differences. Posing these questions makes it possible to further question how experiences have been produced in the way they have, in relation to identity categories such as gender, class, race, ability, and citizenship. Morris argues that the process of noticing and interrogating, for example, "racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, class, generational and national differences... [includes how] these are produced and contested in history" and how these, in turn, "critique... cultural universals."⁴⁷ For those engaged

in pedagogy of popular culture, this questioning process may involve a genealogy of experiences: tracing those processes that position people, including oneself, in particular ways and which produce their particular set of experiences and not others, in relation to identity categories.⁴⁸

To illustrate how this questioning might work, I want to return to the *Alberta Report's* representation of the Molson commercials and Redneck beer and present a different reading of these representations based on an understanding of a small part of my own historicized experience. During the 1990s, I was researching how queer youth in Alberta negotiated expert, legal, and popular culture discourses about sexuality, many of which overwhelmingly denied the value of their lives.⁴⁹ Remarkably, *Alberta Report* had the most complete and comprehensive coverage of queer issues in the province during the 1990s.⁵⁰ I spent many fraught but often amused hours reading the *Alberta Report* as part of this research. In almost every issue, the *Alberta Report* represented gays and lesbians as disgusting deviants. Their accounts were often hateful but many were presented in a way that was so flamboyant or outrageous as to be almost camp. Consider these headlines from among hundreds in *Alberta Report*:

Of Chemicals and Sex: Can Pollutants Cause Promiscuity and
Homosexuality?

The Skater-Boy Who Wasn't: A Lesbian in Drag Seduces Young Girls

What Exactly Was It That Gained Sodomy Such a Fine Reputation?

Homosex for the Masses: The Showcase Channel Airs a Celebration of
Gay Porn

From Dike to Diva: Lesbianism Has Become a Sexy and Sophisticated
Refuge for Women Who Have Given Up on Men

Abuse Made Me Gay, Now I Have AIDS

Diesel Dykes and a Devil Worshipper Named Louise

How Did It Happen That We Have no Right to Life, but Do Have a
Right to Sodomy?

When the article "No Queer Beer Here" appeared in the *Alberta Report*, I was already familiar with local Alley Kat brewery. I had attended their fundraisers to kick off Gay Pride week in Edmonton and I was acquainted with one of their brewmasters, who had input into the brewing of Alley Kat's Redneck beer. This

award winning brewmaster, Roxxie, is a transgender male to female, who is very involved in the Edmonton queer community. I was aware that my reading of the Molson commercials, the image from Redneck beer, and the dissonance I experienced from *Alberta Report's* initial enthusiastic response to Redneck beer as representative of Alberta straightness was a consequence of my own investment in queer communities in Alberta. The dissonance I experienced about *Alberta Report's* reading of the Molson commercial and the cowboy image was also informed by my knowing that "the cowboy" is a gay male trope, parodied by the American group, The Village People, most famously in their song "YMCA." I also knew that, to the dismay of the *AR*, the Alberta Gay Rodeo Association sponsored the first public gay rodeo in 1994 outside Calgary. Along with regular rodeo events, the rodeo included events such as the "drag" race featuring men in drag attempting to move a steer to the finish line. Rather than see a straight, redneck cowboy on the Redneck beer label, I read this cowboy as decidedly campy, queer, and gender ambiguous. I knew from Roxxie that Redneck beer was intended as a "joke beer." The fact that Redneck beer was produced by a queer-friendly brewer and that one of its brewmasters is transgendered, allowed me to understand that the joke was on the *Alberta Report* and to question why, even in the face of contradiction, the writers for *Alberta Report* were not prepared to modify their assessment of who counts as a true Albertan.

The dissonance I experienced between my reading of the beer commercials and that of *Alberta Report* was in relation to who counts as an Albertan or a Canadian and this dissonance has prompted an ongoing questioning for me of how these identities are produced. Much of my present work is directed by questioning of identity categories. I want to refuse dominant discourses about who is to count as Albertan and, through my work, create alternative representations, so that Albertans who do not match dominant representations of what it is to be an Alberta, like those queer youth in my earlier study, won't be dismissed, scorned, or worse for not conforming.

Pedagogy of Popular Culture: The Labour of Refusing and Creating Something New

As I outlined in the section on Foucault's ethics, Foucault argued that coming to understand how we are constituted as subjects in relation to norms and standards of

a culture can result in a refusal of who we have become; a refusal to continue to harmonize oneself to the norms of one's culture; to resist "new totalizing, difference-crushing machines achieved [through] hegemony: citizenship and consumption."⁵¹

Rather than harmonize, it is important to recognize that one lives within contradictions, ambiguities, incongruities, and that these can be cultivated into an unruliness that "promotes new forms of subjectivity."⁵² Refusing a passive involvement in cultural standards permits the possibility of reinventing oneself or creating something new. As Foucault indicates, this new way of participating is "not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture."⁵³ Nevertheless, these "patterns" can be pushed to their limit, played with, reconfigured, and redeployed.⁵⁴ When undertaken by individuals or by a group of people, playing with the limits of cultural expectations can have a disarming effect that can produce dissonance in audiences that may prompt their own recognition, questioning, refusal, and reinvention.

The connection of Alberta-ness to Alberta beef and the cowboy is very powerful in Alberta. How successful might refusal of this connection be in a province that is identified by its beef production?⁵⁵



With permission from Alberta Beef Producers.

Significantly, Alberta beef is not Canada beef. It represents a regional identity in much the same way that Alberta oil stands for values, beliefs, and norms of a people contained within the geographic space of the province of Alberta. The association of Alberta values with Alberta beef is captured in the Alberta Beef Producers' (ABP) 1988–2001 marketing campaign: "If it ain't Alberta, it ain't Beef." ABP launched this campaign as world attention was being paid to the 1988 Olympic Winter Games in Calgary. Utilizing imagery of three cowboys on a ranch, the public were given a face to associate with the Alberta beef industry⁵⁶ as well as a public face of Alberta. An association of beef production with open range grazing was promoted despite the fact that open range ranching ended in Canada in 1906 and that by the beginning of this century, 60 percent of the cattle industry occurs in feedlots.⁵⁷ Describing the significance of this marketing campaign, ABP indicated that "the open landscapes and ranches showed the clean and healthy environment that the cattle are grown in which further solidified Alberta Beef as the best in the world and ABP as caring stewards of the land."⁵⁸

Albertans who identified with cowboys and beef were shocked when an international singing star from Alberta, k. d. lang, was featured in a 1990 television ad produced by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), urging a boycott of the beef industry. Her "Meat Stinks" ad, which was never aired but was reported to exist by *Entertainment Tonight*,⁵⁹ riled the cattle ranchers of Alberta as well as the immediate community of Consort where her mother still lived.⁶⁰ In January 1993, attention was again on lang, who had been named a third-time recipient of a Grammy award. It was usual for the Alberta government to honour outstanding achievements of people who lived or had lived in the province by extending congratulations in the legislature. In lang's case, public acknowledgement was withheld for a month while politicians debated whether she should receive official recognition from the province. Accounts varied as to whether the delay was because lang is a lesbian or because she is a vegetarian. The *Alberta Report's* take was that the singer was using her prodigious talent and fame to "mess with youth's impressionable minds."⁶¹

lang came out publicly as a lesbian in the gay magazine, the *Advocate*, in 1992 and posed in 1993 on the cover of *Vanity Fair* in male drag with model Cindy Crawford provocatively perched over her as lang sat in a barber's chair. lang had teased her public about her sexuality long before her public outing. When she received a Juno award in 1985 as most promising female vocalist, she wore a

wedding dress, a pair of cut off cowboy boots, and her hair was cropped short. In interviews, lang made it clear that she was consciously parodying gender norms.⁶²

lang began her career as a country music artist but she was controversial in Nashville circles. Nashville tolerated her lesbianism but not her animal rights advocacy because of the close ties between country music and cattle ranching. Not only did lang not look like a female country music singer, her music had an edge to it that suggested to some that she was not entirely serious about country music. With albums such as *Absolute Torch and Twang* and lyrics such as “She was a big boned gal from Southern Alberta,” the effect for some was that this androgynous female wearing femme clothing and cowboy boots was playing with cowboy culture.

k. d. lang pushed the limits of country music, of country values and sensibilities, and ways of being a female performer. She created something new within the confines of her culture, which suggested other ways to be female, Albertan, and a cowboy. However, in Alberta, “questioning the consumption and production of beef is akin to being a traitor to the region”⁶³ and for many these new configurations *did not* disrupt gender, sexuality, or regional identity. Instead, k. d. lang was confirmed as “queer.”

In 2001, ABP re-launched its “If it ain’t Alberta, it ain’t Beef” campaign. This time, three women were featured that “all people could relate to... a young mother, a mother and producer, and a grandmother.”⁶⁴ Each “reflected the contribution made by women to Alberta’s ranching legacy as well as women’s role as primary household food purchasers.”⁶⁵



With permission from Alberta Beef Producers.

While there is the potential for dissonance between images of the cowboy and the female faces in traditional male cowboy gear that might lead to questioning about the work women do on ranches, this dissonance does little to disrupt the notion of open range ranching under the watchful eye of the cowboy. The women who posed for this poster are members of traditional ranching families and their images do not draw attention to the massive feedlots, which produce most Alberta beef. Therefore, while opening up questions about gender expectations, these “RancHers” do not disrupt notions of Alberta, gender, and the cowboy. They do not evoke the images of k. d. lang in her cut off cowboy boots and short hair, singing her “Big boned gal from Southern Alberta” and espousing vegetarianism.

In 2003, the United States banned the import of Alberta cows and beef because of a case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). In response to the U.S. boycott, millions of dollars were made available by governments to support beef producers and in Alberta thousands of I LOVE ALBERTA BEEF bumper stickers appeared on cars around the province.



“I Love Alberta Beef” bumper sticker

Those associated with the beef industry were shocked that the entire export of cattle and beef to the United States had been shut down. People in Alberta were encouraged to continue to eat beef to show the rest of the world that there was not a problem with this emblem of Alberta-ness. BSE could have provided an opportunity for a public discussion about beef production in Alberta,⁶⁶ which in turn might have allowed questioning of the association of the province with the cowboy. However, with the BSE crisis identification of beef with Alberta identity was strengthened⁶⁷ because “it was linked with a discourse rooted in a folk tradition of wholesome cowboys, wide open spaces, and ‘natural’ modes of beef production.”⁶⁸

ALBERTA BEEF

DRAG KING CABARET

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25TH | 10 PM SHARP

PRISM BAR & GRILL | 10524 101ST STREET

NO COVER CHARGE | 18+

SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY JUDITH 'JACK' HALBERSTAM



Alberta Beef Drag King Cabaret Poster. With permission from Laura (Lawrence) Crawford.

Alberta beef has been featured in attempts to push the limits of what counts as Albertan, particularly in relation to the masculinity associated with the cowboy image. In January 2007, a drag king group, *Alberta Beef*,⁶⁹ formed in conjunction with a talk by Judith Halberstam,⁷⁰ author of a number of books and articles on female masculinity and transgender identity. *Alberta Beef* uses cabaret to take up ideas of female masculinity, performativity, and gender.⁷¹ The unofficial theme song of *Alberta Beef* is “Save a Horse, Ride a Cowboy,” which is also the name of their first public performance. In each of their performances, which also included “Alberta Beef ... Rebranded!” and “Alberta Beef Overexposed,” they “play up Albertan cowboy masculinity.”⁷²

Founding *Alberta Beef* member Laura “Lawrence” Crawford⁷³ argues that transgender people—those who move between genders—offer a site to investigate gender demarcation and the regulation of public space.⁷⁴ Ironically, Crawford is a recipient of a Trudeau Scholarship, named for former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau who promoted unification of regional identities under the umbrella of the Canadian federation. Crawford’s performance as drag king pushes the boundaries of what counts as gender and sexuality as well as a unique Alberta identity in

relation to Canada. As Crawford says, “questioning... can be rewarding, fun, and change your life... [I]t’s hard to let things remain in question, yet those moments I didn’t know lead me to some of my greatest moments of understanding.”⁷⁵

Through their public performances, *Alberta Beef* have the potential to expose the limits of regional, gender, and sexual identity in a province whose dominant identity is straight masculinity, exemplified in the figure of the cowboy. Challenging cultural norms of sexual or gender appropriateness as well as what counts as regional identity through a popular culture form such as drag produces new ways of participating in public culture. Whether these new ways of participating in Alberta’s public culture will produce questioning and refusal of dominant stories about sexuality, gender, and Alberta identity by those who consider their identity immutable is not predictable. The possibility of parody creating something new “depends upon a context and reception in which subversive confusions can be fostered.”⁷⁶ Shogan underscores this point when she writes of a photograph of the wild drag race at the Calgary Gay Rodeo: “He is dragging what appears to be a full-grown steer while wearing a chiffon dress, gloves, a crown, and sneakers... It is possible for the man in drag participating in the gay rodeo to be ‘read’ as a spoof on rodeo, as an insult to women, a spoof on the artifice of gender, or as a consolidation of gayness as perverse and of a notion of what rodeo ‘really’ looks like when ‘real’ men participate. Only some of these readings have the potential to create new ways of understanding.”⁷⁷

Closing Comments

In this chapter, I have shown how Foucault’s ethics can be helpful in understanding what is involved in a pedagogy of popular culture. By taking up recognition, questioning, and refusal, and creating something new, a consumer of popular culture can be aware that popular culture is “a site... where different groups collide in transactions of dominance, complicity, and resistance over the power to name, legitimate, and experience different versions of history, community, desire, and pleasure”⁷⁸ and that these clashes are often the source of social inequalities. Using popular cultural representations of Alberta-ness as varied as the *Alberta Report* and k. d. lang or the *Alberta Beef* drag king group and the Alberta Beef Producers, I have shown that “doing” pedagogy of popular culture involves a labour of recognizing conflicts in what is represented as valuable or desirable in a culture,

questioning these representations, refusing them in some instances and, in doing so, producing other ways to engage with one's culture.

Pedagogy of popular culture permits consumers of popular culture to be as aware as cultural studies scholars that popular culture is a site of active negotiation. This awareness or recognition also involves noticing ways in which one is a split subject of many often-competing stories about, as examples, regional, national, or gendered identities, and how these stories often conflict. Recognition of split subjectivity opens up the possibility of historicizing one's experience by identifying the discourses or stories to which one has been subjected. In turn, this permits the opportunity to read representations of popular culture differently and the possibility of producing alternative ways of participating in a culture, including undermining social inequality.

Notes

1. Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, *Popular Culture: A User's Guide* (Scarborough: Nelson, 2004): 11.
2. Henry Giroux, "Doing Cultural Studies: Youth and the Challenge of Pedagogy," <http://www/gseis.ucla.edu/courses/ed253a/Giroux/Giroux1.html> (accessed 3 October 2007).
3. I take seriously the importance of acknowledging the labour of cultural studies, including exploited, overlooked labour for example that of students, housewives, subsistence farmers. See Toby Miller, this volume, "Cultural Labour, Cultural Relations, Cultural Politics: The Context for Canada."
4. See Patricia Hughes-Fuller's "Gothic Night in Canada" and Heather Devine's "After the Spirit Sang: Aboriginal Canadians and Museum Policy in the New Millennium" in this volume for disruptions to Canadian identity and myth. See Michele Helstein's "Producing the Canadian Female Athlete: Negotiating the Popular Logics of Sport and Citizenship" in this volume for research that disrupts gender and sexuality norms.
5. Some theorists take issue with what they perceive to be Foucault's idealism—that is, explaining social relations without granting primacy to what they consider material conditions. Foucault does not highlight, as do Marxists, relationships people have to economic processes, and in particular, the relationship people have to the prevailing mode of production, nor does he concern himself with neo-liberal accounts of consumption or with some feminist concerns with the primacy of patriarchal relations in materializing social inequalities. However, anyone reading the relentlessness of the descriptions from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* can't help but be convinced that

- Foucault locates his account of modern power within material conditions.
6. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979): 182.
 7. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–77*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989): 107.
 8. Debra Shogan, *The Making of High Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity and Ethics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999): 90.
 9. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure, Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1985): 26.
 10. Ibid, 26.
 11. Jon Simons. *Foucault & the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 35.
 12. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 27.
 13. Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 46.
 14. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, by H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983): 216.
 15. Shogan 1999, 90.
 16. Ibid, 90.
 17. Ibid, 91.
 18. Toby Miller, *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993): ix–x.
 19. Ibid, ix–x.
 20. See Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).
 21. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990): 145.
 22. Ibid, 145.
 23. Miller 1993. Following the work of Foucault, Miller considers how the interplay between knowledge and social control produce subjects and the contexts within which talk, action, and representation make sense. Foucault referred to these practices as discourses, contending that they are not merely bodies of ideas or ideologies, but they are also attitudes, modes of address, terms of reference, and actions that are reflected in social practices.
 24. See, for example, Margaret Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) or John O'Brian and Peter White, eds. *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007).
 25. J. T. Jockel, *Canada and International Peacekeeping* (Toronto: Canadian Institute for Strategic Studies 1994): 16–18.

26. A. Legault, *Canada and Peacekeeping: Three Major Debates* (Toronto: The Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1999): 72.
27. See the work of Will Kymlicka including *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
28. Scholarly work that challenges the notion of a coherent, unified Canadian or regional identity include Yasmin Jiwani's *Discourses of Denial: Meditations of Race, Gender, and Violence* (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Erin Manning's *Ephemeral Territories: Representing Nation, Home, and Identity in Canada* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press; and Eva Mackey's *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics & National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
29. Gwendolyn Blue, "If It Ain't Alberta, It Ain't Beef: Local Food, Regional Identity, (Inter)National Politics," *Food, Culture & Society* 11: 1 (2008): 74.
30. Sydney Sharpe, "Introduction" in *Alberta: A State of Mind*, eds. Sydney Sharpe, R. Gibbins, J. Marsh, & H. Bala Edwards (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2005).
31. Michaëlle Jean, *Alberta Views*, July/August 2006: 19.
32. A. Gregg, "The True West, Strong and Free," *The Walrus* 3: 7 (2006): 39–45.
33. Miller 1993.
34. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003): 278.
35. Ibid, 278.
36. Aritha van Herk, *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2001): 168.
37. For a counter claim to van Herk's more romanticized version of the cowboy see Max Foran's *Icon, Brand, Myth: The Calgary Stampede* (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2008).
38. Aritha van Herk 2001, 172.
39. Ibid, 168–174.
40. Mark Milke, "No Queer Beer Here: Alley Kat Targets Alberta's Redneck Market," *Alberta Report*, 30 June 1997: 12.
41. In Molson's later commercials, such as "The Rant" and "Where's Your Pet Beaver?" the Canadian viewer is encouraged to identify with longstanding stories about Canada as distinct from the United States that differentiate Canadians as peace loving, nice (hence non-racist), quiet, uncritical, and who have embraced and succeeded at multiculturalism.
42. Mark Milke, "No Queer Beer Here: Alley Kat Targets Alberta's Redneck Market," *Alberta Report*, 30 June 1997: 12.
43. Gloria Filax, *Queer Youth in the Province of the Severely Normal* (Vancouver: UBC

- Press, 2006).
44. Paul Bunner, "Editor's Notes" *Alberta Report*, 25 May 1998: 4.
 45. Douglas Kellner, "Intellectuals, the New Public Spheres, and Techno-Politics," <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/ed253anewDK/intell.htm> (accessed 25 August 2009).
 46. Henry Giroux and Roger Simon, *Popular Culture: Schooling and Everyday Life* (New York, Westport, and London: Bergin Garvey, 1989): 15.
 47. Meaghan Morris, *Ecstasy and Economics: American Essays for John Forbes* (Sydney: E.M. Press): xx.
 48. Joan Scott, "Experience," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan Scott (London and New York, 1992): 25.
 49. Gloria Filax, *Queer Youth in the Province of the Severely Normal* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006): xii.
 50. Ibid, xiii.
 51. See Toby Miller's article in this volume.
 52. Foucault, "The Subject and Power."
 53. Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *The Final Foucault*, eds. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994): 11.
 54. Shogan 1999, 93.
 55. Discourses of "beef" disregard cows as sentient beings whose interests are not reflected in beef production.
 56. Alberta Beef Producers: Marketing Campaigns, http://www.albertabeef.org/consumers/marketing_campaigns/ (accessed 7 January 2008).
 57. Blue 2008, 78, 79.
 58. Alberta Beef Producers: Marketing Campaigns.
 59. Blue 2008, 80.
 60. Judy Davidson, "So What's the Beef?: k. d. lang Comes Out as a Lesbian," unpublished paper, March 1993.
 61. Paul Bunner, "Editor's Notes," *Alberta Report*, 25 May 1998: 4.
 62. Richard Flohil, "Voice from the West: The k. d. lang Success Story Involves Much More Than Luck," *The Canadian Composer* 206 (1985): 4–11, 34.
 63. Blue 2008, 80.
 64. Alberta Beef Producers: Marketing Campaigns.
 65. Blue 2008, 76.
 66. Ibid, 82
 67. Ibid, 71.
 68. Ibid, 82.
 69. In keeping with recent demographic trends in Alberta, most of the members of *Alberta Beef* migrated from elsewhere in Canada.

70. Halberstam is the author of *Female Masculinity*, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* and a new book from NYU Press, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*.
71. See <http://mise-en-abyme.blogspot.com/2007/01/save-horse-ride-cowboy> (accessed 22 February 2008).
72. Richard Cairney, "Trudeau Scholar Examines Gender Demarcation," Faculty of Arts News, University of Alberta, <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/arts/news.cfm?story-6263> (accessed 22 February 2008).
73. See Laura Crawford blog at <http://mise-en-abyme.blogspot.com/2007/01/save-horse-ride-cowboy> (accessed 22 February 2008).
74. For scholarly writing on transgender theory see Jean Bobby Noble's *Masculinity Without Men?: Female Masculinity* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003) and *Sons of the Movement: FtMs Rising Incoherence on a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2006); and Vivian Namaste's *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
75. Ted Kerrsted, "QueerMonton," *Vue* 622, 19 September 2007: front, <http://www.vueweekly.com/article.php?id-7021> (accessed 22 February 2008).
76. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990): 139.
77. Shogan 1999, 97.
78. Giroux and Simon 1989, 11.

<6>

POPULAR GENRES IN QUEBEC CINEMA

*The Strange Case of Horror
in Film and Television*

André Loiselle

Over the last several years, a number of French Canadian filmmakers have distanced themselves from the two dominant axes of Quebec cinema—realism and auteurism—and have asserted their intention to make popular genre films.¹ Genres are not new in Quebec. In fact, there have been genre films made in French Canada for sixty years. Melodramas, such as *La petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre* (1951, Jean-Yves Bigras), dominated the industry in the 1940s and 50s, and light comedies have been a staple of Quebec cinema and television since the 1960s. The change that has marked the last decade is thus not the emergence of genre films *per se*, but rather the increased diversification of genres. Crime thrillers, historical epics, children's movies, and even science fiction films, all relatively rare in the canon, up until recently, have now become common.

The genre whose presence has most drastically increased in Quebec cinema over the last decade is horror. There are doubtless industrial and commercial reasons for the sudden emergence of horror in Quebec film and television, but as this essay will argue the recent production of French Canadian scary movies and TV shows also reflects an important shift in Québécois culture. While in many ways Quebec remains a largely homogeneous society, there are clear signs that the once seemingly unified French Canadian nation has now become more fragmented and divided. It is no coincidence, I contend, that this growing sense of cultural disintegration has found expression in a popular genre that thrives on displaying the dismemberment of the unified body: horror.

Popular Film and Television in Quebec

The roots of the genre “boom” in Quebec can probably be dated to the mid-1980s, when changes in funding policies, epitomized by the creation of Telefilm Canada in 1984, started putting greater emphasis on commercial viability. A succession of big hits in the 1980s and 1990s, primarily broad comedies like *Cruising Bar* (Robert Morin, 1989), *Ding et Dong, le film* (Alain Chartrand, 1990), *La Florida* (George Mihalka, 1993), and Louis Saia’s *Les Boys* series (1997–2006), demonstrated that Quebecers would gladly go see homemade films if they could provide entertainment similar to Hollywood movies. The success enjoyed by comedies inspired filmmakers to move increasingly towards other genres. Jean-Marc Vallée’s crime thriller *Liste noire* (1995) was the first non-comedy genre film of the period to make over one million dollars;² it triggered the diversity that we now see in Quebec. Homemade genre films like the melodrama *Séraphin: un homme et son péché* (Charles Binamé, 2002) and the bilingual cop action/comedy *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* (Eric Canuel, 2006) have broken box office records at home. They are not only successful as “Quebec movies.” They have also become some of the top-grossing films in Quebec regardless of origin.

Along with the diversification of genres on the big screen, primetime television in Quebec has also changed since the 1990s. The typical *téléromans* of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, such as *Rue des pignons* (1966–1977) and *Le Temps d’une paix* (1980–1986), were realist chronicles of the mundane existence of ordinary French Canadians. But over the last twenty years, television series have broadened their themes and styles. They now display more sensationalist stories and do not shy

away from sex and violence. The content and form of sleek, high-production-value television series made in Quebec since the 1990s, like the alluring excitement of newsroom intrigues in *Scoop* (1991–1995) and the spectacular brutality of Montreal's underworld in *Omertà* (1996–1999), are drastically different from the low-budget, low-key, low-resolution shows produced in earlier decades. Yet, French Canadian audiences have effortlessly adapted to the new trends. On any given week, almost two million Quebecers would gather to watch the glossy mobster show *Omertà* or the intricate psychological thriller *Fortier* (2000–2004).³

The popularity of Quebec genre films and television *in Quebec* is the most obvious manifestation of the differences between English Canadian cinema and the Quebec film industry. French Canada's linguistic marginality within North America has in some ways been isolating and disenfranchising. But this sense of isolation has also encouraged the development of strong cultural industries to appeal to local audiences. Over time, an effervescent, homemade popular culture has emerged. Today Quebec has a genuine star system, complete with epic tales of rags to riches and lurid accounts of scandalous excesses filling the pages of French-language tabloids. There simply isn't an equivalent in Anglophone Canada, at least in terms of film and television (the popular music scene is a different story altogether). While French-language films produced in Quebec appeal to a very large percentage of the francophone public, movies made in other Canadian provinces continue to reach only a very small portion of the population.

To be fair, English Canadian television has been more successful in appealing to Canadians than cinema. But even if English Canadian television has enjoyed some hits like *Corner Gas* (2004–2009) that have managed to reach up to two million viewers weekly,⁴ such numbers are proportionally much smaller than comparable hits on Quebec television. English Canada has more than three times the population of French Canada, thus the two million viewers of *Corner Gas* are much less impressive than the two million viewers of *Fortier*, to say nothing of the three to four million viewers who regularly watched the most successful sitcom in Quebec television history, *La petite vie* (1993–1998).⁵

As film historian Pierre Véronneau has noted, "since 2000, Quebec cinema seems to have reached a certain equilibrium, where *auteur* films can thrive alongside commercially successful genre movies, with homemade productions earning over 20 percent of the box office in Quebec, and reaching an extraordinary 26 percent in 2005 (few countries in the world ever manage to do better than this

against the global Hollywood steamroller).”⁶ While Quebec cinema consistently attracts sizable audiences in the province, Canadian cinema has been stagnant over the last decade.⁷ English Canadian audiences watch almost exclusively Hollywood films, and English Canadian film crews work primarily on the type of Hollywood runaway productions that Toby Miller discusses briefly in his contribution to this volume. Miller rightly points out that in 2000 Toronto saw more foreign than local production. Conversely, the Quebec film industry continues to produce a healthy number of indigenous features that include both art films and popular genre movies. This diversification of output has allowed Quebec cinema to enjoy its current success. And perhaps the most telling example of this is the emergence of horror as a viable genre.

To my knowledge, prior to the 1990s, there had been only *one* French-language horror film produced in Quebec⁸: Jean Beaudin’s *Le Diable est parmi nous* from 1972. Thirty years later, Beaudin returned to the genre with *Le Collectionneur* (2002), a psycho-killer tale of terror based on Chrystine Brouillet’s popular novel. *Le Collectionneur* is among a growing number of films whose main purpose is to scare and disturb their audience. The emergence of horror, a genre that, unlike comedy, has a relatively limited target audience (some people will never go see a horror film!), is the best sign of a national cinema that has great confidence in its own popularity. The production of speciality genres like horror suggests that Quebec cinema believes in its ability to survive the fragmentation of spectatorship.

Recent scary movies like *Le Collectionneur*, *Sur le seuil* (2003, Éric Tessier), *Saints-Martyrs-des-Damés* (2005, Robin Aubert), *La Peau blanche* (2004, Daniel Roby) and *5150, Rue des Ormes* (2009, Éric Tessier) clearly borrow conventions from Hollywood. Psycho killers, Satanists, mad scientists, witches, and man-eating monsters are all typical characters of the American horror film that have now found their way into Quebec cinema. French Canadian horror films, however, retain distinctive characteristics that make them undeniably *Québécois*. The same can be said of television. *Grande Ourse* (2003, Patrice Sauvé) and its sequel *L’Héritière de Grande Ourse* (2005, Patrice Sauvé) are among the first Quebec television series to include elements of mystery and horror. Like horror films, horror television series recycle conventions from other traditions while managing to offer an innovative take on distinct cultural issues.

The main cultural issue that Quebec horror explores on both the big screen and the small screen is the dichotomy between urban modernity and rural

traditionalism in French Canada. As we shall see below, through its excessive, Manichean mode of address, horror expresses the growing concern around the perceived fragmentation of national homogeneity in the province. As Montreal's dominant urbanism disengages itself increasingly from traditional French Canadian values, the rest of the province seems to recede deeper into the dark corners of *passéisme*. If one agrees with the basic formula for the horror film proposed by Robin Wood in his seminal introduction to *The American Nightmare* (1979), namely that "normality is threatened by the Monster," then normality in these recent Quebec tales of terror is urban culture and the monster is rural primitivism.⁹

The Urban and the Rural in Quebec Culture

Urbanization in Quebec was slow in the first half of the twentieth century, with the 1930s even witnessing something of a return to the land as a reaction against rampant unemployment in the cities. Unlike in Ontario, where urban growth was more sustained and diversified, urbanization in Quebec before World War II was often stagnant and limited almost exclusively to the island of Montreal.¹⁰ Urban development increased drastically after the war, and by the 1960s, urban culture had become the dominant ethos of the province.¹¹ However, the rural and the land have continued to occupy a central place in the French Canadian imagination. As Gillian Helfield explains in her article, "Cultivateurs d'images: Albert Tessier and the Rural Tradition in Québécois cinema," the idea of the peaceful countryside as the space where the essence of Québécois identity resides remains a common trope, appearing not only in films throughout the history of Quebec cinema but also in other social spheres. For instance, the 1995 Preamble to Bill 1, tabled by the Parti Québécois government to map out the geography of an eventual independent Quebec, "encapsulated mythic constructions of Québécois identity [appropriating] images, traditions, and values rooted in the land. The Preamble also suggested that the Québécois nation is still concretely rooted in the land."¹² For separatists, as well as many other Quebecers, the city might be where a majority of the population lives, but the *real* Québécois belongs in the countryside. This is the ideology that the Catholic Church promoted for decades before the 1960s wave of modernization and secularization known as the Quiet Revolution.¹³ In spite of the profound changes that Quebec

society has undergone since 1960, this traditional perspective still lingers today under different guises.

Like other cultural practices, cinema and television have tended to conceive the imaginary geography of Quebec in binary terms, with the countryside as the cradle of French Canadian culture in contrast to the city as a space where the old stock or *pure laine* Québécois risks being subjected to negative foreign influences, especially *Anglophone* influences. The reality is, obviously, more complex than that. Suburbia represents a third space that is arguably as different from the big city as it is from rural areas. In fact, in the 1960s and 70s the population of core cities declined while that of the suburbs increased.¹⁴ But cinema and television have generally ignored this complex dynamic, and have assigned specific and rather static meanings to each of these three spaces. Urban and rural areas—where, as Bill Marshal has noted, most Quebec films are set¹⁵—work as a dyad embodying two versions of Quebec culture: the modern and the traditional.

Suburbia, for its part, stands alone as the incarnation of an Americanized middle-class middle ground. It is neither thrillingly progressive like the city nor nostalgically reassuring like the countryside. Instead, it is typified by characterless houses on interchangeable streets, peopled by comfortably mediocre nobodies wallowing in their own *kétainerie* (tackiness). There are historical reasons for this association of the suburb with the more boring elements of American culture. As Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, and François Ricard point out, the new urbanism of the 1950s followed an American model, which favoured mass movement from the city to the suburbs.¹⁶ This model fostered the geographical shift of downtowns, away from the earlier spaces of burgeoning modernity towards the passive sites of late capitalist consumption. In the process, it broke the distinction between Montreal, as a literal *island* of urbanity, and the rest of the province as an essentially rural territory. The very emergence of the suburb as this liminal space, where the urban amalgamates the rural in often-dissonant ways, is thus an American idea superimposed upon a visually denatured Quebec landscape. Not surprisingly, films ranging from Pierre Falardeau's *Elvis Gratton, le King des Kings* (1985) to Robert Morin's *Que dieu bénisse l'Amérique* (2006) present suburbia as a space of disengaged artifice, where the adornments of the American way of life hide the barren desolation of French Canadian existence uprooted from its ancestral cultural space.

The two other spaces, the urban and the rural, tend to work in heterotopic relation with one other. Heterotopia, says Foucault, is neither a utopia nor a dystopia, for the heterotopia does exist at least at some level. To quote Foucault: “the heterotopia is simultaneously a mythic and a real contestation of the space in which *we* live.”¹⁷ Foucault uses the mirror as an example of heterotopia, that is, a real space upon which we project an image of ourselves that is reversed.¹⁸ The analogy of the mirror is relevant here because the heterotopic correlation between the city and the countryside within the cinematic context is very much based on a visual distinction. As sociologist Bruno Jean writes in his book *Territoires d’avenir: Pour une sociologie de la ruralité* (1997), while there may or may not be drastic social or cultural differences between urbanites and country folk, the specific morphology of the rural landscape remains strikingly distinct, *visually*, from the cityscape.¹⁹ Unlike suburbia, which looks at once *like* and *unlike* the city, the rural offers a visually recognizable heterotopia that can be used to comment on the city—to hold the mirror up to urban nature, as it were.

Historically, the rural space has been constructed cinematically, in films like Gilles Groulx’s 1964 *Le Chat dans le sac* and Gilles Carle’s 1972 *La vraie nature de Bernadette*, as well as in television series like *Terre humaine* (1978–1984) and *Le Temps d’une paix* (1980–1986), as the repository of the *fundamental* values of Quebec culture; where the *real* Quebec is located. When the alienated urbanite goes back to the country it is to rediscover the values—embodied visually in trees and lakes and snow—that s/he has lost somewhere along the way through overexposure to the busy streets, noisy bars, inhuman office towers, and foreign influences of the city. Quebec’s only French language horror film of the 1970s, *Le Diable est parmi nous*, conveys exactly this message, albeit through the excessive mode typical of the genre. In this film, mysterious exotic *objets d’arts* are instrumental in turning a group of Montrealers into devil worshippers. While the film ends on the pessimistic note that the devil walks “among us” (“parmi nous”) in the streets of the big city, the film offers a brief escape from this threat when, halfway through the narrative, the main character (Daniel Pilon) and his girlfriend (Louise Marleau) drive away from the urban nightmare to a small village where they can enjoy, however briefly, a return to pastoral peacefulness.

As mentioned above, this conception of a peaceful rural space as the locus of authentic “French-Canadianness” away from metropolitan corruption has not

only appeared in Quebec film and television. In very concrete ways, the rural has been constructed within Quebec culture as a solid anchor, secured deep under the surface, in staunch resistance against the foreign influences that threaten *pure laine* Québécois identity. Perhaps more than anything else, the Francophone countryside has been—and in some ways continues to be—perceived as a linguistic sanctuary away from the English-Canadian population that thrives in Montreal. In his book *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*, Richard Handler discusses various programs devised by the Quebec government in the 1960s and 70s to promote an appreciation of the Québécois's Francophone heritage or *patrimoine*. One such program was "Vacances-Familles," initiated in 1971, which arranged for urbanites to spend time with rural families.²⁰ "Organizations like Vacances-Familles," writes Handler, "direct city dwellers to country folk, middle-class white-collar families to small farmers, intellectuals to 'natural' Québécois. It caters to those in search of their roots, or those who want their children to experience country life as they imagine their grandparents had experienced it."²¹ Relating his own experiences with Vacances-Familles, Handler adds that the host families were "certainly aware that tourists interpret their lives as folkloric manifestations of true Québécois culture, yet they did not generally rearrange their routines in order to demonstrate their authenticity or to treat [tourists] to the folklore [they] had come to see."²² Such initiatives were thus clearly aimed at "locating the popular" within the context of a rural folk culture that was deemed to have resisted the gravitational pull of the cosmopolitan, Anglophile urban centre.

This search for roots still exists today²³ and can be seen in more recent films like Denys Arcand's *L'Âge des ténèbres* (2007) and Jean-François Pouliot's *La Grande Séduction* (2003). In the former, a jaded, demoralised civil servant finds solace in a natural landscape away from the chaos and meaninglessness of his urban existence. In the latter, a coke-snorting, jazz-listening plastic surgeon finds the true meaning of life in a remote village where he replaces his scalpel for a fishing rod. But while recent art films like *L'Âge des ténèbres* still tend to draw an aesthetically pleasing, impressionistic picture of the country as a site of redemption for the misguided urbanite, recent horror films and television adopt quite a different perspective. Indeed, in recent horror films, the rural as a peaceful site of nationalist rejuvenation has been completely transformed into a *locus horribilis*, where picturesque local colours disappear behind Satanism, witchcraft, torture, and gruesome murders. While the depiction of rural areas as terrifying places is

certainly not new in horror films from Hollywood and elsewhere—one only needs to think of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *The Wicker Man* (1973)—it *is new* in Quebec cinema.

The Rural as Quebec's New *Locus Horribilis*

For the longest time, the urban–rural split was veiled by the myth of the “unified nation,” whereby *all* old-stock Québécois were deemed to be fundamentally similar, with the urbanites being somewhat more distanced from their true “rural” origins, having been corrupted by English-Canadian power. Early in Michel Brault’s 1974 masterpiece *Les Ordres*, a dejected working-class character (Jean Lapointe) living a miserable urban existence states: “I was born on a farm like my wife, Marie. I guess our biggest mistake was coming to the city.” This line sums up the nationalist myth of French-speaking Montrealers who long to return to the farm and rejoin their Québécois brethren. In recent years, however, drastically divergent ideological positions between the city and the countryside have started to erode this idea of a homogeneous nation belonging in the countryside. Increasingly, the country is perceived by urbanites as conservative, insular, and sometimes downright backward. The results of the March 2007 election in Quebec made manifest this cultural divide. The tremendous gains made by Mario Dumont’s right wing, anti-immigration *Action Démocratique du Québec* outside Montreal exposed the dialectic between urban liberalism and rural conservatism. In 2006, a small village, Hérouxville, had proposed ultra-conservative bylaws meant to prohibit certain practices associated with Islamic fundamentalism. While most urban politicians criticized this proposal for its blatant racism, Dumont spoke out in favour of the proposed rules. The remarkable surge of popularity of the ADQ in rural areas in the months leading up to the 2007 election attested that Dumont’s assertion of the need to defend Quebec’s traditional values struck a chord with a large portion of the population outside the metropolis.²⁴ Significantly, by the end of 2008, when the Hérouxville affair had died down and other issues were dominating the headlines, the ADQ had already lost much of its support even outside Montréal.²⁵ Clearly, this one-platform party could not thrive without exploiting rural racist sentiments, which had reached their apex in 2006–2007.

A 2007 series of public consultations on “reasonable accommodations” for immigrants—known as the Bouchard–Taylor Commission²⁶—further exposed

the division between Montreal and the countryside. While in remote areas such as Saguenay, prejudices against ethnic and religious minorities were clearly expressed, in Montreal participants to various forums, especially young people, appeared to embrace the ideal of multicultural interaction.²⁷ The most notorious participant in the consultation was probably Saguenay's mayor Jacques Tremblay, who insisted that Quebec is foremost a Catholic nation and that French Canadians are entitled to impose their religious values on others. The response from many Montrealers was one of bewildered disbelief before Tremblay's small-town narrow-mindedness. Representative of this petrified astonishment on the part of urbanites was an article by François Parenteau in the hip, urban weekly *Voir*. For Parenteau, Jacques Tremblay's presentation to the Bouchard–Taylor Commission was comparable to a “Taliban speech, spoken by a hillbilly priest who wants to drag us back to a pre-Quiet Revolution time of benedictions at the lumberjack camp.”²⁸ For Parenteau and other urbanites, such as well-known intellectual Denise Bombardier, the Bouchard–Taylor Commission was a useful exercise to reveal the “raw truth” of Quebec culture in all its ugliness, rage, and hatred.²⁹

The Bouchard–Taylor Commission, along with the 2007 provincial election, made evident the chiasm between Montreal's laic multiculturalism and the conservatism and religiosity of country folk.³⁰ It would obviously be a gross exaggeration to claim that every Montrealer now perceives the rest of Quebec as a hotbed of hillbilly religious fundamentalism. But there is no doubt that the gulf between urban cosmopolitanism and rural conservatism has become increasingly apparent. I would argue that the urbanite's current perception of the countryside as a site of radical religious conservatism has found a most striking expression in recent Quebec horror films and television shows. Within the horror idiom of *Sur le seuil*, *Saints-Martyrs-des-Damés* and the *Grande Ourse* series, this takes the form of a binary opposition between savage, pagan rituals and urban scientific/technological rationalism. The way in which these works tackle the dichotomy must have also struck a chord with French Canadian spectators, since hundreds of thousands flocked to theatres to see the films or sat before their televisions to watch the series.³¹

Sur le seuil*, *Saints-Martyrs-des-Damés*, and *Grande Ourse

Sur le seuil is the most obvious example of a narrative that sees the rural as the site of primitive beliefs and arcane superstitions. Based on a novel by Patrick Senécal,

Sur le seuil tells the story of a psychiatrist named Paul Lacasse (Michel Coté) who must take care of new patient Thomas Roy (Patrick Huard), a horror novelist who has purposefully cut off his fingers before trying to commit suicide. A cynical, middle-aged physician who thinks he has seen it all, Paul initially perceives Roy's condition as a relatively banal case of psychosis. As the narrative unfolds, however, he becomes increasingly confused by the succession of strange coincidences surrounding the case. His investigation into the novelist's peculiar history leads him far away from Montreal, to a remote village where Catholic religion meshes with satanic worship. He gradually comes to believe that Roy is the actual incarnation of Evil. The novel and the film close on a scene of murderous madness in the psychiatry wing where Roy is kept. In the middle of an orgy of blood and gore where dead bodies indulge in post-mortem carnality, Roy abducts Jeanne (Catherine Florent), Paul's pregnant colleague, and tears out the fetus from her womb. Paul and the police arrive just in time and shoot the mad novelist, but not before he has managed to kiss Jeanne's nascent child and transmit evilness to the infant.

It is significant that the explosion of insane violence and terror in the urban hospital follows Paul's journey away from the city, into the "heart of darkness" of rural Quebec. In both the film and the novel, the passage from the urban norm to the rural heterotopia disrupts Paul's perception of the world around him at two levels. First, in concrete terms, the Montrealer arriving in the village of Mont-Mathieu is disturbed by the eerie silence and emptiness of this village right out of 1940s *Grande Noirceur*.³² In the novel, Paul describes his arrival in Mont-Mathieu as follows:

Je me retrouve sur un petit chemin de campagne, sous un ciel couvert... la nervosité me gagne de plus en plus... Je passe devant un magasin général, quelques petites maisons colorées, des piétons plutôt âgés qui me regardent d'un air méfiant... Je m'arrête et sors de mon véhicule. Le calme est total. L'église est entièrement isolée ... Une angoisse terrible me paralyse soudain... Et j'envisage alors très sérieusement de tourner les talons et de partir. Fuir... retourner à Montréal et prendre ma retraite. Point final. Tanpis pour Roy, tant pis pour les explications.³³

The terrible calm of the surroundings, the suspicious looks of the elderly locals, and the isolation of the church do not only create a sense of dread in Paul,

but specifically make him want to turn around and go back to Montreal, where he feels safe.

The last line of this passage also hints at the second level of disruption caused by heterotopia. Throughout most of the narrative, Paul seeks logical explanations for Roy's condition. Only when faced with the other space of primitive beliefs does he contemplate, for the first time, giving up on explanations. However, he does not turn around and give up his quest for meaning. Rather he proceeds to interrogate the village priest, Father Lemay (Albert Millaire) from whom he hopes to get answers. But what he gets is a further challenge to his rational perspective. As the village priest relates the story of Roy's birth during a black mass, Paul's rationalism is gradually eroded. That a trustworthy figure like a priest could tell tales of a clergyman turned Satanist and of faithful parishioners-turned-devil-worshippers clashes with Paul's rational expectations. The slow, irrevocable recognition that Thomas Roy was born of evil is as unacceptable as it is undeniable. For the atheist, rational urbanite, the small village church where Roy was born during a black mass is the ultimate heterotopia that exposes, in its reversed religiosity, the fragile foundations of modern rationalism. As Paul leaves the village, he acknowledges that the horror that has unfolded in the other space of perverse religiosity undermines reason.

... je tourne la tête vers l'église. Elle se dresse contre le ciel noir, imposante... elle me semble terrible et menaçante. J'ai l'impression que des secrets immondes s'y trouvent camouflés et que, si j'ouvrais la porte, un flot de sang et de cadavres déferlerait jusqu'à mes pieds... Le père Lemay a raison, la vérité complète demeure dans l'ombre... Et même si je pouvais atteindre cette vérité, serais-je capable de la recevoir ?³⁴

Paul's acknowledgement of his inability to apprehend the truth marks the culmination of the moment of horror as rationalism and realism are obliterated by terror. Troban Grodal, in *Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings and Cognition*, calls "cognitive dissonance" this inability to "make sense" of supernatural phenomena, typical of rational characters in horror films.³⁵ Such cognitive dissonance causes profound angst in the character, as in the reader or spectator of tales of terror, when scientific certitudes are shattered by incomprehensible alterity.

Sur le seuil clearly manifests a newly acknowledged reality in Quebec; that is, that the “nation” is fragmented; split in two. On the one hand, the modern city that constantly tries to claim its place on the world stage,³⁶ and on the other hand, a rural Quebec that votes for the ADQ and is obsessed with people who worship weird gods and turn good old Catholic values upside down. The “cognitive dissonance” suffered by Paul Lacasse mirrors the bewilderment experienced by urbanites before the radical conservatism of country folk.

Saints-Martyrs-des-Damés and the *Grande Ourse* series³⁷ add another spin to the urban-rural dichotomy, namely, the appropriation, transformation and “perversion” of urban technology by the country folk. In both narratives, an urban journalist is sent to investigate the peculiarities of a remote village. Unlike in *Sur le seuil*, where the rural threat is wholeheartedly supernatural, in *Saints-Martyrs* and *Grande Ourse* seemingly inexplicable events are eventually explained as the result of misguided scientists using technology for their malevolent purposes. In the former, a tabloid journalist, Flavien (François Chénier), goes to the remote village of Saints-Martyrs to report on strange disappearances. As his investigation unfolds, Flavien has disturbing visions filled with images of evil twins, a ghostly bride, a bloody groom, and a sinister man in a sombre suit. It turns out that a mad scientist named Dr. Faustin (Hubert Loiselle) is responsible for the disappearances. He kidnapped and killed people to create babies from the life juices of the dead. The twist is that Faustin used his methods to create male babies in his own image and female ones in the image of his mother. The crux of the drama results from one of his own clones marrying one of his mother’s clones. The idea that his creatures’ sexual relations amounted to his having intercourse with his own mother pushed him over the edge and made him kill his most beautiful creation—the bride that haunts Flavien’s nightmares. When Flavien realizes that he too is one of Faustin’s creatures, he kills his “father” to put an end to the cycle of narcissistic, incestuous self-reproduction.

The significance of this plot as a representation of how Quebec spectators perceive themselves emerges from the overlap of urban technology and a stereotypically rural proclivity for incest. Much of Quebec literature, especially by women, has focused on “hallucinatory tale[s] of jealousy, hatred, mutilation and incest set in ... rural Quebec,” to paraphrase Margaret Atwood’s description of Marie-Claire Blais’s debut novel, *La Belle Bête* (1959).³⁸ The new spin on traditional gothic stories of incest set in backward French Canada is that nowadays,

new technologies have found their way to the deepest recess of rural Quebec, but only to reassert traditional practices.

In his study on rurality, Bruno Jean argues that new technologies tend to be acquired at a quicker rate in Quebec's rural areas than in the cities. But according to Jean's analysis, the phenomenon does not merely reflect the rural population's desire to emulate urbanites. Rather, Jean argues that the specific rural utilization of technologies allow people living away from large centres to "mark their difference and their identity."³⁹ Rural populations consciously relate to technology in a way that asserts their distinct rapport with urban innovations. *Saints-Martyrs* thus mirrors a particular tendency of rural Quebec cultures that appropriate modern technologies, paradoxically enough, to affirm traditional identities. Of course, the technologies that Jean talks about have nothing to do with evil baby-making machines. But as is always the case within the excessive mode of horror, actual practices are exaggerated and distorted to the point of monstrosity to make an unmistakable point about the real atrocities that lie beneath the thin veneer of seemingly inoffensive, everyday life.

The technology that Jean is most interested in is television. He argues that when people from Gaspésie or other remote regions watch shows produced in Montreal, they do not fashion themselves after what they see, but rather apprehend the audiovisual material they witness as a spectacle of otherness.⁴⁰ Interestingly, television as a medium of otherness is at the centre of the last work I want to discuss, *Grande Ourse*.

Grande Ourse's narrative is more intricate than those of *Saints-Martyrs* and *Sur le seuil*—and in fact certain critics have praised Quebec television spectators for their willingness to meet the challenge presented by the show's convoluted plot.⁴¹ Of course, the ten one-hour episodes of the series allow for more protagonists and subplots than the 90-minute format of the feature film. But beyond that, the core narrative of the series is also more complex, in and of itself, than that of *Saints-Martyrs*. Most importantly, *Grand Ourse* does not entirely explain away the mystery through the figure of the mad scientist. In the series, a jaded, alcoholic, heart-broken media personality whose career is in decline, Louis-Bernard Lapointe (Marc Messier), is sent to a small village, accessible only by plane, to explore the unique character of Grande Ourse. Shortly after arriving in the forlorn mining town, Lapointe meets an enigmatic woman, a local witch called Blanche Von Trieck (Élise Guilbault). Blanche informs him that he is the "messenger" who

heralds her death and the beginning of the next generation of witches—the thirteenth generation of evil witches.

Through the rest of the series, Lapointe investigates the weird appearances of individual villagers on the local television station, as they publicly reveal deeply hidden secrets to their stunned friends and neighbours. For most of the series, we are led to believe that the bizarre televised confessions are generated by Blanche-the-Witch, who uses her supernatural powers to project images of the villagers' tormented souls onto TV screens. As such, the series initially appears to replicate horror films like *Poltergeist* (1982), in which television as a technological medium is transformed into a spiritualist medium. But Lapointe's investigation does not support this hypothesis. As the series reaches its climax, we are nowhere closer to an understanding of the witch and her followers than in the first episode. Rather the series' "big reveal" has to do with a classified research project and a female scientist, named Catherine (Anne Dorval), with whom Lapointe is in love. As *Grande Ourse* ends, we discover that Catherine has been using awkwardly antiquated neurological technology to expose, through TV pyrotechnics like fast editing and static effects, the hypocrisy of villagers who use and abuse one another. As such, the series gives radicalized form to the rural appropriation of television, which shows the true identity of the villagers through spectacle.

But at the same time as a scientific explanation is provided, the witchcraft narrative is not negated or resolved. Although she dies early in the series, Blanche-the-Witch continues to appear throughout the narrative. Most significantly, she appears as a bear—thus revealing the true meaning of the "big bear" of the title—at the end of the show when her followers ritualistically burn her body. Furthermore, while most strange occurrences are explained in the end, the series both opens and concludes on a gathering of creepy children who, we are led to believe, are the new generation of witches, but whose narrative function is never fully accounted for. The mad-scientist plotline thus appears as a superficial distraction that veils the much more mysterious and unknowable story of the witches of *Grande Ourse*. This mystery remains ultimately unresolved at the end of the series. What matters to me in this complicated storyline is that the series depicts the rural population as one that might appear to be modern in its use of technology, but which remains fundamentally anchored in traditional, primitive beliefs and practices that the urbanite cannot comprehend.

For the sequel of *Grande Ourse*, entitled *L'Héritière de Grande Ourse*, the action unfolding five years after the first series is set in a suburb rather than in an isolated village. While much of the mixture of witchcraft and technology remains central, the narrative becomes less compelling. In fact, weekly viewership declined drastically in the course of the sequel's broadcast. The previous success of *Grande Ourse* attracted 1.1 million viewers for the first episode of the sequel. But by the final episode, ten weeks later, viewership had dropped by 400,000.⁴² While there are probably other reasons for the mitigated success of the *L'Héritière*, I would argue that locating the action in the third space of suburbia diminished the horror effect of the series and, in the process, made it more a parody than a serious "série fantastique." While there is nothing wrong with generic hybridity, and the original series already included much humour, the tacky suburban setting emptied the series of its dark, menacing elements and transformed it into a light-hearted mockery of itself. This, I would argue, was a central reason for spectators' decreased interest. As mentioned earlier, suburbia lends itself less to gothic tales of terror than to parodic reflections on a made-in-Quebec American dream. The rural, on the other hand, is the perfect space to generate horrifying depictions of the French Canadian nightmare, namely, the ungodly return of repressed superstitions and perverse religiosity in reaction against the normalization of the multi-ethnic complexion of the province's main urban centre.

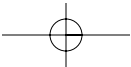
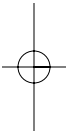
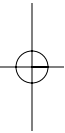
The recent proliferation of horror in Quebec film and television⁴³ coincides with an increased impression amongst the population that the nation is divided between urban cosmopolitan modernity and rural nationalist traditionalism. I would certainly not want to make the universal claim that there always exists a correlation between the disintegration of nationalist homogeneity and the rise of horror. But in the particular circumstances of Quebec in the early twenty-first century, horror seems to have emerged as an ideal mode to give form to this sense of social fracture, disintegration, and collapse. The strange case of horror in Quebec cinema thus bespeaks of a unique conjuncture in French Canadian culture when a screeching tear in the fabric of the nation finds expression in a popular genre that is wholly dedicated to the radical dismemberment of the unified body: the sparagmos.⁴⁴ Horror will thrive on Quebec screens as long as the current situation persists; it will fade away only when, or if, the nation awakes from its collective nightmare.

Notes

1. On the subject of genres in recent Quebec cinema, see Pierre Véronneau, "Genres and Variations: The Audiences of Quebec Cinema," in *Self Portraits: The Cinemas of Canada since Telefilm*, eds. André Loiselle and Tom McSorley (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 2006): 93–127.
2. "Appendix," *Self-Portraits*, 323.
3. Louise Cousineau, "Omertà mène le peloton, La Petite Vie numéro 2," *La Presse*, 16 September 1997: C13; Louise Cousineau, "Fortier 2: meilleur que le premier en tous points," *La Presse*, 2 February 2001: C4.
4. Tim Arsenault, "Guide a real gas," *Chronicle-Herald*, 9 December 2006: C10.
5. See André Loiselle, "A Small Life for the Small Screen: On the Cultural Phenomenon of the Sitcom *La petite vie* and the Critical Failure of the Feature *Ding et Dong, le film*," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 15:1 (Spring 2006): 8–27.
6. Véronneau 2006, 117.
7. Kate Taylor, "Quebec's up. English Canada? Never Mind," *Globe and Mail*, 30 December 2005: R3.
8. Although Montreal-made horror movies like *The Playgirl Killer* (1968) and *The Pyx* (1973) include a few snippets of French, they remain English-language films.
9. Robin Wood, "An Introduction to the American Horror Film." In *The American Nightmare*, eds. Robin Wood and Richard Lippe (Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1979): 14.
10. Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, and François Ricard, *Histoire du Québec contemporain: Le Québec depuis 1930, tome II* (Montreal: Boréal, 1989): 55–59.
11. *Ibid.*, 277, 535.
12. Gillian Helfield, "Cultivateurs d'images: Albert Tessier and the Rural Tradition in Québécois cinema," *Representing the Rural: Space, Place, and Identity in Films about the Land*, eds. Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006): 61.
13. Linteau et al., 1989, 309–310.
14. Linteau et al., 1989, 539–540.
15. Bill Marshall, *Quebec National Cinema* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001): 307.
16. Linteau et al., 1989, 540–541.
17. Michel Foucault, "Des Espace Autres," *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, October 1984; English version: "Text/Context of Other Space" *Diacritics* 16:1 (1986): 23.
18. *Ibid.*, 23–24.
19. Bruno Jean, *Territoires d'avenir: Pour une sociologie de la ruralité* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1997): 17.

20. See Bruno Roy, "*15 ans d'accessibilité pour tous, 1971–1986, Vacances-familles inc.* (Sainte-Foy: Vacances-famille, 1986).
21. Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988): 52.
22. Ibid, 53.
23. See my analysis of Quebec culture's current "nostalgia and search for origins" in *Cinema as History: Michel Brault and Modern Quebec* (Toronto: Toronto International Film Festival, 2007): 153–177.
24. See for instance Hélène Baril, "Élections 2007: Le Choix des Québécois—Montréal sous le choc," *La Presse* 27 March 2007: A34; Mario Girard, "Élections 2007: Le Choix des Québécois—Circonscriptions montréalaises, les adéquistes visent la prochaine fois," *La Presse* 27 March 2007: A34; Ariane Lacoursière, "Mario Dumont comprend Hérouxville," *La Presse*, 4 February 2007: A8.
25. "L'ADQ moribonde, Mario Dumont abandonne," *Le Devoir*, 9 December 2008: A3.
26. The commission was headed by Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor.
27. Marie-Andrée Chouinard, "L'épreuve du reel," *Le Devoir*, 30 November 2007: A8.
28. This is a rough translation of Parenteau's original sentence: "C'est un discours de taliban! Ce bleuët curé voudrait nous ramener avant la révolution tranquille, avec les processions de la Fête-Dieu et les bénédictions de chantiers." See François Parenteau, "Impertinences: la tribune téléphonique Bouchard–Taylor," *Voir* 21:39 (27 September 2007): 16.
29. Bombardier's original sentence: "La vérité toute crue comporte aussi de la laideur, de la hargne, de la rage, voire de la haine." See Denise Bombardier, "Retour au VIII^e siècle," *Le Devoir*, 22 September 2007: C5.
30. For comments on the chiasm between Montreal and the regions, see instance, Marie-Ève Mathieu, "La récréation est-elle bientôt finie?" *Le Devoir*, 24 September 2007: A6; Kathleen Lévesque "La Grande ville balkanisée," *Le Devoir*, 22 September 2007: C1; Sébastien Rodrigue, "Montréal est en plein essor, soutient le maire," *La Presse*, 21 October 2007: A9. It should be noted that other observers also note a generational chiasm that transcends geographical parameters. See Katia Gagnon, "Les Québécois rejettent tous les accommodements," *La Presse*, 9 October 2007: A2.
31. *Sur le seuil* made almost \$2 million in theatres, putting it in the top-25 of all time at the Quebec box office ("Appendix," *Self Portraits*, 322). About one million viewers watched *Grande Ourse* on Radio Canada every week in the winter of 2004. See for instance, Louise Cousineau, "Facteur de risques fait frémir," *La Presse*, 5 February 2004: AS5. In the fall of 2004, *Grande Ourse* also received twelve Géméaux, Quebec television awards. See Frédérique Boudreault, "Balayage de *Grande Ourse*," *Le Soleil*, 29 November 2004: B1.
32. This is the term generally used to talk about the period of Quebec history dominated by the Catholic Church and the ultra-conservative government of Maurice

- Duplessis, premier from 1936 to 1959 (with a brief interruption during WWII). The *Grande Noirceur* was followed in 1960 by the Quiet Revolution.
33. Patrick Senécal, *Sur le seuil* (Québec: Les Éditions Alire, 1998): 341.
 34. Ibid, 388.
 35. Torban Grodal, "Crime and Horror Fiction," *Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings and Cognition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997): 247–249.
 36. For instance, in 2005 Montreal promoted its status as the literary capital of the world. See for example, Chantal Guy, "Montréal, capitale mondiale du livre," *La Presse*, 8 April 2005: AS8.
 37. Similarities between the film and the series have been made in passing but never thoroughly analyzed. See for instance, Kevin Laforest, "*Saints-Martyrs-des-Damnés*: Village fantôme," *Voir* 19:41, 13 October 2005: 16.
 38. Margaret Atwood, *Second Words* (Toronto: Anansi, 2000): 260. See also Mary Jane Green, *Women and Narrative Identity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001) in particular her comments on France Théoret's *Nous parlons comme on écrit* (1982): 100–111.
 39. Jean 1997, 19.
 40. Ibid.
 41. Louise Cousineau, "Les Québécois n'ont pas peur de la télé différente," *La Presse*, 6 September 2004: AS4.
 42. See Hugo Dumas, "La SRC n'a pas aimé la sortie de Jean-François Lépine," *La Presse*, 15 March 2005: AS1.
 43. In addition to the titles I have discussed here, there have also been several short horror films produced in Quebec over the last few years. The "Festival SPASM" series, as well as the short films of Izabel Grondin, François Simard, Anouk Whissel, and Jonathan Prévost attest to the current horror trend in the province.
 44. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957): 222.



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COSMOPOLITANS AND HOSERS

*Notes on Recent Developments
in English-Canadian Cinema*

English Canadian cinema has presented a long-standing problem in Canadian cultural and communication studies, largely because it has not manifested the levels of popularity deemed appropriate for a truly national cinema. It is something of a challenge, then, to think about English Canadian cinema as something other than either a failed experiment in popular culture or a list of overlooked films. My goal in this chapter is to outline an alternative approach. I consider the idea of national cinema and examine the ways in which recent cultural policies in Canada have created multiple industries with different, and sometimes conflicting, goals and outcomes. As examples of the vexing question of English Canadian cinema, I consider the significance of the non-theatrical in Canadian exhibition history and I

Zoë Druick

analyze the rise of what I call “hoser mockumentaries” as actually existing popular Canadian film texts.

I argue that what connects these phenomena is a conception of cinema as a site of the formation of Canadian publics, both in relation to existing or virtual public spheres, and in relation to identity formation. The “public sphere” is a metaphor that, according to Alan McKee, “we use to think about the way that information and ideas circulate in large societies.”¹ But more than this, public spheres can be understood as sites where publics come into being. Publics can be national in scale (the Canadian public) or more local; they can be formed according to official projects, such as nation building, or emerge as oppositional alternative or counter-publics. Michael Warner notes that texts are an intrinsic aspect of publics (the reading public) and that creative work can constitute a public sphere.² So, while traditionally the public has been associated with rational, deliberative political thinking, according to Richard Butsch in his book *Media and Public Spheres*, “if we relax the criteria of reasoned deliberation among equals for a common good, and we accept the presence of multiple public spheres, then we find public spheres of all sorts in many places, included, abetted or unrestrained by today’s pervading media.”³ Arguably, the formation of national identity occurs in part through the public sphere and certainly important aspects of citizenship occur in and through such textual interactions.

Non-theatrical screenings with the pedagogical intention of nation-formation go all the way back to the National Film Board’s mobile cinema strategies of the 1940s and continued in the postwar period with an emphasis on the importance of libraries and schools as sites of Canadian film distribution. Following the policy turn toward cultural industries in the 1980s, by the 1990s non-theatrical screenings were transformed into sites of privatized consumption, on the one hand, and film festivals on the other. Significantly, hoser mockumentaries emerge at this same moment and can operate as a site of textual encounter with official policies traditionally connecting film and citizenship, marking in a prescient way both the shift underway in the English Canadian film landscape toward the film commodity and the struggles in the Canadian polity over multiculturalism.

In what follows, I argue that funding for film festivals, as well as their remarkable success in Canadian cities, and the push for new media solutions to the distribution problem, as well as the emergence of popular mockumentaries all point to the long-standing question of film’s role in the Canadian context as a site of

citizenship formation. Citizenship is invoked whether it is rooted in the urban experience of the film festival's temporary public, in the attempt to bypass conventional commercial distribution circuits, or in the parody of the Canadian documentary tradition. This complex relationship between culture, citizenship, and marketplace—between texts, national and political identity, and the context of commodity exchange that tends to dominate—provides a framework for what, following Mette Hjort, we could call the themes of nation.⁴

Nation and "Spheres of Publics"

In his article, "Technological Nationalism," published over twenty years ago, Maurice Charland proposed that technology was at the centre of the Canadian imagination: "Canada's national dream is a dream of technology," he wrote.⁵ "Technological nationalism promises a liberal state in which technology would be a neutral medium for the development of a polis," but is ultimately bankrupt. There is "no substance or commonality for the polis," he concludes, "except communication itself."⁶ According to Charland, in Canada a technophilic bureaucracy inhabits the place where a true community should be. Charland's argument is elegant and thought provoking. Yet it normatively presumes that to be authentic a state should be propped up by a nation and not the other way around. Elsewhere I have proposed that we examine our highly regulated and technologically mediated public sphere in Canada not as inauthentic, but rather as productive of the distinctive sorts of public discourses and national activities that prevail in this country.⁷ I'd like to extend that discussion here.

Theorists of the democratic process in liberal nation-states tend to agree that citizens constitute a public only when they become engaged in spaces, both literal and figurative, around issues of public concern. According to Michael Warner, a public must be self-organizing, "organized by something other than the state."⁸ This corresponds to Charland's discussion about the absent Canadian nation. Their views dovetail with the growing field of cultural citizenship, where there is a move to shift citizenship discourse away from an orientation toward state sanctioned formal rights, and toward participation (though of course rights can form a safeguard for participation of certain kinds). Partially, this shift has to do with a move away from assuming the nation as the default scale of political community. National forms of citizenship are being reconstituted by an emphasis on the global and the local⁹ and

citizens by definition belong to a polity in which they may participate, a concept that is not coterminous with any particular scale of community or nation.¹⁰

Yet as Craig Calhoun and others note, nations still matter.¹¹ In his extensive work on the area of media and national communication, Philip Schlesinger has observed that strong national links remain despite globalization and that, above all else, the nation is a “communicative space.”¹² Nations have distinctive national discourses, he argues; they still “speak to themselves, mark themselves off as different from others.”¹³ In this respect, Schlesinger’s notion of a “sphere of publics... in which national identities are seen as subject to much more explicit negotiation”¹⁴ is suggestive. Charland, for example, does not account for the existence of multiple publics in Canada, presuming a singular public sphere. Nor does Charland allow for the possibility that spaces opened up by the state may still operate in dialogic fashion with more authentically popular democratic public activity. Warner postulates, for example, that a public can only act thorough “imaginary coupling with the state,”¹⁵ and this may prove a useful perspective on the Canadian case.

Michael Warner’s emphasis on the textual basis of publics is also pertinent. According to him, the “concatenation of texts through time” creates a public, an “ongoing space of encounter for discourse.”¹⁶ Publics in this sense are “intertextual” and “intergeneric.”¹⁷ In Canada, where virtually all feature film production and 70 percent of television production is funded by Telefilm, a national agency with a nation-building mandate, the conception of the film public is more than an abstraction. Thinking about the link between policy and public is useful when we consider the role of film policy in constituting texts and spaces for their reception as nation-building activity. Authenticity is certainly at issue, as is credulity. Nation-building’s earnest engineering is easily mocked. Yet, as I explore below, even this intertextual mocking can provide a significant commentary on Canadian political culture and is therefore worthy of analysis.

National Cinema: Some Issues

The concept of “national cinema” is often closely linked to nation building. Nevertheless, the term is polyvalent and context-dependent, referring by turns to a domestic industry, a privileged set of domestically produced “quality films,” or the actual films watched by various fractions of the national audience.¹⁸ With

the globalization of cultural industries, there has been increasing acknowledgement that the nationalist project of producing an indigenous cinema, in English Canada and Quebec as elsewhere, cannot be thought of without reference to the very real aspect of Hollywood films in Canadian's lives. For instance, one implication of Hollywood's dominance is that no small national cinema meets Hollywood or other regional powerhouses on its own terms. National cinemas are always in lopsided dialogue with Hollywood or other regionally dominant cinemas, such as the Indian film industry (Don McKellar's *Child Star* [2004] and Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* [2002] are both self-conscious examples of this).

One of the modalities of this dialogue is genre. Genre, exemplified by mainstream film conventions such as the western, the gangster film, the musical, the horror film, melodrama, and comedy, has tended to be dominated by Hollywood definitions. Thus, every engagement with genre is an engagement with or a rejection (in the case of the auteur film) of Hollywood. Auteur films play well at film festivals and art houses, but otherwise have a limited following, and haven't produced a national audience for Canadian-made films. Genre films are what most people choose to see, whether or not this is due to lack of exposure to alternatives. Added to the complex relationship with Hollywood is the fact that Hollywood production has become an important policy aspect of the Canadian film industry.¹⁹ It may be effective to consider it as one of a number of Canadian film industries, along with indigenous popular film, indigenous art film, Quebec film, and Aboriginal film.²⁰ In short, Canada is home to multiple film industries and corresponding film publics.

In an oft-anthologized essay, Stephen Crofts has described the different ways in which national cinemas negotiate the relationship with Hollywood:²¹

- Cinemas that differ from Hollywood but do not compete directly by targeting a distinct, specialist market sector;
- Cinemas that differ from Hollywood and do not compete (as above), but do directly critique Hollywood;
- Non-Anglophone entertainment cinemas that struggle against Hollywood with little or no success;
- Cinemas that ignore Hollywood;
- Anglophone cinemas that try to beat Hollywood at its own game;

Cinemas that work from within a wholly state-controlled and often substantially state-subsidized industry;
Regional or national cinemas whose culture and/or language take their distance from the nation-states that enclose them.

Canadian cinema, defined as both our domestic industry and patterns of consumption, combines several of these profiles. Since John Grierson penned the National Film Act in 1939 Canadian film policy has tended toward the first approach, to develop a specialty in distinct markets that wouldn't directly compete with Hollywood. This explains our traditional strength in both documentary and non-theatrical cinema. Since the 1970s, many Canadian films conform to profile number two, an auteur driven art cinema that criticizes Hollywood. Currently there is a shift to category five, trying to beat Hollywood at its own game by creating crowd-pleasing popular fare that can compete at the box office at home and abroad. And finally, Quebec cinema represents a particularly successful version of number seven, a regional cinema that takes its distance (through distinct language and culture) from the larger Canadian nation-state.

Film Policy

Policies mark the ways in which official culture permeates everyday life. Since the culture of a nation is still broadly identified with the state's key agency of official culture, the national education system,²² film policy has tended to focus on the production of projects deemed relevant or worthy by state agencies. Yet multiple, conflicting ideas make their way into policy, sometimes leading to confusion. In recent years, the instruments of the Canadian state invested with the task of producing a successful film culture have registered with alarm that the audience has been overlooked as an outcome of policy. In order to rectify this situation, the 2000 film policy, *From Script to Screen*, resolved: "Having built an industry, it is now time to build audiences."²³ The turn to the audience represented a concern about an oversupply of films without the production of viewers who were invested in the significance of indigenous work. Yet the concern about the audience oversubscribing to Hollywood products is contradicted in part by the Canadian state's own commitment through tax breaks and other industry initiatives in the 1990s to support an industrial model of film and television production. This period of

neo-liberal deregulation bolstered the foreign locations market and co-productions on a newly expanded cable dial, creating a comparatively large and embarrassingly undistinctive audiovisual culture.

The turn to audiences in film policy represented a new approach. Rather than provide what was good for citizens, or good for industry, the question of what people want to watch, the popular, implicated the policy in the formation of film publics. The complexity is compounded by the fact that the turn toward audiences came after a boost in funding to Canadian film producers in the first years of this century which itself came hard on the heels of a booming foreign locations market in the 1990s, part of Hollywood's globalization.²⁴ This shift in international production to Canada was linked to the rethinking of public funding for the arts, including film, in the 1980s, during a period of liberalization and a turn from a language of arts funding to a discourse of the "cultural industries."

The multiplicity of film industries reflects the complex and some would say contradictory work of policies that are brought into relief when we consider that film policy, like so many arts policies, is not only about industrial success. Canadian state film policy has a number of imperatives, of which economic success is only one. It also aims to develop creative talent, to create and strengthen identity, to foster diversity, and to entertain audiences. The question of whether or how all of these objectives might be met at once is one of the many paradoxes of Canadian cultural policy.

Non-theatrical Cinema

There have been some direct consequences of the *Script to Screen* policy to find audiences. Starting in 2001–02, \$5 million was dedicated annually to putting Canadian filmmakers together with film festivals, both domestic and international. A number of subsequent policy papers have turned to the non-theatrical as a viable site for considering films to come into contact with Canadians, and a new way to quantify effective policy.²⁵ But does this policy emphasis on the national help us understand the public? Shawn Shimpach has hypothesized that the cinema audience is an early example of a self-conscious public, comprised of individuals imagining themselves within a group experience. A statistical entity, the cinema audience constitutes a mass public, whether going to the cinema together, or watching films alone but together as part of what Charles Acland notes is a collective media event of a film's

opening weekend.²⁶ Like the first weekend box office and attendance figures, the film festival constitutes one such zone, where individual choice dovetails with aesthetic production and national cultural policy.

Film festivals are experiencing a surge of interest around the world, providing a public space for engaging with cinema that offers partial relief from the limited palette of mainstream cinemas year round, as well as the promise of the auratic contact with directors, actors, and other cultural figures that provide a “value-added” aspect to the viewing experience that cannot be replicated at home. It is also a zone where official culture meets popular practice in a genuinely successful way. Canadian film festivals have burgeoned in the past couple of decades, representing a clear continuity with what Charles Acland has called Canadian film culture’s “expo mentality,” an orientation toward the special screening venue.²⁷ Their emergence is certainly linked to the formation of specific identities and communities around texts, from the early Women’s Film Festival in Toronto, to queer, Asian, Hispanic, environmental, and children’s festivals today. A parallel focus on genre reflected in festivals grouped around form, such as documentary, experimental, animated, short, and mobile, has become a way for industry, often dominated by television, to interarticulate with cultural production, sidestepping more political modes of organizing film publics. But these festivals, too, might be thought of as constituting film communities.

Like film policy and the public sphere itself, film festivals are mixed zones that, as Janet Harbord points out, include discourses of independent filmmakers and producers; media representation and spectacle; business discourse of purchase, copyright, and logos; tourism and service industry, all of which are bound together through discourses of the nation. She writes, “the festival remains a crucial showcase for the symbolic capital of the nation; the local specificity is contextualized by this broader infrastructure of subsidy and policy framing, remaining connected to the nation.”²⁸ Reflecting the contradictions of the public sphere, from the outset, the nationalist and industry mandates for Canadian cinema have been connected. The first Canadian film festivals only belatedly introduced Canadian film series, more or less in tandem with the development of the industry. For example, in 1977, a year after the Canadian Motion Picture Distributors’ Association introduced the Golden Reel award to mark the highest grossing film in Canada, Toronto’s Festival of Festivals (now the Toronto International Film Festival, or TIFF) included just three Canadian films in its program; in 1984, the

same year as the shift to cultural industries led to the renaming of the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) to Telefilm, the festival launched its Perspective Canada program. Today the festival screens dozens of Canadian films annually and often chooses a Canadian film as its prestigious opening screening. In the twenty-first century, most Canadian cities host a film festival and all of them include an emphasis on national and regional, as well as international cinema.

Yet for all this festival hype, Canadian films are not theatrical hits. Liz Czach, a former TIFF programmer and academic, has observed this contradiction: "Unlike the rest of the year when little critical or popular support seems to be mustered for Canadian films, festivals generate crucial critical, public, and industry interest in Canadian films."²⁹ This state of affairs can perhaps be explained by the fact that film festivals are sites or spaces only marginally related to other aspects of the Canadian film industry. As Julian Stringer notes, a successful festival is not inextricably linked to the growth of a national film industry.³⁰ In addition, most Canadian films still fit the bill as independent, auteur-based productions, which, although they may play well to a film festival public, are of only limited interest to the majority of moviegoers. Genre films are still rare.

One way to explain the seeming discrepancy between film festival success and year-round struggles for Canadian films is that the film festival has become a distinct, temporary cultural sphere where the traditional expo mentality reigns and film events constitute Canadians into quasi-spontaneous film publics. Film festivals represent successful spaces of global-urban cultural interface and, in this sense, they epitomize what Shawn Shimpach identifies as the cinema-going audience representing itself to itself as a public. As he puts it, making the decision to go to movies in a particular context is partly about "imagining oneself as a certain type of person."³¹ It is precisely the successes of Canadian films at film festivals that leads me to think about film festivals as public spheres. The emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism in film festival programming brings a range of cultural expressions to a single public sphere in which the film-festival-goer, presumed to be an urban, sophisticated cultural consumer, consorts with self-selected peers in a highly charged atmosphere. This cosmopolitan public achieves representation of itself to itself through the massive media coverage that occurs during the festival.

Moving Beyond the Theatre

So far, I have considered the ways in which film policy has turned its attention to audiences, at the same time that Canadian film festivals have achieved unprecedented popularity. Since the *Script to Screen* policy, there has been a move to recognize and encourage non-theatrical film exhibition of all kinds. This move was a way to recalibrate the actual film consumption activities of Canadians, at schools, in the home, and in the workplace, rather than simply look to the theatres in which Canadian films have never done too well. It specifically sets out to recognize the more diverse “sphere of publics” in which Canadians actually operate. In 2005, the government released its follow up report to *From Script to Screen*, tellingly entitled *Scripts, Screens and Audiences*. According to this report, performance of a film should be expanded past box office results to include non-theatrical markets, what the interim report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage called a film’s “ecology.”

However, the issue about whether to emphasize genre pictures, art films, or the Canadian tradition of documentary film—the result of multiple film publics and film industries—could not be completely resolved. In a series of briefs submitted to the federal government in 2005, the National Film Board (NFB) suggested the establishment of a network of electronic or e-cinemas in which Canadians could receive dedicated screenings of NFB films. In particular, then Film Commissioner Jacques Bensimon suggested that this kind of network would “serve communities outside the major urban centers ... turning them into cultural spaces connected to Canadian creativity.”³² This proposal was an extension of a recent initiative, CineRoute, launched in December 1999 at fifty-five university libraries, which allowed users to connect over broadband network to 800 NFB films.³³ But going back even further, it was an extension of the earliest distribution strategies of the NFB. Since the early 1940s, the NFB utilized mobile screening strategies derived from British colonial practices.³⁴ During the Second World War, film circuits were set up in factories and later around rural areas. In the postwar period, this practice morphed into the establishment of film clubs and a network of film lending libraries. But information films were still made and circulated to dedicated screening locations, including schools. This philosophy found a permanent home in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, where NFB supporters established the first Canadian film festival in 1947, specifically for the short films produced by the Film Board.

So although in certain ways the policy focus on the non-theatrical is new, in another light it is a continuation, albeit in privatized form, of the tradition of dedicated non-theatrical screenings. Arguably, this kind of complementary viewing practice has come to constitute one of the national thematics in our public film culture. These state-sponsored public spheres, no doubt plagued by contradictions, as Charland suggests, are productive of the particular flavour of media publics in this country. I propose that we call this practice the establishment of temporary publics and consider the impact of this kind of circulation on the sort of film culture we have inherited and continue to develop. Both dedicated, mobile film screenings and documentary have a long history in Canadian film culture and in this way serve as interfaces with the constitution of Canadian publics.

Over the past thirty years, then, there has been a shift from publicly funded, primarily documentary fare, to privately financed feature films, and from the constitution of audiences as temporary publics to the statistical constitution of atomized home consumers. Yet aspects of public service remain embedded in the policies. By no means are terms like “identity” and “community” the equivalent of “publics” made up of citizens. But the issues of who speaks to whom about what are relevant to both. National communicative space is essential for the sphere of publics, however temporary or flawed.

Mocking the Documentary Tradition

Thus far, I have sketched the ways that the Canadian state has renewed an effort in recent years to constitute Canadian publics around films, a strategy that I suggested has been used before. These strategies have been state led and therefore perhaps lack the authenticity and democratic authority of non-state organized publics. In the remainder of the paper, I want to consider the rise of Canadian mockumentaries in the past decade as another form of engagement with film’s role in Canadian official culture. Through parody, mockumentaries from *Hard Core Logo* (1996) and *FUBAR* (2002) to *Trailer Park Boys* (2007) reject multiculturalism and the sophistication of the self-selecting film festival audience. Achieving levels of theatrical popularity rare for English-Canadian features, these films utilize the documentary form as an intertextual engagement with the constitution of the nation. The working class, backwoods, white masculinity both mocked and

celebrated by these films harkens back to the phenomenon of Bob and Doug McKenzie, awakening the nation to its true hoser spirit, not to mention *Wayne's World*, *The Red Green Show*, and some of the *CODCO* and *Royal Canadian Air Farce* sketches. Remarkable is the degree to which all of these texts engage not only with hoser masculinity but also with the documentary form, or in the case of *Wayne's World*, *Red Green Show*, and *Trailer Park Boys*, low budget or cable television, traditionally associated with civic engagement, as well as amateur culture. At the same time, they explore the rural as a space of Canadian culture excribed from the emphasis on sophisticated urban culture—the site where the NFB would place e-cinemas. In choosing to watch these films in relatively large numbers, audiences have self-constituted themselves as a certain sort of public, one that adopts the values and virtues of Canadian identity ironically, precisely through an engagement with and mocking inversion of the site of film reception as either a state-sanctioned civic form or generic entertainment imported from Hollywood.

Hyperbolic Hoser Masculinity: *Hard Core Logo* and *FUBAR*

Hard Core Logo (1996) is the well-known adaptation of Michael Turner's book of poetry, widely considered director Bruce McDonald's most successful film.³⁵ The screen writer, Noel Baker, along with the cast and director, significantly altered the original book's emphasis on the dead-ends of punk rock to create a love story between the band's singer and lead guitarist, played by Hugh Dillon and Callum Keith Rennie respectively. The film traces the band's desperate Western Canadian reunion tour as they, like punk rock itself, fall apart. In an apparent quest for realism, the screenwriter opted for a mockumentary format that allowed him to write in the real director as a self-mythologizing character also named Bruce.³⁶ The two buddies at the centre of the film routinely criticize "Bruce," as does their idol, punk icon Bucky Haight.

In his analysis of the adaptation, Peter Dickinson astutely notes that the final film produces the effect of a highly characteristic Canadian text combining Canadian cultural institutional traditions and Hollywood. "*Hard Core Logo*, the film, is Julien Temple's *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* by way of the NFB, Rob Reiner's *This is Spinal Tap* as funded by Telefilm, Penelope Spheeris's *Decline of Western Civilization, Part II* as it might have looked on the CBC."³⁷ The distinctively

Canadian aspect is precisely the intertextual combination of American popular culture with Canadian authorized discourse.

In his “making of” diary, Baker describes the painful experiences in the Telefilm office, the fears and anxieties about spontaneous changes to the script while shooting that might lead to the film being hung up by the gate-keeping agency later on. At the first meeting with Telefilm, executive Michelle McLean reportedly explains that the funding agency thinks that McDonald should try something other than a road movie. Baker keeps the following thought to himself, but includes it in his diary: “I want to ask why Telefilm has no trouble funding filmmakers who specialize, film in and film out, in, say, lesbian love stories or frigid parables about contemporary alienation, yet they have such a problem funding Bruce within his area of interest.”³⁸ Indeed Dickinson points out that for Baker, “the completed movie is a document as much to the institutional, economic, and political constraints that bedevil the Canadian film industry as it is to those constraints which bedevil the Canadian music industry.”³⁹ At the same time, the emphasis on a film not about lesbians or alienation is code for a popular, accessible film, one that happens to be about tough Canadian boys. The lesbian alienation films are clearly for the festival audiences.

Dickinson analyzes the performance of masculinity in the film, a balance between the “hypermasculine erotics of display and exhibitionism on stage” and prototypical “masculine detachment.”⁴⁰ As punk rock icons, the boys of Hard Core Logo have achieved a certain limited national notoriety and, in the case of Billy Tallent, are being sought out by powerful members of the American music industry. Yet, in another way, they emblemize the backwoods anti-fashion punk sensibility particular to Vancouver, one that distinctively negotiated its identity away from the cross-dressing, urbane, and ironic New York and Los Angeles scenes. So, while Joe Dick and Billy Tallent represent Canadian artists and countercultural figures, they also convey a certain sort of straight ahead, working class, small town, white, rock ‘n’ roll attitude; a kind of “hyperbolic hoser masculinity,” to borrow a phrase from Tom Waugh.⁴¹ This kind of cultural homology includes buddies, beer, and loud music, living for the moment without the pretences of educated, cosmopolitan urban life. Unlike some alternative music scenes, Vancouver punk rock articulated, for the most part, a machismo that makes *HCL*’s homoeroticism all the more surprising.

Yet sexuality is not as far from hoser culture as one might suspect, given that a hose is a euphemism for a male sexual organ. Upon reflection, hoser sexuality is not that different from the sexuality of mainstream heteronormative national culture. In his book *The Romance of Transgression in Canada*, Tom Waugh compellingly shows the rich history of straight men in love in Canadian cinema, including and especially, when they are in sports-related rural contexts, such as on hunting trips or during hockey tournaments.⁴² In this context, alcohol comes into play and drunkenness not only “gives license to enact without accountability the erotic undercurrents of homosocial relations and sport... it also becomes an end in itself,” the fount of a sort of masochistic dissolution.⁴³

In *HCL*, the particular hoser eroticism between straight men who love each other comes at the expense of the filmmaker who is trying to document them. Their love for each other eclipses their wish to be engaged by the public. Similarly, in *FUBAR*, the film’s main subjects, Dean and Terry, bond against the filmmaker, Farrel, who has set out to make a documentary about head banger subculture. From the outset, as Farrel screens his previous film for his new film subjects, the audience is encouraged to identify with Dean and Terry as they request that Farrel “turn down the suck” on his pretentious film full of incomprehensible imagery. By contrast, Dean and Terry’s drinking, partying, and head banging seems authentic, if somewhat excessive. The friends are living their lives; Farrel is only “following us around.” Moreover, as we soon learn that Dean has testicular cancer, the issue of phallic power is clearly established and Farrel, not Dean or Terry, is the one with something to mock. Finally, on a camping trip to Sasquatch Creek, Farrel shows just how incompetent a Canadian male he is as he refuses to jump into a river, only to finally jump to his death. The film itself continues without the filmmaker, showing just how insignificant he is compared to his film’s hard drinking, dead end ’bangers, who nevertheless know how to live life with gusto. Despite capturing actual documentary footage of recreational parking lot fights and other facets of small town partying, the film doesn’t achieve any kind of hard-hitting expose of head bangers.

Through the parody of authority and heroism, the mockumentary form is well suited to the satire of masculinity. Where a film like *This is Spinal Tap* (1984) relentlessly, if lovingly, satirizes the hypermasculinity of heavy metal through a parody of the rockumentary,⁴⁴ both *HCL* and *FUBAR* parody the filmmaker’s anthropological attempt to observe the film’s subjects who either retain their integrity as characters, or, through an aversion to pretence, are not in a position to

be parodied. It is the outsider filmmaker who comes in for the ridicule precisely in his attempt to make a comment on something through the documentary form. Unlike the profound, if endearing, stupidity of the members of Spinal Tap, the essentially Canadian hosers are redeemed through their lack of pretence.⁴⁵

Trailer Park Boys is a slightly different case, as the filmmakers never appear as characters. The shaky hand-held style becomes a low budget aesthetic to match the low rent lifestyles of the main characters, Ricky, Julian, and Bubbles, and the other side of the story of a reality show like *COPS* that follows the police into trailer-park-like settings. However more than in *HCL* and *FUBAR*, *TPB*'s emphasizes the humour of white trash, where poverty and slum living are the source of laughs precisely because the characters are white but not upwardly mobile.⁴⁶

In all of these cases, the hoser masculinity of the main characters is the butt of the jokes, but simultaneously, it is precisely what enables them to assert their subjectivities and their bond at the expense of the meddling filmmakers. The popularity of these stories well beyond the demographic of white small town men is redolent of the surprising success of the Bob and Doug McKenzie characters created by Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas in the early 1980s as a way to fill the two extra minutes of screen time allotted to SCTV during its Canadian broadcast. After spending less than an hour improvising these skits, the two actors were surprised to have created a sensation in which people dressed like them, talked like them, and mobbed them whenever they appeared in public, yelling "Take off, eh!" and other McKenzisms.⁴⁷ In less than one month, they sold more than 300,000 albums and in 1983, they released their self-directed movie *Strange Brew* with MGM/UA, which went on to be the top grossing Canadian film of the year.⁴⁸

At least since the plaid-wearing Charlie Farquharson appeared on *This Hour Has Seven Days* (CBC, 1963–66) with his homespun advice, the self-deprecating backwoods motif has figured prominently in representations of English Canadian masculinity. (The resounding success of both *Les boys* and *Men With Brooms* would also seem to attest to this.) It is challenging to explain the tenacity of this stereotype. On the one hand, it seems to be a way of laughing about masculinity, one of the mainstays of comedy, while also making fun of the working class. On the other hand, however, there is a kind of dignity and respect granted these characters precisely because of their modesty and lack of pretension. It would be too simple to call this mindless entertainment; it is also popular and Canadian. Rather, I propose that there is something about the constellation of unpretentious

white masculinity that resonates with certain factions of the Canadian audience and it may be related to a backlash against an official culture promoting a centrist model of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism.

In her study of Canadian whiteness, *The House of Difference*, Eva Mackey argues that despite Canada's belief in itself as a land of civic nationalism, ethnic nationalism exists here, too, insofar as "certain categories of people consider that they, as real and authentic Canadians, represent the 'democratic will of the people.'" These are people who say of themselves that they are *Canadian-Canadians*.⁴⁹ Liberal discourses of "tolerance" are reliant on a racist logic of dominant and subordinate groups with varying claims on national belonging. "The recognition of difference," Mackey writes, "is not necessarily the solution, just as the erasure of difference *per se* has not always been the main problem."⁵⁰ These Canadian films about hoser masculinity render performative the usually invisible apparatus of heteronormative, white masculinity in Canada. In so doing, they arguably register the existence of a certain sort of self-defining public around these media texts. At the same time, they are so heavily self-ironizing, especially around the critique of the filmmakers within the films, that it is hard to say what the films mean in any definitive way.

Conclusion

Charland is right to point out that popular culture and public culture seem to be anathema in Canada. In the realm of cinema, this has had to do with the multiple, often conflicting, objectives. But, unlike the empty technological nationalism Charland associates with broadcasting systems, film policy has long been associated with a close control of content. From script vetting to film festival programming, English Canadian film culture has been closely tied to a policy of forming a film culture that is at once distinctively national and oriented toward the cosmopolitan. Yet truly popular Canadian fare has emerged around the hoser, an unprepossessing figure who engages with Canadian airs and pretensions to global consciousness with deep irony. These figures also provide a possibly reactionary and certainly laughable everyman who loves the foibles and failures of his buddies.

These films can be seen to comment ironically upon the drive of the earnest Canadian policy to create spaces for civic engagement and the promotion of educational national culture. Whether or not they also present a populist, if

inarticulate, challenge to official culture is hard to say. Yet these contributions to, and affirmations of, white male hoser culture may at the same time actually serve to engage a public in a simple version of the nation, rather than the increasingly complex and diverse situation we actually find ourselves in where national identities, as Schlesinger notes, must be engaged with “explicit negotiation.”⁵¹ The persistence of the hoser imaginary is possibly a way to mimic and undermine this kind of discussion while nevertheless making claims about national belonging and identity.

Film policy, like the public itself, is riven by multiple objectives, some might say contradictions, attempting to negotiate between marketplace and art form, affective and deliberative citizenship, entertainment and enlightenment. Rather than see the film festivals as successes and the national film industry as a failure, I have attempted here to argue that each is productive in different ways given their contradictory mandates. The problem with the phrase “English Canadian cinema” is that it means radically different things to different people. Many automatically presume that it represents an inherently oppositional discourse, providing alternative imagery and ideas to mainstream, American culture; others imagine it as the articulator of popular sentiment; still others envision a successful industry. As the most powerful rhetoric of state policy and funding decision-making, the nation remains an important part of the discussion. The themes of nation cannot be reduced to the analysis of texts alone. As I’ve tried to explore here, Canadian cinema, like the diverse Canadian audiences for which it is produced, is constituted both intratextually between cinematic texts and intertextually between mutually resonant texts and their economic and political contexts in a sphere of publics. In that sense, it is part of an on-going envisioning of citizenship.

Filmography

Bollywood/Hollywood (dir. Deepa Mehta) 2002

Les boys (dir. Louis Saïa) 1997

Child Star (dir. Don McKellar) 2004

CODCO (Salter Street Films/CBC) 1988-93

Decline of Western Civilization, Part II (dir. Penelope Spheeris) 1988

Family Viewing (dir. Atom Egoyan) 1987

FUBAR (dir. Michael Dowse) 2002

The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle (dir. Julian Temple) 1980
Hard Core Logo (dir. Bruce McDonald) 1996
The Making of Monsters (dir. John Greyson) 1991
Men With Brooms (dir. Paul Gross) 2002
The Red Green Show (S & S Productions/CBC) 1991-2006
Royal Canadian Air Farce (Air Farce Productions/CBC) 1993-2008
SCTV (CBC/Global/NBC) 1978-89
Strange Brew (dir. Dave Thomas and Rick Moranis) 1983
This Hour Has Seven Days (CBC) 1963-66
This is Spinal Tap (dir. Rob Reiner) 1984
Trailer Park Boys (dir. Mike Clattenburg) 2007
Videodrome (dir. David Cronenberg) 1983
Wayne's World (dir. Penelope Spheeris) 1992

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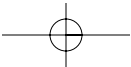
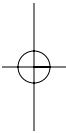
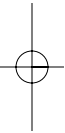
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chiatric patients, dressed in *Star Wars*-style black and white storm trooper outfits and trained to respond violently to the strains of a hockey arena organ on a rink lined with cases of beer is a scene of queer sports nationalism that John Greyson would have been proud to direct.

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<8>

FROM GENRE
TO GENRE*Image Transactions in
Contemporary Canadian Art*

Johanne Sloan

Ron Terada is a Vancouver-based artist who sometimes makes paintings (he is equally recognized for making sculptural installations and photo-based conceptual projects.) The “Jeopardy” series of paintings he executed in the years 1999–2000 have meticulously crafted coloured surfaces built up of many layers of pigment. Terada’s paintings are often referred to as “monochromes,” as if they were single-colour abstract paintings. But while the artist’s commitment to refined colouration might have resulted in abstract artworks, his paintings are instead enlivened by lines of block-like writing. *Jeopardy Painting (General Richard Montgomery...)*, from 1999, for instance, is a peacock-blue canvas with text that reads: “General Richard Montgomery was killed 31 December 1775 leading a hopeless attack on this Canadian city.” This sentence was

lifted from the long-running television game show *Jeopardy!*: what appears on Terada's canvas is thus one of the answers that flash up momentarily on millions of TV screens, the show's well-known gimmick being that viewers (and contestants) are supposed to provide the missing question. This is an American television program, of course (even if a random clue refers to a bit of Canadian history, such as the American military's failed attempt to capture Quebec City in the eighteenth century) but the long-running program has been available in Canada for so long that it arguably no longer qualifies as an imported product. *Jeopardy!* is merely part of a familiar, everyday televisual world of long-runners and re-runs, which functions as a kind of stable ground against which newer, more specialized, or more local programs are presented.

So what do these fragments of televisual text signify when they reappear in this manner, detached from their original context and relocated within the contemplative space of modernist-looking abstract paintings? There is certainly a great deal of humour in these artworks, but there is also something uncanny about Terada's *Jeopardy* paintings. The familiar features of the game show are distorted, the ephemeral imagery acquires material heft, and in their painted incarnation, the statements now seem to emanate from somewhere else.

Terada's art practice is idiosyncratic and original in many ways, but this artist's interface with pop culture is hardly unique. In the Canadian art milieu, as is true of the international situation, contemporary artists have no qualms about their ability to borrow, quote, paraphrase, appropriate, sample, and so on from every aspect of pop culture. Given the ease with which the present-day generation of artists incorporate TV shows, games, movies, advertisements, and other such material into their artwork, it could be argued that we should now regard art as something that is embedded in an expanded field of visual culture. Visual culture might then be understood as a capacious cultural category, filled with diverse kinds of imagery and visual practices, some of which happens to be art. This definition of visual culture is rather unsatisfactory, though, from a methodological point of view. It seems to me that "visual culture" remains a worthwhile concept, but not if it simply designates a wide-open realm, where every variety of image coexists, where every kind of visual experience is possible, freely available to all. Instead, the value of visual culture as a designation is surely that it can help us negotiate the boundaries between different kinds of visual objects, practices of representation, and modes of spectatorship. Irit

Rogoff has insisted that what is at stake with visual culture is “the constitution of a new object of knowledge,” something that can only be achieved when it is understood that “the field of vision becomes a ground for contestation.”¹ Another point of view on this debate is provided by W. J. T. Mitchell, who urges us to regard “visual culture and visual images as ‘go-betweens’ in social transactions.”² These comments point to the need for new modes of analysis and interpretation, to address this cultural configuration.

Some of the most interesting art practices at present are those that join the relentless traffic in images characteristic of contemporary culture even as they make us more aware of the transformative processes at work within the realm of the visual. If the typical contemporary artist seems perfectly at ease borrowing visual elements from a music video or a tabloid newspaper, this is not to say that every instance of pop-cultural borrowing is going to be radical or even interesting. But some artworks do propose that a social/cultural transaction has been undertaken: this is evident in Terada’s series of Jeopardy paintings, I have suggested, and another striking example of this negotiation with pop culture is the work of Canadian artist Lynne Marsh, as in *Calling* (2000) a DVD projection that shows a single female figure moving through a digitally-constructed space reminiscent of computer games. *Calling*’s synthetic spatial environment has become unusually evocative, however, in a way that is reminiscent of landscape images produced within the terms of visual art. Terada’s paintings monumentalize the fleeting visual impressions of a television game show, and it is as if the artwork stages a confrontation between a TV quiz show and the legacy of abstract painting. Marsh has seemingly isolated backgrounds from the fast-paced and often violent narratives of commercially produced entertainment, and in this instance, the filmed sequence suggests a showdown between a familiar pop-culture game, and the art historical genre of landscape.

To track such negotiations or transactions across a field of visual culture, I am suggesting that the concept of genre is very productive. Genre allows us to discern specific codes, conventions, and pictorial formations within particular disciplines and cultural industries. Genre proposes a high degree of specificity, ensuring that the discussion doesn’t resort either to a transcendent category of “art,” or to a vaguely derogatory category of “pop culture.” I am admittedly approaching these artworks by Terada and Marsh as an art historian, and I am particularly interested in how an art historical genre (abstract painting/landscape art) is transformed

when it comes up against a pop-cultural genre (the quiz show/computer game). The results of these cross-disciplinary, genre-to-genre actions are compelling.

I will return to a more sustained discussion of both these artists, but it is important to recognize the genealogy of this question. Over the course of the twentieth century, the relationship between art and pop culture has arisen repeatedly in diverse artworks, practices, movements, and discussions. There is a fascinating 1920 painting entitled *Billboard*, for instance, by the renowned member of the Group of Seven, Lawren Harris, showing workers installing a large multi-coloured billboard. Here, Harris was interacting with the modern, commercialized cityscape, but this subject matter was anomalous at the time, and there was little in the way of a discursive or theoretical framework for this kind of imagery until several decades later. So despite such isolated moments, it is in the 1960s and 70s that the art/pop-culture question really heats up in Canada. In 1963, for instance, Joyce Wieland would insert a big comic-like speech bubble, containing the words “Howdy Stranger” in the middle of a painting called *Stranger in Town*. (The connotations of such things change: today this visual object is likely to remind us of the commercial “pop-ups” that punctuate every foray on the Internet.) Along with Greg Curnoe, Wieland’s early experiments with a “pop” sensibility were some of the most striking in Canada, while in Quebec, a distinctive cultural movement called “Ti-pop” included contributions from visual artists such as Pierre Ayot and Gilles Boisvert. Canadian and Quebecois pop experiments of the 1960s and 70s are unusual (as compared with contemporaneous international practices) for their degree of politicization. And so Ayot brought the strident designs of household products and commercial signage into his investigation of national identity, while Wieland clothed her feminist and ecological interventions in the colourful, plasticky language of cartoons and advertisements.

The response to this new tendency was occasionally harsh: the Canadian art historian Barry Lord, for instance, maintained that artists in Canada should actively resist the alluring pop style, and not mindlessly succumb to American cultural imperialism.³ (It is interesting, too, that he criticized not only content and subject matter, but also style, which is to say the surface appearance and aesthetic effects of pop culture.) Lord’s take on this question was informed by his particular brand of nationalist/Maoist fervour, but the apprehension he expressed about the influence of pop culture was part of a widespread discourse, within Canada and elsewhere, emanating from both right and left poles of the political spectrum.

There are vestiges here of the position taken up by the New York critic Clement Greenberg decades earlier, whereby avant-garde art was defined as a cultural arena that should defiantly resist pop or mass culture, remaining strong despite the continual threat of kitsch defilement.⁴

Outside of Canada, Umberto Eco was amongst those authors looking at pop art more sympathetically. He described how twentieth-century art could be understood as a process of translation and migration, moving between extremes of high and low culture. Eco's worst-case scenario was a dystopic kind of stasis, a levelling out of culture into a universally palatable middle-brow-ness. And so he offered the insight that "in pop art kitsch is redeemed," and that pop culture is "raised by the artist into a new state of aesthetic dignity."⁵ This vocabulary of depths and heights, of redemption and raising up, doesn't quite manage to dismantle the hierarchical attitude that locates art on top and pop culture at the bottom of a cultural continuum.

The notion that an artist condescends to notice some bit of pop culture detritus, and introduces it into the more sophisticated, more aesthetically durable category of art, remains problematic. Eco's account is indeed symptomatic of the 1960s, when there was a great deal of anxiety and hand wringing, but also much genuine debate, about the "problem" of pop culture vis-à-vis the category of art. The postmodern theorizing that arose in the 1980s was more sanguine about this relationship, and the artist's gesture of "appropriation" was now endowed with great theoretical and aesthetic complexity.⁶ Still, the prevailing postmodern attitude was that art could provide a critique of dominant systems of representation: the pop-culture fragment introduced into a work of art would accordingly be deconstructed, and its ideological pretensions laid bare. Neither of these positions seems adequate as a description of the contemporary situation: it doesn't ring true to say that the game shows and computer games referenced by Terada and Marsh are "raised... into a new state of aesthetic dignity," nor is the notion of "critique" adequate.

If we return for a moment to Wieland's *Stranger in Town* painting, it certainly seems that the cloud-like speech bubble was borrowed from comics as a kind of homage, because the artist had recognized a great pictorial invention. Neither did Wieland simply appropriate this comic-strip paradigm. Rather, the distinctive cartoon logic of the speech bubble is altered when it meets the history of painting. Wieland's painting shows additional white shapes that seem to be coming into

existence here and there throughout the painting, as if the speech bubble were an alien life form, virally reproducing and colonizing the otherwise abstracted shapes and carefully blended colours of the painting. The artwork thus stages an encounter between different modes of representation. Is this accomplished in order to assert the primacy of art as cultural form, as discourse? Or does this kind of project speak to a different attitude vis-à-vis the impact and significance of pop culture? It is interesting to consider how the legacy of pop art was regarded by Dick Hebdige, writing in 1988, which is to say, at the height of the postmodern moment. Hebdige argued that the most radical insight of pop art was that “popular culture and mass-produced imagery are worthy of consideration in their own right.”⁷ The art practices of Terada and Marsh are exemplary in this respect because it is evident that something complex and meaningful results from the confrontation with pop culture.

Ron Terada and the Televisual

Terada has gone through a lot of trouble to ensure that his language paintings can be compared to the monuments of twentieth-century abstract art; up close one can see that they are by no means slap-dash applications of a single colour, but instead, that the surfaces are built up out of many layers of paint, resulting in remarkable effects of transparent colour. It has often been noted that Terada’s paintings are structured according to a basic contrast or conflict. Christopher Brayshaw has written that the paintings “link two aesthetic forms often considered incompatible. One is the monochrome—a virtual emblem of modernist abstraction’s stately withdrawal from the world. The other is text culled from a wide variety of pop-cultural sources: Artforum gallery ads, newspaper personal ads, and high school yearbook quotations.”⁸ The idea that Terada’s artworks combine “two aesthetic forms” is not quite right, however, because the textual fragments gleaned from everyday sources are not aesthetic configurations in their own right. Indeed, it is precisely their marginality as cultural texts and their non-aesthetic identity that is so striking.

We might say that to create these works Terada reached into the back-catalogue of both twentieth-century TV shows, and painting styles. The kind of abstract painting Terada is reimagining here is monochrome painting, which is a sub-category of colour-field painting, otherwise known as post-painterly

abstraction—a movement that flourished in the U.S. as well as in Canada in the 1950s and 60s. Barnett Newman and Morris Louis are some of the key Americans, while it can be said that this form of abstraction was truly a cross-Canada phenomenon, including Guido Molinari and Yves Gaucher in Quebec, Ronald Bloore and other members of the Regina Five group, and on the West coast, Michael Morris, and Roy Kiyooka. While there are certainly differences between the individual art practices mentioned above, the colour-field project sought to eliminate recognizable imagery and figure-ground relationships, pushing aside illusions of spatiality and perspective, and crucially, dispensing with narrative content. And if these paintings are deemed “post-painterly,” this is to differentiate them from the theatrical gestures and painterly flourishes characteristic of other branches of abstract painting. Instead, the colour-field painters de-emphasized the brushstroke, the mark of the hand, and the sense of a direct link to an individual psyche. What this left was the unadulterated potency of colour, shape, and composition. In some accounts, modern art reached a climax with this permutation of abstract painting—a rectangular shape enclosing a refined blaze of colour. This is an important episode in the history of modern art in Canada, and yet it has been institutionally overshadowed, not least by the earlier Group of Seven artists. It is also true that the once-heroic history of abstract painting has been largely neglected by a contemporary art world fixated on issues of representation. But Terada’s paintings nonetheless do resonate art-historically in very Canadian terms.

To some artists and critics at the time, and for subsequent generations, that kind of pared-down monochromatic painting came to symbolize the high-modernist withdrawal from material, social, and historical realities. (It’s the other extreme from the apparent capitulation to pop culture and everyday life characteristic of the pop art impulse.) Recently, Mark Cheetham has considered the legacy of this art historical phenomenon, describing how eventually, “abstraction and especially the monochrome became, not special areas of competence, but rather experiments, infections, contagions.”⁹ This is to say that the modernist desire to achieve a “pure” form of painting was short-lived, and indeed this ambition was deliberately undermined by subsequent generations. While Cheetham doesn’t mention Terada, his book points to an ongoing dialogue with this highly charged episode in the history of twentieth-century art. And as Kitty Scott remarks about Terada’s *Jeopardy* series, “while each painting literally produces an answer, each appears to ask the ultimate riddle: What is painting?”¹⁰

The genre of abstract painting can also be regarded as a twentieth-century addition to the distribution of genres within the occidental tradition of art. Some of the most long-lived genres were landscape, portrait, and still-life, while the powerful academies of art ensured that the didactic power of the “history painting” genre was valued above all others. It should be noted, all the same, that the history of art is a history of proliferating sub-genres and hybrid genres: we can refer to Arcadian landscapes, realist landscapes, or surrealist landscapes, for instance. Richard Wrigley has remarked that while the hierarchy of the genres initially appears to be a rigid and conservative system, “yet it only endured because it was an extremely flexible framework which was capable of diverse applications.”¹¹ The advent of modern art is often described as doing away entirely with the taxonomic logic of genres, but it can be argued that genres never entirely disappeared from the artistic imagination, as a “shared syntax” and an invaluable “aesthetic code.”¹² And then, abstract painting is arguably one of the few entirely new genres to appear in the twentieth century.

In Terada’s work, the sub-genre of monochrome abstract painting is indeed subject to hybridity and contagion, and this is quite specifically due to the impact of pop culture, which has its own elaborate system of genres. Certainly, in the realm of television the concept of genre is indispensable—for scholars, but also for industry insiders as well as everyday viewers. Genre is crucial when networks come to devise programming, study the ratings, determine time slots, and so on. And as Graeme Turner comments, “For the (television) viewer, genre plays a major role in how television texts are classified, selected, and understood.”¹³ So *Jeopardy!* or any other game show cannot be understood in isolation; it takes its place amongst an intricately wrought package of televisual entertainment. Zeroing in on the specific genre in question, the skill-testing game show claims the attention of the television viewer in distinctive ways. It’s very different from watching a drama, cop show, soap opera, or sit-com, because of the absence of narrative momentum, and indeed this obviates the need for sustained attention from the television viewer; this kind of TV show is often turned on while people are doing other things, even if the program seems to be constantly interpolating the viewer. The intelligibility of Terada’s *Jeopardy* paintings depends on an everyday knowledge of televisual genres and the mode of spectatorship appropriate to this specific genre. And if all this seems somewhat obvious, William Boddy has suggested that the television quiz show is a peculiarly impenetrable cultural object: “As nearly authorless texts,

the quiz show has frustrated traditional auterist and generic methods of analysis imported from literature and film studies.”¹⁴

What the television viewer sees on his or her screen is a stage, the name of the show spelled out in enormous letters, the game show host standing behind a small podium, and three contestants lined up on one side of the stage, facing a mammoth gridded panel. Occasionally the camera retreats to show a studio audience in attendance. Day after day, year after year, the format is unchanging: parcels of information flash up on a screen, punctuated by the overdetermined glee or disappointment of the contestants. Each square on the display board initially indicates a quantity of money, and then flips over to reveal one of those signature answers that demand a winning question. At some points during the program, these texts will entirely fill the screen: white lettering with drop shadows against a brilliant blue field.

The *Jeopardy!* game show was first broadcast in 1964 (coincidentally the hey-day of colour-field painting?) and is one of the most successful of all television game shows, and indeed one of the longest-running television programs more generally. The ephemerality of the originally aired show is an important factor to consider, especially now that the back-catalogue of American television is being made available to the public in the form of reissued DVDs. (I earlier used the term “back-catalogue” in relation abstract art, but this term is not commonly used in relation to works of art.) The back-catalogue implies an archive of half-forgotten material—those hit-parade songs, B-movies, and cancelled TV shows that were captivating once, but inevitably were supplanted by the next instalment of attention-grabbing sounds and pictures. At present, there is evidently a consumer base for re-issued episodes of *The Mod Squad* and for obscure recordings of soul singers from that same sixties decade, but do the thousands of hours of *Jeopardy!* programs constitute part of America’s cultural heritage and also deserve a second life? Is there a reason why these bygone pop-cultural fragments should be made to flare up now, and in a Canadian context? If the game shows and quiz shows broadcast in the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and 90s still exist in some material form, does anyone want to watch these again, or are they a definitive form of cultural waste? We might remember Nietzsche’s incisive comments about people who are unable to live fully in the present, because of their “antiquarian” attachment to the accumulated material stuff of history. The project of becoming modern subjects was undercut by this backward-looking tendency, Nietzsche suggested, “We are all suffering

from a consumptive historical fever and at least should recognize that we are afflicted with it.”¹⁵

And if these fleeting televisual moments have become historical fragments, so too do the questions themselves often refer to history. Scott Watson has remarked that Terada’s paintings demonstrate how “the reductiveness of the Jeopardy questions always lead to partial, myopic landscapes or truncated history.”¹⁶ Terada’s paintings certainly don’t impose a coherent historical narrative on these fragments, but the “pastness” of the televisual and art-historical genres does meet in the “objecthood” of the painting—and the result is a form of historical consciousness. It is crucial that Terada’s paintings are material objects that, at some point, must occupy an apartment wall, a corporate lobby... and that a gallery-full of Jeopardy paintings becomes an environment within which the visitor is immersed, materially and temporally, in an exaggerated here-and-now.

To some extent, this question of historicity coincides with the Canadian-ness of Terada’s project. Scott remarks on Terada’s “sly insertion of Canadian content” in the Jeopardy paintings.¹⁷ (Another notable example features the evolving career of hockey legend Wayne Gretzky.) This could also be said of another group of paintings created prior to the Jeopardy series. The so-called Personals paintings from 1994–95 also consist of monochromatic expanses of colour with overlaid text, but here the words are the kind of personal ad placed in a local newspaper. *Untitled* (I saw you...) 1995 is deep red with lettering that reads: “I SAW YOU at the Home Depot in Burnaby on Sunday Nov. 13th. We stood in same checkout line. You are Oriental and beautiful. You were looking at me too. Phone me at 5035.” (A small phone icon precedes the number.) This is undoubtedly Canadian content, with a site-specific dimension, for while the Home Depot hardware store in Burnaby might resemble many other big-box stores spread across the continent, only this suburban franchise was the site of this particular epiphany.

In fact we have no way of knowing whether this was an actual message intercepted by the artist, or whether he invented it in accordance with innumerable, comparable examples that can be read in any North American city’s freebie or alternative media. Either way, though, Terada calls attention to a distinctive form of expression within the contemporary urban context, one that communicates desire with telegraphic brevity, while also providing spatio-temporal coordinates in equally condensed terms: location, date, and time of encounter. And then too, the message includes a few key references to race, bodily disposition, gesture, and

glances exchanged. If the text's first appearance in a classified ad was as ephemeral as those TV-show texts, Terada's strategy of isolating and relocating the message calls attention to the pathos of one fateful moment in one person's life.

Whether or not Terada's Jeopardy paintings overtly reference Canadian subject matter, those fragments of text no longer float in a televisual no-place, banished to the margins of cultural history. Terada's painted words on canvas provide a new incarnation for words that only flashed up briefly on an illuminated screen; nor does the genre of abstract painting maintain its hermetic art-historical identity. The amalgam of quiz-show detritus and half-forgotten style of painting has resulted in a newly invigorated cultural object.

Lynne Marsh: Landscapes in Play

The question of genre arises in a different, but equally interesting way in the art practice of Lynne Marsh. In works such as *Calling* (2000), as well as in *Cowgirl & Future Stories* (1998), *Venus* (1998), and *Screeners* (2002), looped video or DVD projections show single or multiple figures, moving through digitally constructed, landscape-like spaces that are reminiscent of computer or video games. Such games are usually replete with textual instructions, prohibitions, and messages that purposefully conduct the viewer/player (along with his or her avatar) through the virtual space. In Marsh's work, it is as if the usual instructions and stories of such games have been stripped away, however, allowing the background to emerge as a newly mysterious space into which the artist then inserts herself. Here too I want to suggest that a productive cross-disciplinary mingling of genres has occurred, as the genre of action-adventure computer games comes up against the venerable art-historical genre of landscape art. In Marsh's work, this clash of genres becomes an aesthetic opportunity, allowing landscape to be re-invented yet again, as an art-form positioned at a moment of impact between technologies, historically-specific desires, and the natural world.

Marsh's work *Calling* features a mottled lunar-like environment, which is repeatedly traversed by a single female figure: this character is tall, slim, and dressed in a bright blue jumpsuit with matching headgear and goggles. In the 3.2-minute looping DVD projection, she moves towards the picture plane—that is to say, towards us—then turns and retreats towards the horizon-line that defines the rear of the fictional space. The figure repeats this movement, back and forth, back

and forth, until eventually, she collapses. As with the universe of computer games destined to be re-played ad infinitum, this apparent expiration or “death” does not really signal the end. Rather, the viewer/player is meant to learn the repertoire of gestures that make up the game—in Marsh’s case, these are limited to that crumple to the ground, a miraculous resuscitation, and a return to the paced-out measurement of the space.¹⁸ The artist hasn’t borrowed from or recreated a specific computer game here: it’s not that we can identify this mysteriously denuded locale as one of the backdrops in Atari’s *Cosmic Ark* (“the objective is to gather specimens from different planets aboard a cosmic ark, which contains the survivors from the city of Atlantis”) or the best-selling *Halo 2* (“a science fiction first-person shooter video game”).¹⁹ Nonetheless, Marsh’s invented spaces evoke the gaming world’s fantastic environments—those ever-multiplying sites of action and violence—even while the artist’s actions put into question what kind of activity/interactivity is appropriate in such imaginary visual spaces. Lesley Johnstone’s comments about other Marsh works are equally relevant here; the artist manages to create “a performative space based on a set of codified power relations.”²⁰

In discussing the process of negotiation and transaction undertaken by Marsh and Terada, it is important to bring forward the sophisticated theory of reception developed within the field of cultural studies. The emphasis on reception was meant as a corrective to the story of mass-produced cultural products thrust onto a population, and destined to be passively and unthinkingly consumed, along with whatever ideological content might lie embedded in those attractive and entertaining products. Stuart Hall’s influential essay “Encoding/Decoding,” which first appeared in 1973, introduced the idea of “negotiation” vis-à-vis the consumption of movies or television, to suggest both “the legitimacy of hegemonic definitions” but also the meaning-making that occurs “at a more restricted, situational (situated) level,”²¹ every time a new person encounters a particular pop-cultural object. And so an evening’s-worth of televisual entertainment will be imaginatively transformed, according to specific circumstances of identity-formation and social positioning, and according to the desires of those individual people on the receiving end of things. John Fiske would later argue that the most ordinary and banal of pop-culture images could become an important “site of semiotic struggle.”²² This line of thinking has been extremely relevant to questions of Canadian (or Québécois) national identity, since most of us consume vast quantities of American pop culture, even while the effects of that consumption remain unclear.

In a way, the artworks under consideration here seem to exemplify this theoretical model of reception. It could be said, in other words, that both Marsh's and Terada's artworks indicate how a single unit of pop culture can undergo a kind of metamorphosis once it comes into contact with an individual consciousness, an individual social subject. With these artworks, we can trace how some pop-cultural thing enters into the imaginative orbit of an individual consumer. The artist would therefore stand in for the viewer, reader, or consumer who appropriates that fragment of culture and adapts it to his or her own needs and desires. But this model is only partially useful, as it's not enough to claim that these artworks merely mimic or call attention to a process shared by everyone who sits back on their sofa watching TV. The crucial difference is that the artist's encounter with pop culture involves a material intervention, that the pictorial forms and historical conventions of art are called upon, and that this practice has resulted in a new cultural object. And so, while reception theory allows us to understand how TV shows and computer games can be re-narrativized, equally important is the engagement with style, medium, materiality, and genre that occurs through these art practices.

There is a distinctly Canadian resonance to Marsh's sustained attention to the question of landscape. The landscape genre in Canada has often been institutionally positioned and deployed as a means to bolster sentiments of nationhood, to consolidate a sense of collective identity. Recently, this nationalistic agenda, together with what John O'Brian calls the "predatory desire for wilderness" has been subject to much criticism.²³ Certainly many contemporary artists have been anxious to overturn some of the ideological and aesthetic conventions of traditional landscape art. And yet, the landscape genre has proven to have tremendous vitality as a cultural form, both within the world of art and across multiple sites within pop-culture and commercial entertainment. Lynne Marsh's landscape aesthetic seems to draw equally from these domains.

The adventures featured in computer games unfold against a series of constructed spaces, that can range from familiar-looking urban scenery to the more threatening and otherworldly landscapes demanded by science fiction and fantasy genres. The spatial imagery appearing on computer screens has apparently come about in a way that has little in common with the history of landscape painting or drawing; it is made not with an accumulation of brushstrokes or dabs of applied pigment, in other words, but rather through the technologized

manipulation of information. However, as computer games move towards increased realism, the pictorial qualities of the virtual worlds owe more and more to the traditional representational skills developed by artists, over many centuries. The gaming industry has indeed promoted the development of specialized cadres of artist/technicians, including “level artists,” “environment artists,” and “character modellers,” whose collective goal is to build up illusionary spaces bit by bit, according to well-established codes of realism.

Comparing Marsh’s fictive spaces to today’s state-of-the-art games, it is evident that she has not chosen to replicate the high level of finish, lighting, shadows, modelling, and texturization that might result in a convincingly realistic style. If anything, Marsh’s landscapes resemble early, primitive forms of video games, where the object-world as a whole looks suspiciously spongiform and lacking in substance.²⁴ In Marsh’s “games,” we become aware that realism itself is an especially slippery effect: an illusion of visual mastery is promised one minute, but the image hovers on the brink of unintelligibility the next. What is the aesthetic value of this partially real landscape, we might ask?

Marsh’s figures appear in landscapes that are so stripped down and elemental looking that they approximate a kind of wilderness. There’s practically nothing in the way of picturesque detail, something that might suggest the intricacies of plant or mineral life, nor is there any anecdotal evidence suggesting the historical build-up of human settlement. It is these starkly outlined figures against a landscape that so recall the cartoon-like figure-ground relationship of early computer games, but then again, these figures inhabiting rudimentary visual environments return us to the landscape genre at its most basic and structural level.

The woman who inhabits Marsh’s strange and unrealistic space moves with purpose, she seems to be looking for something or to want something, but then suddenly she expires. It is precisely this pared-down inscription of movement and desire onto a (quasi) natural environment that convincingly recalls the history of landscape art. Memorable landscape pictures manage to suggest that nature could provide an escape or refuge from collective life, that human history can be measured against the cyclical temporality of the natural world, that the changeable, ephemeral forces of nature can be provisionally stilled. If these qualities are not usually in play for the teenage kid who sends his avatar roaming and ravaging through a game, Marsh’s hybrid landscape pictures reassert those realms of experience. Marsh’s work also reminds us, though, that any incarnation of the landscape

genre can be taken seriously as a form of knowledge, positioning the natural world in relation to human history, society, and consciousness. And at the same time, the energy and exhilaration that accompany the playing of virtual games make their way back into the art-historical genre of landscape.

Both Ron Terada and Lynne Marsh make use of the game, and the idea of play, to negotiate the relationship between pop culture and visual art. I have described their artworks as image transactions, and a complex and aesthetically challenging process is indeed set in motion, while this is accomplished by mixing up the rules of the game, and the conventions of the genre(s). The artists are able to capitalize on both the historicity and flexibility of genres. Moving between one genre and another across disciplines and pictorial formations is possible because those specialized genres are made to morph and adapt. Here is the dynamic energy and inventiveness of pop culture, as well as its propensity for newness. At the same time, the emphasis on artistic forms implies tradition, monumentality, and aesthetic reflection. The hybrid objects that result from these encounters capture the very spirit of cultural change.

Notes

1. Irit Rogoff, "Studying Visual Culture," *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. N. Mirzoeff (London and New York: Routledge, 1998): 15, 22.
2. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture," in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (Clark Art Institute and Yale University Press, 2002): 243.
3. Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974): 211–212.
4. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-garde and Kitsch," *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, [1939] 1961).
5. Umberto Eco, "Lowbrow Highbrow, Highbrow Lowbrow," in *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, ed. Carol Anne Mahsun (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, [1971] 1989).
6. See Craig Owens, "Representation, Appropriation and Power," *Art in America* 70:5, May 1982: 9–21.
7. Dick Hebdige, "In Poor Taste: Notes on Pop," in *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Pop* (New York: ICA/London: MIT Press, 1988): 116–143.
8. Christopher Brayshaw, "Mono Maniac," *Canadian Art* 17:2 (Summer 2000): 36.
9. Mark Cheetham, *Abstract Art Against Autonomy: Infection, Resistance, and Cure Since the 60s* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 43.

10. Kitty Scott, "What's the Question?" *Ron Terada: 'What's the Question?' Jeopardy Paintings 09.25.99/10.23.99* (exhibition brochure), (New York: Real, 1999): n.p.
11. Richard Wrigley, *The Origins of French Art Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993): 286.
12. Wrigley 1993, 286. Museologically as well, the traditional genres have persisted. When London's Tate Modern opened in 2000, for instance, the thematic, non-chronological, and supposedly radical organization of the collection was surprisingly reminiscent of landscape, portraiture, still life, and so on.
13. Graeme Turner, "The Uses and Limitations of Genre," *The Television Genre Book*, ed. Glen Creeber (London: BFI Publishing, 2001): 5.
14. William Boddy, "The Quiz Show," *The Television Genre Book*, ed. Glen Creeber (London: BFI Publishing, 2001): 79–80.
15. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* (Kessinger Publishing, 2004) (first published 1873): 2.
16. Scott Watson, "New Vancouver Modern," in *New Vancouver Modern* (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 1998): 24.
17. Scott 1999, n.p.
18. This description of Marsh's artwork is adapted from my own review essay: see Johanne Sloan, "Landscape Immersions: Lynne Marsh's Performative Spaces," *Art Papers*, March/April 2006. See also the exhibition catalogue.
19. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_video_games (accessed February 2008).
20. Lesley Johnstone, "Figure, Architecture, Camera: The Strategic Modes of Lynne Marsh," *Lynne Marsh* (exhibition catalogue), (Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and Rimouski: Musée régional de Rimouski, 2008): 56.
21. Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," *Media Studies: A Reader*, eds. Paul Marris and Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1996): 60. First published 1973.
22. John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989): 97.
23. John O'Brian, "Wild Art History," *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007): 22.
24. See, for instance, Mark J. P. Wolf, "Abstraction in the Video Game," *The Video Game Theory Reader*, eds. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York and London: Routledge, 2003). Wolf contests the race for ever-greater realism, and argues, "abstraction represents perhaps the greatest area of potential for the video game medium," 64.

<9>

CONTROLLING THE POPULAR

*Canadian Memory Institutions
and Popular Culture*

Frits Pannekoek,
Mary Hemmings, and
Helen Clarke

*T. H. Goode, Member of Parliament for
Burnaby-Richmond:*

*"There are Women Outlaws and True
Mystery. This latter is the most filthy book
that I have ever seen on a magazine stand."*

An hon. member: "What is in it?"

*T. H. Goode: "The honourable member can
read it after I'm through with it."*

In the last decade, there has been an apparent radical realignment in the attitude of memory institutions towards popular culture. In the past, archives, libraries, and museums aligned themselves with cultural forces that ensured the marginalization, indeed the criminalization, of popular culture. Today they seem to be in a cautious embrace. However, the realignment from guardians of high culture to cautious intermediaries is superficial. As

the manifestations of popular culture gain a patina of respectability through age or nostalgia, items such as paperbacks, comics, or letters may be collected, but they are managed through old forms: "The librarian as gatekeeper between order and chaos, the library as cathedral, the humiliation of the user, and the power of surveillance and the consequences of disrupting the sacred order of texts."² As well, memory institutions use codified law and ritual to control the products and activities of the emerging digital information world and continue to disregard the discourse and products of popular culture.

This marginalization arises from the alignment of memory institutions with bodies that work to control information and the culture's uneasy relationship with new forms of discourse or expression. The wish for control is based on a desire to maintain the codified validation of the authority of information, the economic investment in existing models of control such as copyright, and the belief that memory institutions bestow status on information through inclusion.

The rituals of access are shadows of ancient practices meant to control reading and interpretation, keeping these privileges for those who can be trusted to respect the status quo. In 1804, the British House of Commons noted that access to the Reading Room of the British Library should be limited to those already known to a Library trustee or officer.³ In the present, the language of copyright enforcement remains unchanged, and libraries sign licenses with digital information sellers restricting full access to those authorized by the institution. Non-affiliated users visiting the library depend on the scrutiny of institutional gatekeepers for access. These new rituals are manifested in the vocabulary of metadata, login, and password.

In doing this, memory institutions set themselves at odds with the emerging reality of digital information. As this conservatism takes root there is a real danger that Canadian memory institutions will be reduced to unpopulated temples for the validation of group memory, eerie outposts for copyright enforcement, and, for those who tolerate their rituals of meaningless consecration, engines for the generation of tax receipts.

A History of Discomfort with Popular Culture

He spoke, and with his fleshless, diaphanous hands he began slowly tearing to strips and shreds the limp pages of the manuscript, stuffing them into his mouth, slowly swallowing as if he were consuming the host and he wanted to make it flesh of his flesh.

—UMBERTO ECO, *The Name of the Rose*, 480⁴

In 1949, the Canadian Parliament introduced legislation to criminalize the production, sale, and ownership of pulp fiction and comic books in Canada.⁵ While controls had been exercised over salacious adult material in the past, now Canadian youth had disposable income and the temptations of the free market. As well as criminalizing pulp magazines, a Royal Commission, known as the Massey Commission, was established to review the nature of Canadian culture. Ignoring Canadian contributions to popular culture, such as Winnipeg's Harlequin Publishing, the Commission concluded that the bad literature that defined popular culture came from the United States.

Parliament and the Massey Commission believed it was the role of memory institutions to mediate good taste. Today the impact of the Massey Commission is still felt. The belief in the licentious, tainted contagion of pulp fiction effectively led to its destruction not only by individual citizens, but also by Canadian memory institutions, which refused to collect it and thereby legitimize these works.

Popular culture has also been marginalized in memory institutions because society views it as transient and disposable. Popular culture is seen as a tasteless, fleeting, and disposable commodity. A few years ago, a newspaper article lamented the loss of eight years of Johnny Carson tapes because a junior television executive thought they had little enduring value. In a similar vein, children's libraries diligently avoided purchasing series such as the Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew. They were not proper forms of literature for formative tastes. Although public libraries now do purchase popular paperbacks, they also discard them when worn or when their appeal has waned. They can be read but not "collected"—that would bestow too much status.

Academic libraries, archives, and museums have been especially careful to keep popular culture at bay, although recently, some American library, archive, and museum associations have begun actively to endorse its collection.⁶ In Canada, as the nature of the nation's literary canon is increasingly questioned, so too are the

collecting policies of its brand institutions. Recently, the decision of the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) to acquire the works of an unsuccessful Canadian writer met with some excitement among postmodernist literary critics.⁷ Canada's postwar "juvenile delinquents" (including Margaret Atwood), who read pulp science fiction, crime novels, and comic books with a flashlight at midnight, are now of an age to wish to see validation of their nostalgia through the collections of memory institutions.

However, acceptance of these materials means that they must be controlled by the same codes and rituals that accompany traditional collections. This creates a deep tension in memory institutions. To assign value to materials by accepting them, they must be made to fit into the traditional practices of description, control, and institutional values. Yet these materials are by nature non-traditional in format and readership. In the case of academic libraries, for example, a distinctive collection is generally considered as a candidate for Special Collections. Special Collections units tend to focus on rare and elite materials. Inclusion here confers without question a social consensus of value and worthiness. Without a senior advocate, a popular culture collection stands little chance of entering that rarefied place. Even when a dean, university president, or library director is enamoured of a collection, there will be resistance arising from the materials' patent unsuitability for traditional treatment. Where will the collection be housed? Who will organize it? Where are the extraordinary resources for conservation? A boatload of comic books or VHS cassettes is about as welcome as a plague ship.

When such collections are accepted, they continue to play a peripheral role, often being seen as a cause for embarrassment rather than celebration. Rarely do popular culture collections receive the publicity and curation needed to become established within the academic community. There are examples of activist librarians who have popularized such collections (for example the Judith Merrill Collection of the Toronto Public Library), and there is growing awareness of the web as a dissemination tool. However, for the most part, Special Collections remain institutional backwaters mired in the past.

As Special Collection materials are scanned for digital access, Canadian memory professionals, whether curator, archivist, or librarian, continue to control access by replicating high-culture rituals. In the past, this included legislation criminalizing unlawful copying. Now, misinformed awareness of copyright law serves as an excuse to assume sanctioned rituals to ensure control. These rituals

include controlling who can view digital products, decisions on the suitability of material for digital access, and reluctance to include born digital material. Traditional practices and roles need to be questioned as memory institutions seek to engage with new information technologies and culture.

A New Popular Culture of Information Seeking

The abbot smiled. "No one should. No one can. No one, even if he wished, would succeed. The library defends itself, immeasurable as the truth it houses, deceitful as the falsehood it preserves. A spiritual labyrinth, it is also a terrestrial labyrinth. You might enter and you might not emerge. And having said this, I would like you to conform to the rules of the abbey."

—*The Name of the Rose*, 38

Memory institutions have always been rooted in high culture. Yet today the apparent cornucopia of the Internet is spawning a new popular culture of information seeking that radically challenges the physical and intellectual shape of memory institutions. Institutions are faced with maintaining traditions created to sustain a print culture of information scarcity and sanctity. In the meantime, society is engaging more directly, immediately, and easily with information than ever before. A radical transformation is taking shape. It is marked by the dominance of technology, the dominance of the culture of copying, the dominance of the culture of ease, and the struggle for space. Combined with this is the increasing use of legislation to control access and use of information. Privacy and intellectual property legislation is being used by memory professionals to reinvent their gatekeeper function by reintroducing "criminality" and reasserting their traditional power over information seeking.

Dominance of a New Populist Technology

It was a forked pin, so constructed that it could stay on a man's nose... And on either side of the fork, before the eyes, there were two ovals of metal, which held two almonds of glass, thick as the bottom of a tumbler.

—*The Name of the Rose*, 74

In Canada, memory professionals have been leaders in using new information

technologies. Librarians employed technology decades before the Internet to control content with the automation of the card catalogue. The integration of catalogues across institutions eventually created the OCLC world catalogue based in Dublin, Ohio.

The Canadian Heritage Information Network was the first to use the power of the Internet to popularize history and the country's museum collections. The intention was to put an inventory of the nation's collections online. The metadata fields that would describe these items were to have been of the highest standard and, of course, impossible to achieve with existing resources. Security considerations (it was a criminal act in some jurisdictions to release the location of archaeological remains) precluded some of these first efforts to increase public access. For whatever reason, the anticipated hordes of users did not visit these initial offerings. Over time, inventories were replaced with online exhibits that followed in the museum, archive, and special collections tradition of curated and controlled public access.

The creation of digital surrogates for concrete objects is a surprising source of controversy in memory intuitions. Librarians have been eager to use technology to attach digitized material directly to description, creating a single act that combines discovery and use. Librarians see this as a holy grail and widely seek a complete digital recreation of the print environment.

Archivists, while willing to post samples or the best of a set of letters, are often unwilling to create complete digital versions of holdings. There is a real fear that researchers will stop visiting archives for advice or to use collections. For example, the Hudson's Bay Company collections were prevented from being digitized because it was argued that archive would "lose" any control over end use. The argument was that the microfilms and some of the materials were of such poor quality that the documents required interpretational assistance.⁸ Similarly, the City of Calgary resists digitizing historical bylaws because the archivists believe the public will misunderstand the difference between an historical bylaw and a current one. Surely, this is the role of the researcher, not the memory professional.⁹

In archives, the rituals of access are reinvented and reinforced through provincial and federal privacy legislation, itself a result of the increased availability of personal information in digital environments. In the best circumstance (Alberta), a researcher has to identify their research needs and sign a researcher non-disclosure agreement. At the worst (the federal government), all documents must be vetted,

and costs assigned. Memory professionals have found a new gatekeeper role. Archival documents that were available thirty years ago are now restricted. Indeed documents are subject to such expensive reviews that unfettered research is limited to those employed by governments. Governments and their information specialists now control information more tightly than ever before through the rituals of the memory professionals.

In libraries, technology has also allowed the reinvention of control. Librarians have willingly cooperated in this change as the readers' preference for online access pushes a digital library agenda. But in moving so quickly to the digital frontier, librarians have accepted models of control that will ultimately erode their core values. Licenses, rather than cultural consensus, now rule access and use. Limited budgets mean the range of information gathered contracts. Preservation and the role in sustaining a generational legacy are easily abandoned as too expensive and difficult.

The Changing Culture of Copying

The brightest places were reserved for the antiquarians, the most expert illuminators, the rubricators and the copyists. Each desk had everything for illuminating and copying... Next to each scribe, or at the top of the sloping desk, there was a lectern, on which the codex to be copied was placed, the page covered by a sheet with a cut-out window which framed the line being copied at the moment.

—*The Name of the Rose*, 72

There is a growing tension between the old culture of power derived from controlling the authorized original and the new culture of power derived from participating in shared creation. The old culture demanded acknowledgement of the primacy of ownership. The new culture of copy negates that relationship, transferring power to creative acts.

There are significant questions regarding copies in a digital environment. Is information viewed on publicly posted websites there for readers to enjoy and distribute, or are these postings analogous to the virtual page of a book? Some think the former, while copyright holders argue the latter. The recent focus of post-secondary institutions on plagiarism can be seen as attempting to reinforce

the sanctity of the academic copy culture, which very much aligns with the primacy of ownership of ideas. It can be argued that in a society in which the collective owns memory there can be no concept of plagiarism.¹⁰

There is an existing copy tradition that memory professionals could use to understand these new behaviours. In bureaucratic environments, the practice is to create institutional copies that do not acknowledge an individual creator. For example, Ministers of the Crown regularly sign letters, advocate policy, or deliver speeches drafted by subordinates who rely on many sources of information, including academic materials. There are no footnotes in legislation or policy speeches acknowledging these sources. Bureaucratic cultures rarely use academic rituals of copy and rely instead on their own authority to reinforce argument. The information culture of the vast majority has always been based on this culture of criminalized but approved plagiarism. It can be argued that the culture of the institutional copy is the one that has much in common with digital popular culture.

Most memory specialists work as professionals within the institutional environment. Curators, librarians, and archivists are rarely acknowledged as owners of intellectual property or as creators. Archival finding aids, library catalogues, or museum exhibition texts are rarely acknowledged. Memory professionals are often bureaucrats—part of larger government, post-secondary, or church bureaucracies that understand and legitimize the tradition of information replication. Ideas are not owned by a single individual or an institution but rather by an evolving group of individuals who give and take as needs demand. In the collective academic, authority does not matter.

Information shared on the digital street tends to reference an unspecified authority. What makes this new copy culture powerful is its ability to create a new equivalent of the institutional copy culture. This information does have power, but it is a populist power rather than a result of the power of the state or a legitimized institution. Reliability of the source still matters, but not in a way that memory specialists might find acceptable.

Information-seeking studies indicate that reliable members of an individual's immediate community are often the first point of inquiry. The passing of unauthored but friend-legitimized information is a form of "power sharing" and "power replication." Authority is inherent, not in the information, but in the individual authorizing the information. This authority has now also been given at least in part

to the machine. The machine is the friend—the machine is “they.”

It is critical to note that different information is legitimized in different ways and by different authorities. For example, the Initiatives in the New Economy SuperNet Alberta study, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada found that financial information from friends in the banking industry, not Internet sources, was considered the most reliable. Agricultural market reports from rural radio were considered authoritative. Health information from the Internet was considered as a first source of information. The Internet was considered an acceptable authority for schoolwork. Unless focus-group members were prompted, memory professionals were not mentioned. Libraries¹¹ were considered essential to community life as a place to go for recreational reading.¹²

A culture of group creation could reduce accountability, and the care behind intellectual activity. The Initiatives in the New Economy SuperNet Project, which undertook to study information seeking-behaviours, suggests this is not the case. Librarians, for example, are still considered the keepers of knowledge regarding the best information—however they are no longer seen strictly as gatekeepers. They are one of a number of community authorities that include friends, the Internet, radio, or the press. Each is valued differently depending on the information type. Where memory professionals have authority in the digital world, it is because of the brand of their institutions. As in the past, the institution provides the legitimacy of the information.

Memory professionals remain complicit in trying to control the emerging digital information culture by acceding to criminalization through legislation, and by accepting a role in supporting these rules. For example, a fundamental principle of the new digital age is criminalizing the use of best information if done without the imprimatur of a memory institution or copyright holder. Often the librarian, archivist, or now “disclosure analyst” acts as the intermediary preventing discovery or access. Librarians and archivists become complicit in the high culture’s desire to control access and textual interpretation. They provide the mechanisms to regulate access to information within the context of the new criminality. For example, logins and passwords serve as authorizations to see materials (i.e., manage copyright) and to extract financial tolls for access to knowledge.

Have memory professionals increased the cost of information by using the resources of their institutions to acquire and tollgate information? Have they also attempted to retain control through the intimidation of professional language?

Does a researcher care whether the material they found was through a Google search or was Dublin Core compliant?

This is particularly evident in how memory institutions use ritual and law to continue to regulate and shape the culture of copy. Memory institutions have always regulated copy, whether in the scriptorium or at the Xerox machine. The Internet introduces the potential for information to serve as a universal resource that can be used by anyone. We should expect the rituals around acknowledgment and access to be profoundly changed as archivists, librarians, and curators are no longer required to serve as intermediaries between what is owned and what is public. If memory professionals are no longer needed to guard authority and authenticity, then what is their function? Will fear lead to a too-close alignment with agencies that seek to establish control and to create roles to enforce the legalities of access? Such a development would critically harm the memory professions and institutions. Users have demonstrated a willingness to abandon the traditional culture of control, if an alternative is presented.

Culture of Ease

I don't know. There is something in the library, and I don't believe it is the souls of dead librarians...

—*The Name of the Rose*, 90

Accompanying the culture of copy is a culture of ease that dominates digital information searching. Perhaps the change most difficult for memory institutions to understand is the advent of information plenitude rather than scarcity. Readers are no longer limited in their choice of information sources. Rituals that make access difficult or complex are now readily bypassed. Memory professionals and their institutions are not the first choice for information. Studies of information grounds show that most individuals rank libraries quite low in terms of preferred sources.¹³ Familiarity and ease guide the choice of information source. Friends are preferred over the reference desk, Google over the library catalogue, and digital access over the physical space.

It has been argued that there has been a sharp decline in writing skills and the ability to sustain complex and extended thought. One study shows that only one third of Internet information seekers go beyond the first page. These “flickers”

have short attention spans and visit many sites, but investigate and use few. When they find a web page that is significantly below their skill level or when there are problems with securing access permissions, it is abandoned. It is a culture of ease and play. As more people look for information on the Internet, information professionals focus increasingly on digital access.

This is not without consequence. Recent studies show that the new culture of information seeking is accompanied by a sharp decline in writing skills, in individualized study (group work is preferred), and in classroom and library attendance. The reading culture is disappearing in favour of skimming or browsing. Immediacy is preferred. Friends are considered more reliable sources of information assessment than professionals. Most of these findings are from the Pew Foundation studies and are conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom.¹⁴ But, they were also reinforced by the findings of the SuperNet information-seeking projects in Alberta.¹⁵ It must be noted that these studies were mostly conducted by information professions and tend to focus on the negative aspects of information technology. The ability to educate, to free information from the fetters of the controlling professions, and to revolutionize economies is generally sidelined.

Libraries, archives, and museums have always believed they support a culture of ease. Library catalogues, archival inventories, and museum exhibitions are dominated by the desire (or so their creators argue) to ease the information pathway. However, whereas libraries attempted to ease the pathway to information through bibliographic verification, Google and Yahoo showed the archaic, clumsy nature of this approach by providing a direct link between discovery and use. Now memory institutions struggle to create ever-easier paths to information. Text bites and images rather than complex narratives rule in museums. No text can be longer than eighty-eight words. Information seeking, even for complex materials, is dominated by considerations of ease, only slightly mitigated by frustrations relating to quality. Information seeking is not about the best but about good enough.

The challenge is to continue to serve readers who need complete, rare, or complex information. This is not the same as using rituals to confirm an artificial aura of importance. Rather it is recognizing that satisfying the needs of the majority can lead unwittingly to excluding information that is marginal or specialized. This challenge has at its root many of the same considerations that excluded popular culture materials in the past—an engrained reluctance to engage in risk or controversial

questions and the fear engendered by reliance on external funding. It is far too easy for memory institutions to follow the smooth path.

Physicality and the "Bilbao Disease"

Wherefore it is best that in places like this... not all books be within the reach of all.

—*The Name of the Rose*, 89

Memory institutions have long identified their status within society through iconic buildings: the best of high architecture. In a digital environment, buildings are icons of past glory. Statistics from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) show a steady decrease in onsite reference statistics for Canadian members. From 2000 to 2005, the thirteen Canadian members of ARL for which there are statistics showed an average decline of 64 percent in reference statistics. Only three institutions showed an increase. At the same time, libraries are experiencing an astonishing increase in the use of licensed electronic resources. For example, there were over 2.7 million instances of access to online resources recorded by the University of Calgary in 2006. These patterns are found equally among academic libraries across North America. The culture of ease calls into question the need for physical library space.

In the last few years, museums, libraries, and archives have sought a new relevance through "starchitecture."¹⁶ If one institution symbolizes high culture it is the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank O. Gehry. The museum's architecture has become the exhibition. As the *New York Times* pointed out, no one knows what is in the building. The collections are irrelevant—the building is the star. The same argument could be made about the new Royal Ontario Museum, the new Art Gallery of Ontario addition, or even the new Alberta Art Gallery. Few comprehend the content or role of these institutions. What matters is the ability to gain diminishing market attention through the magnificence of space. Canada's Bill Thorsell, who fully understands the art of communication and is not afraid to borrow a good idea, has led the Canadian revolution by retaining Liebiskin to dream a crystal over Bloor Street. The Royal Ontario Museum building, with its leaking roof and over-abundance of light, has become a popular culture icon in Toronto. The War Museum, the Museum of Civilization, and the National Art Gallery have all done the same thing. Are libraries any different? The

new Vancouver library is but one example of the new information temples. It should not escape anyone that all these buildings were conceived in the digital age.

So what is the role of library, archive, and museum buildings? We are still constructing them but now they are showpieces for the legitimization of information. Is that what the larger public expects out of their memory institutions: Bilbao temples with no objects of worship and no sanctifying priests? Is Jacques Derrida's metaphor¹⁷ that knowledge is controlled by institutionally sanctioned archivists who limit access and space a self-fulfilling prophecy?

These new memory facilities teeter between relevance in a digital age and sanctifying information. Already we see some emerging traditions in the content of these facilities. For example, a new university library must have an information commons. Social interaction is the real intention of these spaces. Social space is replacing space devoted to collections. Now collections are placed in storage buildings to be hauled out as artifacts. While libraries exert control over digital information through authorized login and password, they also increase control over physical collections.

When a Gen-Xer was asked whether his community needed a library, an archives, or a museum, he proclaimed that of course a community needed these facilities. To him they were symbols of civilization or sophistication, although he struggled as to what a librarian might do there.

The Persistence of Tradition and the Challenge of Change

Tradition

The old man was silent. He held both hands open on the book, as if caressing its pages, flattening them the better to read them, or as if he wanted to protect the book from a raptor's talons.

—*The Name of the Rose*, 480

In the past, archivists and librarians required readers to pass through rigorous rituals of access. In the LAC, all research using archives and special collections was done in a secured reading room under the careful eye of a professional. Like Foucault's metaphor of the Panopticon, librarians regulated behaviour through

the organization of space.¹⁸ Academic libraries still contain controlled spaces for the viewing of designated material. In museums, collections that are not on exhibit are locked away from view and very special intervention is required to examine these materials. Consequently few members of the public ever do.

In a digitized environment, everyone could potentially view these collections. There would be no need for refereed access. But then, how would memory institutions control interpretation? Memory professionals could adopt the curator's strategy: provide access through exhibitions. Scholars would still have to come to the institution to examine collections and the status of both the profession and the space would be assured.

Libraries and archives continue to preserve the rituals of access for online collections. To access licensed digital resources, a library issues a login and password. In addition, they hold items back from digitization. Memory professionals find themselves positioned to use copyright laws and licensing agreements to reinvent their gatekeeper functions. It can be argued that archivists, librarians, and indeed curators are redefining their roles from being driven by client service access, to becoming agents of the state, publishers, and rights holders.

For example, the "big three" law publishers (Lexis Nexis/Elsevier; Westlaw/Thomson; and CCH/Wolters Kluwer) have controlled 80 percent of the U.S. legal publishing market in 2005. Since then, the big three have made significant inroads in purchasing small national publishers in Australia, the U.K., and Europe.¹⁹ However, despite the precedent of the Supreme Court's liberal interpretations against the big three,²⁰ librarians have studiously avoided irritating these publishers. Instead, they listen politely²¹ to the Big Three's lawyers and impose restrictive access to law materials as a matter of acquiescent principle.

Instead of assuming a role in decriminalizing the sharing of information, library and museum professionals reinforce their roles as guardians of authority by demanding that the public adhere to the academic ritual of authorization. They continue to be rigorous in the enforcement of the Copyright Act. Public and academic libraries are a key source of revenue for Access Copyright in Canada.

If memory professionals acted as advocates for the new popular culture of information seeking, would new economic models for information sharing emerge? Some radical elements work toward this purpose by protesting restrictive copyright laws, digital rights management, and pushing for open access/open source agendas. But in most cases, this is done by individuals with minimal institutional support.

Change

*All of this, in any case has been of no avail... Now it is over. I have found you,
I have found the book, and the others died in vain.*

—*The Name of the Rose*, 480

As libraries are emptied of content and users cease to visit, professionals seek a turnaround by leaving the library and entering into the information grounds of users. Information grounds are the physical and virtual spaces where individuals look for information and research shows that libraries do not rank highly here. Some examples of the trend for information professionals to try to occupy these spaces include setting up virtual libraries in Second Life and projects where librarians situate themselves in campus coffee shops or other public/social spaces. Even more adventurous is the withdrawal from labelled space. Here the library provides essentially unbranded services within the larger information universe. For example, libraries can work with Google Scholar to allow authenticated users to link directly from citations to licensed text in a minimally branded seamless interface.

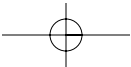
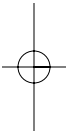
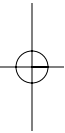
The exploration of roles outside the physical library space is a proper and reasonable reaction to the fundamentally changing nature of information use. However, it can insidiously carry with it the loss of a role in stewardship and support for the marginal and complex. While academic libraries in Canada are successful in negotiating and purchasing access to large blocks of information from mainstream publishers, such as Elsevier, Springer, or Sage, they struggle to develop meaningful reactions to the burgeoning open access environment of digital information. Like its inhabitants, librarians too easily view this environment as ephemeral, lacking gravitas or lasting value. It is a remarkable continuation of the blind spot to printed popular culture. Blogs, wikis, web pages, open access journals, none of these are seen as suitable objects of the attention of Special Collections. Special Collections as signifiers of cultural value for objects continue to depend on the physicality of these items.

What stands to be lost through this absence of attention is an entire generation's cultural dialogue. We have no collectors hoarding fanzines, comics, letters, or photographs in dusty attics awaiting our eventual appreciation. Digital information requires quick action, not protestations of impotence in the face of copyright, limited budgets, or the needs of the majority.

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AFTER THE SPIRIT SANG

*Aboriginal Canadians
and Museum Policy in
the New Millennium*

Introduction

Heather Devine

In 1988, a pivotal event occurred that changed the course of Canadian museum administration forever. An exhibition intended to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of Canada's Aboriginal peoples, *The Spirit Sings*, opened at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary in 1988 as one of the many showcases developed for the Calgary Winter Olympics. What should have been a critical success from a curatorial perspective, however, became a huge embarrassment to its creators.

The Spirit Sings was an ambitious exhibition that sought to display the finest examples of Canadian Aboriginal material culture gathered from repositories around the world. To achieve this goal, a number of museums in Britain, Europe, and elsewhere were approached and asked to loan specific ethnographic items from

their holdings. Not surprisingly, the costs to research and mount an exhibition of this magnitude were formidable. To help defray these costs, the Glenbow received corporate sponsorship from Calgary's oil industry, particularly Shell Oil.

Unfortunately, the participation of Shell Oil as principle corporate sponsor served as a lightning rod for Aboriginal criticism of not only the exhibition itself, but the contemporary treatment of Canada's Aboriginal people in general, and the Lubicon Cree of Northern Alberta in particular. Shell Oil, and several other petroleum producers, had been drilling on Crown land in the heart of traditional Lubicon territory, while the Lubicon had been lobbying unsuccessfully for years to negotiate treaty rights and land claims with both the federal and provincial governments.

The subsequent boycott of the exhibition and the withdrawal of many of the museums that had agreed to participate as donors sent shock waves throughout the Canadian heritage community. The controversy over *The Spirit Sings* had not only revealed Canada's history of shameful Aboriginal policies to the world, but had also exposed the profound gulf that existed between the largely non-Native administrators, curators, designers, and educators, and the Indigenous peoples whose heritage they presumed to interpret to the rest of the world. Moreover, in the wake of the Glenbow disaster, when other Canadian museum curators were asked how they would have approached the development of such an exhibition, they responded that they would not have done things differently.

It is not the intention of this paper to revisit *The Spirit Sings* in any great detail; the reader can access a substantial body of literature dealing with the exhibition and its immediate aftermath.¹ The historical importance of *The Spirit Sings*, when considered in the context of Canadian cultural policy, is not simply that it precipitated a re-evaluation of Aboriginal heritage in museums. *The Spirit Sings* debacle was a logical, if unfortunate, consequence of an evolving multicultural policy that sought to accomplish several competing goals at once: to satisfy the substate nationalist aspirations of Québécois; to assist new immigrant groups to integrate smoothly into the Canadian body politic; and to repair the social and economic damage created by a century of misguided government policies for Aboriginal people.

Indigenous Peoples and Their Place in a Multicultural World

Although some may assume that multiculturalism is Canada's greatest social gift to the world, in actual fact policies promoting cultural diversity are the result of almost a century of international response to the need to protect—and placate—minority populations in countries around the world.

Since the end of World War I, when the redrawing of European borders served to isolate cultural and linguistic minorities from their larger “parent” nations, there was recognition of the need to protect the human rights of these isolated groups in order to prevent the kind of ethnic unrest that prompted The Great War in the first place. As a result, bilateral treaties were established between neighbouring nations to “ensure reciprocal protection of co-nationals” caught on the wrong side of redrawn borders.²

After World War II, however, in the wake of the creation of the United Nations, the concept of protecting minority rights on a piecemeal, treaty-by-treaty basis was abandoned for a system that would both guarantee and protect basic civil and political rights for all people, not just minority groups. This concept was codified in the Charter of the United Nations in 1945, and later in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which the signatory nations were expected to implement. A series of complementary, regional human rights agreements were later negotiated by other international organizations in different parts of the world.³

The concept of universal human rights prevailed until the 1960s, when a range of different minority populations began to mobilize politically. It became evident that the concept of universal human rights embraced by Western democracies after World War II had not adequately addressed the cultural, economic, and political inequalities that created ethnic violence and political unrest.

Until recently, most states around the world have aspired to be “nation-states.” In this model, the state was implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) seen as the possession of a dominant national group, which used the state to privilege its identity, language, history, culture, literature, myths, religion, and so on, and which defined the state as the expression of its nationhood. (This dominant group was usually the majority group, but sometimes a minority was able to establish dominance—e.g. whites in South Africa under the apartheid regime, or *criollo* elites in some Latin

American countries.) Anyone who did not belong to this dominant national group was subject to either assimilation or exclusion.⁴

A new concept of minority rights, known as “liberal multiculturalism,” was developed, which acknowledged the existence of three primary categories of minority populations: Indigenous peoples, substate minorities, and immigrant groups. Indigenous groups are considered to be those minority populations that exist in countries colonized by European nations: Indians, Inuit, and Métis of Canada; the Aboriginal peoples of Australia; the Maori of New Zealand; the Saami of Scandinavia; the Inuit of Greenland; and Indian tribes in the U.S.⁵ Substate nationalist groups are defined as those large, non-Indigenous minorities that have been present for most, if not all, of a country’s political history and consider themselves “states within states,” such as the Québécois in Canada, the Scots and Welsh in Britain, and the Basques in Spain. Immigrant groups are those ethnic minority groups that have recently (within the last 50–100 years) migrated to the traditional countries of immigration (i.e., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States), initially from Europe, but more recently from Latin America, Asia, and Africa.⁶ Policies of liberal multiculturalism were intended to be developed and applied by individual countries in a way that would reflect the unique makeup of their own minority populations.⁷

In particular, policies regarding Indigenous minorities were in dire need of rethinking. In most countries, multicultural policies regarding Indigenous peoples were intended to reverse traditional government policy intended to assimilate these groups, including the implementation of the following:

- Recognition of land rights/title;
- Recognition of self-government rights;
- Upholding historic treaties and/or signing new treaties;
- Recognition of cultural rights (language/hunting/fishing);
- Recognition of customary law;
- Guarantees of representation/consultation in the central government;
- Constitutional or legislative affirmation of the distinct status of
Indigenous peoples;
- Support/ratification for international instruments on Indigenous
rights;
- Affirmative action for the members of Indigenous communities.⁸

Policies, declarations, and programs developed by the various United Nations agencies and other NGOs may have moral authority, but they have no legal authority. Therefore, the manner in which these policies are implemented from country to country is largely dependent upon the priorities and preoccupations of each individual nation.

In Canada, the introduction of Canada's multicultural policy in 1971 by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau followed on the heels of a humiliating reversal in Canadian Indian policy. In 1969, the government had tabled a White Paper on Native Policy in Canada intended to address the entrenched economic and social problems in Canada's Native communities. The policy paper, which was developed without input from Aboriginal groups, advocated the abolition of reserves and the repeal of the Indian Act in exchange for full citizenship rights. The overwhelmingly negative response to the White Paper by Native groups across Canada reflected their concern with the failure of the government to offer any protection for the Aboriginal land base or the social and economic programs promised in treaties and protected through the Indian Act.⁹

The failure of the White Paper was also indicative of Pierre Trudeau's preoccupation with the Québécois, a substate minority group that had been advocating for increased political autonomy for at least a decade. Trudeau was reluctant to grant special rights to any minority group, and did not make any distinction between Indigenous minorities and substate minorities in policy. The result was an Aboriginal policy with a non-Aboriginal agenda, an initiative designed to deter attempts by Quebec nationalists to lobby for special rights, rather than policy intended to revise the Indian Act while protecting Aboriginal rights.

Unfortunately, the government did not appear to have learned any lessons in policy development from the rejection of its White Paper on Indian Policy. Instead, the multicultural strategy introduced into Parliament a short time later continued to prioritize the implementation of English/French bilingualism and biculturalism across Canada. On 8 October 1971, Trudeau made a speech to the House of Commons in which he announced that the Liberal government had initiated a cultural policy that he described as "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework."¹⁰

Because of this emphasis on cultural duality at the expense of Indigenous and ethnic groups, the "official multiculturalism" that developed in Canada after 1971 was a program that concentrated on legal equity for all citizens under the law,

while promoting a symbolic form of diversity that did little to address the socio-economic concerns of Native peoples or immigrants. The result has been, argues sociologist Augie Fleras, a culture-blind form of multiculturalism.

Under a culture-blind Multiculturalism, minority women and men have the right to *identify* with (not necessarily practice) the cultural traditions of their choice, *provided* these affiliations do not violate the laws of the land, interfere with the rights of others, or pose a threat to core values and institutions. Diversity is endorsed, to be sure, but only to the extent that all differences are equivalent in status, subject to similar treatment, and comply with the state's self-proclaimed right to define what differences count, what counts as difference. Differences are further de-politicized ("neutered") by channelling diversity into relatively harmless avenues around identity or culture.¹¹

The cultural festivals and ethnic museum exhibitions that appeared all over Canada in the 1970s and 80s, emblematic of what critics have called "folkloric multiculturalism," became the standard expression of cultural diversity in Canada. This bland, toothless, feel-good approach to diversity may have facilitated the integration of immigrant minorities into Canada, but did not address the systemic social and economic inequities experienced by Aboriginal people exposed to assimilative government policies for over one hundred years.

The principles of liberal multiculturalism, which advocated recognition of cultural distinctiveness and policies that entrenched Aboriginal rights, were only partially dealt with through the patriation of Canada's Constitution in 1982, where Aboriginal rights were legally entrenched. However, in Canada's cultural institutions, such as its museums, Aboriginal history and culture continued to be interpreted in a sanitized, non-controversial fashion in keeping with the aesthetic of folkloric multiculturalism.

By the mid-1980s, when Calgary was preparing to host the 1988 Winter Olympics, the concept of creating a museum exhibition to display the best in Aboriginal material culture was well in keeping with the non-controversial, paternalistic form of multicultural expression then in vogue in government policy circles. The international outrage over *The Spirit Sings* resulted, in large part, from the perceived collusion of the Glenbow Museum with a corporate sponsor actively involved in what many perceived to be cultural genocide in Northern Alberta. What was even more disturbing, however, was the profound sense of surprise and indignation expressed by some museum professionals, who did not appear to

understand why an exhibition of this magnitude should be developed in partnership with Native people, or why museums should be cognizant of the contemporary socio-political experience of Canadian Aboriginal people. The profound “disconnect” between government policy-makers and Native people clearly exposed the shortcomings of “official multiculturalism” to the world.

Something had to be done.

Turning the Page: The AFN/CMA Task Force Report

Because of the events in Calgary, a national conference, co-hosted by the Canadian Museums Association and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) was convened at Carleton University in November of 1988. Out of the conference a working group, or task force, was convened to develop an ethical framework and strategies by which Native peoples and cultural institutions could work cooperatively to represent Aboriginal culture and heritage.¹² The specific recommendations for change made by the Task Force included: participation of Aboriginal people in the governing process of museums; involvement of Aboriginal people in the planning, research, implementation, presentation and maintenance of all exhibitions, programs, and/or projects that include Aboriginal cultures; repatriation of Aboriginal cultural patrimony (human remains, sacred and ceremonial items, and other significant cultural objects); training of Aboriginal museum professionals; and implementation of recommendations through legislation and funding programs.¹³

Since the 1990s, Canadian museum organizations have invariably reported on the changes that have taken place from the perspective of the academy, or from the perspective of institutional managers.¹⁴ The academic authors generally take a case study approach, critiquing a few of the more egregious cases of mainstream institutional wrongdoing (e.g. *The Spirit Sings, Into the Heart of Africa*) while offering recommendations for change. The responses by heritage professionals—generally those in management—have ranged from largely defensive, even hostile reactions (as with the early literature associated with *The Spirit Sings*) to self-congratulatory pieces describing the institutional changes that they have implemented. The commentaries from source communities regarding institutional change in museums tend to echo this range of commentary.

What the vast majority of this literature does *not* express is the true nature and extent of change in museum practice. Despite the spate of literature on the

subject, how much change has *actually* taken place in Canada's museum world, post-*Spirit Sings*? And are these changes authentic or cosmetic?

Museum Governance

Most agencies that administer heritage, whether they are museums, government departments, or university faculties, are hierarchical and bureaucratic institutions. Regardless of policy documents and funding programmes that make institutional change both imperative and inevitable, the actual time involved in shifting the operational paradigm is immense and difficult—not dissimilar to turning around a large sailing vessel in high seas.

Let us examine, for example, the managers of the typical, *Spirit Sings*-era heritage organization, operated under the auspices of government agencies, universities, and/or large private foundations. Because of the nature of employment in these realms, there may or may not be regular injections of “new blood.” The result is, unfortunately, organizations whose employees reflect more traditional and inflexible approaches to museum decision-making; they may be intellectual adherents of particular philosophies that are now out-of-date or discredited; they may be resistant to new ideas; and, most of all, they may resent the democratization that comes with accountability to stakeholder groups.

Most museum curators are subject-matter specialists in the field where they are expected to carry out their research and exhibition development activities. As such, their intellectual horizons are defined by the theoretical and methodological approaches characteristic of their specialties, whether they be anthropologists, zoologists, art historians, botanists, and so forth. Not surprisingly, scholars with advanced training in these disciplines have largely “bought in” to the epistemologies of their specialties. Not only do they believe their professions to be inherently “good,” but, not surprisingly, they tend to resent criticism of their work by people they consider non-practitioners. When museum audiences possessing specialized understandings or affinities with particular museum exhibitions (i.e. “stakeholder groups” or “source communities”) respond negatively to museum activities, curators, conservators, and other museum professionals may feel bewilderment and resentment.

In the past, dealing with recalcitrant museum visitors and public critics was considered the domain of the visitor services and public affairs personnel who occupy the bottom layers of the museum “food chain.” However, over the last

twenty-five years, controversies arising from audience reaction to a few high-profile exhibitions have brought the inadequacies of museum operation into sharp relief. It is clear that the problems with museum exhibitions have their origins much higher in the museum structure.

As a heritage professional employed by government during this period, I observed, and experienced first-hand, the negative reaction to enforced change brought about by *The Spirit Sings* and the *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples*. First, there was hurt and resentment. As noted earlier, heritage professionals—historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists in particular—see their professions as being inherently “good.” Part of the problem here is that historians and cultural anthropologists prior to the 1980s had been largely dismissive of the role that colonialism, Enlightenment philosophy, and Darwinism played on the formation of their professional paradigms, personal worldviews, and views of Aboriginal people in particular. If the issues of colonialism and racism were considered at all in curatorial circles, they were treated as abstract concepts that did not apply to themselves.

These attitudes were particularly evident in the generation of “Baby Boomer” archaeologists, now nearing retirement. This particular intellectual cohort were trained in the theories of Lewis Binford and processual approaches to archaeology, which stress empirical, as opposed to inductive, approaches to the analysis of the archaeological record. While the Binford philosophy did contribute to a much more systematic and quantifiable approach to archaeology, it ignored the fact that research conceived and carried out within the social and intellectual context of colonialism is fundamentally biased. Therefore, the Binfordian archaeologists foisted on Aboriginal people in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, were woefully under-prepared to deal with contemporary Native communities. It took several years of government cutbacks and contemporary Aboriginal protest movements (such as the *Spirit Sings* boycott and the Oka Crisis), before archaeologists were forced to change their approaches, acknowledge their accountability to communities, and adopt a “post-processual” research paradigm for archaeology.¹⁵

In some cases, it became painfully apparent that heritage professionals, particularly those unfamiliar with community-based research, were woefully unprepared to establish interpersonal relationships with Native people on an individual or collective basis. Not only were they academically unprepared to establish a dialogue with communities, they were socially unprepared as well. For the most part,

upper middle-class Euro-Canadian bureaucrats were, and continue to be, uncomfortable dealing with Aboriginal people.

Some of this discomfort is understandable. *The Spirit Sings* protests of the 1980s, followed soon after by the Oka Crisis and a series of blockades and protests in the years after, had made museum curators wary of Aboriginal people. For many museum administrators, their only real connection to Aboriginal people had taken place under the shadow of bitter disputes over medicine bundles, sacred sites, and contested exhibition representations. For the most part, these public servants did not have experience living in Aboriginal communities, or have any personal friendships or kin relations with Native people. The prospect of having to develop authentic working partnerships with Native communities to secure exhibition funding and develop new programming was a scary prospect, to say the least.

Some museum administrators attempted to subvert the partnership process by making superficial, cosmetic changes to museum practice that did not make substantive changes to the mission and overall functioning of the institution. For example, inviting source community members to participate in exhibition planning committees is mere tokenism if they are not allowed substantive influence (e.g. veto power) over elements of collection, conservation, and interpretation. Engaging docents from source communities without involving them actively in the development of programming for different visitor communities is also tokenism. Unfortunately, many museums take this route, because the alternative would involve a radical restructuring of the museum's decision-making hierarchy and a corresponding reallocation of resources to museum departments (e.g. Educational Services) generally denigrated or ignored altogether by the subject-matter specialists who comprise museum management.

Symptomatic of this institutional discomfort with Aboriginal partnerships is the appearance in the museum world of an entirely new cultural industry—a direct product, one might argue, of the *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples*. This new cultural industry consists of the provision of a variety of Aboriginal consulting services to non-Native heritage institutions. The Aboriginal cultural workers who consult to heritage institutions assume many different roles—they may be Elders; they may be craftspeople; they may be wilderness guides; they may be performers or interpreters—or, they may simply be well-mannered, kind people with brown skins that come from reserve communities and are

comfortable dealing with non-Natives. Whether these Aboriginal consultants authentically represent their communities' cultures and values is a matter of some debate. However, they have become as necessary to the effective functioning of a mainstream museum possessing Aboriginal artifacts as a Curator of Ethnology. Ironically, at a time when the commodification of traditional Indigenous culture threatens its long-term survival, it could be argued that the emergence of the "professional Elder" in the wake of *The Spirit Sings* is cultural commodification at its most blatant.

This may sound like an unfair, even mean-spirited assessment of mainstream museums' success in promoting diversity in their institutional cultures. However, the utilization of specialized Indigenous contractors on an episodic basis enables some mainstream museums to remain essentially intact in terms of their overall operating philosophies and day-to-day procedures, and this has not gone unnoticed by Indigenous communities. Even in regions where museums have implemented radical restructuring of their working relationships with Indigenous communities (the Glenbow Museum in Calgary comes to mind),¹⁶ there has been no reduction in the pressure applied by First Nations communities to repatriate their sacred objects and other material culture.

Repatriation and Legislation

A key element of the Task Force recommendations was the repatriation of sacred and ceremonial objects to their Aboriginal source communities, considered essential to Indigenous cultural revitalization, and a means to promote reconciliation between government institutions and Native communities.¹⁷ One of the common criticisms levelled at the recommendations in *Turning the Page* is that they were just that, recommendations that had no teeth without legal sanctions, i.e. legislation and penalties for wrongdoing. Because the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) appeared in the U.S. around the same time as the *Turning the Page* Task Force Report, the Canadian effort to promote repatriation was initially seen, in some quarters, as being less effective in protecting Indigenous heritage. So which was more effective—NAGPRA or the Canadian Museums Task Force?

While NAGPRA looks great on paper, in actual practice there are enough loopholes in the legislation that protection of Aboriginal heritage is only partially

achieved. First, NAGPRA only applies to publicly funded American museums, leaving the private commercial galleries and extensive personal collections unaffected. Secondly, the legislation does not apply to the major American flagship museum, the Smithsonian, though it should be noted that a special piece of legislation (the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989) governs approaches to repatriation at the Smithsonian.¹⁸ And finally, under NAGPRA, repatriation of artifacts is only mandatory when it involves the patrimony of Native American communities in the United States. This means that large American museums that hold ethnographic materials from Canada and elsewhere are not obliged to return anything to their original owners, much less engage in meaningful dialogue. To be fair, however, the American museums that hold large international ethnographic collections have been compelled to initiate meaningful dialogue with source communities, which testifies to the effectiveness of moral suasion on, and the need for positive public relations by major public institutions.¹⁹

Of course, the other aspect of legislation is enforcement. While I believe there is evidence that NAGPRA has facilitated the return of thousands of skeletal remains and sacred objects back to tribal communities, it is doubtful whether it has actually increased the protection of Aboriginal patrimony that is in private hands, in tribal hands, or in the ground in archaeological sites. Anyone who has watched even a few episodes of the American version of *Antiques Roadshow* will be aware of the brisk trade in American Indian artifacts, and the often-stunning dollar figures associated with these items. This fuels the thriving market in illegal antiquities, and recent reports from the U.S. indicate that the authorities are fighting a losing battle in their efforts to protect archaeological sites in vast, isolated areas of the American Southwest, which are attractive to pot hunters because of the pottery, shell and turquoise jewellery, and perishable (and therefore rare) items preserved by the dry conditions. In some states in the American Midwest and southeast, pot hunting is an entrenched, multi-generational pastime with lax law enforcement to prevent it.²⁰

The main problem with enforcement of American antiquities law is that protection of archaeological heritage is generally governed by state legislation rather than federal legislation. Some states have very lax enforcement, and when arrests are made, there is considerable pressure brought to bear on elected local officials to let the offenders off with small fines or dismiss the case altogether, which

occurred when a large, undisturbed Late-Mississippian Culture archaeological site in Kentucky was systematically looted and destroyed by pothunters. The account of the incident, which has since become a popular case study in cultural resource management classes throughout North America, was dubbed by archaeologist-author Brian Fagan as “The Tragedy of Slack Farm.”²¹

For those unfamiliar with the story of Slack Farm, the particulars of the case involve a house and farm owned by the Slack family near Uniontown, Kentucky. The Slack family were aware of the site on their land, but did not allow pothunting on their property, although digging for artefacts was permitted under Kentucky law at the time. When the last member of the family died and the property was sold, a group of pothunters from several states banded together to offer the new owner \$10,000 for permission to “excavate” the site. The group proceeded to attack the site with shovel and bulldozer, destroying and displacing human remains, remnants of ancient dwellings, and other artefacts not considered marketable. After complaints from neighbours, a misdemeanour charge of grave desecration was laid against the thieves. Further investigation revealed that the looters had destroyed over 650 burials. Despite the strengthening of antiquities laws following the public outcry, criminal charges against the culprits responsible for destroying Slack Farm were eventually dropped in 1990, and they were never prosecuted.²²

While there have been no lootings of Canadian archaeological sites on this scale, Canada’s protection of Aboriginal sacred and ceremonial material is only marginally better. The idea of the Canadian Task Force was to encourage the underlying *ethos* governing museum operations to evolve naturally, rather than to impose change on a resistant museum establishment. However, the Task Force recommendations *were* only recommendations, and museums responded, predictably enough, in a patchwork fashion concerning policy and operational change. In fact, some museums, like the Provincial Museum of Alberta (PMA, now the Royal Alberta Museum), initially stepped up their efforts to acquire Aboriginal collections.²³ The policy of the PMA in the early 1990s was to resist, rather than facilitate, repatriation. Eventually however, the Government of Alberta instituted legislation to force movement on recalcitrant institutions like the PMA, most specifically repatriation of sacred and ceremonial objects belonging to the Blackfoot Confederacy of Treaty Seven, who were the Alberta tribal groups most affected by the loss of material cultural objects.²⁴

Most Canadian museums, however, did make a sincere effort to address the issues regarding repatriation of sacred objects and human remains. Most large museums are members of the Alberta Museum Association (AMA), Canadian Museum Association (CMA), and the International Council of Museums (ICOM)—or at least adhered to the various Code of Ethics espoused by these bodies. However, even museums with clearly articulated mission statements and policy and procedure manuals can make grave errors in managing their collections, if the governance of the museum is weak or negligent.

This was the case at the Anthropology Museum at the University of Winnipeg, which had as part of its collection a number of ceremonial objects associated with the Midewiwin Society, an Ojibwa ceremonial group. These items had been placed in the museum for safekeeping by members of the Pauingassi First Nation, a small Ojibwa community almost 300 kilometres north of Winnipeg. The controversy began when it was discovered that a significant portion of Pauingassi artifacts supposed to be in the museum were missing from the collection. It was later discovered that these artifacts and other items had been removed and “repatriated” to an American Ojibwa cultural organization in the United States without the knowledge or consent of the museum’s administrators or the Canadian tribal community from whence the artifacts originated. A provincial enquiry, chaired by the Manitoba solicitor-general, revealed that negligent management, characterized by the improper training and supervision of museum employees, and a failure to follow their own standard museum practices manual, resulted in what essentially was a theft of artifacts from the museum.²⁵

Perhaps the most distasteful element of “the Pauingassi affair” was that one group of American Aboriginal activists manipulated and exploited an obviously negligent university department to steal another Native community’s cultural patrimony. That the major Aboriginal culprits responsible for this theft have yet to be punished in any substantial way, draws attention to another weakness in the management of Indigenous cultural resources—that being the need to make Native communities and organizations equally accountable for their conduct in heritage matters.

Government Policies for Research

The recommendations for institutional change itemized in *Turning the Page* were based on the ethos of partnership; co-management, co-responsibility, mutual appreciation, and commonality of interest, all values that reflected the intellectual and social currents of the time, but ones that required considerable time and money to institute in practice. Because of the symbolic importance of the *Task Force Report* (not dissimilar in impact and tone from a United Nations resolution), government agencies began the long process of creating policies and programs to foster more inclusive and democratic approaches in Canada's cultural industries, whether they be those that delivered Aboriginal heritage via print or electronic media, trained university researchers, regulated cultural resources, or interpreted Canada's Native past to the public.

One of the major irritants of *The Spirit Sings* exhibition was the virtual absence of Aboriginal input in every stage of the exhibition's development, indicative of the prevailing approaches to research, which privileged Euro-Canadian scholarship and ignored community-based priorities and expertise. The result was a massive reshaping of research policies and programmes involving Aboriginal heritage by the leading federal research bodies, a process that took fifteen years after *The Spirit Sings* to implement. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, for example, initiated its *Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples* in 2002, intended to develop new policies and procedures for funding and evaluating university-based research on original peoples.²⁶

The result of these consultations have had mixed reviews from university researchers, largely because of the implied threats to academic freedom embodied in the creation of community-based review panels responsible for evaluating research applications. The arguments against these review panels include their perceived bias against theoretical, as opposed to applied, research projects. Critics also question whether unqualified laypeople, whether Native or non-Native, should be involved in evaluating research proposals that require a certain level of technical expertise to judge. Finally, there is the real concern that community-based evaluators will make choices based on partisan political points of view, especially when these choices involve research on issues that pose a possible threat to their own individual and collective interests. Similar funding initiatives governing other cultural programmes for Aboriginal heritage, such as the Aboriginal Heritage component of the Museums Assistance Program, have also been implemented by

other federal and provincial departments.²⁷ The overall result has been an “iron fist in a velvet glove”—an enforced adherence to research partnerships, due to the fact that institutional access to crucial program funding is tied to the implementation of such policies.

The Creation of Aboriginal Museums: Training and Facility Development

The significance of museums, historic sites, and other heritage facilities as bona fide cultural industries that communicate, reproduce, experience, and explore the social values and hierarchical structure of the nation has long been recognized and utilized by Canadian governments, both past and present. One of the major recommendations of the *Task Force Report* involved the training of Aboriginal museum curators and other heritage professionals, and the creation of cultural facilities owned and operated by Aboriginal communities. It is perhaps this aspect of the Task Force Report to which Native communities responded the most enthusiastically. For the Blackfoot communities in Treaty Seven, repatriation of sacred and ceremonial objects to their home communities and families, followed by the construction of on-reserve interpretive facilities for housing these items, has been a central priority for the last twenty-five years. It was the Blackfoot people, with the assistance of then-Alberta premier Ralph Klein, who pushed for the provincial repatriation legislation to be enacted. What quickly followed was the spiritual reawakening of medicine bundles from dormancy, and the revival of traditional Blackfoot societies and ceremonies.

Along with this community-based cultural revival came the desire to interpret the Blackfoot past in an on-reserve interpretive facility. Prior to the official opening of the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park in July of 2007, the Siksika Community sought to familiarize its citizens with standard museum practice, and provide initial training to potential employees. The Museum and Heritage Studies Program at the University of Calgary initiated one such program for the fall of 2005. The introductory course in basic museum practice (Museum and Heritage Studies 201) was offered in an intensive one-week format at the Siksika (Blackfoot) Reserve in Gleichen, Alberta the first week of September. The goal of the course was to provide band members, band councillors, and university undergraduates with a basic knowledge and understanding of museum practice, to serve as a prerequisite for further training in the field. By

offering the program on the Reserve, the course instructor was able to utilize the various historic sites on the reserve as teaching tools. The “best practices” regarding care and interpretation of sacred and ceremonial objects from a Blackfoot cultural perspective, were presented jointly by Blackfoot ceremonialists and specialists in museum practice.²⁸

Another 2005 project, this time focusing on exhibition development in collaboration with Aboriginal partners, was initiated by the Nickle Arts Museum with members of the Kainai First Nation in southern Alberta. The project was the development of a museum exhibition celebrating the life and work of Kainai journalist and cartoonist Everett Soop (1943–2001), a collaboration between Nickle Museum curators Heather Devine, Geraldine Chimirri-Russell and members of Everett Soop’s family, principally his older brother, Louis Soop. With the endorsement of different Kainai tribal organizations (e.g., the Blood Tribal Administration and Red Crow Community College), the project successfully secured an exhibition development grant from the aboriginal component of the Museums Assistance Program of Canadian Heritage.²⁹ The result was a museum exhibition that was well received by the critics, and which began touring to out-of-province venues in the fall of 2007.

The long-term goal here is the establishment of ongoing, democratic pedagogical and curatorial relationships, which will serve to educate source communities on the elements of museum practice. The hope is that this involvement will not only correct misconceptions about museum operations by making these processes more transparent, but will also bring the members of source communities into the museum profession itself. This cannot take place until culturally sensitive training initiatives are in place.³⁰

Another goal of these joint initiatives is the sensitization of mainstream museum personnel into the contemporary realities of life for many ethnic and racial minorities. The long-term future of ethnographic museums depends on a continuation of collaborative research with Indigenous communities and groups, such as those carried out in the projects discussed above. However, working in multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural settings is *not* easy. Museum professionals operating in these capacities are expected to assume a multitude of responsibilities when supervising cross-cultural research projects. Consequently, it is the ability of museum specialists to carry out these people-oriented functions, rather than their academic skills, which often influence the overall success of cross-cultural partnerships with source communities.³¹

Appropriate interpersonal attitudes, skills, and behaviours are crucial to successful work with Aboriginal communities. Outsiders cannot expect to come into Indigenous communities, collect artifacts and sensitive cultural information at will, and leave. Researchers must be prepared to devote the time necessary to establish good interpersonal relationships with the community-based participants in the research, and to demonstrate the flexibility needed to react to the vagaries of daily life in Native communities.

As Murray L. Wax notes in “The Ethics of Research in American Indian Communities” (1991):

What is crucial is participation in the life of the community; being present at gatherings and ceremonials; *listening to others and responding in a manner that indicates one has reflectively heard* [my emphasis] and giving of one’s self and one’s possessions in the sense of sharing and maintaining reciprocity with one’s peers. These are also keys whereby a stranger gains acceptance.³²

At the same time, however, museum professionals must be careful to avoid involvement in political factionalism or other elements of reserve life that may negatively affect research.

The most successful museum-community partnerships resonate with the qualities of collegiality and respect in Aboriginal community settings. The resulting projects, more often than not, are the result of work conducted over several years—the time required, in many cases, for outsiders to gain a degree of acceptance.³³

The willingness of museum-based specialists to work with *other* experts outside the museum in research partnerships is crucial to the future of ethnocultural programming of all kinds. The level of interdisciplinarity and methodological sophistication required in Indigenous Studies, for example, has grown to such an extent that teamwork, or at the least consultation among specialists, has become a necessity. This is particularly true in the field of Indigenous history, often called “ethnohistory” because of its multidisciplinary character.

In “Strange Bedfellow, Kindred Spirits” Jennifer Brown notes that:

Ethnohistorians are often intellectual free traders; we borrow other people's methods, concepts, and tool kits, from linguistic, archaeology, geography, and literary criticism, and we thereby enrich our analyses, even if we risk making them more complicated and ourselves more confused... what ethnohistory is all about is the crossing of boundaries, of time and space, of discipline and department, and of perspective, whether ethnic, cultural, social, or gender-based.³⁴

This can create problems, however, as René Gadacz points out in "The Language of Ethnohistory." Because the field has become so multidisciplinary, borrowing, as it does from anthropology, sociology, history, psychology and other disciplines, there is the danger that not only terminology, but approaches are being misused, creating problems in research and interpretation.³⁵

In recent years these ideas have been forcefully articulated in the literature of contemporary museological theory, which defines cultural heritage facilities and sites (like other forms of mass media) as didactic places that construct representations of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and spirituality that mirror society's status quo. These revisionist works also assert that the mainstream (i.e. scholarly) perceptions of reality presented by museums often repudiate the worldviews, the values, and aspirations of some of the audiences that they serve. The reaction of minority groups to these "disabling representations" and "oppressive cultural narratives" is embodied in the protests, blockades, boycotts, and other forms of activism directed against heritage institutions over the last two decades. Such measures are the result of disenfranchised groups who feel that no avenues exist for gaining power and control over the artifacts that comprise their heritage, or over the way in which their cultural values and history are communicated through those objects.

Critical theory also suggests that if museum institutions are not part of the solution, they are part of the problem. Such a perspective demands that museums change the way that they do things in order to embark on fruitful relationships with visitors in general and members of source communities in particular.³⁶

The importance of the crisis engendered by *The Spirit Sings* is that it illustrated clearly the failure of professionals in Canada's cultural industries to recognize the unique identity of Aboriginal people within the context of national government policies promoting multiculturalism. As a result, *The Spirit Sings* exhibition

became the “tipping point” that initiated a sea change in how Canada’s cultural institutions and cultural professionals approached the research, collection, protection, and interpretation of Aboriginal heritage.³⁷ At present, Canadian policy-makers are faced with the challenge of developing and implementing cultural and communications policies that will enable it to preserve its unique national identity and cultural sovereignty in the face of powerful, globalized mass media.³⁸ The future protection and interpretation of Aboriginal heritage will also be influenced by the social, political, and economic struggles affecting Indigenous people and ethnic source communities elsewhere in the world, as communicated via electronic media. Canada’s challenge will be to reconcile its past and present dealings with Aboriginal people in a way that satisfies the Indigenous need for autonomy and control over Indigenous heritage, while preserving the sovereignty and cohesion of the larger community.

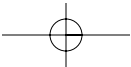
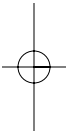
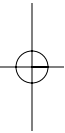
Notes

1. Most of these articles were produced during or immediately after the exhibition, and were authored primarily by individuals directly involved in the situation—as curators, as government officials, as anthropology professionals or as activists. References of note include the following: W. J. Byrne, “Collections, Traditions, and a Path to the Future: Reflections on the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples,” *Alberta Museums Review* 19:1 (Spring/Summer 1993): 21–26, 48; Beth Carter, “Let’s Act—Not React: Some Suggestions for Implementing the Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples,” *Alberta Museums Review* 18:2 (Fall/Winter 1992): 13–15; John Goddard, “Last Stand of the Lubicon,” *Equinox* 21 (May–June 1985): 67–77; Julia Harrison, “‘The Spirit Sings’ and the Future of Anthropology,” *Anthropology Today* 4:6 (December 1988): 6–9; Marybelle Myers, “The Glenbow Affair,” *Inuit Art Quarterly* (Winter 1988): 12–16; Bruce Trigger, “Reply to Julia Harrison’s Article,” *Anthropology Today* 4:6 (December 1988): 6–9; Bruce Trigger, “A Present of their Past? Anthropologists, Native People, and their Heritage,” *Culture* 8:1 (1988): 71–79; Gerald T. Conaty and Beth Carter, “Our Story in Our Words: Diversity and Equality in the Glenbow Museum,” in Robert Janes and Gerald T. Conaty, eds. *Looking Reality in the Eye: Museums and Social Responsibility* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005): 43–58. Perhaps the most insightful critiques of the controversy are the following: Robyn Gillam, “The Spirit Sings: A Sour Note in the Museum’s Halls,” in Robyn Gillam, *Hall of Mirrors: Museums and the Canadian Public* (Banff, AB.: Banff Centre Press, 2001): 101–134; and Frances W. Kaye. “Whose Spirit,

- What Song?" in *Finding the Audience: Viewing Arts and Arts Institutions on the Prairies* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003): 139–184.
2. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Negotiating the New International Politics of Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007): 28.
 3. Ibid, 29–30.
 4. Ibid, 61–62.
 5. Ibid, 66–77.
 6. Within the last thirty years, many European countries that have traditionally been the source of migrants (e.g. Italy, France, Sweden, and so on) have now become destinations for migrants from Africa and Asia. Because these countries continue to view themselves as monocultural nations, they have often failed to develop and implement effective policies that address the needs of "temporary" migrants who have become permanent residents in their nations. See Wayne A. Cornelius, Takeyuki Tsuda, Philip L. Martin, and James F. Hollifield, eds. *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2004).
 7. Kymlicka 2007, 66–86.
 8. Ibid, 66–68.
 9. The definitive analysis of the development and withdrawal of Canada's White Paper on Native policy continues to be Sally M. Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy: The Hidden Agenda 1968–70* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).
 10. Tamara Palmer Seiler, "Thirty Years Later: Reflections on the Evolution and Future Prospects of Multiculturalism," *Canadian Issues* (February 2002): 6.
 11. Augie Fleras, "Multiculturalism as Critical Discourse: Contesting Modernity," *Canadian Issues* (February 2002), 10.
 12. Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association. *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples—Task Force Report* (Ottawa: Author, 1992).
 13. Ibid, 8–10.
 14. See Leighann Carole Neilson, *Museum Visiting In Canada: A Means to Furthering Cultural Goals?* Unpublished MA thesis (Kingston, Ontario: Department of Sociology, Queen's University, 2000); Ann Markusen, Gregory H. Wassall, Doug DeNatale, and Randy Cohen, *Defining the Cultural Economy: Industry and Occupational Approaches*. Presentation at the North American Regional Science Council Meetings, Toronto, 17 November 2006.
 15. For an excellent summary of the philosophical debate over "the New Archaeology" see Paul Newell, "Philosophy and the New Archaeology," *The Galilean Library*, <http://www.galilean-library.org/manuscript.php?postid=43805> (accessed 11 June 2009).
 16. See Gerald T. Conaty, "Glenbow's Blackfoot Gallery: Working towards Co-Existence," In Alison K. Brown and Laura Peers, eds. *Museums and Source*

- Communities: A Routledge Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003): 227–241.
17. For a succinct overview of the prevailing arguments for and against repatriation, see Elazar Barkan, “Amending Historical Injustices: The Restitution of Cultural Property,” in Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, eds., *Claiming the Stones, Naming the Bones: Cultural Property and the Negotiation of National and Ethnic Identity* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002): 16–46.
 18. For a description of the Smithsonian’s comprehensive repatriation strategy, see *National Museum of the American Indian*, “Repatriation,” <http://www.nmai.si.edu/subpage.cfm?subpage=collaboration&second=repatriation> (accessed 22 February 2008).
 19. In terms of good curatorial citizenship, the institution that comes immediately to mind is the Field Museum in Chicago, which has a number of high-profile ethnographic collections originating outside of the United States. They house one of the world’s largest assemblages of Pacific artifacts, as well as a large collection from Canada’s West Coast tribes. The Field Museum has been active in developing working relationships with its source communities, and has initiated repatriation of human remains to Indigenous groups outside of the U.S., such as the Haida. See “Trip Home” (a press release on Haida repatriation at the Field Museum): http://suethedinosaur.org/museum_info/press/press_haida3.htm (accessed 11 June 2009).
 20. See Hester Davis, “Facing the Crisis: Looting in the U.S.” *Archaeology* (July 1998), <http://www.archaeology.org/online/features/loot/> (accessed 11 June 2009).
 21. See Brian Fagan, “The Tragedy of Slack Farm,” <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept/d10/asb/archaeology/pothunting/index.html> (accessed 11 June 2009).
 22. R. Barry Lewis and David Pollack, “The Future of Kentucky’s Past,” in R. Barry Lewis, ed., *Kentucky Archaeology* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 213–226; 219–220.
 23. It could be argued that this accelerated acquisition activity was not in response to the Task Force recommendations at all, but to the impending passage of the *Native American Graves and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA). For an overview of NAGPRA, see National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, <http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/INDEX.HTM>. See Heather Devine, “The Syncrude Canada Aboriginal Peoples Gallery,” *Alberta Museums Review* 24:1 (1998): 58–62.
 24. See Government of Alberta, Queen’s Printer, *First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act*, http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca/documents/Acts/F14.cfm?frm_isbn=0779701658 (accessed 10 October 2007); and Government of Alberta, Queen’s Printer, *Blackfoot First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Regulation*, http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca/documents/Regs/2004_096.cfm?frm_isbn=0779729943 (accessed 10 October 2007).
 25. See the Manitoba Auditor-General’s Report, entitled, *Investigation of Missing Artifacts*

- at the Anthropology Museum at the University of Winnipeg, <http://www.oag.mb.ca/search.php?keywords=hickes> (accessed 11 June 2009); and Cheryl Petten, "Missing Artifacts Lead to Auditor-General's Scrutiny," *Windspeaker*, August 2002, <http://www.ammsa.com/windspeaker/topnews-August-2002.html#anchor1983155> (accessed 11 June, 2009).
26. See Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, *Aboriginal Research Pilot Programme*, http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/site/about-crsh/publications/arpp_evaluation_response_e.pdf (accessed 11 June 2009).
 27. See Canadian Heritage, *Museums Assistance Program*, <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pam-map/index-eng.cfm#a2> (accessed 11 June 2009).
 28. See *Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park*, <http://www.blackfootcrossing.ca/index.html> (accessed at 11 June 2009).
 29. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this particular funding program was initiated as part of the long-term policy response to the recommendations of the 1992 *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples*.
 30. Heather Devine, "Towards a Critical Pedagogy for Museums," in Hildegard K. Viereggs, ed., *Museology and Audience (Museología y El Público de Museos)* (Munich: International Committee for Museology [ICOFOM]), 2005: 61-68; 65.
 31. Devine 2005, 65-66.
 32. Murray L. Wax. "The Ethics of Research in American Indian Communities," *American Indian Quarterly* 15:4 (Autumn 1991): 431-456, 435.
 33. Devine 2005, 66.
 34. See Jennifer Brown, "Ethnohistorians: Strange Bedfellows, Kindred Spirits," *Ethnohistory* 38:2 (1991): 115-116.
 35. Rene Gadacz, "The Language of Ethnohistory," *Anthropologica* 24: 147-166).
 36. See Trudy Nicks, "Introduction," in Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown, eds. *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader* (London and New York: Routledge 2003): 19-27.
 37. The term "tipping point" as "the moment in time at which an emerging trend or idea achieves the critical mass that enables it to gain momentum, spread rapidly, and become dominant. The term was introduced by Malcolm Gladwell in his book *The Tipping Point* (New York: Abacus, 2001), which compares the development of trends and fashions to the sudden spread of epidemics and suggests that change is not a gradual process, but takes place in sudden dramatic shifts. In the same way as a small weight will tip the balance of a pair of scales in equilibrium, a small change in organizational strategy may have major effects. The concept has been applied to leadership and change management." See "Business Definition for: Tipping Point" *Bnet Business Dictionary*, <http://dictionary.bnet.com/definition/tipping+point.html> (accessed 11 June 2009).
 38. Neilson 2000, 13.



<11>

PRODUCING THE CANADIAN FEMALE ATHLETE

*Negotiating the Popular Logics
of Sport and Citizenship*

Michelle Helstein

Sport Canada's institutional home, as a branch of the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage, is representative of sports' long-standing celebration within Canadian culture as a phenomenon that values, strengthens, and unites the Canadian experience. Sport in this context is part of a larger Canadian cultural policy that assumes a broadly representative, homogenous, "Canadian" audience. However, this celebration of nationalism within the context of Canadian sport exists alongside a substantial body of academic literature that argues and illustrates that sport is a masculine domain. Thus, the topic of Canadian popular sporting culture necessarily highlights a link between citizenship and masculinity that initiates questions about the production and positioning of the Canadian female sport participant. As the editors of this volume

suggest in the introduction, addressing the popular cultural production of the Canadian female athlete requires an exploration of the contexts in which she is produced, circulated, consumed, and preserved. That is, how do the various social, economic, and political institutions that govern popular sporting culture produce particular understandings of Canadian sporting females? In response to this question, this paper will examine the contemporary intersections of masculine sport culture, public sport policy, changing federal funding regimes, increased private sector sponsorship, evolving media ownership, and commodification as contexts for a specific production, circulation, consumption, and preservation of the female athlete in Canadian popular culture. At the intersections of these contexts, there is an attempt to celebrate a unified notion of Canadian sporting culture, even as the Canadian female athlete necessarily complicates that process. Through an exploration of contexts, this paper illustrates that popular sporting culture in Canada is not an end point, but rather an ongoing site of cultural labour that showcases the constitution and negotiation of a popular logic of female athletes and citizenship.

The Department of Canadian Heritage “is responsible for national policies and programs that promote Canadian content, foster cultural participation, active citizenship, and participation in Canada’s civic life, and strengthen connections among Canadians.”¹ It is not surprising then that Sport Canada, the federal government agency responsible for the development and functioning of the Canadian sport system, is housed administratively within the Department of Canadian Heritage. Federal government discourses position sport as a powerful “tool for social development,” with the “ability to engage citizens and communities,” build a “more cohesive society” and “pride in our nation,” while enriching “Canada’s cultural life by promoting Canadian values, including diversity.”² Sport is situated as a resource for the work of nation and citizenship.

Canada is certainly not alone in its contemporary attempts to forge links between sport and national culture. As Silk, Andrews, and Cole suggest,

The twentieth century witnessed a strengthening of the bond between the discursive (re)production of specific national cultures and select sporting practices, such that sport has become arguably the most emotive—peace-time—vehicle for harnessing and expressing bonds of national cultural affiliation.³

Similarly, Rowe, McKay, and Miller suggest "...national mythmaking through sport is common across continents."⁴

In the Canadian context, this link between sport and national culture is most evident in the nationalism that has long been associated with hockey in Canada.⁵ Indeed, it is common within the Canadian context to assert that ice hockey signifies something about Canadian people and their culture. As Gruneau and Whitson point out in their book, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities, and Cultural Politics*, hockey has been celebrated as "Canadian specific," "our common passion," "the language that pervades Canada," and "the game of our lives."⁶ Given this rhetoric, it is not exceptional to hear statements such as those made by Brown that, "hockey is far more than a puck and a stick to a youngster living in Canada. It is a ceremony, a ritual, an almost mystical rite... the playing of the game credentials a boy and makes him an authentic Canadian."⁷ These popular imaginations are commonplace and within the wider Canadian cultural context; many people are noticeably invested in protecting them as true.⁸

Associations between hockey and Canadian identity are taken up, in both popular and official discourses, in ways that highlight unified constructions of Canadian culture and identity. Adams states "hockey is about part of the obfuscating construction of the so-called 'ordinary Canadian', a creature whose evocation in popular political commentary helps to homogenize discourses about an increasingly heterogeneous population."⁹ While this heterogeneity takes many forms (ability, age, class, gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, among others), the focus of this paper is on locating gender within these homogenizing discourses. Doing so raises questions about the production of the Canadian female athlete within a national sporting culture that is necessarily, even if not always explicitly, premised on masculinity. Popular and official links then between sport, nationalism, and citizenship are necessarily deeply gendered.¹⁰ While sport has certainly been a major site of contestation for increased opportunities and acceptance of women, it is still regarded and understood as a male preserve.¹¹ While women are participating in increasing numbers, their positioning within sport is still subject to normative discourses of gender that are celebrated and protected within sporting culture.

Dominant sport discourse, for example, most often requires strong, aggressive, forceful, space-occupying movements. Adherence to these embodied practices enables an athlete to be successful at sport. Dominant gender discourses function

in similar ways. Dominant notions of femininity require a petite frame, cooperation, and passivity, while dominant notions of masculinity require strength, aggression, the occupation of space, and domination. Therefore, to practice dominant sport discourse and a dominant discourse of masculinity is to engage in the same movements, gestures, and attitudes.¹² This argument holds most true in sports including hockey, lacrosse, football, basketball, rugby, and soccer that happen, not coincidentally, to be some of the most celebrated sports around the world. On the other hand, the embodied practice of conventional femininity and sport is at odds. As Shogan suggests, “while there is nothing normal about an athletic body for either men or women, male athletic embodiment is an ideal of masculinity, and female athletic embodiment is a contradiction.”¹³

So, while women can and do excel at sport, their embodied participation is still seen to be at odds with their position as women. As Young argues, “if there is a particular female person participating in sport, then, either she is not ‘really’ a woman, or the sport she engages in is not ‘really’ a sport.”¹⁴ There is clearly a hierarchy within sporting cultures, and those sports seen as most worthy of links to national identity are those that celebrate strength, aggression, the occupation of space, and domination, that is, those that celebrate normative masculinity. A female successfully practising such sport, and thereby embodying the movements of conventional masculinity, has been resisted. This is most obvious, in the historical refusal or discouragement of access to sport for women¹⁵ and more contemporarily and implicitly in the rendering of women who practice sport successfully as abnormal or unnatural.¹⁶ As more women participate in sports traditionally coded as masculine, it is a common conception that such females must be reclaimed or recovered. Popular cultural engagements with successful female athletes often reinforce that women can only transgress gender boundaries if they can somehow over-correct, that is, show their normative femininity, and therefore assumed heterosexuality in very explicit ways to ensure their status as real women.¹⁷

In the context of Canadian hockey for example, Whitson and Gruneau argue “...it was hockey’s attachment to a hypermasculine vision of ‘Canadianness’ that became the core element in Canada’s emerging hockey mythology.”¹⁸ Women who take up the game, even at the national level, receive less praise and attention within national sporting culture for equal

accomplishments.¹⁹ It is often argued that Canadian women who take up the game are not playing “real” hockey in that they play a less aggressive and physical version of the game. That is, they play a less masculine version of the game. However, there is no denying that hockey, whether played by men or women, requires strong, forceful, aggressive, space-occupying movements; movements normatively associated with masculinity.

It is therefore not surprising that we see attempts within popular representations to reclaim Canadian female hockey players as “real” women. One such attempt occurred at the first women’s world hockey championship tournament held in Ottawa in 1990. Rather than the red/white/black combinations traditionally worn by all Canadian teams, the Canadian National Women’s Hockey team wore hot pink uniforms. It is difficult to imagine any rationalization for that choice on behalf of Hockey Canada beyond an attempt to feminize the women even as they played a strong aggressive game.

More contemporary examples exist with respect to individual players in Canadian hockey. For example, Cassie Campbell, arguably the most conventionally feminine woman on the 2002 and 2006 gold-medal-winning Olympic hockey teams, was also “by far the most prominently featured member” of the team in both promotional campaigns for Canadian hockey and commercial endorsements, was “dubbed by her teammates and others as the ‘poster girl’ for women’s hockey,”²⁰ and is now working as a commentator for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s (CBC) *Hockey Night in Canada*. This is not to say that Campbell is not an exceptionally skilled hockey player (she is), but rather to highlight that none of her exceptionally skilled teammates were deemed to be as marketable to the national sporting culture. As Theberge suggests, in order to be marketable in an era of corporate interest players may celebrate their athleticism on the ice, but must be “pretty and feminine off it.”²¹

Hayley Wickenheiser, often cited as the best female hockey player in the world, provides a different example of how female athletes are reclaimed. Wickenheiser is a physically dominant player who is not normatively feminine. Her success on the ice as both a Canadian national team member (in both hockey and softball) and a member of a European men’s professional hockey team has attracted some media attention (though significantly limited in comparison to Cassie Campbell) but very limited endorsement opportunities. Her adopted son

Noah and/or her boyfriend are almost always present (either visually, literally, or figuratively) within popular representations of Wickenheiser, positioning her as mother and wife. Perhaps most famously, this is evident in her commercial endorsing *Hamburger Helper*, which features her explaining that the product allows her to be an athlete without impeding her ability and obligation to be a good wife and mother by cooking for and attending to the needs of her family.

The place that women are afforded within national sporting cultures is necessarily constrained by the masculine culture of sport. "The nation as a group of readers has routinely been for the taking, but it is taken in distinctly partial ways. For when women are offered up as representatives of the nation, it is usually in a way that sexualizes performance."²² If we return to the link between sport, nation, and citizen the production of the female athlete occupies a complex space. While in moments the individual successes of female athletes may be celebrated, those same athletes are eventually positioned and reclaimed as "good citizens" through reference to hyperfemininity and/or heterosexuality:

Simply put, so-called national sports afford men—in general, and certain men in particular—an opportunity to represent the nation in a way not open to women. Sport helps construct the different versions of citizenship available to men and women.²³

Given the links between sport, nationalism, and masculinity, the existence of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) should not be surprising. CAAWS is both the most widely popular advocacy group and the organizational voice for the official federal discourse of female sport participation in Canada.

The history of CAAWS and its institutionalization within the Canadian sport delivery system is a significant context for the production of the Canadian female sporting participant. Formal federal government involvement in Canadian amateur sport began in 1961 with the passing of Bill C-131, *The Fitness and Amateur Sport Act*. Government involvement as instituted by the act was indirect and consisted primarily of federal-provincial cost sharing agreements to promote mass fitness and sports programs.²⁴ There were no provisions to ensure the distribution of monies to both male and female athletes. The Federal government's 1968 Task Force on Sport similarly made no mention of the distribution of funds to women

on an equal basis with men.²⁵ The 1970 *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* made recommendations concerning “the lack of equal opportunity for girls in school sport programs.”²⁶ The federal government responded by hiring a consultant to the Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch (FASB) in 1972. Still, FASB personnel did not act on recommendations forthcoming from the first national conference on women and sport (1974) and, consequently, little changed in the administration of sport in Canada.²⁷ It was not until 1980 that FASB officials, “sufficiently concerned about an inadequate response to the 10-year review of the *Royal Commission on the Status of Women* recommendations,” finally agreed to the establishment of an official Women’s Program within FASB.²⁸ The Women’s Program led to the establishment, in 1981, of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS).²⁹

Hall, Lawrence-Harper, and Scott Pawson³⁰ have identified a relationship between the history of CAAWS’ funding and the historically specific mandates of the organization. Initially, CAAWS was funded primarily through project grants from the FASB Women’s Program and the Secretary of State Women’s Program. At that time, CAAWS’ founders stated specifically that their mandate was “to advance the position of women by defining, promoting, and supporting feminist perspective on sport and to improve the status of women in sport.”³¹ In the early years there was debate among the membership about whether the association should be committed to explicitly feminist principles, what feminism meant, and what type (liberal, radical, et cetera) of feminism was being practiced.³² In 1987, CAAWS specifically declared itself a feminist organization and, through a series of five position statements, committed itself to feminist advocacy.³³ In accordance with that commitment, during this period CAAWS relied on funding from the Secretary of State Women’s Program and only accepted specific project funding from Sport Canada so as not to be “co-opted by the sport system it was committed to changing.”³⁴

In 1990, CAAWS lost its operational funding from the Secretary of State Women’s Program. One year later, CAAWS was saved when an agreement with the federal government established CAAWS as a national multi-sport organization with an office in the Canadian Sport, Fitness, and Administration Centre in Ottawa.³⁵ As Lawrence-Harper suggests, CAAWS “reformulated the organization’s ideological strategy, structure, and external relations in order to be an umbrella sport organization.”³⁶ Since 1994, CAAWS, like all multi-sport organizations, has received its core operational and project funding from Sport Canada.³⁷

At the time of that transformation, CAAWS “removed all references to feminism from its mission statement and goals.”³⁸ In 1992, the association’s mandate was “to ensure that girls and women in sport and physical activity have access to a complete range of opportunities and choices and have equity as participants and leaders.”³⁹ Hall suggests, “CAAWS now sees itself more as part of the Canadian sport community and much less a feminist organization linked to the women’s movement.”⁴⁰ McKay argues that this emulation of bureaucracy is the tendency within women’s sporting organizations when volunteers are supplanted by “professional experts skilled in marketing, business administration and management.”⁴¹ This position is exemplified in the words of Marg McGregor, CAAWS executive director from 1992–2000, who stated, “that a not-for-profit organization was no different than a business” that needed to be “cost effective, productive, show value, be supported by clientele, and able to market its product.”⁴²

On its website, CAAWS assures readers that it plans to remain “true to its founding principles” and “accepting of its place in women’s movements” but also suggests that in the future the organization “will wear a different face.”⁴³ In a stance consistent with, and likely motivated by, Canadian sport policy, which states a need to seek “innovative sources of funding... especially through private sector and corporate partnerships and sponsorships,”⁴⁴ CAAWS states:

Recognizing that the time has come to diminish our dependence on government funding, CAAWS is developing a marketing strategy... we are seeking to attract public sector contributions and private sector sponsorship, to encourage individual participation in the organization, and to expand the market for our products.⁴⁵

The effects of this shift are significant given that, as the only national public sector initiative and the only multi-sport organization in Canada charged exclusively with promoting sport/physical activity to girls and women, CAAWS predominates the official federal discourse of female sport participation in the Canadian context. In this privileged position as the predominant public sector voice, we might assume that CAAWS has the potential to offer competing, more diverse, and just representations of active females than might be expected of profit-motivated private companies concerned with marketability framed in reference to hyper-femininity and heterosexuality.

In its most benevolent form, CAAWS attempts to represent the female sport participant through discourses of advocacy, feminism, empowerment, participation, diversity, and inclusion. However, we know through the association's own statements, at least some of the leadership and labour within the organization views discourses of marketing, efficiency, commodification, and corporatization as legitimate. While CAAWS has done and continues to do valuable work in the promotion and inclusion of the female sport participant in Canada, there is a danger that, in looking to marketing and private sector sponsorship, representations produced by CAAWS highlight and conform to the conventionally popular (hyper-feminine and heterosexual) female sport participant, and in that process conform to normative, rather than resistive, narratives.

For example, one of the most notable and publicized corporate partnerships resulting from this new philosophy was the collaboration between CAAWS and Nike. Publicly, Nike claimed that its efforts directed to the women's market were concerned with empowering female athletes, providing opportunities for self-transformation and growth, and providing products "Engineered for women athletes."⁴⁶ Research conducted on Nike found that the company's representational vision of the female sport participant was premised on empowerment and excellence for middle- and upper-middle-class women.⁴⁷ The vision presumed normative white, heterosexual, able-bodied, (hyper)femininity, and a neo-conservative distinction between whatever you are right now (unhealthy, unmotivated, unfit) and what you can, should, and will be if you simply try hard enough.⁴⁸ Analysis of Nike advertising texts demonstrated that under the guise of empowerment and advocacy, the lived realities of many women were silenced within the representational images.⁴⁹ As just one example, Nike is invested in empowering a certain group of girls and women (privileged North American) through the exploitation of another group of girls and women (offshore factory workers).⁵⁰ Furthermore, while it would be unfair to say that Nike has not positively influenced the promotion of female athletes in some ways, various researchers have found that Nike advertising directed to women since the early 1990s clearly illustrates that, as a profit-motivated company, they have not moved beyond the constraints of normative sporting culture in representing women in sport.⁵¹

A second corporate partnership that resulted was the Whirlpool sponsorship of a CAAWS campaign titled Mothers in Motion.⁵² From the Sport Canada homepage, it is only a few links to the Mothers in Motion homepage, "for women who

want to lead healthy lifestyles and mentor their children to do the same.”⁵³ A central feature on the page is a circle with the words “Excuse #26” and an arrow pointing to a laundry basket piled high with clothes. Above the basket are the words, “NO MORE EXCUSES.” One link on the page takes the reader to another Mothers in Motion site that provides “Laundry tips for busy active moms,”⁵⁴ while a second link provides “a few stain-removal tips courtesy of Whirlpool Home Appliances to keep uniforms and other sports-wear shiny and new,”⁵⁵ and a third link offers “tips for storing food and keeping your family safe.”⁵⁶ While there are arguably some helpful resources on the overall site and mothers are encouraged to lead by example, much of the Mothers in Motion campaign is framed in reference to mothers enabling children to achieve and be active. The uniforms that mothers are to keep “shiny and new” are explicitly those of their children (not their own). “Knees and elbows can come home a new shade of green as your little soccer tyke slides and dives across the field.”⁵⁷ Elsewhere “mothers of school-aged children” are encouraged to be “the biggest fan of your child’s sport team (such as soccer, basketball, ice hockey, ringette).”⁵⁸ It is unlikely that had CAAWS been determining content on their site outside of the influence of Whirlpool that the organization would have chosen topics like laundry and refrigeration as significant to keeping mothers active. Again, this corporately sponsored campaign is constrained by the motivations of profit and, as such, does not move beyond normative representations of women.

That these sponsors and sites are linked to Sport Canada⁵⁹ and thus the Department of Heritage Canada, with its commitments to “active citizenship and participation in Canada’s civic life” is telling with respect to how women are positioned in the national sporting culture. While I again reiterate that CAAWS has done some very important work with respect to female sporting participation in Canada, these two examples are representative of normative notions of gender that constrain the female athletes positioning within masculine national sporting culture.

While it is true that there is an increased encouragement and expectation of private sector sponsorship across the Canadian sport delivery system with “government funding... below the level of the late 1980s and early 1990s,”⁶⁰ the move impacts the production of male and female athletes within the national sporting culture differently. For example, in 1999, the Department of Canadian Heritage convened a national conference that brought together key individuals from sport,

government, and the corporate sector with the objective of forging stronger relationships between Canadian sport and the corporate sector.⁶¹ The summary report on the National Conference on Sport and the Corporate Sector highlights a number of barriers to corporate funding of sport in Canada. One of these barriers is that “there is insufficient coverage of amateur and high-performance sport in the Canadian media.”⁶² This barrier is directly linked in the report to the fact that “professional sport events dominate media coverage to the extent that amateur and lower-profile sports cannot make a marketable impact,”⁶³ a key component necessary to draw corporate interest. This point is significant for at least two reasons. First, given that professional sport in Canada (and North America) is almost exclusively male, the fact that professional sports dominate media coverage translates to male sport dominating media coverage. This obviously increases viewer exposure to those sports (hockey, football, basketball, baseball, and so on) and ways of playing the game. Second, it suggests that what is considered marketable, and thus presented to and consumed by the Canadian public, is left in the hands of media ownership and corporate interest.

This introduces another important context in examining how the Canadian female sport participant is produced, circulated, consumed, and preserved. Globally, we are witnessing a trend toward convergence and synergy wherein a small number of major media conglomerates have large holdings of both various distribution platforms and the means of content production (including to a large extent sport!). News Corporation, owned by Rupert Murdoch, is perhaps the most cited example of this corporate integration and the resulting media concentration. Moreover, the rise and success of News Corporation is intricately tied to sport. As David Andrews states, quoting Murdoch himself:

At the heart of Murdoch’s corporate media philosophy is the steadfast belief that “sports programming commands unparalleled viewer loyalty in all markets” (Murdoch 1996), and can therefore be used as a “battering ram” to penetrate media markets more effectively, and indeed rapidly, than any other entertainment genre.⁶⁴

Given Murdoch’s appropriation of sport as a “battering ram” it is not surprising that in 2006 News Corporation had complete or partial holdings in Fox Sports Networks, FoxSports.com, ESPN, CTV Sportsnet, Rogers Sportsnet,

Madison Square Garden, the New York Knicks, the New York Rangers, the Staples Center, the National Rugby League (Australia)).⁶⁵ Additionally, News Corporations' many holdings across a number of distribution platforms (TV, Internet, film, magazine, newspapers, and book publishing) means the media conglomerate has a great deal of control over what is both produced and distributed with respect to sport content.

Harvey and Law provide a highly detailed, complex, and informative description that demonstrates how Canada's largest media conglomerates, including BCE, CanWest, Rogers, and Quebecor, have in the recent past developed a "Canadian oligopoly" that has lead "to a high degree of concentration of media ownership"⁶⁶ in the Canadian context. They too highlight the positioning of sport within that concentration and speak to the effects on mediated sport culture in Canada. While the space of this paper does not allow for an extensive discussion of their argument, I draw here on their claim that

[a] concentrated press means also less diversified sport journalism reporting and an increased focus of the media on commodified sport forms. Moreover, the so-called need for a national entertainment media model meant that less important room has been left for broadcasting non-commodified sport events.⁶⁷

The increasing changes to the Canadian media system mean that cultural sporting values and politics are "subject to corporate strategies driven by global competitive pressures."⁶⁸ In this context, some symbols proliferate while others become extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find because what matters is what sells.

Silk, Andrews, and Cole have termed this process "corporate nationalisms."⁶⁹ In this process, "the locus of control in influencing the manner in which the nation and national identity are represented becomes exteriorized through, and internalized within, the promotional strategies of transnational corporations."⁷⁰ Most often, these "commercially inspired reflections" are "depthless caricatures... and stylized signifiers of (sporting) traditions."⁷¹ Given discussion earlier in the paper regarding the positioning of women within the necessarily masculine sporting culture, it is not difficult to anticipate that women's sport is more adversely affected by a media system driven by a concentrated corporate interest and thus

more concerned with marketability and commodification than the celebration of diversified cultural values and affiliations. The caricatures and stylized signifiers of national sporting culture are not strong, aggressive, forceful women. If women appear at all within concentrated media forms they are more likely to be framed within discourses of femininity and (hetero)sexuality as exemplified earlier in this paper through reference to Cassie Campbell, Hayley Wickenheiser, Nike, and Whirlpool. Jenkins puts it most succinctly, “[media] concentration is bad because it lowers diversity.”⁷² Once again, the context in which the Canadian female athlete is produced and circulated will arguably lead to less representation, or at the very least less diversity of representation for the Canadian female athlete.

Before concluding, it is necessary to draw out an important distinction central to this paper. The arguments presented throughout are not meant to diminish the very real lives and accomplishments of female sport participants in Canada. Of course, many women exemplify not only sporting excellence (in all its strong, forceful, and aggressive embodiments) but also the heterogeneity necessarily implicit in that identity. The distinction that must be made is between the actual women who pursue sport and their existence (production, circulation, consumption) as a popular cultural form.

For example, as individuals, both Cassie Campbell and Hayley Wickenheiser have challenged gender norms and masculine sporting culture in very real ways. That said, the production, circulation, and consumption of Cassie Campbell and Hayley Wickenheiser as popular cultural forms has been framed within national and masculine sporting cultures, Canadian sport policy, changing federal funding regimes, increased private sector sponsorship, evolving media ownership, and commodification. Within those contexts, Campbell and Wickenheiser (alongside all Canadian female sport participants) as popular cultural forms are actively supporting the institutions (social, political, and economic) that produce them as texts. The work of the female sport participant thus becomes the work of the nation and markets. Regardless of the diversity present, the female athlete as popular cultural form works to produce, circulate, and preserve the homogenous “Canadian” sporting audience that can be sold for both government and corporate interest.

Locating the production of the Canadian female athlete at the intersections of masculine sporting culture, Canadian sport policy, changing federal funding regimes, increased private sector sponsorship, evolving media ownership, and

commodification, have highlighted the ways in which national sporting citizenship is differently displayed and available across difference. While I have focused this paper on gendered differences there are clearly many contexts within national sporting culture that attempt to “reify the term ‘sport’, denying the fissures—of gender, class, ethnicity...—that it sometimes tries to reconcile.”⁷³ The Department of Canadian Heritage offers us a unifying discourse of national sporting culture, but highlighting the production of the Canadian female athlete speaks to the heterogeneity of that culture. This disruption illustrates that popular sporting culture in Canada is not an end point, but rather an ongoing site for the production, circulation, and negotiation of a popular logics of citizenship that is necessarily gendered. Acknowledging the ongoing production of national sporting culture, rather than asserting it as something already there to be proud of and engage in, may allow for a recasting of the “regimented images of sporting citizens” such that they are represented “in all their chaotic, hybridic diversity.”⁷⁴

Notes

1. Canadian Heritage, “Welcome!” http://pch.gc.ca/index_e.cfm (accessed 8 September 2007).
2. Sport Canada, *The Canadian Sport Policy* (Ottawa: Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada, 2002): 3.
3. Michael Silk, David Andrews, and C. L. Cole, *Sport and Corporate Nationalisms* (New York: Berg, 2005): 6.
4. David Rowe, Jim McKay, and Toby Miller, “Come Together: Sport, Nationalism, and the Media Image,” in *MediaSport*, ed. Lawrence Wenner (New York: Routledge, 1998): 121. See also Andrew Tudor, “Them and Us: Story and Stereotype in tv World Cup Coverage,” *European Journal of Communication* 7 (1992): 391–413; Hugh O’Donnell, “Mapping the Mythical: A Geopolitics of National Sporting Stereotypes,” *Discourse and Society* 5 (1994): 345–380.
5. See for example Gamal Abdel-Shehid, “Writing Hockey Thru Race: Rethinking Black Hockey in Canada,” in *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism*, ed. Rinaldo Wolcott (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2000): 69–86; Ken Dryden and Roy MacGregor, *Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989); Neil Earle, “Hockey as Canadian Popular Culture,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30 (1995): 107–123; Rick Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993); Peter Gzowski, *The Game of Our Lives* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981); Steve Jackson, “Gretzky, Crisis, and Canadian Identity in 1988:

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6. Gruneau and Whitson 1993, 3.
 7. Neil Earle, "Hockey as Canadian Popular Culture: Team Canada 1972, Television and the Canadian Identity," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30 (1995): 107–123.
 8. Mary Louise Adams, "The Game of Whose Lives? Gender, Race, and Entitlement in Canada's 'National' Game," in Whitson and Gruneau 2006: 71–84.
 9. *Ibid*, 71.
 10. Rowe, McKay, and Miller, 1998.
 11. Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Eric Dunning, "Sport as a Male Preserve: Notes on the Social Sources of Masculine Identity and its Transformations," *Theory, Culture, & Society* 3 (1986): 79–90; Michael Messner, "Sports and Male Domination: The Female Athlete as Contested Ideological Terrain," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 5 (1988): 197–211; Mariah Burton Nelson, *Are We Winning Yet? How Women are Changing Sports and Sports are Changing Women* (New York: Random House, 1991); Nancy Theberge, "Toward a Feminist Alternative to Sport as a Male Preserve," *Quest* 37 (1985): 193–202; David Whitson, "Sport in the Social Construction of Masculinity," in *Critical Feminist Perspectives*, eds. Michael Messner and Donald Sabo (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1990): 19–29.
 12. Whitson 1990; Debra Shogan, *The Making of High Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity and Ethics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
 13. Shogan 1999, 55.
 14. Iris Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility and Spatiality," *Human Studies* 3 (1980): 147.
 15. Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1986); Hall 2002.
 16. Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Burton Nelson, 1991; Shogan 1999.
 17. Cahn, 1994; Toby Miller, Jim McKay, and Randy Martin, "Courting Lesbianism," in *Sportsex*, ed. Toby Miller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001): 103–125.
 18. David Whitson and Rick Gruneau, *Artificial Ice: Hockey, Commerce and Cultural Identity* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2006): 3.
 19. See Adams 2006, 71–84, for a discussion of the 2002 gold medal wins of both the Canadian Men's and Women's hockey teams at the Salt Lake City Olympics.
 20. Nancy Theberge, "Challenging the Gendered Space of Sport as a Male Preserve," *Quest* 37 (2002): 298.

21. Ibid.
22. David Rowe, Jim MacKay, and Toby Miller, "Courting Lesbianism," in *Sportsex*, ed. Lawrence Wenner (New York: Routledge, 1998): 126.
23. Adams 2006, 74.
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<12>

GOTHIC NIGHT IN CANADA

*Global Hockey Realities and
Ghostly National Imaginings*

Patricia Hughes-Fuller

The game of hockey is an example of a popular culture practice that has been enshrined as central to “being Canadian.”¹ Hockey has also served as a *context* for a body of *texts*, in both print and electronic media, that have helped construct and reinforce the myth of a seamless national identity. In *Reflections of a Siamese Twin*, John Ralston Saul observes that “Canada ... suffers from a contradiction between its public mythologies (e.g. hockey is Canadian ‘at heart’) and its realities.”² Saul also warns that there can be slippage from myth making to mystification and contrasts generally accepted Canadian myths to historical events that, for whatever reason, did not become part of the national lexicon.³ Myths are powerful communicative tools; for Barthes they are a “type of speech” yet their messages are ambivalent, repressing some truths

while monumentalizing others.⁴ While we may yearn nostalgically for hockey's pastoral beginnings, as a simple game played on the ponds and sloughs of the prairies, or in backyard rinks from Brantford to Baie Comeau, for the last several decades, it has also been played professionally "from New York to LA," and is increasingly characterized by big stars, big media, and most of all, big money.

At the same time, myths may have a positive function, as "stories that dramatize important themes and tensions in a culture."⁵ They are the stories we tell ourselves, and each other, about who we think we are. Furthermore, audiences play an important role in how popular myths are received and re-articulated. Unquestionably, hockey today is the object of market-driven mass cultural production.⁶ However as John Fiske and others have emphasized, such products are made meaningful only through a process of negotiated popular consumption.⁷ This may be why hockey has somehow managed to maintain its unlikely status as a "specific expression of culture in action."⁸

Let me emphasize that my purpose here is not to talk about "real" hockey—the literal game itself—but rather *representations* of hockey and the symbolic and communicative uses to which these texts and images are put. As discursive enablers of cultural myth building, hockey representations contribute to the kind of "deep horizontal comradeship" that Benedict Anderson argues is key to imagining community.⁹ Anderson also refers to the "ghostly" nature of these "national imaginings"¹⁰ and in the case of hockey texts, they are sometimes explicitly so. This should come as no surprise since, as Margaret Atwood points out, "the important images, archetypes and genres [in Canadian culture] are often tied to concepts of monsters, ghosts and the gothic."¹¹ Atwood's insights are in keeping with the work of other critics who have theorized that the gothic relies on the idea of unstable, splintered, or fragmented identities. For Michael Hurley this fragmentation is socially situated, since there is "a relationship between the gothic, the grotesque... and periods of cultural disorder or upheaval, a relationship also informing Canadian postmodernism."¹² Most agree that, at its otherworldly core, the gothic is about the instability of boundaries—between natural and supernatural, past and present, self and other, the living and the dead. Freud has described the gothic as *unheimlich*, literally "un-home-like,"¹³ and in the case of hockey gothic this seems like yet another paradox since, for many, the framing narrative of identity is that our "country is winter" and home is where the hockey is. Perhaps there is a tension between this most familiar of myths and the fear that, as

discourse, it may turn out to be unsustainable? If so, then the presence of gothic elements in hockey texts also speaks to the “in-between space”¹⁴ that is Canada, and the anxiety this ambiguity produces.

The Canadian gothic tradition to which Atwood refers dates back to First Nations tale-telling and shamanistic practices, and early fictional examples include the short stories of remittance man Algernon Blackwood¹⁵ as well as John Richardson’s *Wacousta*, generally recognized as the first novel written in English by a Canadian. More recently, authors as diverse as “Munro, Davies, and Ondaatje have all deployed gothic elements” in their writing,¹⁶ while Paul Quarrington, Jeff Klein, David Gowdy and others have contributed to a corpus of hockey texts involving spectres of various kinds. In the case of the latter, it also may be possible (as Pierre Macherey puts it) “to trace the path that leads from the haunted work to that which haunts it.”¹⁷ Interestingly, manifestations of hockey gothic seem to coincide with a state of heightened anxiety about the status of the game itself.

For decades in North America, NHL hockey was promoted as the only hockey to be taken seriously.¹⁸ The apogee of this “Fortress North America” mentality was probably the cold-war frenzy surrounding the 1972 Canada Cup, when Canadian NHLers defeated the national team of the then-Soviet Union. However, in today’s context, while hockey is doing well with other players (including amateur and women players) and in other places, creeping professionalism (the “business of hockey”), along with the commitment on the part of NHL “brass” to sun-belt expansion (while refusing to entertain the possibility of new franchises in Hamilton and Halifax), has not benefited hockey culture here in Canada, as witnessed by the departure of small-market teams from Winnipeg and Quebec City. On the contrary, these events have fostered a growing sense among some Canadians that we are losing “Our Game.”¹⁹

Perhaps this why writers and journalists, and even ordinary fans, have settled on ghosts and the gothic as the most effective means to represent their fears and hopes about the future of hockey. Derrida’s deconstructive “take” on spectrality is that, while ostensibly about the past, it is primarily concerned with the problems of the here-and-now.²⁰ This chapter looks at two hockey novels—*The Divine Ryans* and *The Last Season*—a late-90s television series, *Power Play*, and, finally, persistent folklore regarding the “ghosts” of the Montreal Forum to examine and hopefully explain, the communicative functions that hockey gothic serves in each.

The Divine Ryans

The opening scene of Wayne Johnston's magic realist novel, *The Divine Ryans*,²¹ takes place in a graveyard. The Ryans, a St. John's Newfoundland commercial dynasty that has gradually fallen on hard times, own and manage (among other things) a funeral home:

All that was left of the empire, except for Aunt Phil's house, was its four corners: *The Chronicle* and the funeral home which we owned, and the orphanage and the convent, which we might as well have owned, given how long somebody named Ryan had been running them ... The only moneymaker in the lot was the funeral home, prompting Uncle Reginald to remark that, from now on, the family motto should be, "We make our living from the dead." (p. 2)

It is in this comic/gothic context that the principal character, nine-year-old Draper Doyle, comes of age. As might be expected of a stereotypically Canadian youth, Draper Doyle Ryan plays hockey. He is a goalie and, in his own mind at least, not a particularly good one. The framed photo on his bedroom wall says it all:

At my skates, on the ice just in front of me, lay my nemesis, the puck. The word "puck," my father had once told me, originally meant "demon." For a time it had even been used interchangeably with "hobgoblin." I made a mental note of thanks to that anonymous inventor of hockey who had had the good sense to opt for "puck."²²

Hobgoblins notwithstanding, Draper Doyle loves the game. In any case, he has other, more disturbing, worries. His father has died recently and Draper Doyle has been seeing his ghost:

... from out of the darkness of the house, he appeared, looking as if he had just come home from work. My father stood at the kitchen sink and looked out the window, at me, it seemed, though he gave no sign that he had seen me. I closed my eyes then opened them to find that a man unmistakably my father was still staring at me... Then he took from his coat pocket what looked like a hockey puck, which he began to toss from

hand to hand, his head going back and forth as he followed the flight of the puck ...

"Mom," I shouted, "Mom, Dad is in our house. In the kitchen. He's there, I saw him." (pp. 3–4)

The adults in the family, and even his twelve-year-old sister, view these visitations with scepticism. To them, this is clearly a sign that Draper Doyle has been traumatized by his father's sudden and untimely demise. Worse still (at least for the more religiously inclined family members) the ghost sightings seem downright frivolous. As matriarch Aunt Phil points out, "people came back from the dead to deliver 'messages' or 'warnings' to the living, not just to look at them or of all things to throw pucks up in the air" (p. 7).

Draper Doyle soon learns to refrain from mentioning these episodes to the other Ryans, but he continues to find them troubling, in part because he has experienced a memory loss or "black-out" and cannot recall the events immediately preceding and following his father's death: "My 'missing week' Uncle Reginald called it. My father, he insisted, was gone but not forgotten. My missing week, on the other hand, was forgotten but not gone" (p. 8).

As well, Draper Doyle's sleep is often disturbed by recurring nightmares and twice he dreams he is in the Montreal Forum. His second Forum dream is patterned on a "real life" incident, the death of hockey legend Howie Morenz²³ and subsequent public display, at centre ice, of his remains:

That night I dreamed that I was in the Forum, on the ice, standing with Aunt Phil in a line of people who, like us, were wearing street clothes. It might have been one of those Depression-era breadlines, for the way that we were dressed and the way that we shuffled forward, heads bowed ... It was exactly as Uncle Reginald had once described it to me. Aunt Phil was taking me to see the great Howie Morenz, who was being waked at centre ice ... Aunt Phil and I were taking part in one of the greatest moments in Habs history. "Morenz" the crowd kept whispering, "Morenz," I said, as the circle slowly broke to let us in ...

"Kiss him," Aunt Phil said. "Kiss the man good-bye." She began to lower me towards the casket ...

I looked down to see, not Morenz, but my father, his hair slicked back,

a kind of spectral handsomeness about him, my dead father, waiting for a kiss from the one person who could bring him back to life ..." (pp. 122–124)

When the climax of the novel finally comes and Draper Doyle's dilemma is resolved, this too is accomplished by means of a dream in which Draper Doyle, urged on by Uncle Reginald, must confront his fears externalised as monsters (a neighbour's Doberman is cast as Cerberus) and exorcise his father's ghost. Once again, Draper Doyle stands before his father's coffin, but this time he is not in the Montreal Forum but rather in hell (or some underworld equivalent, located, appropriately enough, in the basement of Reg Ryan's Funeral Home). He is dressed to do battle in his goalie mask and pads, and armed with magic hockey pucks:

"I don't want to touch him," I said. "I'm not touching him."

"You don't have to," said Uncle Reginald. "Just use the pucks."

"What?" I said.

"The pucks," he said. "Put them on his eyes."

I reached into my pads and took out the two remaining pucks.

"Put them on his eyes?" I said.

Nodding his head and looking at me through circles made with his index fingers, Uncle Reginald said gravely, "*On his eyes.*" (p. 199)

Pucks, rather than pennies, are placed on the dead man's eyes, but the ritual works. When he awakens, Draper Doyle discovers that his "missing week" is missing no longer. He remembers how—and, more importantly, *why*—his father died, and this knowledge brings with it the possibility of freedom for his mother, his sister, and Draper Doyle himself. Their departure is an incongruous one—especially for a "Divine Ryan":

I had always figured that we would leave Fleming Street in a hearse, though I hadn't expected us to all go together, not to mention while we were still alive. Rather than climb into the casket compartment, which Aunt Phil wanted us to do so that no one on Fleming Street would see us, we all piled into the front seat with Uncle Reginald. More than one person on the route to the airport witnessed the unlikely sight of a woman and her

two children, crammed like hitchhikers into the front seat of Reg Ryan's hearse, all laughing except for Uncle Reginald, whose mournful expression was even more pronounced than usual. (p. 214)

Under patriarchy we all bear "the name of the father" so it is significant that, as a condition of their release (and symbolic gesture of excommunication), Aunt Phil insists that Draper Doyle's mother revert to her maiden name. Henceforth, the widow and her two children will be known by the more secular and mundane patronymic, Delaney. Draper Doyle, who, as Uncle Reginald has reminded him, is the last male bearer of the Ryan name, must, as a condition of freedom, leave that name behind him (p. 212). This, however, does not subvert the already-established link between Draper Doyle and his father, nor does it break the metonymic chain: father/hockey/past/identity. It is surely no accident that, as a denouement, Draper Doyle discovers his father's final message to him (again, from beyond the grave) in his copy of *The Cartoon Virgil*. Like Aeneas, Draper Doyle must emerge from the underworld (i.e., life under the parochial dead hand of the "Divine Ryans") in order to fulfil his yet-to-be-discovered destiny.

The Last Season

Hockey hauntings are not always so benign. Unlike the protagonist of *The Divine Ryans* who is looking for clues as to who his father really was and (by extension) who he himself may become, the central character of Roy MacGregor's novel *The Last Season*²⁴ struggles to come to terms with a past—and an identity—that he has personally rejected, but that simply will not go away. Felix Batterinski is a member of the category euphemistically known as "New Canadians" and his Polish-immigrant father, whom he loves deeply, is a source of embarrassment to the acne-ridden and emotionally insecure teenager who hopes to become a successful professional hockey player.

The story begins with a flashback. The fifteen-year-old Felix has left the remote northern community of Pomerania and is "boarding out" with a middle-class family in the town of Vernon. He is dismayed when his father who, in Felix's eyes, "looks like a degenerate" (p. 2) pays him a surprise visit:

"Why have you come, Poppa?"

"I want to see my son play hockey."

"We don't play tonight. It's juveniles tonight. Midgets don't play until tomorrow."

"Fine then. I'll stay till tomorrow."

Den. Den. Fine den. ... Christ, until I heard him I hadn't realized how much I'd lost. It was amazing what laughing behind your back could do for your front; I fell asleep thinking "th" and woke up saying it.

"Never mind," Poppa said quickly, though I had said nothing. "I'll get a room at the hotel."

I couldn't be sure whether he expected me to argue with him or not. But how could he have possibly stayed at the Riley's? If he went to the bathroom he wouldn't even know to flush. (p. 4)

Ironically, the more Felix tries to escape the past, the more it pursues him. He is particularly determined to get away from his step-grandmother, Batcha, who has a reputation in her own community, as a woman of power, in Polish, a *carovnica* or white witch. For Felix, Batcha and her folk remedies are a particularly potent symbol of "foreign" ignorance and superstition:

Growing up with her always around, it had never seemed all that unusual to me. But now, coming from Vernon where Mrs. Riley had her sparkling medicine chest filled with every cure the television promised, Batcha seemed outrageously impossible. (p. 29)

Still, he has some feelings of ambivalence, which lead to even more strenuous denial:

I myself had seen her cure swollen cows' udders over at the Jazdas' by scratching the teats with a mole's foreclaw. And I remembered how when Jaja died she had forced Poppa to walk around the yard telling everything, chickens, bushes, trees, even a chipmunk, that the old man was dead, while she came along behind making the sign of the cross over everything Poppa spoke to. I remember he seemed embarrassed. But I also remember he did it. So not much had changed in Pomerania—they were still buying the old bitch's tricks. (p. 30)

When the *carovnica* sacrifices a black cat, as part of an attempted cure for a neighbour-woman's cancer, Felix confronts his father, who is more than a bit evasive:

I shook my head. "Why do you let her do it?" ...

"Your Batcha is very well thought of around here, Felix," he said.

"She spooks me," I said....

"You're fifteen years old, son. Has she hurt you yet?" (p. 41)

Batcha continues to "spook him," and years later when Felix is forced to acknowledge that his once-promising hockey career is in ruins, he blames her for everything:

She fucked Philadelphia. She fucked Helsinki. She fucked me in Leningrad. It was always her, always at the window, laughing... And she's still laughing.

Bitch! (p. 303)

The Last Season is a variant of the classic (the unsympathetic might say shop-worn) tale of the underprivileged Kid from the Sticks whose Special Talent enables him to Rise to Stardom. In fact, such "Cinderella Stories" were not all that rare in real life and for decades, the sons of farmers, factory workers, trappers, lumberjacks, and miners provided the raw material from which future hockey Hall-of-Famers would be shaped. In *The Last Season*, however, MacGregor manages to subvert the rags-to-riches cliché just enough to allow a different, much darker, story to emerge. Felix Batterinski's (his name is a deliberate pun) special talent is that he is unusually tough, strong, and aggressive, and he achieves fame (or at least notoriety) as one of hockey's premiere enforcers (read: "goons"):

It was Orr and Batterinski, the two defencemen, they talked most about in Ontario junior. Bobby Orr would get the cover of MacLean's. I almost got the cover of Police Gazette after the Billings incident. My rep was made. The North Bay Nugget's nickname for me, Frankenstein, spread throughout the league ... *They didn't know me. I didn't know myself.* But I loved being talked about in the same breath as the white brush cut from Parry Sound. (p. 100)

Over time, however, Felix does learn to recognize the self he sees reflected in his ambivalent public image and to identify with his hypermasculinized Frankenstein persona. But as his career falters (he is traded to an expansion team, and eventually ends up as a playing coach Europe) he also begins to understand the downside of life as a manufactured monster. As his self-doubt grows, he is increasingly haunted by negative aspects of his past, particularly Batcha. On a rare visit home to Pomerania, the increasingly demoralized Felix goes on daily runs to try to keep his aging body in “game shape”:

Ahead of me, just where the road would rise to the cedar knoll heading up to a rock face overlooking the swamp, a sun pocket lay in waiting. But I did not see it until I entered. ... Four long strides and I was through—a light switched on at night, then instantly off—and the higher fog was already swallowing me when I spun in mid stride.

Batcha had been standing there!

My ankle caught and I stumbled, skidding on the grass embankment along the side, falling heavily to my knees in the gravel and stopping on all fours, my palms pounding the loose stone through ...

“Batcha?”

But nothing. I looked at all sides of the strip of bright morning. There was the path, wet and glistening, the silver poplar trunks, dew on the cedar, some dry blueberry bushes, the blue sky in a narrow gap above, the fog banks on all sides—But not Batcha.

Yet I *had* seen her ... (p. 220)

Not long afterwards, Felix learns the meaning of the name Batcha had called him as a child. To her, he has always been a *vjeszczi*—a monster—because he was born with a caul. Unknowingly, Batterinski has been a “Frankenstein” all along!

If Draper Doyle’s journey resembles *The Aeneid* (in that he goes on to new beginnings), Felix Batterinski’s follows the pattern of *The Odyssey*, a circular journey fraught with many perils, which finally takes him back to his point of origin. Here, however, all similarities cease, for there is no glad homecoming for the prodigal from Pomerania. Ultimately, this hinterland anti-hero (who has wanted so desperately to be part of the mainstream) remains a displaced person:

"In the end, I am just a Pole. Alone. All I can truly pray for is Batterinski, the poor dumb bastard. But pray for what?" (p. 289). As his identity as a hockey player disintegrates, Felix becomes increasingly delusional and, in a last desperate act, he tries to lift the *vjeszczi* curse, which (supposedly) has been on him since birth, and that the former sceptic now accepts with the zeal of a true believer. In his own words, he attempts "to devour his past to nourish his future" (p. 310). But it is not his real past; this he has carelessly lost, along with his grandfather's cherished Batterinski Family History. Felix can neither learn to value his Polish heritage, nor construct a viable alternative identity, and the failure to do so literally kills him.

Power Play

Other media have employed spectres to remind us of our ambivalence about where we come from and who we are. *Power Play*, a television series produced by the Canadian corporation Alliance Atlantis, was introduced in the late 1990s, and ran for two seasons on the CTV network before finally being cancelled due to poor ratings in the U.S. Half morality play, half soap opera, *Power Play* tells the story of the Hamilton Steelheads, a fictional small-market Canadian NHL franchise, and the struggling team's efforts to survive in the high-priced world of professional hockey. One of the ongoing themes of the series is continuity, and in several episodes, ghosts appear to the protagonist to re-introduce him to events from his past and to admonish him regarding his present conduct.

The importance of continuity is made clear at the outset by the program's opening. The theme music is Stompin' Tom Connors' "The Hockey Song." Initially, we hear the song sung by Tom himself, over a grainy black and white (signalling "the Past" as well as "the Real") montage of children and adults playing pond hockey, long shots of the Hamilton steel mills, and close-ups of the hands of working men carrying lunch boxes and punching time cards. Then, we segue to the present; colour replaces black and white, and the audience now hears a cover version of the same song, this time performed by the 1990s "Celt-Rock" band, Great Big Sea. As the credits roll, we see Hamilton today (principally the Copps Coliseum where much of the action is set) and the faces of various cast members. (The above is reinforced on a weekly basis as the same sequence appears at the beginning of every episode.)

Power Play is a Canadian product that was obviously created with an eye to the American audience. It makes fun of cultural clichés on both sides of the border. In the first episode, when the main character, Brett Parker (expatriate Canadian and successful player agent—with headquarters in New York, of course!) tells his American girlfriend he is going home to Hamilton, she insists that Hamilton is in Bermuda. When he argues (“No, it’s in Ontario”), she flatly states that she knows perfectly well where it is, since she was there just last week. This is only one of several examples lampooning American arrogance and ignorance about things Canadian. However, with typically “Canadian” self-deprecation *Power Play* includes comments such as the following: “A young ‘hip’ guy named ‘Ashley,’ plays a fiddle, wears a kilt (pause... eye roll...) only in Canada!” (episode eight).

Episode one of the series begins with a scene in which marketing “whiz” Parker vetoes a promotion because it is “too Canadian.” The first thing the television audience sees is an aerial shot of a frozen prairie landscape, then the camera cuts to a game of shinny (both of which are filmed in black and white). At the same time, a voice-over is telling us, “It was born from the land, an expression of joy and community in the face of bleak winter... It is a game, yes, but also a tribal ritual; a blood bond handed down from generation to generation...”

“All right—KILL IT!” Abruptly we hear the voice of Brett Parker, and the TV audience realizes that we have been watching a video (shown in a Manhattan boardroom). Parker continues: “What the HELL was that? We’re supposed to sell fire on ice—this was KIDS WITH FROZEN SNOT!!!! WHO DID THIS????” The blurb, which was to have been the network opener for the forthcoming playoffs, turns out to have been the “brain child” of someone named Ian. With a sneer, Parker pounces: “Ian? Ian... with a name like that you wouldn’t... you wouldn’t conceivably be CANADIAN would you?” When Ian replies, “hockey is universal, eh,” Parker’s response is, by now, predictable: “He said ‘eh.’ GET HIM OUTA HERE! ... How many times do I have to tell you, you don’t hire Canadians for these jobs? They don’t know how to sell hockey. They don’t know ANYTHING ABOUT HOCKEY. ...” (episode one). This brief vignette pokes fun at stereotypes (this time Canadian ones) while establishing Brett Parker’s persona as an American “wannabe.”

The conflict that drives the series centres on the interactions of three principal characters. The team owner, “Duff” McArdle (played by Gordon Pinsent) is both a businessman (he also owns McArdle Industries) and a lover of hockey. He is torn, because he knows that it would make good economic sense to move the

franchise to an American city, but his heart is in his hometown, Hamilton. He hires Brett Parker to manage the team, and instructs him that his preordained task is to keep the team from moving. This pits Brett against Colleen Blessed, president of the Steelheads and CEO of McArdle Industries, who has been instructed (again by Duff), to sell the team to the highest bidder.

Duff himself lives mainly in the past and is constantly reminiscing, yet he has problems with his short-term memory (implying that recent events are somehow tainted by their proximity to the present, and, as a result, are less meaningful).²⁵ In the context of the plot structure of individual episodes, he functions as a kind of *deus ex machina*, setting near-impossible tasks for Brett and Colleen, then sabotaging their chances of achieving their respective goals. In true soap opera fashion, a love interest develops between the two, both “hometown kids who’ve (more-or-less) made good” and both characters who must be reminded—in Brett’s case at times forcefully—of where they come from. In a pivotal moment, after seeing the house that Brett grew up in, and in which he lives once again, Colleen observes, “Parker, you’re just like me” (episode ten).

It is clear, in *Power Play*, that the fate of a small-market team is also tied to national survival (Canada as small-market country) and a set of values. Duff McArdle embodies old-style paternalistic capitalism displaced by the “new world order” and he remarks, in true High Tory fashion that: “Nobody knows why they do anything any more... There’s *just some things they have to hang on to*” (episode one, emphasis added). Family is represented by Brett’s teenaged daughter Michele whom he abandoned as a child (in favour of his career) but with whom, upon his return to Hamilton, he re-establishes a relationship. However, when he asks her if she wishes to call him ‘dad,’ she replies “‘dad’ is something you earn, like ‘doctor’ or ‘major.’” Later, when confronting a young “cool” American hockey player who wants to date her she challenges his cynical attitude toward the game and asserts Canadian Difference: “Hockey is not just a ‘gig’. It’s not just ‘show biz’, *not in this country*” (episode seven, emphasis added).

In *Power Play*, conservative community values are all, in one way or another, opposed to economic rationalism because, as the series makes clear, it actually *would* make sense (and dollars) to move the team south. McArdle industries is going broke and the money from the hockey franchise might save the business, which in turn would mean saving jobs for local steel mill employees. Even the players could benefit, because of potentially higher salaries paid by big-market franchises. The message

is a mixed one and, to varying degrees the characters all display a kind of schizoid indecision about what choices they should make and why. However, only the “identity-challenged” Brett Parker sees ghosts, who (invariably) remind him that you have to remain true to tradition, in hockey, as in life.

While he has spectral encounters with, among others, Bill Barilko, Jacques Plante, and the infamous Eddie Shore (who is only marginally more terrifying as a ghost than he was in life) not all of these hockey apparitions are famous NHLers. He also sees the ghost of the Steelhead’s recently deceased general manager who coached him during his promising PeeWee career, as well as the spectre of his father, a career minor leaguer who was always somewhere else when his son needed him. One night, after a demoralizing loss, estranged from his players, and alone in the darkened arena parking lot, Parker is accosted by the ghosts of the Dawson City Seven²⁶ who tell him that, when times are hard and things fall apart, its good to “be with your team” (episode three).

The protagonist of *Power Play* must learn that he can only address new realities by remembering, and being true to, the old. In the final scene of the concluding episode, he is (literally) invited to embrace the past, when his father’s ghost clasps him in his arms. The series *Power Play* is well named, since it is about both play (hockey) and power. It reminds us that:

The subordinate may be disempowered but they are not powerless. There is a power in resisting power, there is a power in maintaining one’s social identity in opposition to that proposed by the dominant ideology, there is a power in asserting one’s own subcultural values against the dominant ones. There is, in short, a power in being different.²⁷

The Ghosts of the Forum

Hockey also provides a context for ghostly speculations of a more grassroots kind, and one arena in particular, the now-defunct Montreal Forum²⁸ has proven to be the locus of ongoing commentary that affirms the enduring existence of departed members of *le Club de Hockey*. In 2006, during March and April, the Canadiens.com Fan Forum recorded over ninety posts on the subject of “the Forum Ghosts.”²⁹ The following remarks by “hockey guru grand Manitou” are typical:

Saturday March 11, 2006, the night the Canadiens retire Geoffreon's #5 jersey, Huet records his 5th shutout of the year

Saturday March 11, 2006, the day Geoffreon dies and the day the Habs retire his #5 jersey come on March 11, the same day that the funeral of his legendary father-in-law, Howie Morenz, was held in the Montreal Forum in 1937

March 11, 1996 is also the night of the final NHL game at the Forum

Have the ghosts from the old Montreal Forum finally found their way to the Bell Centre?²⁹

Over the two months of its virtual existence, this online discussion vacillated between skeptics and believers, the latter deriving support for their arguments from portents such as the discovery that then-Montreal goalie, Cristabel Huet, had images of the "ghosts" painted on his helmet and warning the doubters to "not mock the spirits." The concern expressed most often by fans was whether or not the Forum ghosts have relocated in the home team's new arena, briefly named Molson Centre, but now (as of September 2002) the Bell Centre. While most seemed hopeful that the ghosts had made the move, some were less sanguine. After all, how could a building designed to represent and promote corporate logos possibly evoke the same feelings as an arena bearing the name of the city that was recently—if somewhat arbitrarily—declared the "birthplace" of hockey?³⁰

It's worth noting that the forum ghosts turn out to have been a hockey legend even before the fan trauma induced by the closure of the Forum. In 1999, on NHL.com, the league's official website, sports journalist John Halligan posted an article with the following "lead":

It has been over three years now, and still nobody has told the ghosts.

Either that or the fabled "Ghosts of the Montreal Forum" are simply taking their sweet time about moving from their home of 72 years into the new home of the Montreal Canadiens, the squeaky clean Molson Centre. Veteran "ghost watchers" would swear they saw the stiff pennants move when the ghosts were about, as they surely were on two notable occasions in recent years.

It was the ghosts, wasn't it, that caught Boston coach Don Cherry with too many men on the ice in 1979, leading to a dramatic Guy Lafleur goal

that propelled the Canadiens to victory in the semifinal round against the Bruins?

It was the ghosts, wasn't it, that caught Marty McSorley of the Los Angeles Kings with an illegal stick in 1993, leading to a Montreal goal that led to four straight victories after an opening game loss?

The "Ghosts of the Forum" are generally believed to be a fluid group. Morenz is there, to be sure, but Hall of Famers George Vezina, Newsy Lalonde, Joe Malone, Aurel Joliat, Toe Blake, Bill Durnan, Jacques Plante and Doug Harvey have probably visited at one time or another."³¹

Today, the Forum ghosts can be viewed on an AOL video and, in 1996, the arena (and its ghosts) was the subject of a French-language television documentary, *Le Fantôme du Forum*, by award-winning Québécois filmmaker Jean-Marc Duchesne. More recently, recollections of a visit to the Forum inspired the following comments from one nostalgic blogger, John Cianfaglione, who, in 2007, recalled attending a "Habs" game in 1993 only three years prior to the building's closure:

It was like a dream come true walking through the Forum doors, seeing pictures of famous Canadiens players of years past, like Guy Lafleur, Jean Beliveau and my dad's favorite Maurice "The Rocket" Richard. I honestly thought that I'd died and gone to heaven. I could feel the presence of those famous Forum ghosts.³²

* * * * *

Gothic elements figure in each of the above examples, reminding us of the need for continuity, and signalling the dangers of losing our links with home and history. In the case of the anecdotal ghosts of the Montreal Forum, the loss is a literal one, given that the team has abandoned the building that was its "home" for decades. In this instance, it seems clear that the function of les fantômes is to convey a message of hope to demoralized fans who feel that Montreal might be losing its tradition as the "winningest team in hockey." This loss of tradition can be ascribed, at least in part, to the changing nature of the North American entertainment industry, and the impact of these changes on the sport of hockey.

Revenants are “crucial to the gothic, where haunting usually takes the contractual form of inheritance”³³ and in *Power Play*, the central character learns that, despite his yuppified disdain for all things Canadian, he *can*—in fact must—“go home again.” According to Atwood, fictional ghosts tend to be of three general types: “spirits of place ... bearers of fate [or] ... manifestations of repressed inner lives made visible.”³⁴ Fortunately for Brett Parker, his ghosts (functioning as “bearers of fate”) are there to show him the way. Once again, economic imperatives are pitted against shared community values and in the black-and-white soap opera universe of *Power Play*, the choices, while clear, are not easy.

Magic realism, represented here by *The Divine Ryans*, is a subgenre of the gothic in which “mythic elements convey their messages through humour and a certain ambiguity.”³⁵ A ghost who throws pucks in the air seems almost playful, though the sheer incongruity is alarming. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake, in the context of Johnston’s novel, to take these visitations less than seriously given that the ghost—clearly, a “sliver of [Draper Doyle’s] repressed inner life made visible”—actually functions as an agent of recovered memory. In the climactic scene, we learn it was Draper Doyle’s accidental discovery of his father’s secret gay identity that has triggered both Donald Ryan’s suicide and his son’s memory loss. For father and son (both “divine Ryans”) family ties bind in cruel ways, but while the former is victimized by homophobia, Draper Doyle manages to stand Aunt Phil’s bigotry and fear of public disgrace on its head. The repressed returns—and with a vengeance—yet brings with it release, and the promise of future possibilities.

The forum ghosts are an example of a fan-inspired, half tongue-in-cheek urban legend, while *Power Play* and (to a lesser extent) *The Divine Ryans* often treat serious issues with a kind of ironic levity. In contrast, *The Last Season* is a more straightforward work that blends gothic elements with psychological realism. For the immigrant protagonist, who admits he does not “know himself,”³⁶ Canada is “a new home whose ‘newness’ constantly calls forth the spectre of the past.”³⁷ Felix Batterinski, however, wishes to avoid his past, and is further conflicted by his Jekyll-and-Hyde-like dual identity as both man and monster, a result of the need to remake himself as a cultural commodity for export (i.e., a career NHLer). The setting, a remote northern community, is also appropriately gothic, recalling as it does Margot Northey’s haunted wilderness that, as Atwood has pointed out, is the shadowy domain of Windigos and other strange things: “The settler’s arrival in this uncharted region displaces him (sic) from European social

codes of conduct and threatens... a potential loss of self.”³⁸ Batcha’s ghost, at once “bearer of fate” and “spirit of place,” embodies both immigrant identity and the peril of the North Ontario bush country, a convergence against which the embattled Felix—who has always been a kind of “one-man garrison”—cannot fortify himself.

Ghosts and the gothic remind us that there is something unstable about our most seemingly secure cultural assumptions. Perhaps this is because Canadian identity is less about ontology than “hauntology,” and the Derridean state of suspension between being and non-being. Myths, as mentioned earlier, are stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, and Julian Wolfrey notes that “to tell a story is always to invoke ghosts, to open a space through which something other returns.”³⁹ But such instability, while sometimes uncomfortable, is not a bad thing, because, as Colin Davis points out, spectrality in Derrida represents “the structural openness... directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future.”⁴⁰ If the sport of hockey’s symbolic function is to tell us “we are Canadian,” representations of hockey as gothic undermine all such certainties, and may even gesture towards a critical interrogation of what being Canadian actually means.

Conclusion

While much hockey writing sustains and celebrates our myth of national identity, a number of examples, including those discussed above, point to the gap between myth and reality that Saul refers to earlier. Hockey texts are sites of contradiction, including the assertion-in-discourse of a fundamental relationship between the game of hockey and “Canadian-ness,” in the context of a globalized world where hockey, like much else, exceeds national boundaries. Graeme Turner observed a similar phenomenon in the case of representations of Australian nationalism that have “outlasted most of the political and social conditions that produced them [yet] have not lost their potential for signifying Australian-ness.”⁴¹ Years ago, Raymond Williams distinguished between “residual” and “emergent” cultural forms, pointing out that both can work in opposition to the hegemonic dominant culture.⁴² It may well be that his insights are more valid now than ever, given the scope of present instabilities:

The [contemporary] cultural configuration of everyday life is an unsettled—and constantly unsettling—mélange of the globally same and the locally diverse, with the latter continuing to exist in the face of the former, and the former in some ways stimulating both old and new versions of the latter.⁴³

In Canada, at least, the Garrison walls have been breached and old forms of exclusionary nationalism have been de-centred but, if Inglis is correct, it should be possible to find new and better ways of resisting the Master Narrative of corporate globalization. The need to do so is urgent but the task is difficult because, while systematically exploitative of both populations and resources (natural as well as cultural), at the level of discourse (or, if you like, as myth) the neo-liberal consensus is nothing short of Panglossian in its simple-minded optimism and self-proclaimed inevitability.

The answers to my questions about why Canadians seem so obsessive in their need to mythologize hockey turn out to be speculative. This is fitting, I think, given the phantasmagorical qualities of our imagined community, something I see as symptomatic of both internal and external pressures. Regarding the latter, Justin Edwards concludes that the supposedly “Canadian taste for order and stability” is subverted by “a sort of Northern grotesque that one might attribute to the peripheral position Canada occupies with respect to the centres of power”⁴⁴ while Gina Wisker emphasises that, in postcolonial discourse, the gothic is frequently employed “to explore ways in which imperial and colonial powers disempowered, de-energized, disenfranchised and silenced... taking from [the colonized] their identities, their histories, languages and the right to imagine and speak.”⁴⁵ For Andrea Frolic, “arguably the only thing all Canadians share is a protracted quest for a coherent national identity.”⁴⁶ At the very least, hockey gothic articulates a tension between the desire to know ourselves through myth and memory and a troubled uncertainty as to whether or not such a coherent collective self ever was, or could be.

NOTES

1. In a study that included both print and electronic media, and explored a range of cultural artifacts and practices, from commemorative postage stamps, to Molson's well-known "Joe Canada Rant" advertisement, to the Senate appointment of a former NHL star (Frank Mahovlich), the research showed that, for producers and consumers of hockey texts, the identities in question frequently had to do with national belonging. To be "Canadian" was to engage somehow with hockey. I found this conclusion paradoxical, given that hockey was never an exclusively Canadian sport, and rarely has been less so than today.
2. John Ralston Saul, *Reflections of a Siamese Twin: Canada at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Viking, 1997): 1.
3. Saul 1997, 6.
4. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Granada, 1973): 109.
5. Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport Identities and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993): 133.
6. David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *Net Worth: Exploding the Myths of Pro Hockey* (Toronto: Viking, 1991). Gruneau and Whitson 1993. Bruce Kidd and John Macfarlane, *The Death of Hockey* (Toronto: New Press, 1972).
7. John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1989).
8. Martin Laba, "Myths and Markets: Hockey as Popular Culture in Canada," in *Seeing Ourselves: Media Power and Policy in Canada*, eds. Helen Holmes and David Taras (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992): 336.
9. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1996). For a discussion of the utopian potential of such nostalgic imaginings, see Hughes-Fuller, 2002. "The Good Old Game: Hockey, Nostalgia, Identity." PhD dissertation, University of Alberta.
10. Anderson 1996, 9.
11. In Donna Bennett, "Criticism in English," in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, eds. Donna Bennett and Russell Brown (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002): 161.
12. Michael Hurley, *The Borders of Nightmare: The Fiction of John Richardson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 161.
13. Justin Edwards, *Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005): xx.
14. Edwards 2005, xiv.
15. John Colombo, "Four Hundred Years of Fantastic Literature in Canada," in *Out of This World: Canadian Science Fiction and Fantastic Literature* (Ottawa: Quarry Press and the National Library of Canada, 1995): 32–5.
16. Hurley 1992, 6.
17. Pierre Macherey, Excerpt from *A Theory of Literary Production: A Critical and*

- Cultural Theory Reader*, eds. Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 21–30.
18. Gruneau and Whitson 1993, 103–105.
 19. Dave Bidini, *Tropic of Hockey* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2000): xviii.
 20. Colin Davis, “État Présent, Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms,” *French Studies* 59:3 (2005): 379.
 21. Wayne Johnston, *The Divine Ryans* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1998).
 22. Morenz, known as the “Stratford Streak” was famous for his scoring ability (in 1928–29 he scored forty-four goals in forty-eight games) but also for his speed and finesse. When he died at age thirty-five “the funeral was the greatest outpouring of public grief the nation had ever expressed. The body lay in state at centre ice in the Forum, while... outside 200,000 stood in mourning as the coffin was borne through the streets of Montreal.” See Peter Gzowski, *The Game of Our Lives* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981): 26.
 23. Roy MacGregor, *The Last Season* (Markham, ON: Penguin, 1985).
 24. Throughout the series, “Duff” keeps up a continuous (and often hilarious) patter of anecdotes and remarks on Canadian themes and icons. He recalls Canadian swimmer Marilyn Bell, “a pretty little thing when she wasn’t all prune,” laments the cancellation of *Don Messer’s Jubilee*, refers to someone as “huffin’ and puffin’ like (former CTV news anchor) Harvey Kirk,” and so on. In another instance, he takes Brett Parker’s American girlfriend on a tour of Hamilton, pointing out and describing the buildings that used to be, as she (puzzled) follows him from parking lot to parking lot.
 25. “Of the many challenges in Stanley Cup history, 1905 provided the most unusual. The famed Ottawa Silver Seven were challenged by a team from Dawson City in the Yukon. The Klondikers travelled 4000 miles to Ottawa, part of the way by dogsled, where they were humiliated by one of the greatest teams ever assembled.” See Brian McFarlane, *One Hundred Years of Hockey* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1989): 6.
 26. Fiske 1989, 19.
 27. The Forum has not been demolished; rather it has been transformed into a combined Cineplex and Bowling Alley.
 28. “Fan Forum, *Le Canadiens*.com: <http://forum.canadiens.com/index.php?showtopic=7297> (accessed 7 July 2008).
 29. Ibid.
 30. The origins of hockey have been a source of contention for some time: “There are numerous accounts of ball and stick games... being played on ice as far back as the eighteenth century. Indigenous people may have played such games even earlier” (Gruneau and Whitson 1993, 32) The most popular choices have been Kingston, Ontario, Windsor, Nova Scotia and, of course, Montreal (www.birthplaceofhockey.com/origin/overview.html). Only recently was the latter institutionalized as hockey’s “official” birthplace, in part because of the “Hockey Day in Canada” commemoration process.

31. Halligan, John. "The Ghosts of the Forum," 1999:
<http://www.nhl.com/hockeyu/history/teams/montreal.html> (accessed 9 July 2008).
32. John Cianfaglione, "My First Visit to the Montreal Forum," 2007: <http://john-cianfaglione.blogspot.com/2007/02/my-first-visit-to-montreal-forum.html> (accessed 7 July 2008).
33. Edwards 2005, xxix.
34. Margaret Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (London: Virago Press, 2004): 73–74.
35. Charles DeLint, "Considering Magical Realism in Canada," in *Out of This World: Canadian Science Fiction and Fantastic Literature* (Ottawa: Quarry Press and the National Library of Canada, 1995): 120.
36. Macgregor 1985, 100.
37. Smaro Kamboureli, *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literature* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996): 1.
38. Edwards 2005, 3.
39. Julian Wolfrey, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (London: Palgrave, 2002): 3.
40. Davis 2005, 379.
41. Graeme Turner, *Making It National: Nationalism and Australian Popular Culture* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994): 110.
42. Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *Rethinking Popular Culture*, eds. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): 407–423.
43. David Inglis, *Globalization, Culture and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2005): 135.
44. Edwards 2005, 164.
45. Gina Wisker, *Horror Fiction: An Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 2005): 187.
46. Andrea Frolic, "Wear it with Pride: The Fashions of Toronto's Pride Parade and Canadian Queer Identities," in *In a Queer Country: Gay and Lesbian Studies in the Canadian Context*, ed. Terry Goldie (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2001): 281.

<13>

VERNACULAR
FOLK SONG
ON CANADIAN
RADIO*Recovered, Constructed, and
Suppressed Identities***E. David Gregory**

Does folk music programming on Canadian radio reflect Canadian identities, national, regional, and ethnic? To the extent that it does, how accurately does it do so? This chapter seeks to explore the extent to which traditional folk-song is broadcast on Canadian radio, and whether it still functions as a means of communicating identifiably Canadian cultural traditions, history, and values. I also examine the validity of the historical and cultural images projected through folk music by a cross-section of Canadian broadcasters. Such images may be reasonable facsimiles of the lived reality of particular Canadian communities located in geographically diverse parts of the country, or they may be misleading stereotypes that nonetheless find appreciative (or occasionally critical) audiences.

In approaching this subject, the first thing we need to do is to recognize a potentially misleading imbalance in the existing scholarly literature on the subject. Much although admittedly not all academic writing in the field of communication studies is done from an urban perspective that celebrates, at least implicitly, the latest technological developments in the various communications media and assumes that older media are doomed to extinction and must be regarded as “residues” from a form of society that is rapidly becoming history. In the process, the fact that most of the world, and indeed most of Canada (geographically if not demographically), is still rural is forgotten or brushed aside. Audiences are assumed to have access to all forms of broadcasting, and the analogue form of radio that we have known in the past is often seen as an outdated medium, fated to disappear in the brave new world of the twenty-first century. This is the message that is often subtly—or not so subtly—projected by American textbooks on popular culture and the media. An example is Richard Campbell’s *Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, which suggests that radio in the twenty-first century will likely consist mainly of talk shows, although it does also anticipate roles for programming to minority cultural groups, non-profit broadcasting, and Internet music programming.¹ The problem with this approach is that it seriously underestimates the ability of the medium to survive in the digital age, in part, because radio still fulfills audience needs in a convenient form and in part because it can adapt to digital modes of transmission, especially via the Internet.

Similarly, a substantial proportion of academic work although, again, not all writing in the field of cultural studies nowadays seems to regard older cultural forms and traditions as *inevitable* victims of globalization. The assumption seems to be that popular music worldwide is becoming increasingly homogeneous and “techno” because of the twin trends of Americanization and computerization. Older styles of music are then regarded as *passé*, to be studied, if at all, as historical phenomena that will inevitably fade away in time. Folk music is often characterized this way, viewed as a style associated with the 1950s and 60s. It is sometimes thought of as an “exhausted commodity,”² one that has passed its shelf life, and then placed in a mental bin labelled “nostalgia.” This is the underlying thesis in Robert Cantwell’s rather superficial overview of the postwar American folksong revival, *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. In contrast, a better and more detailed history, Ronald Cohen’s *Rainbow Quest: The Folk*

Music Revival and American Society, 1940–1970, demonstrates a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between folksong and politics in the American context.³ Both books, incidentally, are exclusively concerned with the United States, and neglect the roots of the Canadian postwar folksong revival in the earlier Late Victorian/Edwardian folksong revival in the U.K. and in the pre-war collecting of such Canadian folklorists as Roy Mackenzie, Helen Creighton, and Newfoundlander Gerald Doyle.

The underlying problem with the “exhausted commodities” approach is that it embraces too willingly and wholeheartedly the ideology of globalization. Globalization is undoubtedly a hugely important phenomenon in the field of culture, as in that of political economy, but has also provoked widespread resistance. Such resistance is often cultural, expressed in a defence of traditional values, ideas, and cultural forms. The resurgence of traditional music is just one of many expressions of this resistance to external factors perceived as alien and unwanted. Folk music, of course, is normally seen as comprising the work of both traditional artists and today’s singer-songwriters, but both forms of folksong—traditional and contemporary—can and do give artistic expression to movements resisting the dominance of world capitalism. A significant proportion of contemporary folksong, following in the steps of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and Phil Ochs (to name just a few of the best-known older artists) is political in nature, and there are many folksongs, old and new, that embrace the cause of environmentalism. A few examples will illustrate the point. Maria Dunn’s compositions often have a sharp political edge, and Garnet Rogers’ recent work has included songs about George Bush and about Canadian involvement in the Afghan war. Bruce Cockburn is well known for controversial musical-political statements (“If I Had a Rocket Launcher”) and for his environmental songs (“If a Tree Falls in the Forest”). Folk music can therefore be understood as part of the worldwide movement of resistance to war, environmental degradation, and globalization, and, as such, is by no means an “exhausted commodity.” Rather it is a cultural form that has found a new *raison d’être*, one with evident continuity with the political role, played in both the 1930s (as a response to the Great Depression) and in the 1960s and early 1970s (as part of the anti-war movement).

Both these conventional wisdoms (“radio is on the way out” and “folk music is merely a form of nostalgia”), if left unqualified, therefore, tell us more about the ideological blinkers worn by their proponents than about the realities of either

radio or folk music today. I will show, *pari passu*, in this article, that both radio and folk music are alive and well in Canada in the early twenty-first century. But it is critical to recognize that they are also changing. Critics who view them as “residual” have simply missed, or misunderstood, the transformation that has been occurring in each case. The issue is also bedevilled by problems of terminology. Our second task, therefore, is to interrogate these two key concepts, “radio” and “folk music,” concepts that have now become thoroughly ambiguous. Discussion of the term “folksong” also raises the concept of “vernacular song” and the question of the intersection between these two. Only by working our way through these thorny terminological matters can we identify more precisely those aspects of the Canadian folk scene that are keeping alive a spirit of Canadian nationalism and/or providing a voice of resistance to the impact of global capitalism on the environment and on the quality of everyday life.

Radio

Until recently, radio was a straightforward term. It denoted programming transmitted through the air on the medium of electronic waves from a broadcasting station to a wireless receiver. For half a century, from the early 1920s to the early 1960s, it was perhaps the leading mass entertainment and news medium. Television was expected to kill it, and did indeed reduce its audience and importance, but perhaps surprisingly, radio has not only survived but seems to be experiencing something of a renaissance. At present—although perhaps not for long—its core mode remains the same: analogue broadcasts on short, medium, or long wave, using both AM and FM wavebands. These are still received at no cost by the listener, and can be accessed easily in home or vehicle, using simple, cheap equipment. Radio’s functionality too has remained, at least in part, the same. It has survived primarily because of its flexibility: it accommodates the multitasking that is so much a part of contemporary lifestyles. One can listen while driving, knitting, reading, or doing the dishes.

Yet in the last two decades, radio has metamorphosed. While its core—analogue broadcasting—remains, radio has also adapted to newer, digital, media. There are three main forms of digital broadcasting, each employing a different technological solution. One method is to use a satellite as the means of distributing the broadcast signal. In North America, this approach has been adopted by,

among others, the Sirius radio network. It has, however, certain drawbacks that have yet to be overcome. At present, the listener is required to purchase a new listening device that receives only Sirius signals. While it is cheap and effective for city dwellers and can be fitted into vehicles, it often works poorly or even not at all in some of the rural locations that comprise, geographically, the major part of Canada. More elaborate (and more expensive) receivers can be placed on rooftops, but householders who already have satellite dishes or cable service are apparently, and not unreasonably, reluctant to go to the trouble of installing such an additional device. Sirius and its competitors, it seems, will have either to content themselves with an urban audience or make better provision for their programming to be received as TV satellite and cable channels.

A second form of digital programming is found mainly on cable TV. This might be called “blank screen” TV: when tuned to the correct channel, one hears music coming from one’s TV set but sees no images, although usually the song titles, artists and record companies are indicated. This service is offered by some, but by no means all, cable operators: it is rarely available in rural locations. Where it *is* found, it seems to be regarded as a dispensable frill, available in those cities where competition for cable subscribers is fierce but not provided where a cable company has a monopoly, as in most small town markets.

The third, most important, and potentially revolutionary, form of digital broadcasting employs the Internet as its distribution medium. Internet broadcasting has provided the means of overcoming the limitations of signal strength and geography. It takes two main forms. Many conventional radio stations now broadcast their normal programming simultaneously as analogue FM signals (over the airwaves) and as digital signals (over the Internet), the latter form of transmission seen as an inexpensive way of reaching more listeners. This is usually called webcasting, and in Canada, the procedure is legitimized (and regulated) by the station’s CRTC broadcast license. Here, too, there is still an irritating technical glitch: since the digital and analogue signals are not “in sync,” one cannot listen simultaneously on radio and computer but is forced to choose between them.

A second form of Internet broadcasting, usually called streaming or podcasting, is more radical, in the sense of abandoning a traditional broadcast schedule. With podcasting, the individual programs may initially be broadcast on a published schedule, but they are subsequently archived and made available to the listener at any time he or she chooses to click on the appropriate file. In this way, not

only geography but also the limitations of calendar and time zones are overcome. Podcasting provides the listener with the utmost in flexibility and choice. According to Ian Harvey, there are already more than 10,000 radio stations in North America broadcasting over the Internet, although the proportion of these that are podcasting is apparently unknown.⁴ Nonetheless, there are at present with this form of radio two rather obvious disadvantages for the average listener. One is that the archived files are usually removed after a few weeks or months. This regrettable procedure seems to be motivated by two concerns: lack of server space, and fear of being sued by record companies. The other disadvantage for the listener is that he or she is tied to a computer. To overcome this liability, media adapters—small devices that connect a home stereo system to a PC—have been invented, but so far, they are quite expensive (between \$150 and \$300) and hardly user-friendly. Both hardware and software evidently still have plenty of room for improvement, but it is not difficult to envisage a future in which cheap and tiny wireless devices perform this function. So although we are not quite there yet—at least in Canada—one might reasonably hazard a guess that podcasting is where the future of radio lies.

There is one other important distinction that needs to be made in discussing the nature of radio—the difference between active and passive programming. In the golden age of postwar radio during the 1950s and 60s, the DJ was king. His aim was to win a faithful audience with a distinctive mix of music that reflected his own personality and tastes. And, as payola demonstrated, successful DJs had considerable power and influence over their devoted listeners. By plugging a particular disc, they might make it a hit, and by ignoring an artist, they might close the door to a successful career in the music business. Corrupt and flamboyant they may have been, but their programming was a form of active communication with fans and record-buyers. They talked about the discs they spun, discussing the vocalists, instrumentalists, bandleaders, and songwriters who created the music, the singing styles, and the lyrics of the songs. In the wake of the payola scandal, when managers of commercial radio stations had realized that their businesses could cash in on their power to influence their audiences' buying patterns, the role of many DJs declined to that of promoting a limited playlist of items chosen by advertisers and record companies. They had lost control of their programming, the creative spark that had made the job enjoyable was missing, and communication had been replaced by a more passive form of canned entertainment. By now,

the DJs were dispensable; they could be, and often were, replaced by technicians who simply spun the discs in the prescribed rotation, without even introducing them. In turn, the technicians were replaced by automated systems that did the same job, and the move to passive programming was complete. The music had been reduced to the status of aural wallpaper.

There are, of course, still many radio stations—usually small independent ones, although to some degree CBC still falls into this category—that are committed to the concept of active programming. Since this inquiry targets folk music on radio *as a form of communication*, active programming is of most relevance and interest to us. While the two other forms of digital radio have employed primarily passive programming, the growth of Internet radio has witnessed the simultaneous revival of active programming as something approaching an art form. This is an important development, one significant way in which radio is reinventing itself and at the same time reclaiming its glorious past.

Much Internet radio is aimed at small specialist audiences: the kind of people who happen to like the peculiar mix of music and other material chosen by that particular station's artistic manager and small group of DJs. In such cases, the broadcasters and their audience form a community not unlike an extended family. The communities, of course, may be large or small, and they may, or may not, exhibit discernible identities of a local, regional or ethnic character. The type of folk music and the contents of the song lyrics included in such active programming may provide an important clue to a given radio community's sense of self-identity and to the kind of communication that is taking place between programmers and listeners.

Folk Music

If the concept of "radio" has recently become more ambiguous, the term "folk music" is notoriously difficult to define. Most people seem to agree that it comes in two forms: traditional and contemporary. 'Traditional song' means the entire corpus of popular balladry and shorter lyrics that have accumulated since the late Middle Ages, as well as the creations of musicians consciously working within that "folk" tradition. This includes many, although by no means all, contemporary performers at the large urban folk festivals and artists whose CDs are categorized as "folk" or "world music" by record stores. Folk music, then, includes both the

non-art music of the past and the music of people nowadays who value that older musical form and who seek to continue to work within it. Conventionally, however, it also embraces the work of performers and composers with less evident connections to traditional music, provided only that they avoid heavy reliance on electronic technology and reject classification as rock, pop, or jazz musicians. They are seen as exponents of a form of ‘contemporary folk music,’ which may be loosely defined as the work of those of today’s crop of singer-songwriters who prefer to accompany themselves on acoustic instruments, whatever their principal musical influences happen to be. Their songs are often about personal relationships—“love” in its various guises is clearly the most popular theme by a wide margin—but more than occasionally also interrogate social and political issues.

On this much there is close to a consensus, even among academics. Nonetheless, there is no widespread agreement on how the terms “folk music” and “folk-song” should be defined. In fact, there is a variety of different usages in existence, most of which are legitimate within their own terms but which are nonetheless incompatible. I have discussed this problem elsewhere, for example in my book *Victorian Songhunters*, but because of the confusion and prejudice that surrounds the concept, it seems necessary to lay out some of the parameters again.⁵

Nowadays many people tend to employ the term “folksong” in a rather wide and vague manner. This was not always the case. The term was invented in the early 1870s⁶ and it initially had a fairly precise meaning. Late Victorian and Edwardian usage was in fact quite narrow, a subset of later usage. Even then, there was disagreement about a precise definition. In *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*, Cecil Sharp provided a coherent viewpoint and some rules for using the word, emphasizing anonymity and oral tradition.⁷ Yet even at the time, not everyone was happy with his rather doctrinaire approach and the (English) Folk Song Society was reluctant to adopt his definition. In modified form the Sharpean perspective did subsequently win many supporters, including the International Folk Music Council at the 1954 São Paulo conference,⁸ and even became something approaching the conventional wisdom on the subject, but it never won total acceptance. During the postwar folk music revival, the argument about how to define *folksong* or *folk music* went on, and on, and it continues today.

In my view, this debate will never be resolved, because folksong is not a concept susceptible of definition in terms of necessary and sufficient criteria. It is a bundle of different usages, a little group of language games, to use Ludwig

Wittgenstein's terminology.⁹ As such, it is best understood as akin to a photograph of an extended family at a reunion party. One can see family resemblance among all the faces in the photograph, but not every family member has the same nose, the same eyes, or the same cheekbones. I therefore cannot provide a cut and dried definition of a folksong that will obtain unanimous support. All that can be done is to clarify the different linguistic options (and the values implicit in them), or, in other words, make more explicit the alternative language games that were, and still are, played with the term *folksong*. After that, you pay your money and you take your choice. Let us then make a brief classification of some of the alternatives available to us. These rival definitions suggest some of the different ways one can, quite legitimately, employ the term, provided only that one is clear about what one is doing and does not try to impose one's choice upon others who may have good reasons for adopting a different usage.

I will begin with a definition found, implicitly or explicitly, in the writings and/or practices of most first revival collectors. It reflects the original meaning of the term:

1. A folksong is a communal product of the *rural lower classes* and the tune must derive from oral tradition even if the words happen to be preserved in print.

This perspective substituted a more realistic and inclusive concept for that initially favoured by Cecil Sharp (which anachronistically restricted folksong to the oral traditions of the peasantry alone), and it was the definition that Frank Kidson, Lucy Broadwood, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and many other early collectors (even Sharp) employed *in practice*, since they did not in fact restrict their collecting to the peasantry properly so called and they often resorted to filling out their texts from broadsides. As mentioned, it was also, in essence, the definition proposed by the International Folk Music Council after World War II. Note that the definition assumes that folksong is entirely *rural* in nature. I find it unsatisfactory for that very reason, as did such second revival collector/singers as Bert Lloyd and Ewan MacColl. The following alternatives assume that folksongs can be of industrial and/or urban origin also. The second definition is implicit in the work of many folklorists and ethnomusicologists, although they usually avoid the academically unfashionable word *folksong* and tend to use the term *traditional song* instead:

2. A folksong is *any song collected from a member of the lower classes, irrespective of who composed the tune or words*. It may have been composed [words and/or tune] by an individual from an urban background or from a higher social class; that does not matter provided a lower-class singer has adopted it and thereby taken it into oral tradition. It is the social status of the *performer* not that of the *songwriter* that matters.

However, in my experience this definition is not widely accepted within the Canadian folk music community (i.e., among performers and fans), since it is usually regarded as unreasonably exclusive in its focus on membership of a lower social class. The emphasis on performance is also often questioned. Something like the following alternative is often suggested, and it was the definition adopted *in practice* by various leading figures in the postwar folksong revival, including Pete Seeger, so it has considerable prestige:

3. A folksong is any song composed *in the spirit* of a lower-class musical tradition, irrespective of the social background or geographical location of the actual composer or of the singer performing it. It doesn't matter that tune and/or words may be newly composed by a known individual from a higher social class or an urban background, provided only that the songwriter intended to create a new song within a lower class musical tradition that he/she feels part of and regards as folk music. Nor does it matter who sings the song since the social class and/or geographical background of the *performer* is irrelevant. What does matter is the *intent* of the songwriter. A folksong is thus an old song created by a member of the lower classes or a more recent song that is intended to be folksong.

All three of the above definitions assume that folksong is traditionally a form of lower-class music, i.e., that it is in some sense a music of ordinary people and *not* that of professional musicians, the highly educated, or wealthy members of the middle or upper classes. Historically this was certainly the case for five centuries, although it has been less so during the last fifty years. If this assumption is challenged and discarded, an even more catholic definition is required, such as the following:

4. A folksong is any old song that has become part of oral tradition or any more recent song deliberately composed as a folksong. *Class is irrelevant, since we are all "folk."*

Louis Armstrong was among the many who have expressed this sentiment. Note that this definition includes all vernacular songs (songs that have become part of oral tradition) as folksongs, even when they began life as pop songs, jazz, or rock music. It also recognizes the existence of a contemporary genre of popular music conventionally called *folk* that is frequently performed by educated or middle-class musicians who may compose some or even their entire repertoire, albeit in a somewhat traditional style. There is indeed much to be said for this eclectic and inclusive definition, although it is not true that we are all "folk." I wouldn't call an investment banker part of the folk, nor would I count as folk musicians rock stars or any professional musician with a lucrative recording contract from the music industry. On the other hand, I am quite willing to call Stan Rogers, Martin Simpson, Phil Ochs, Tom Paxton, and the young Bob Dylan contemporary folk singers. Indeed, there seems to be no other suitable term. We merely need to continue to make that other distinction between traditional folksong and contemporary folksong.

Of course, there are other, even more permissive, usages of *folksong* out there. It is common to find the more recent compositions of such singer-songwriters as Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, or Leonard Cohen (to mention just a few of the biggest names) still classified as folk music, even though as performers they have long since embraced other musical genres. Even broader is the usage implied by the title of the Edmonton Folk Music Festival (held annually in Alberta) or that of the Cambridge Folk Festival in the United Kingdom, both of which include rock bands in their lineups. Historically speaking, these other, even looser, language games are later developments, and, arguably, the broader they get the more they tend to deprive the concept of content and meaning. Yet it is no use denying that they exist nowadays and that for some (perhaps very many) people they have legitimacy. Anyway, the above list is not exhaustive, but you get the idea. One man's meat is another man's poison, and one man's folksong is another man's "fakesong."¹⁰ Usages vary from restrictive to catholic, and one could make a case for whichever language game one chooses to play.

For the purpose of this essay, we clearly need to go beyond Cecil Sharp's classic definition of folksong. On the other hand, there is no point in adopting a usage that is so catholic that the term becomes meaningless and the music it supposedly designates becomes indistinguishable from other genres of popular music. Personally speaking, I find definition #3 the most satisfactory, although some would view it as too catholic, and the element of intention makes it somewhat subjective. In practice I find that it reflects the language game that I play most of the time, especially when I am wearing my historian's hat and am therefore most conscious of the lower-class *roots* of folksong. Usage #4 is ecumenical and attractive, but I am uneasy with the way that it equates folksong with *all* vernacular song, although I recognize that some songs from other musical genres eventually become accepted as folksongs. The concept of vernacular song is a tricky one, although it is very useful, and I will discuss it in more detail later.

To summarize my view of folksong: I would argue that folk music (instrumental as well as song) is, in some sense, a music of the people, a form of popular or vernacular culture, as opposed both to Western art music, which was and is created for a social elite, and to the products of the commercial music industry, which are manufactured and marketed with the aim of maximizing profits. Folk music, of course, includes unaccompanied song (usually traditional balladry), instrumental pieces, and a variety of song-types in which words are accompanied instrumentally. While folksong includes the kind of songs and dances collected by Sharp in both England and the Appalachian mountains,¹¹ it also comprises a variety of "composed" material that Sharp rejected, including at least some of the so-called "national" songs¹² recovered by William Kitchiner¹³ and William Chappell.¹⁴ By extension, the compositions of more recent singer-songwriters working within the same musical tradition are also counted as part of the genre. This more catholic understanding of folksong was embraced by at least one late-Victorian collector, Frank Kidson.¹⁵ It therefore has a respectable pedigree, and, as suggested above, it has become a common usage, perhaps even the dominant usage, in folk music circles today.

A significant virtue of this perspective is that it recognizes that traditional music changes over time, that it has become urban as well as rural, and that it has incorporated the work of many composer-performers who have written new songs—or invented new tunes—in the spirit of their particular regional, ethnic, or national tradition. It means we can count as "traditional" the work of (say) O. J.

Abbott, Fred Redden, Anita Best, Joe Cormier, and Kelly Russell, and even many of the contributions of Wade Hemsworth, Stan Rogers, Eileen McGann, Finest Kind, The Rankin Family, Tanglefoot, and Rawlins Cross. At the same time, this definition, by recognizing that the music evolves, transcends class and incorporates elements from other musical traditions, permits the inclusion of the work of such contemporary singer-songwriters (among many others) as Bill Bourne, Susan Crowe, Heather Dale, Maria Dunn, Ron Hynes, James Keelaghan, Loreena McKennitt, Garnett Rogers, and John Spearn, as well as such older figures as Bob Bossin, Bruce Cockburn, Gordon Lightfoot, Murray McLauchlan, and Sylvia Tyson. And, of course, it has the virtue of still allowing us to distinguish between folk music and other popular genres such as jazz and rock music.

Vernacular Song

Notwithstanding my spending all this time discussing definitions of folk music, it must be recognized that there is an increasing tendency among academics (that is, folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and practitioners of one form or another of cultural studies) to abandon the very concept. It has been suggested, for example by Archie Green¹⁶ and also by Peter Narváez,¹⁷ that one way around the dilemma of the ambiguity and ideological baggage associated with the word “folksong” is to dump it in favour of an alternative term, “vernacular song.” This label, they suggest, is less encompassing than the very broad term “popular music” but more flexible than that of folksong, which (in their view) is sometimes construed too narrowly. Green and Narváez actually advocate the *abandonment* of the term folksong rather than a redefinition of folksong as vernacular song, but their proposal essentially amounts to a brief for usage #4 (above). The idea seems attractive at first, but there is a significant problem with this putative solution. It is that, intuitively, vernacular song refers to *any* kind of popular song that is, to quote the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “of one’s native country, native, indigenous, not of foreign origin or of learned formation.” Any style of popular music can therefore spin off vernacular songs. To be vernacular, to be sure, a given song has to be created in the home country and not by an art music composer; moreover, it has to be taken up by ordinary people and sung by them, thereby becoming in some sense native or indigenous in provenance as well as origin. But that could be true of, say, a theatre song, a vaudeville song, a music hall song, a jazz song, a rock

song, or even a pop song. “My Old Man’s a Dustman” and “I’m Henry the Eighth I Am” are classic English vernacular songs, and so, I would argue, are “Yellow Submarine,” “With A Little Help From My Friends,” and even “Waterloo Sunset,” “Space Oddity,” and the Sex Pistols’ “God Save the Queen.” Yet most people would be reluctant to call them folksongs.

In earlier centuries, such compositions as “Auld Lang Syne,” “Cupid’s Garden,” “Drink To Me Only,” “Golden Slumbers,” “Green Grow the Rashes O,” “Greensleeves,” “Heart[s] of Oak,” “Home, Sweet Home,” “John Peel,” “The Lass of Richmond Hill,” “Lilliburlero,” “Little Brown Jug,” “Sally in Our Alley,” and “Walsingham,” to choose a few more examples at random, were vernacular songs. Indeed, most of them still are. Although they certainly possess “vital melodies” (Frank Kidson’s invaluable criterion),¹⁸ and they have passed into oral tradition, I still feel some hesitancy in calling all of them folksongs. Some (e.g. “Cupid’s Garden” and “Greensleeves”) seem more acceptable than others (e.g. “Heart[s] of Oak” and “Home, Sweet Home”). Perhaps this is because the latter two (and their ilk) are obviously the creations of well-educated writers (most of whose names we know) and/or products of the commercial music industry of their time. Their language tends to be more formal or consciously poetic, and some of them clearly reflect the ideas and values of the middle or upper classes. Whatever the reason, one has the sense that ordinary, working-class people did not produce these songs, even if they found an audience among them. Intuitively, then, there *is* a difference between folksongs and these other vernacular songs, and we therefore still need terms to denote and differentiate them. It goes without saying that both kinds of vernacular song are valuable and interesting and that the history of the urban vernacular song is just as important as that of rural folksong. But the traditions are somewhat different, and I am reluctant to embrace a usage that blurs or eliminates this.

Admittedly, we are dealing with a borderline area here. My reader may be inclined to suggest that such highly popular and enduring vernacular songs have (or will) become, by osmosis and in the course of time, folksongs, even if we know their middle-class composers by name and even if they were originally intended for a different genre of popular music. That may eventually become true also of such modern songs as (say) “Summertime,” “Stormy Weather,” “My Way,” “Blue Suede Shoes,” “Peggy Sue,” “Sitting on the Dock of the Bay,” “Satisfaction,” “Ziggy Stardust,” “Born to Run,” “Beat It,” and “Smells Like Teen Spirit.” But

only time will tell which of these may eventually become incorporated into vernacular tradition. In any case, the suggestion that they have become folksongs will be accepted only by someone who also embraces a broad usage of the term. And no one can make him or her do so. So there is little point in trying to force the matter, and we might as well accept that intuitive distinction between folksongs and other kinds of vernacular song. In any case, the point is that we need—and we already have—a useful term (vernacular song) for all those songs, whatever their style or origin, that did once become (or currently are) genuinely and enduringly popular, songs with vital melodies and lyrics to match. It seems a better term than the older one (national song), if only because there was considerable confusion over the usage of the latter.¹⁹

At least as I use it, then, vernacular song is a broader concept than that of folksong. It comfortably includes national songs and other composed songs that many generations of ordinary people have made their own. It includes all broadside ballads that caught on with their audience. It includes minstrel creations that became popular ballads, whether or not those ballads happened to be preserved by way of manuscripts, printed broadsheets, or oral tradition. It includes some music hall, drawing room, and jazz songs, those that are sung and whistled in the streets or in the bathtub. It even includes a few songs, such as “Yellow Submarine,” that have become known throughout much of the world. In short, the category of vernacular song comprises all kinds of popular song that have *endured* and become part of a country’s *actively sung* song heritage. Incidentally, during the past fifty years vernacular song has found expression not only in the postwar folksong revival but also in the skiffle movement, folk-rock, punk rock, garage bands, rap music, and, above all, in the work of thousands of contemporary singer-songwriters. A few more examples of recent vernacular songs are “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “When I’m Sixty-Four,” “Imagine,” “Hallelujah,” and one that reappears during every NHL play-off series, “Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye.”

To summarize: by *vernacular songs* are meant any songs that have lived and often still live in oral tradition, songs that have become part of our collective memory. This collective memory goes back at least as far as the late Middle Ages, so we are talking about a cultural tradition that has flourished for over six centuries. Vernacular song, in short, is a fundamental form of human expression and communication, and it seems very unlikely that it will suddenly die out because of certain recent technological innovations. Our vernacular song traditions will no

doubt adapt and evolve, but they will survive as long as there are ordinary people who feel a need to make their own do-it-yourself music.

Canadian Vernacular Folksong

Notwithstanding the views of Green and Narváez, I would submit that the concepts of folksong and vernacular song are not mutually exclusive alternatives. They can and do in fact intersect. Not all vernacular songs are folksongs and not all folksongs are vernacular songs. Vernacular folksong is thus a sub-category of folksong, just as folksong is a sub-category of vernacular song. I have listed above a few of the many vernacular songs that have been created in the genres of musical theatre, jazz, pop, and rock music. Each year singer-songwriters use the folk music idiom to produce hundreds, even thousands, of new songs at least 95 percent of which will never “catch on” with their audiences sufficiently to become even possible candidates for vernacular song status. Most folksongs, in fact, have not become or are unlikely to become vernacular songs. But some already have, and others will in the future. We can therefore adopt the term *vernacular folksong* to specify those folksongs, traditional and contemporary, that have been embraced so enthusiastically and widely by ordinary people as to become part of our collective cultural memory. Three Canadian examples, by way of immediate illustration, would be “Farewell to Nova Scotia,” “Canadian Railroad Trilogy,” and “Northwest Passage.” But let us explore in a little more detail what we mean by Canadian vernacular folksong.

In the Canadian context, the vast heritage of vernacular folksong includes songs that have become part of either our national culture or the culture of a specific region, such as the Prairies or Newfoundland. They come in many different languages: native languages, French, Gaelic, Ukrainian, Polish, German, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and so on. But English is still the common language of most of Canada, geographically and numerically, and there is an abundance of song in the English language. So I will focus on the wealth of English Canadian vernacular song, without meaning to imply that there are not equivalent songs in other languages spoken in Canada.

Anglo-Canadian vernacular folksong includes many traditional lyrics and ballads that have survived in oral tradition or been preserved in print and have been taken up again by modern singers. It also—and here we again go beyond Sharp—

includes songs by known authors and even those by recent or contemporary singer-songwriters that have become part of oral culture. A few more examples may help to illustrate what I mean. Let's start with traditional song. The large heritage of anonymous folk music collected in Atlantic Canada includes such well-known and well-loved songs as "I'se the B'y," "Lukey's Boat," "The Ryans and the Pitmans," "She's Like the Swallow," and "Farewell to Nova Scotia." Upper Canada contributed such widely sung lumbering songs as "The Jam on Gerry's Rock," "Les Raftsmen," and "Lost Jimmy Whelan," not to mention "The Poor Little Girls of Ontario" and "The Young Man from Canada." The Prairies produced "Red River Valley," "The Alberta Homesteader," and "A Life in a Prairie Shack," while the traditional songs of British Columbia include "The Grand Hotel," "Far From Home," "Haywire Outfit," and "Know Ye the Land." Both Atlantic and Pacific coasts have left us a rich legacy of sea-songs, including, among many others, "The Greenland Whale Fishery," "The Banks of Newfoundland," "John Kanaka," and "A Hundred Years Ago." The names of the men and women who created these songs are lost, as are the authors of broadside ballads such as "The Bold Northwestman" and "Bold Wolfe." But for most songs written more recently, we do know the authors. For example, one of the better-known Newfoundland folk-songs, "The Squid-Jiggin' Ground," was actually written by Arthur Scammell, and Otto Kelland penned "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's," while "The Maple Leaf Forever," composed in 1867, was the work of Alexander Muir.

The history of Canadian folksong has been poorly served by academics, whether they are cultural historians, folklorists, musicologists, or ethnomusicologists. Essentially, it has yet to be written, notwithstanding the useful, if brief and spotty, sections on folk music found in Elaine Keillor's *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity*,²⁰ and the rather controversial outline account of the Canadian postwar folksong revival provided by Gillian Mitchell in *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945–1980*.²¹ The oldest Canadian songs date from the pre-colonial and early colonial eras, but it was during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that a large body of English-language vernacular songs first accumulated, in Newfoundland, the Maritimes, Upper Canada, and, to a lesser extent, the Pacific Coast. During the later nineteenth century, we begin to find more songs from the Prairies and the interior of British Columbia, as well as political songs about Canada–U.S. relations and Confederation. These have survived in a combination

of print and oral tradition, and many have been published, for example by Edith Fowke in such books as *Folk Songs of Canada, Volumes 1 and 2*, *Canada's Story in Song*, *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs*, *Traditional Singers and Songs from Ontario*, and *Lumbering Songs from the Northern Woods*.²²

Canada shared in the postwar Anglo-American folksong revival, and a fair number of the songs in the first four of these publications were performed—and sometimes recorded—by such revival singers as Alan Mills, Tom Kines, Wade Hemsworth, Derek Lamb, Stan Triggs, and Karen James. The majority of the recordings were made by a small American record label, Folkways, although usually supervised by a Canadian employee, Sam Gesser. Although gradually forgotten as the folk revival waned in the late 1970s and 80s, substantial selections from these performances were issued on two multiple CD sets in the 1990s by the Mercury label.²³ Sadly, these boxed sets are now unavailable, but the Smithsonian Folkways project has made most of this material accessible again, albeit in a rather expensive format.²⁴

A large number of the best-known Canadian vernacular songs date from the postwar folk music revival. Conventionally these are classified as contemporary folk music, because they were written during the last half-century by composers whose names we know. Some date from the 1950s. Wade Hemsworth, perhaps the best Canadian singer-songwriter in the early years of the postwar folk music revival, was the author of “The Black-Fly Song,” “The Log Driver’s Waltz,” “Shining Birch Tree,” and the beautiful “The Wild Goose.” Many more Canadian vernacular songs date from the 1960s and early 70s. Gordon Lightfoot’s output included such classics as “Steel Rail Blues,” “Alberta Bound,” “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald,” and the iconic “Canadian Railroad Trilogy.” “Four Strong Winds” was written by Ian Tyson, Neil Young wrote “Helpless,” and Joni Mitchell contributed “River” and “A Case of You.” Stompin’ Tom Connors’ long career began in the mid-1960s and he may well have written more songs about Canadian people, places, and history than any other songwriter. The earlier ones included “Wop’ May,” “Tribute to Wilf Carter,” and “How the Mountain Came Down.” By the mid-1970s he had added “Fire in the Mine,” “The Don Messer Story,” and “Big Joe Mufferaw,” but he is probably best known for such classics as “A Real Canadian Girl,” “Football Song,” “Hockey Song” and “Canada Day, Up Canada Way.” The late 1970s and early 80s were the decade of Stan Rogers, among whose creations that have entered oral tradition may be counted “Make

and Break Harbour,” “The Mary Ellen Carter,” “Barrett’s Privateers,” and “Northwest Passage.” It takes time, of course, for a song to become established in oral tradition, so only a handful of items from the post-Rogers era are obviously vernacular songs, but the Arrogant Worms’ “Proud to be Canadian” and “Last Saskatchewan Pirate” look to be good candidates, as do James Keelaghan’s “Hillcrest Mine” and David Francey’s “Skating Rink.” Other examples that come to mind include Richard Harrow’s “Jerry Potts” and Bill Gallaher’s “The Last Battle.”²⁵

Of the songwriters mentioned it is probably true to say that just three of them, Wade Hemsworth, Tom Connors, and Stan Rogers set out deliberately to write songs that express a Canadian identity, although the Arrogant Worms’ popularity stems at least in part from the pan-Canadian nature of much of their satirical material. There are also performers of traditional folksong who are consciously promoting a Canadian—as opposed to a regional, provincial, or ethnic—cultural identity. A good examples is the duo Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat, whose three CDs are titled *Come to Me in Canada*, *The Young Man from Canada*, and *The Green Fields of Canada*. They have also released a CD-Rom of sixteen radio programs titled *Songs and Stories of Canada*.²⁶ Probably the most interesting contemporary singer-songwriter with an overtly nationalist agenda is John Spearn. Spearn is working on what he describes as his “Canada songs project,” which has so far borne fruit in three CDs, *Northern Sightlines*, *Canada Songs*, and *Lonely Heroes*. Two of his songs in particular, “Edith Cavell” and “Dieppe,” seem to be striking chords in the hearts of folk festival audiences.²⁷

This very cursory discussion has, I trust, established two things. There is a wealth of homegrown Canadian traditional and contemporary folksong in addition to the vast treasury of English-language traditional song brought to this country by immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland, the U.S., and elsewhere. There is also a tradition of Canadian singer-songwriting that seeks to capture and express a uniquely Canadian identity. There is no reason to believe that this tradition of Canadian vernacular song is dying out. On the contrary, new singer-songwriters whose compositions express a Canadian identity appear almost daily.²⁸ Unfortunately, we lack a term that conveniently differentiates these consciously *Canadian* composer-musicians from those whose recorded work does not specifically reflect their home and native land. What we can say with assurance is that there exists a generation of younger musicians working in

the folk music idiom whose creations are potentially Canadian national vernacular folksongs.

On the other hand, it is evident that several regions of Canada possess strong musical traditions that they feel to be their own (rather than pan-Canadian), and that local singer-songwriters have consciously built on these traditions to foster regional identities rather than a pan-Canadian one. Leaving aside Quebec and Nunavut, where in each case a perceived threat to both language and culture provides strong motivation for cultural nationalism, this is most clearly the case in Newfoundland. One leading traditional singer in Newfoundland, Anita Best, has emphasized that she sings Newfoundland versions of ballads, not Canadian versions. Singer-songwriter Ron Hynes has written a number of songs that express his views and feelings as a Newfoundlander, including his famous "Sonny's Dream" and the poignant "The Final Breath," both of which can be found on his CD *Face to the Gale*, which also includes "St. John's Waltz" and "Gone to Canada." Perhaps the most overt expression of Newfoundland nationalism through the medium of folksong is found on the compilation CD *We Will Remain: Patriotic Songs of Newfoundland*, which includes three anti-Confederation songs, a "Republican Song," "Flag of Newfoundland," and the Newfoundland national anthem, "Ode to Newfoundland," as well as Hynes' "The Final Breath" and Jim Payne's equally separatist "Whispering Wave." There are several Newfoundland folk-rock bands whose music is based firmly on the island's traditional song, the best known being Great Big Sea, The Irish Descendants, and Rawlins Cross. Space limitations preclude a parallel survey of the living folk music of the Maritimes, but perhaps mention of Lenny Gallant, Mary Jane Lamond, Rita McNeil, Garnet Rogers, and the Rankin Family will quickly make the point. And if it is objected that this musical language no longer speaks to young people, perhaps the names Natalie McMaster, Ashley MacIsaac, and Aselin Debison will suffice to dispel that claim.²⁹

So, we do have a heritage of homegrown, traditional vernacular song that captures in music the history and soul of the land from coast to coast to coast. We have a tradition of Canadian songwriting that seeks to build on this heritage and to express in simple, accessible music a love for the country and its unique places and peoples. And we have musical traditions that foster a strong sense of regional culture, in which the identity felt and expressed is regional or local rather than pan-Canadian. In some instances—Quebec, Newfoundland, and Nunavut—this sense of cultural identity is so strong that the region rather than Canada as a whole

is often viewed as the real nation. This situation is paralleled, of course, with one in which various First Nations and ethnic groups feel an allegiance primarily to their communities rather than to the nation-state to which they also belong.

Vernacular Folk Music on Canadian Radio

How does this rather complex pattern of national, regional, and ethnic identities play out with regard to the broadcasting of Canadian vernacular music? Radio in Canada is a rather diverse and complicated affair, so we have to make some distinctions. One obvious distinction is between analogue and digital radio. First let us take analogue radio, the kind that is broadcast over the airwaves, using either AM or FM transmitters. There is a national network, CBC, that transmits on two analogue channels but only CBC 1 (providing mainly news and talk programming), is on AM and is Canada-wide. Part of this programming, however, is given over to local CBC stations that create morning and evening talk shows aimed at commuters in their own cities. CBC 1 is, of course, also available on FM in much of urban Canada. CBC 2, however, broadcasts only on FM and is therefore accessible only in communities (mainly big cities) with FM transmitters. It is much more music oriented, although its programming is curiously selective.³⁰

Parallel to the CBC network we find four types of radio stations. There are commercial networks, often devoted mainly to talk shows and sports programming. CHED is an example in Alberta. There are independent commercial stations, such as CFCW in Alberta, that include a lot of music programming but usually stick to oldies, contemporary pop music, or country & western music. Both the networks and the independents are, of course, beholden to their shareholders and advertisers, and so their programming is designed to appeal to as large an audience as possible. There are a few independent stations, such as CKUA, that consciously see themselves as alternatives to the commercial mainstream, and employ a mixture of advertising revenue and community-based funding drives to stay afloat financially. And finally, there are non-profit cooperatives and student radio stations, normally run mainly by unpaid volunteers.

When we ask the question, "How much Canadian vernacular folk music can the listener find on these various kinds of Canadian radio stations?" what answers do we find? In particular, do we find anywhere the conscious promotion of a Canadian national identity? Do we find the deliberate fostering of regional or

local identities rather than a national one? Or do we find Canadian song lost in a wash of American programming in which Canadian artists are musically indistinguishable from their U.S. counterparts? My answers are the result of an extensive survey of Canadian radio that I conducted in the summer of 2007, supplemented by renewed listening the following year. This involved driving across Canada, from the east to the west coast, listening to stations broadcasting in all provinces from Newfoundland to British Columbia, as well as seeking out folk music programs transmitted digitally on the Internet. To some degree, my results are impressionistic and provisional, since it was impossible for a single person who lacked research funding to carry out a fully comprehensive survey of all Canadian radio stations' folk music programming. Nonetheless, this was a quite elaborate empirical survey, and, as far as I am aware, the only one of its kind. We are, admittedly, dealing with a snapshot in time (the years 2007–2008), and since then podcasting has increased greatly in scope and quantity. But with that one qualification, I believe the following observations are factually based and valid.

The place to start is with CBC 1. Despite its many hours of talk shows, CBC 1 also does some music programming. We find programs devoted to classical music (*Symphony Hall* and *OnStage*), rock (*Vinyl Tap*), pop (*Definitely Not the Opera*, or *DNTO*), jazz (*Tonic*), world beat (*Roots and Wings*), and even a specialist blues program (*Saturday Night Blues*). There are also several eclectic music programs, including *DiscDrive*, *Fuse*, and *Vinyl Café*. But there is no regular folk music programming, let alone a program intended specifically to explore the wealth of Canadian traditional vernacular music and the work of singer-songwriters who write about Canadian history, people, and places. It is as if Canfolk does not exist. In theory one might expect to find, in a world beat show such as "Roots and Wings," an interest in the sources ("roots") of Canadian musical traditions other than those to be found in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, but this is very rarely the case. In *DNTO*, the world of commercial pop holds sway, albeit with an occasional nod back to Joni Mitchell and Neil Young. Canadian artists such as Avril Lavigne, Alanis Morissette, and Arcade Fire will get a hearing, but not the likes of John Spearn or even James Keelaghan. Even such big names as Gordon Lightfoot and Stan Rogers struggle to find a place on CBC 1, although an occasional track may turn up as nostalgia on one of the eclectic programs.

But wait; is this because the jobs of covering the Canadian folk music scene and promoting Canadian identity through music have been assigned to CBC 2?

The answer unfortunately seems to be no. Surprisingly, perhaps, there is no regularly broadcast program on CBC 2 devoted to vernacular music, either to Canadian folk music or to the broader Anglo-Celtic folk tradition. Although it changes from time to time, the CBC 2 music programming mix is on the whole remarkably similar to that on CBC 1. In some ways, it is even more restricted, with greater emphasis on classical music programs (*Music and Company*, *Here's to You* and *Sound Advice*) and less pop, rock, and blues. Admittedly, there are a few exceptions to this conservatism. For example, *Live By the Drum* is a world beat program, but unfortunately it is even less interested in Canadian roots music than *Roots and Wings*. Similarly, the country & western program *Twang* does not stray into folk music territory unless you count the occasional Ian Tyson track. So again, it is only once in a long while on eclectic programs such as *I Hear Music*, *Nightstream*, and *Weekender* that one comes across a folk musician, and then it tends to be a Bruce Cockburn or Joni Mitchell. One finds periodic multicultural nods to the music heritage of Indo-Canadians and Chinese-Canadians, even, although infrequently, to the music of central and Eastern Europe, but evidently neither English or Scottish count as distinct ethnic groups with musical heritages worth protecting under the rubric of multiculturalism. Revenge against the former colonial oppressors, no doubt! To be sure, there are a few one-off programs that showcase individual Canadian folk artists, although Aselin Debison and Great Big Sea seem swamped among Paul Anka, Randy Bachman, Burton Cummings, Diana Krall, Avril Lavigne, and Anne Murray, to mention only a few of the CBC programmers' favourites. There are some indications that CBC 2 is slowly becoming more adventurous in its music programming (especially late at night), but there is rarely any focus on material that specifically reflects Canada as a national entity. In this respect, CBC 2 is very similar to CBC 1. After all, as the Arrogant Worms point out, we don't need to promote Canada: it is Big, and that's enough.³¹ Anyway, one could hardly accuse the CBC of encouraging Canadian unity through its broadcasting of Canadian folk music.

CBC regional programming tells a different story, although in a sense it is the same story but with an ironic twist. Most CBC regional stations have been permitted to develop at least one program of their own featuring local artists and local music. Thus Newfoundland & Labrador has *Performance Hour*, the Maritimes collectively have *Atlantic Airwaves* and *All the Best*, Cape Breton has its own *Island Echoes*, and PEI has *Mainstreet*. Quebec has *À propos* and *Routes Montréal*, Ontario

has *Bandwidth*, Toronto its own *Fresh Air*, the northern Prairies have *Keewatin Country*, Saskatchewan has *Sound Xchange*, Alberta *Key of A*, the Northwest Territories *Northern Air*, the Yukon *Nantaii*, and British Columbia *North By Northwest*. I haven't had the opportunity to sample all of these regional programs but I have listened to three of them. *Performance Hour* features concerts by Newfoundland folksingers and folk groups, including, of course, Great Big Sea, Jim Payne, and Ron Hynes. *Key of A* features a variety of Alberta artists of various musical stripes but they include such folksingers as Maria Dunn, Bill Bourne, and Jim Keelaghan. *North By Northwest* is the most interesting of all: it includes occasional performances by Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat. Significantly, though, they usually sing their British Columbia material—much of it from the Phil Thomas collection of B.C. vernacular songs—rather than songs from other regions of Canada. The Thomas collection includes a considerable number of logging, mining, and transportation songs, and Thomas' printed selection from the songs in the B.C. archives, *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, provides a social history of the province through its vernacular culture.³² Here, then, we have the recovery of British Columbia's historical and cultural identity through the medium of song—a very significant and worthwhile achievement. CBC provincial programming requires a more thorough examination than I have space for here, but it is evident from my three samples that it does sometimes promote regional culture and regional identity. However—and this is perhaps hardly surprising, given its specific and limited mandate—it does little to promote *Canadian* identity or Canadian unity. It is essentially centrifugal in nature, underlining regional differences rather than national bonds.

Moving into the wasteland of commercial radio in Canada, I will pause briefly to mention a typical Alberta station, am. Unlike commercial network stations that are usually restricted to playlists, am seems to have full rein to program what it likes within its chosen musical field, country & western. The recordings of well-known Canadian country artists such as Hank Snow, Shania Twain, Ian Tyson, and Adam Gregory are interspersed with the expected outpourings from Nashville. But curiously, the songs chosen rarely have any Canadian content. For example, you'll hear Tyson's "Navaho Rug" (it was a big hit on the country charts) but not "Alberta's Child," "Old Alberta Moon," or even "Four Strong Winds." And despite the fact that his singing style and backings reflect the influences of Wilf Carter and Johnny Cash, Stompin' Tom is conspicuous by his absence from

the CFCW airwaves. Too Canadian and too far from the Nashville mainstream, no doubt! Clearly commercial stations such as am or their equivalents programming rock, pop, or oldies are not the place to find Canadian vernacular song.

But not so fast... that generalization may be a little too hasty. Canada is very diverse, and what is true for Alberta may not be true for Newfoundland. On the Rock, we find CJYQ, a commercial station called "Radio Newfoundland," which prides itself on playing "our music." By this phrase, it means not only music produced by artists from Newfoundland & Labrador but also Irish folk music. Here then, for the first time in our search, we find plenty of traditional music as well as music by contemporary singer-songwriters working in the folk style. The catch, though, is that Canadian artists from every other province are largely excluded, and there is no recognition of Newfoundland music as part of a broader Canadian musical tradition. Moreover, although the roots of Newfoundland folk music in Irish traditional music are recognized fully by the large number of Irish recordings in the programming mix, its roots in English folksong are denied. You will hear Mary Black and Sean Keane but not Martin Carthy and Kate Rusby. English folksong is simply not played on Radio Newfoundland, despite its huge legacy to Newfoundland musical culture. In reality, immigration to Newfoundland was largely from two areas: the English-speaking southeast coast of Ireland around Wexford and Cork, and the English counties of Dorset and Devon. The English immigrants slightly outnumbered their Irish counterparts, and, of course, they brought their traditional ballads and folk lyrics with them, just as the Irish did. Not that there was any great difference musically between the two traditions, because the Newfoundland Irish were not carriers of Gaelic song but rather of a common British song-culture that included eastern Ireland as well as lowland Scotland, much of Wales, and the whole of England except the Celtic part of Cornwall. But why this deliberate blindness to Newfoundland's musical heritage from England? While it could be a matter of ignorance about the roots of Newfoundland music on the part of Radio Newfoundland programmers, it is more likely to have been a conscious management decision to reinforce the picture presented by Tourism Newfoundland of a friendly island populated by jolly lobster-eating and fiddle-playing exiles from the green land of Erin. The net result is a radio station that communicates an invented culture while promoting an extreme form of regional nationalism. In this part of Canada, opposition to Confederation has never entirely died out, and CJYQ is playing its part in a

resurgent Newfoundland nationalism that incorporates a strong separatist wing. Evidently, an invented culture can have a political function in addition to promoting tourism.

CJYQ's programming may be unique, but it is still strictly speaking a commercial radio station, sustained by its advertising revenue. Back in Alberta, we find an unorthodox station of a different kind, one that used to be publicly owned and is now semi-commercial, funded by a mix of advertising and fundraising drives that encourage its regular listeners to become members of a virtual community. CKUA's programming policy is governed by the basic concept of providing an alternative to mainstream media: it includes specialist classical music, jazz, blues, country & western, and folk shows, in addition to several eclectic programs that rely substantially on the recordings of singer-songwriters and indie bands but also include folk, blues, and jazz in lesser quantities.

Of particular interest, from our point of view, are the two specialist folk music programs: *Folk Roots* and *The Celtic Show*. The latter is built around Scottish and Irish music but includes a good component of Canadian acoustic music with a similar sound, including, of course, plenty of recordings from the Maritimes and Newfoundland. However, singer-songwriters from Stan Rogers to James Keelaghan and David Francey are frequently included in the mix, and I have even heard songs by John Spearn. There is no attempt to promote either a Canadian or a regional identity through the music, but the regular listener will obtain, over time, a fair acquaintance with a broad range of contemporary Canadian vernacular music. What is missing, however, is any interest in older Canadian traditions: one never hears excerpts from Helen Creighton's or Kenneth Peacock's field recordings, nor have I ever heard *The Celtic Show* play a single track by Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat. *Folk Roots* comes closer to the kind of program one expects to find on CBC but looks for in vain. Although the host, Tom Coxworth, also plays music from Britain, Ireland, and elsewhere, he showcases Canadian folk music from all regions of the country, and includes songs by Canadian artists writing about the people, places, and history of their native land. As with *The Celtic Show*, one would like to see more frequent recognition of the older traditions of Canadian vernacular music—more traditional folksong as opposed to recordings by contemporary singer-songwriters—but on *Folk Roots* one does occasionally hear field recordings taken from the Canadian component of the Smithsonian collection. CKUA has even made a special series devoted to Smithsonian Folkways,

so Sam Gesser's solo effort to include Canada in Moe Asch's great project has not been completely forgotten in Alberta, although this does seem the case in the rest of the country.

While I have focused on Newfoundland and Alberta, I must emphasize that examples of commercial or semi-commercial radio stations that include folk music in their programming may be found in central Canada. For example, CKLN (broadcasting from Toronto) has a Sunday evening show hosted by Joel Wortzman called *Acoustic Roots*, which concentrates on showcasing the work of contemporary singer/songwriters. More oriented towards traditional folk music is Allistair Brown's *A Sign of the Times*, which may be found on Sunday mornings on CIXX-FM in London, Ontario.

My last category of Canadian radio is the non-profit, volunteer-run station, operating on a shoestring budget. These are usually associated with universities, such as CKIT in Toronto (University of Toronto), CKUT in Montreal (McGill University), CFRC in Kingston, Ontario (Queen's University), or CJSR in Edmonton (University of Alberta). Not all volunteer radio stations are student-run. Some are community cooperatives, examples being CKCU in Ottawa (although this is also associated with Carleton University) and CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia.

CJLY bills itself as "Kootenay Co-op Radio." It plays a lot of indie rock—a reflection no doubt of the predominantly young programmers' personal tastes—but there is the expected mix of older-style rock 'n' roll, jazz, contemporary singer-songwriter material, reggae, and bluegrass. One folk music program (*Folks' Music*) is in evidence, and it sometimes has a refreshingly Canada-wide perspective: on one occasion when I listened, the host set herself the task of playing a song about every Canadian city from Victoria to St. John's. But there is little traditional music to be found on this show. Curiously, I have never heard a single song from the Phil Thomas collection of B.C. vernacular music played on CJLY. CJSR, the University of Alberta station, also broadcasts much indie rock but it does include such programs as *The Sound of Folkways*, *Prairie Pickin'*, and *Sounds Ukrainian* as well as several more eclectic acoustic music shows. Surprisingly, given that the university has a Department of Ethnomusicology, there is no program that investigates the older traditions of Canadian vernacular music or even covers the full spectrum of contemporary Canadian folk music. CKCU (Ottawa) has an interesting variety of programming, some of which caters explicitly to Aboriginal,

Indian, African, Asian, Caribbean, and Scottish audiences. Folk music of a more general nature is found on such shows as *Roots & Rhythms* and *Canadian Spaces*, the latter devoted entirely to Canadian music. Perhaps it is because the nation's capital has a pan-Canadian sensibility lacking elsewhere that we find this uniquely nationalist programming only on CKCU.

In the main, it seems reasonable to conclude that, despite some lacunae, these volunteer, campus-oriented stations are doing a better job of promoting Canadian vernacular music, culture, and identity than either Canadian commercial radio or the CBC. Unfortunately, their broadcast range and audience figures tend to be rather small, so their programming is reaching only a limited niche market.

Some Conclusions

So what conclusions can we draw from this examination of folk music programming on Canadian radio? How should we answer the questions posed earlier? To do so we need to distinguish between the two kinds of radio: broadcast and digital.

To begin with, how much Canadian vernacular folk music is broadcast using the older analogue medium? Unfortunately, much less than might have been expected. CBC appears to have singled out folk as the one popular music genre to which it refuses to devote a specialist program on its regular channels. *Aficionados* of classical, jazz, blues, rock, pop, and even country music can usually find at least an hour or two a week featuring their favourite music, although they may be annoyed to find that a particular program (and hence the style of music that it featured) has suddenly vanished for a season or more. Not so for those interested in Canadian vernacular music or the Anglo-Celtic source traditions of English-language Canadian song and instrumental music. They are permanently out of luck.

The same is true of most analogue commercial radio, whether AM or FM: playing folk music must not be a suitable way of selling the advertisers' wares. Canadian songs are heard only occasionally and Canada is lost in the torrent of American-dominated programming in which Canadian artists are usually indistinguishable from their U.S. counterparts, whatever the style of music. One exception is Newfoundland, where one commercial station, CJYQ "Radio Newfoundland," plays almost entirely folk music, albeit only Newfoundland and Irish music.

To find a broader spectrum of Canadian folk music on the radio we must go to CKLN in Toronto, CIXX-FM in London, Ontario, or the semi-commercial CKUA in Alberta, which is in part community-funded and so, one presumes, somewhat responsive to listeners' preferences. The other place to look is to volunteer-run co-operative or student stations such as CIUT, CKUT, CFRC, CKCU, and CJLY. These, indeed, are the best places to find specialist music aimed at ethnic minorities or folk music *aficionados*. They are also, incidentally, the best places to find indie rock, one of the most creative music genres in present-day Canada.

Can we find anywhere the conscious promotion of a Canadian national identity through music programming? Were not CRTC rules on Canadian content once intended, at least in part, to do just this? Since only the CBC has a national purview and a Canada-wide network of transmitters one might expect its mandate to include the promotion of Canadian unity. But at least as regards music this does not seem to be the case. Choosing Canadian artists to play Bach or to sing Puccini does little for Canadian consciousness although it satisfies Canadian content regulations, and much the same is true for shows that feature Canadian jazz or blues musicians. It is the songs that matter, and they are conspicuous by their absence. So in ignoring Canadian vernacular folk music in its cross-country programming, CBC appears to be neglecting a real opportunity to promote Canadian culture to new immigrants and ethnic minorities not familiar with older Canadian traditions. It is also missing the chance to increase knowledge and awareness of regional cultures in other parts of Canada. Moreover, CBC's regional programming, which is rarely broadcast Canada-wide, actually reinforces regional identities and regional separatism, rather than helping different parts of the country know each other better. It is centrifugal rather than centripetal in its effect. However, at least in the case of the B.C.'s *North by Northwest*, this programming serves to inform listeners about local culture, history, and vernacular music. A lost cultural identity is being gradually recovered, a significant achievement.

The regional programming of commercial and semi-commercial radio stations varies widely from province to province. Most purely commercial stations have no interest in Canadian vernacular music and are contributing only to the Americanization of Canada. However, in Newfoundland, with CJYQ, we find something quite different: a clear-cut case of the deliberate promotion of an invented cultural history at odds with the province's actual history. The motives for this appear to be two-fold: to support Newfoundland nationalism and to

develop the tourism industry. Only on a semi-commercial station in Alberta (CKUA), a non-commercial co-op station (CJLY in Nelson, B.C.), and various campus stations (most notably CKCU in Ottawa) could I find folk music programming that was consciously pan-Canadian in scope. Sadly, these appear to be the only partial exceptions to what is, in the main, a dismal story.

My overall conclusion has to be that Canadian radio (the analogue, broadcast variety, that is), including the CBC, devotes little time to the country's heritage of traditional song and instrumental music. Even contemporary folk music is short-changed relative to other musical genres. Moreover, Canadian vernacular folk music is rarely used, as it could be, to promote a sense of national identity and unity. More frequently, folk music is used to promote a regional identity, which can be either constructed or authentic in nature.

When we examine folk music programming on digital radio, the overall picture is somewhat different. Most analogue transmissions are also found in digital form, so the conclusions stated above also apply here. Mainstream CBC is something of a mixed bag, but, taken overall, rather disappointing in its failure to embrace a national mission. Commercial radio is just as indifferent to Canadian cultural nationalism and vernacular music in digital as in analogue form. CJYQ in Newfoundland is promoting a constructed identity that involves a serious distortion of Newfoundland cultural history whether its broadcasts are received by radio receiver or by computer. However, my qualified praise of CKUA in Alberta, CJLY in Nelson, CKCU in Ottawa, and CIXX in London (among others) applies just as much to their digital transmissions as their analogue ones.

One finds a similar phenomenon on what I characterized earlier as "blank TV screen" broadcasting. This is similar to webcasting, except that the receiver is a television set rather than a computer. Here the folk music programming tends to be less specialized and more eclectic in nature. There is a heavy reliance on old favourites from the 1960s onwards, usually mixed in with folk-rock items by Bob Dylan, the Byrds, The Loving Spoonful, Buffalo Springfield, The Mamas and the Papas, and Crosby, Stills & Nash, et al. If one is patient enough, one is usually rewarded with recurrent doses of Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Gordon Lightfoot, Ian Tyson, and even, once in a long while, Stan Rogers and Natalie MacMaster. What you will not find in this medium is much in the way of traditional Canadian folksong, except occasionally as interpreted by a "big name" group such as Great Big Sea.

The principal difference between digital and analogue radio lies in a dimension that does not exist in the analogue medium, namely podcasting. As we have seen earlier, digital radio can be podcast as well as—or instead of—webcast. One of many folk music shows that are podcast in MP3 format as well as webcast is *Folk Directions*, hosted by Gerry Goodfriend on CKUT. CBC 3, on the other hand, consists entirely of podcasts, most of them musical. However, there are also archived versions of programs previously broadcast on CBC 1 or CBC 2, which tend not to include the specialized regional programming where most Canadian vernacular music is to be found. In contrast, the various podcasts that have been specially created for CBC 3 cannot be heard elsewhere. Among them is at least one regular podcast devoted entirely to folk music selected by Mary Jane Lamond, the leading performer of Cape Breton Gaelic song. Regrettably, Ms. Lamond's own voice is absent; she does not function as a DJ, introducing and commenting upon the discs she plays, so there is little communication between broadcaster and listener. One can obtain basic information about song titles and performers, but these entirely lack context. The music is reduced to entertainment at best, aural wallpaper at worst. Nonetheless, here is an excellent place to find contemporary, and some traditional, Canadian folk music. For the curious, and especially for the knowledgeable listener, Lamond's podcast can be a gold mine. It is a good example of effective specialized programming to a minority audience. CBC 3 is gradually expanding the number of podcasts that it hosts and so there is hope for more folk music programming of this type, including shows that feature Canadian vernacular song. The downside, however, is that these CBC 3 podcasts are minimally promoted, rather difficult to find on the CBC website, and separated from the mainstream of CBC programming. Only highly motivated listeners will ever find them. They may cater better to particular niche markets than CBC has ever done in the past, but they are unlikely to broaden those minority audiences.

It is with the newest category of digital broadcaster, the small independent podcaster on the Internet, that the future of folk music on Canadian radio may lie. There appear to be hundreds of such freelance narrowcasters in the U.S. The podcasting movement—because that is what it is in the U.S., a new cultural movement—is only just getting started in Canada, not only because of the smaller population but because of perceived legal restrictions and/or CRTC regulations. It may be premature to place too much weight on this phenomenon, yet two conclusions already seem obvious. First, stations such as CIUT,

CKUT, CKCU, CKUA, CJRC, CFRC, CJLY, and even CJYQ will almost certainly find their digital listenership growing while their analogue audience gradually declines. Yet their audiences will increasingly be specialist ones, comprising those who choose their URLs precisely because of their idiosyncratic mix of programming—including a goodly dose of folk music. Second, notwithstanding the practice seemingly adopted by CBC 3, the critical importance of this targeted digital programming is that it can preserve the original function of radio as *communication*. DJs usually discuss the music as well as play it, and the songs are presented within a cultural context that enhances their meaning rather than reducing them to aural wallpaper. There is a potential here for the celebration through music of national Canadian as well as regional and ethnic cultures. The downside of digital radio on the Internet is that we will almost certainly see a proliferation of niche marketing and the creation of multiple auditory silos. The consumer needs of folk music devotees will be taken care of but at the same time the music—and hence the cultural heritage associated with it—will be marginalized. It will be the preserve of a minority, not the daily fare of the masses. The same marginalization will be true, of course, for lovers of East Indian music, early classical music, indie rock, Baroque opera, or any other musical taste perceived not to be part of the mainstream.

For all its promise, digital broadcasting therefore seems likely to bring about a fragmentation of both highbrow and popular culture, a trend to which folk music will not be immune. It is perhaps fortunate that Canadian vernacular music is also communicated in other ways: through kitchen parties, ceilidhs, house concerts, pub evenings, folk clubs, small-scale local folk festivals such as the Princeton Traditional Music Festival in B.C., and even, although it is increasingly marginalized here too, in the big cities' so-called folk music festivals. Narrowcast digital broadcasting will likely fit well with this grassroots form of cultural distribution. However, the negative result may be an increased ghettoizing of vernacular folksong. While an increasing quantity of Canadian folksong may become available through the medium of webcasts and, in particular, podcasts, the audience for this music will likely be restricted to *aficionados* sufficiently committed to seek it out in the special places where it can be found. Niche marketing in digital radio will therefore probably contribute to a further fragmentation of Canadian cultural activity by cutting off vernacular folk music from the mainstream of (commercial) Canadian popular music.

To return, once more, to the question posed at the outset of this chapter, does folk music programming on Canadian radio accurately reflect Canadian identities, national, regional, and ethnic? The short answer seems to be that music reflecting or promoting a Canadian *national* identity is found only rarely on Canadian radio. One might have expected to find such programming on at least one of the three CBC channels, but there appears to be not a single radio show with active programming devoted exclusively to Canadian vernacular folk music. The closest one comes is with a folk music podcast on CBC 3, but this takes the form of passive rather than active programming. Some independent stations, such as CKUA, CKUT, CKCU, and CJLY, have good folk music programs, but these do not usually focus on Canadian music per se, although they include Canadian artists in their mix. The shining exception that demonstrates what might be done is CKCU's *Canadian Spaces*. There is, on the other hand, a wide range of local programming that promotes regional identities. Sometimes this programming explores provincial or local culture in an accurate and sensitive manner, as with CBC's regional program in B.C., *North by Northwest*. On other occasions, for commercial or tourism reasons, such regional programming promotes a misleading image of the province's cultural heritage, as with CJYQ in Newfoundland.

In sum, it is evident that Canadian radio, which is highly diverse and fragmented in nature, reflects and reinforces a range of local and regional identities, some recovered and others constructed. My most disturbing finding, however, is that the medium, by suppressing the sense of a Canadian national identity and promoting instead regional identities, is aiding the cultural fragmentation of Canada. It is one of the many forces currently contributing to the dissolution of Canada as a national entity.

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Notes

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6. Probably by William Axon. See William E. A. Axon. *Folk Song and Folk Speech of Lancashire* (Manchester, U.K.: Tubbs & Brook, [1871; reissued 1887]).
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 13. William Kitchiner, ed., *The Loyal and National Songs of England, for one, two, and three voices, selected from original manuscripts and early printed copies in the Library of W. Kitchiner* (London: Hurst, Robinson & Co., 1823).
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 16. Archie Green, "Vernacular Music: A Naming Compass," *The Musical Quarterly* 77:1 (1993): 37.
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19. As used by William Chappell in *Popular Music of the Olden Times* “national song” meant essentially the same as the later term “vernacular song.” However, Carl Engel, in his influential *Introduction to the Study of National Music*, muddled the waters by using the identical term as a translation for *Volkslied* (folksong). From 1904 onward Cecil Sharp drew a hard and fast distinction between genuine folksongs and national songs (in the earlier, broader sense of the term), but the value of this distinction was disputed by his opponents, including Stanford and Somervell.
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23. *Canada: A Folksong Portrait*, Mercury 769748000-2; *Singers and Songs of Canada*. Mercury 769748001-2.
24. See the Smithsonian Folkways collection at <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org>.
25. See the discography at the end of this chapter for the CDs on which these various songs may be found.
26. Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat, *Songs and Stories of Canada*, CD-ROM, (Vancouver: Bartlett & Ruebsaat, 2004).
27. The Bartlett/Ruebsaat and Spearn CDs are listed in the discography. Spearn’s songs “Edith Cavell” and “Dieppe” are transcribed in *Canadian Folk Music/Musique folklorique canadienne* 41:2 (Summer 2007): 9–10 & 13–14. See also his article, “The Canada Songs Project: Music, Musings, and Memoirs,” *Canadian Folk Music/Musique folklorique canadienne* 41:2 (Summer 2007): 1–8.
28. Maria Dunn, David Francey, Bill Gallaher, Richard Harrow, James Keelaghan, and John Spearn (among others) are carrying on where Wade Hemsworth, Gordon Lightfoot, Stan Rogers, and Stompin’ Tom Connors left off.
29. For some of their CDs, see the discography at the end of this chapter.
30. CBC 3 is not available on analogue radio. It broadcasts only in the form of digital podcasts.

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<14>

THE VIRTUAL
EXPANSES OF
CANADIAN
POPULAR
CULTURE

Derek Briton

Virtual Worlds are a very recent phenomenon on the cultural stage, and although Massively Multiple Online Games (MMOGs) and Massively Multiple Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) comprised the first instances of virtual worlds, many non-competitive virtual environments now exist. Virtual worlds are an ongoing topic of interest and discussion on the Internet, and although the acronyms hardly roll off the tongue, this has not stifled their use: a Google search for “MMOG” yields 2.8 million results, for “MMORPG” 28.3 million. Since their inception in 2004,¹ the universe of virtual worlds has expanded dramatically, but the aim of this chapter is neither to provide an exhaustive list nor a definitive account of these cyber realities—if this were even possible.² It is, rather, to explore the extent to which virtual worlds have impacted Canadian popular culture,

and to find a way to rethink the implications and consequences of virtual worlds in a manner that avoids portraying players either as dupes of the military-entertainment complex³ (a Media Studies 1.0 analysis) or socially irresponsible, apolitical aesthetes (a Media Studies 2.0 analysis)—to move beyond this either/or impasse.⁴ Virtual worlds are considered in terms of three broad categories: (1) first-person-shooter, (2) role-playing/questing, and (3) socializing/community-building, and the chapter's focus is predominantly, but not exclusively, on three exemplary instances of this division: Bungie's *Halo 3* (*H3*), Blizzard Entertainment's *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*), and Linden Lab's *Second Life* (*SL*).

Brave New Worlds

Set in the twenty-sixth century, *H3* stages an interstellar war between an alliance of alien races (the Covenant), and the defenders of humanity—the United Nations Space Command and a race of alien supporters (the Elites). Players can choose to play in “campaign” or “multiplayer” mode. In campaign mode, players assume the character of Master Chief, a cybernetically enhanced super soldier, and are assisted in their task by human and alien allies. In multiplayer mode, players engage in combat with other players. *WoW* is staged in the virtual world of Azeroth, and players can adopt a character (called an “avatar,” which is a digital representation of a person) of their choice, but must declare allegiance to one of two factions, Horde or Alliance, and join a collection of other players (a guild) to advance in the game. Players can explore the world's various realms (each of which has its own language) and can choose to 1) engage in open combat with one another, player versus player (PvP); 2) fight monsters and complete quests, player versus environment (PvE); or 3) role-play, which involves elements of PvP and PvE. *SL* is a virtual world comprising regions and islands that are rated according to content and activities. Subscribers, or Residents (who must be over 18 years of age), create an avatar and can then explore the world in various modes: on foot, by flying, in a variety of vehicles, or through teleportation. Residents interact with one another and can trade their creations and/or services to other Residents for Linden Dollars (currently, \$259 L = US\$1). *SL* is unique in that Residents, not the game's developers, have generated the majority of content. To accommodate players under the age of 18, *Teen Second Life*, was launched in February 2005.

Population Counts

How virtual worlds calculate their inhabitants (subscribers/players) is a point of heated contention.⁵ *SL*, for instance, counts every subscription created since its inception in 2003. *WoW*, on the other hand, counts only currently active (paying) users. Such disputes aside, the numbers remain staggering: as of April 2008, *WoW* declared over 10 million users paying at least US\$12 per month, and *SL* over 12.3 million free and premium subscriptions. On its U.S. release (25 September 2007), *H3* sold close to 2.4 million copies in the first 24 hours, for a total of \$174 million, and after the first week, total worldwide sales reached over \$300 million.⁶ An X-Box 360 exclusive, *H3* also contributed significantly to sales of the gaming unit, doubling previous sales for a total of 17.7 million units as of January 2008. As of the same date, Microsoft calculated *H3* users numbered in excess of 8.1 million.⁷ On Monday, 22 June 2009 (11:30 am, MST), the Bungie.com homepage displayed 102,765 *H3* players online, and a total “Campaign Kill Count” of 10,784,460,648—3,991,992,921 greater than the world’s estimated population of 6,792,467,727.

Shifting Virtual Sands

But this does not mean the ruling triumvirate can afford to sit on their laurels. As of September 2008, Sulake’s *Habbo*,⁸ a socializing/community-building virtual hotel for teens, surpassed *SL* in terms of total subscribers (over 100 million) and long-time industry leader, *WoW*, in terms of active users: “Habbo Hotel has the largest player base of any online game or virtual world (7.5 million per month), significantly surpassing *World of Warcraft* (4.5 million per month).”⁹ And a June 2008 report by Strategy Analytics reveals these figures may be just scratching the surface, declaring that “over the next ten years some 22 percent of global broadband users will have registered for one or more virtual worlds resulting in a market approaching one billion registrants and an eight billion dollar services opportunity.”¹⁰

Gamer Stereotypes

The appeal of Virtual Worlds is broad, but gamers are often stereotyped: “you need to be Asian to be good at video games ...all gamers are morbidly obese people who can’t stand daylight ...girls can’t play video games ...if you play *WoW*,

you will never get a date ...all gamers are way too hardcore.”¹¹ These stereotypes have been challenged with anecdotal evidence in the past, but a recent controlled study of a popular MMORPG, Sony Corporation’s *Everquest II*, reveals just how unfounded most are. The study, published September 2008 in the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, reveals a number of facts about gamers: average age 32 years, but more players are in their 30s than 20s; older players play more hours per week than younger, and the hours increase with age; 80.0 percent male to 19.2 percent female gender distribution, but female players play more hours per week than male; players incomes are approximately \$25,000 above U.S. average, as is their education level; Whites and Native Americans play at above average rates, but Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics/Latinos play below; players are generally healthier than the average population, with lower body-mass indexes, and older gamers are especially fit in comparison to their non-gamer counterparts. Such evidence, that gamers are in better physical health than the general population, that older gamers play more than younger, that female gamers play more than male, that Caucasians play more than Asians, and that players are motivated for social reasons, certainly dispel long-held stereotypes of gamers.¹²

New versus Old Media

The popularity of virtual worlds has not escaped the attention of the “old” media, and several U.S. television networks have featured MMORPGs in prime-time TV shows in an attempt to cash in on their growing popularity. *The Comedy Network*, for example, took a satirical poke at MMORPGs in an episode of *South Park* entitled “Make Love, Not WarCraft,” which first aired 4 October 2006. The next day, NBC featured *Call of Duty* (a first-person-shooter MMORPG set in World War II), in an episode of *The Office* entitled “The Coup.” NBC followed this with an episode of *Law and Order: Special Victims’ Unit* entitled “Avatar,” which aired on 2 October 2007. The show featured underage sex in a virtual world (*Alternate You*) that bore a striking resemblance to *SL*. CBS, not to be outdone, explicitly featured *SL* in two episodes of *CSI: New York* (“Down the Rabbit Hole,” on 25 October 2007; and “DOA for a Day,” on 2 April 2008), and used Cisco Systems’ Telepresence technology and one of its recent corporate acquisitions, Electric Sheep, to promote and facilitate entry into *SL* so audience members could investigate and solve a specially-staged, in-world crime.¹³ Not to be outdone, NBC also

featured *SL* on 25 October 2007, in another episode of *The Office* entitled “Local Ad.” Then, on 9 November 2007, another CBS series, *Numb3rs*, featured a MMORPG in an episode entitled “Primacy.” Although a virtual world has yet to make an appearance in the CBS series *NCIS*, special agent Timothy McGee, a junior investigator, is regularly teased by colleagues because he participates in a *WoW*-like MMORPG.¹⁴ As for Hollywood, after some early delays due to financing, *Halo* and *WoW* movies are proceeding toward release dates in 2010. Of course, the *Matrix* trilogy, which debuted in 1999, had already done much to bring the idea of virtual worlds into the public’s consciousness.¹⁵

Virtual Worlds and Canadian Popular Culture

Not surprisingly, the virtual-world phenomenon is influencing Canadian popular culture, and many Canadians have been quick to embrace the new possibilities. For instance, as early as November of 2006, Toronto indie band *Uncle Seth* performed at *C’est What* and simulcast their performance in *SL*. Suggesting, perhaps, that one of the band members had read a *Wired* article published two months earlier:

Move over, *MySpace*. Pop legends and aspiring rock stars are heading for an online outlet that’s more Sims than social networking. With thousands of bands now crowding the pages of *MySpace.com*, acts like Duran Duran and Suzanne Vega are turning to the online virtual world of *Second Life* to make themselves heard. Artists are creating avatars and using the game’s audio-streaming features to play “live” concerts on stages made of polygons.¹⁶

In fact, months before *Uncle Seth*, pianist Lang Lang had given a live performance in *SL*, as had three orchestras, one of which was the Liverpool Philharmonic.¹⁷ In June 2007, *The Guardian* and Intel announced an ambitious, jointly hosted three-day music festival in *SL*, SecondFest, featuring headliners such as the Pet Shop Boys, Hadouken, and New Young Pony Club. The festival attracted over 15,000 spectators, and despite some technical difficulties was deemed a great success.¹⁸

And in Canada, as elsewhere, music and fashion are closely linked, so it’s no surprise that in February of 2007, Kate Trgovac, a social media and digital

marketer, announced “After a Fashion” ... a Canadian “Girl’s Night Out in Second Life.” Kate’s intent was to form a small group of Canadian women to explore *SL*. Shopping is the group’s *raison d’être*, but she was prepared to expand into other activities should the group so wish. This announcement was followed closely by a gallery of screen grabs illustrating what Kate’s *SL* avatar, Katicus Sparrow, would have worn had she attended the Oscars. These blog posts were immediately preceded by a report on an *SL* fashion show Kate had attended.¹⁹ And let’s not overlook the presence of a donation-sponsored, quintessentially Canadian cultural icon in *SL*—Tim Hortons: “It’s run mostly on donations from residents, and calls itself the unofficial Canadian embassy.”²⁰ But it isn’t just Canadian music and fashion that is being impacted by the virtual-worlds phenomenon.

Canadian Businesses in Second Life

On 25 September 2007, Davis LLP became the first Canadian law firm to open an office in *SL*. Launched by a group within the firm that focuses on intellectual property, technology, and video-game law, the initiative seems not entirely unfitting. The group’s press release states: “the Davis lawyers present in Second Life are represented by avatars and the virtual office features a lobby, a library with topical legal information, a recruiting centre, and a secure boardroom.” The virtual law office is impressively furnished and clients have a choice of six virtual lawyers to consult.²¹ But Davis LLP is not alone. In November 2007, Canada Post opened an outlet to serve online shoppers,²² and in February 2008, CBC *News* reported that a Vancouver-based developer had set up shop in *SL*, noting: “while many businesses are experimenting in Second Life, Global Condocenter bought an island and began development with a definite plan in mind.” The result: “a virtual condo shopping mall... helping condo developers promote their properties to buyers around the world.”²³

But a number of businesses have found the cost of maintaining a virtual presence in *SL* difficult to justify when compared to alternative forms of advertising/promotion. Duncan Riley of TechCrunch, for example, notes that the advertising “cost for business on Second Life is insane: simply even for the very best, the figures don’t add up.”²⁴ Riley concedes, however, that “Second Life doesn’t rely on corporations for revenue and the decline of corporations on Second Life doesn’t really matter all that much to Linden Lab,” and that “once the last

corporation leaves Second Life, the user-generated metaverse will continue, and in some ways may even end up being better off.”

From Reaching Out to Looking Within

The significant cost of maintaining a presence in *SL* for promotional/advertising purposes has no doubt contributed to a number of early adopters closing shop (American Apparel, AOL, and Pontiac, for example). But a number of large corporations are attracted to *SL* not because of its marketing or sales promise but its ability to facilitate in-house communication and collaboration. Compared to hosting large conferences and paying for accommodation and travel expenses, buying and maintaining an *SL* island is relatively inexpensive. In April 2008, for instance, Sun Microsystems, after its acquisition of *MySQL*, hosted a twelve-hour corporate meeting on one of its seven *SL* islands (only two of which are open to the public), bringing hundreds of old and new employees together, and “high-tech titan IBM, which has nearly 387,000 employees in 170 countries... [has] about 5,000 workers visit Second Life and other virtual worlds to conduct meetings, train new employees and hold orientation sessions.”²⁵ IBM’s move into *SL* is of particular note because it was premised on the stipulation that the virtual environment be hosted on the corporation’s own servers, a significant change that allows IBM to manage its own security protocols; a move that will no doubt pave the way for greater corporate use.

In addition to Sun and IBM, over one-hundred large corporations, the like of Ben & Jerry, Best Buy, Cisco Systems, Dell, H&R Block, Reuters, and Toyota, have a presence in *SL*. What such corporations are also discovering is that *SL* can be invaluable for staging simulations that would otherwise require large capital outlays for start-up technology and/or infrastructure in a real-world setting. The virtual world is also proving an invaluable corporate recruitment tool for executive search agencies. TMP Worldwide Advertising & Communications, for example, established an *SL* island early in 2007, and others, such as Career Builders, and Accenture, one of the world’s largest recruitment agencies, soon followed.²⁶ But not only corporate recruiters are looking to *SL* to meet their staffing needs, as evidenced by the launch of two in-world law-enforcement recruitment campaigns: Vancouver Police, in June 2007, and the Western Australian Police in September 2008.²⁷

Virtual Degrees

No surprise, then that the communicative, collaborative, simulation, and recruitment potential of *SL* should attract the attention of Canada's colleges and universities, a number of whom were early to establish a presence in *SL*. Mohawk and Loyalist Colleges were among the first, but LaSalle soon followed, announcing its presence in December of 2006 with the opening of *Eduisland*. Later, in February 2007, Mohawk firmly established its presence with an *SL* island of its own. But of the three colleges, LaSalle's foray into *SL* was the most ambitious, launched with the promise to relocate all of its distance education offerings to the virtual domain, "technology permitting."²⁸ But it was Canada's westernmost province, British Columbia, that staged perhaps the most spectacular entrance into the world of *SL* so far, with the simultaneous launch of a new Centre for Digital Media and a Masters of Digital Media Program in both the real and virtual world of *SL*, in the presence of Premier Gordon Campbell.²⁹ The presence and participation of educators in the *SL* is now such that in 2008 a dedicated education track (SLED) was included for the first time in the annual Second Life Community Conference.

Pre-tween Virtual Worlds

The popularity of virtual worlds with tweens and teens is difficult to dispute, given the remarkable success of Sulake's *Habbo* and other tween/teen sites. "Tween" is a term invented by marketers for children 8–12 years of age. No longer children but not yet teens, tweens are in search of a firm identity and are very image conscious. Their desire to appear sophisticated leaves them open to marketing techniques that treat them as independent, mature consumers who no longer require parental guidance.³⁰ *Gaia*, for instance, boasts over 100,000 in-world economic transactions per day, over 7 million unique users each month, over 1 billion total posts to member forums, over 100,000 auction transactions per day, and the highest average visit-time of similar social networking sites.³¹ *Gaia*, which is more properly an avatar-based social-networking site, furthered this success with the addition of a "unifying game storyline plot inside the world," a MMOG named *zOMG*, which launched in open beta on November 6, 2008.³² But virtual worlds that cater to pre-tween users are proving equally successful, and one of the most popular originated in Canada, *Club Penguin*.

Launched in October 2005, *Club Penguin* was meticulously designed to provide a safe online environment for pre-tweens. Players assume a penguin avatar to navigate and interact in the virtual Antarctic world, but conversations between players are monitored, and communication restricted to choices from prepared scripts. The success of the venture (4.7 million unique visitors in June of 2007, a 159 percent increase over 2006) proved sufficient to attract the attention of the Walt Disney Company, who acquired *Club Penguin* in August 2007 for \$350 million and a promise “to pay the founders, three fathers based in Kelowna, British Columbia, up to \$350 million more by the end of 2009 if the site meets growth targets.” This is an example, *The New York Times* suggests, of Old Media “being forced to rethink how they reach young people, who often do not see television as the door to the world of movies, toys and video games,” and Disney’s acquisition of *Club Penguin* is clearly an effort to avoid “falling behind on the Web as children flock to an array of upstart sites.”³³

Virtual Addiction

The proliferation of virtual worlds has given some great cause for concern, others for celebration, but the one thing dystopian and utopian critiques have in common is their almost singular focus on the player. Any kind of “success,” in virtual worlds, whether competitive, commercial, or social demands a considerable outlay of online time, which some insist can result in addiction. In fact, addiction seems to be becoming the central focus of concern, surpassing even exposure to violence. Initially, many linked the rash of school shootings in the U.S. and worldwide from the mid-70s on to excessive violence in video and online games, but it has proven impossible to establish a firm connection.³⁴ The gaming blog, *GamePolitics*, for instance, notes how TV psychologist, Dr. Phil McGraw, host of pop psychology show *Dr. Phil* (who initially declared a clear link between playing violent games and engaging in violent behaviour when interviewed on CNN’s *Larry King Show* on 17 April 2007, one day after the Virginia Tech shootings), changed a scheduled show on violence in games to game addiction, a much less contested target.³⁵ The show aired 20 October 2008, and featured “ExGamer,” a self-confessed game addict “whose real name is Brad ... a 40-year-old Canadian in recovery from a nine-year compulsive online gaming habit, including, but not limited to, up to 80 hours per week playing more than sixteen different massively

multi-player online role playing games.” Brad hosts *Exgamer.net* with the help of Maschinca, “a 44-year-old wife and mother of two teenagers who resides in the Netherlands... [and] is recovering from excessive gaming in the World of Warcraft (WoW).”³⁶ This was the first *Dr. Phil* show to feature MMORPG addiction, but a previous show that aired 3 December 2007, entitled “Shocking Teen Trends,” did include a segment devoted to MMO addiction: “Virtually Addicted.” The segment comprised an interview with a 13-year-old girl and her mother, who believed her daughter was addicted to a socializing/community-building virtual world for teens—*There.com*.

Dystopian versus Utopian Visions of Virtual Worlds

Virtual worlds that cater to the pre-tween audience have been the subject of some of the most damning criticisms. Dystopian critics of pre-tween virtual worlds focus on their competitive and currency-driven focus, noting that although most offer free entrance, full participation is limited to paying members, and those without full access often feel themselves social outcasts. Players must pay a monthly subscription to gain the right to “earn” or purchase in-world attire, accoutrements, and “pets.” Moreover, some sites, such as *WebKinz*, also require the purchase of a real toy to gain entrance. In May of 2008, Consumer Reports Web Watch published an ethnographic study of how young children interact with online websites, “Like Taking Candy From a Baby,” that confirms the competitive nature, monetary focus, and consumerist ethos of pre-tween virtual worlds.³⁷ Critics also note that, spurred by the desire to acquire more possessions as quickly as possible, many pre-tweens have resorted to cheating the system:

Across the Internet, blogs, message boards and even video clips on YouTube.com offer preteens tips and tricks on how to steal coins at ClubPenguin.com or cheat their way to a higher salary at Whyville.net. ...To some educators, the cheating is yet another example of a competitive culture looking for shortcuts to get ahead. Worse, these cheaters can be as young as 8, and by unfairly learning how to obtain the biggest igloo on the block, it could foreshadow cheating in other aspects of life, they say.³⁸

The fear is that pre-tween virtual worlds are little more than “marketing plans to hook children on brands, to teach them how to shop and to turn them into... ‘gimme machines’,”³⁹ and some critics lament that developers have “lowered the point of entry to social-networking sites from middle school to elementary school, opening up young children to a type of interaction that even tweens and teenagers often find overwhelming and hurtful.”⁴⁰ There’s also the fear that pre-tweens will develop an obsession with virtual worlds that deters them from non-virtual forms of interaction with peers, where they’ve traditionally learned hands-on, practical skills. One parent, concerned that her son is obsessed with *Club Penguin*, limits his access to weekends and wonders, “if children weaned on computer games will grow up to know how to do anything beyond point and click.”⁴¹ Addiction to virtual worlds is, of course, also an issue for the K–12 audience.

In the education realm, where K–12 issues typically play out, variants of the analyses Miller describes as Media Studies 1.0 and Media Studies 2.0 vie for the support of educators and parents. Lowell Monke, author of *Breaking Down the Digital Walls: Learning to Teach in a Post-Modern Age*, is an outspoken critic of electronic media, and is convinced children become addicted to video and online games.⁴² In a 2003 presentation to an international education conference, for instance, Monke warns that “TV, and most likely, all other video screen activities, possess all of the same clinically identifiable characteristics required to classify them as addictive substances,” and further cautions educators: “Don’t be surprised if some day BEJ (or a more scientific label) is added to LD, BD, ADD and ADHD as a psychological malady in children.”⁴³

Marc Prensky, on the other hand, author of *Don’t Bother Me Mom—I’m Learning!* and an advocate of all things digital, argues that we are witnessing a fundamental transformation in how children think and learn, and insists that “*our students have changed radically. Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach*”; moreover, “there is absolutely no going back” (emphasis in original).⁴⁴ Prensky contrasts “digital natives,” students who have grown up with the new digital technologies, with “digital immigrants,” teachers and adults who struggle with the new digital medium and lexicon, and who have an “accent” that impedes their ability to interact and communicate with “native speakers.” More radically, Prensky claims “today’s students *think and process information fundamentally differently* from their predecessors,” noting “these differences go far further and deeper than most educators suspect or realize.” He concludes:

“It is very likely that *our students’ brains have physically changed*—and are different from ours—as a result of how they grew up. But whether or not this is *literally* true, we can say with certainty that their *thinking patterns* have changed” (emphasis in original).⁴⁵

Such antithetical analyses of the virtual appear irresolvable, evidenced by the ongoing debate in the education literature between representatives of Monke and Prensky’s position.⁴⁶ But what if the focus is widened beyond the implications and consequences of virtual worlds for players to include others the virtual-world phenomenon may be affecting? Miller, for instance, contends that a focus on exploited labour, the central element of a Media Studies 3.0 perspective, may be the way to move beyond the Media Studies 1.0 and 2.0 antinomy.

Virtual World Labour Practices

In 2006, an article published in the *Canadian Journal of Communication* offered an insightful glimpse into the exploitative labour practices of the North American electronic gaming industry.⁴⁷ The paper “examines the conditions that generated the crisis in video game labour exposed by ea_spouse and the variety of responses this exposure has elicited from both game corporations and game workers”—“ea_spouse” being the significant other of an overworked Electronic Arts (EA) employee, EA being the largest employer in the sector and among Fortune’s “100 Best Companies to Work For.” The report contends that “Youthful enthusiasm, home-away-from-home workplaces, stock options, the risks of leaving, macho bravado, and a cool corporate culture... are among the softly coercive elements of video game companies’ culture of extreme work,” but also acknowledges that employees do have the right to organize and could, thereby, compel employers to provide wages and conditions in excess of the minimal legislated standards of the industry. Employers in many other industries, after all, pay above legislated minimum wage levels. The authors conclude, in fact, that worker exploitation is not peculiar to the electronic gaming industry, noting “how similar their problems of long hours, boundary-less toil, and workplace burnout are to those suffered by an apparently very different group of workers—academics.” It would seem, then, that North Americans engaged in the production of virtual worlds are no more susceptible to exploitation than workers in any other industry. That workers in the electronic gaming industry are particularly susceptible to exploitative labour prac-

tices is certainly not something that should be overlooked, but there is nothing inherently exploitative in virtual-world production processes. But what of those who don't enjoy the right to organize and the protection of North American labour legislation?⁴⁸

The Virtual World Precariat

If virtual worlds have a precariat,⁴⁹ it would seem the “gold farmers,” those who play games in crowded workshop “farms” for long hours and minimal wages to earn virtual rewards (in-world gold, accoutrements, and items) that their employers sell to more affluent players for real currency, would be prime candidates. In fact, the trading of virtual goods is now a worldwide phenomenon. For instance, in October 2007, South Korea introduced legislation “to punish online traders that manage the profit-driven trading of online game items and game currencies into real money.”⁵⁰ Although the Korean electronic gaming industry remains skeptical of the government's ability to enforce the legislation, two in-game traders were found guilty and fined a total of 8 million Won (US\$8,000) on 27 February 2008. Since the two had traded items from the virtual world *Lineage II* and made more than 20 million Won in profit between May and July of 2007, the judge decided “their trades were illegal because the amount of money they handled was huge enough.” At the trial, the Korea Game Development and Promotion Institute testified that in excess of 830 billion Won was expended on online game items in 2006, and that over 1 trillion will be expended in 2008.⁵¹

Traders may earn huge profits, critics argue, but it is their employees who pay the price—the “gold farmers” who have to spend long hours in packed workshops replicating mundane, in-world tasks. Gold farms are now predominantly based in China, and U.S. gamers, who lack time to play but not money to spend, are the major purchasers of their virtual products. But an in-progress documentary on gold farmers, produced and directed by University of California, San Diego, Ph.D. candidate Ge Jin, reveals that Chinese gold farmers (who are predominantly young males) value the opportunity to play games that would otherwise be unavailable to them, welcome the chance of employment doing something that they like (in a very competitive labour market), and enjoy working, living, and eating in close proximity with colleagues they can have fun with.⁵² One 23-year-old “farmer” interviewed by *The New York Times*

states: "I make about \$250 a month, which is pretty good compared with the other jobs I've had. And I can play games all day."⁵³ And one of Ge Jin's interviewees, Xiong Xiong, states, "We are playing at the highest level, not just for money but also for fun. When so many people are playing together, it's important to have fun. There is a sense of achievement." In fact, when the workshop that employed Xiong Xiong closed its doors, he invited three colleagues to live with him at his home so they could continue gold farming cooperatively, sharing whatever revenue they were able to earn: "Here we don't have employer or employee. If we can make money, we share it. If we can't, at least we are happy playing together."

It appears, then, that gold farmers involved in the production of virtual goods for North American gamers are no more exploited than millions of Asian workers involved in the production of material goods for North American consumers, perhaps even less so, because they enjoy their work so much that even at the end of a twelve-hour shift conducting repetitive tasks to earn gold, they spend their free-time playing games. As one (unidentified) interviewee puts it: "Sometimes after we finish the tasks of the day, we also want to enjoy the game a little. We want to play with foreign gamers, form groups, and take some quests together." What these workers wish more than all else is respect from North American gamers, and to be identified not as "Chinese farmers" but professional gamers. Surprisingly, according to some, game workshops provide a valuable community service, employing disenfranchised youth who would otherwise be gang members involved in nefarious activities: "Changmao was a member of a gang in a small town called Lishui. Some residents in Lishui say that the town feels a lot safer ever since the emergence of gold farms and there are less unemployed youngsters wondering around and looking for fights. He started working in a gold farm one year ago. Now he is persuading other gang members to join him to fight virtual enemies."⁵⁴

But employing low-cost, overseas labour is not restricted to MMORPGs. In 2006, for instance, the Illusion Factory, a special effects company based in Southern California, started outsourcing *SL* projects to highly skilled Vietnamese workers who create 3-D environments for a fraction of what it would cost to hire U.S. workers.⁵⁵ But as with the Chinese gold farmers, the question of whether these Vietnamese workers are being exploited is not easily resolved. For instance, one designer, who suggests his salary of US\$1,000 per month is average among his

colleagues, notes that this is a lot of money in Vietnam, since \$300 per month is considered a good salary, and although he works an average of twelve hours per day, he professes to love his work. It may appear, certainly, that these Vietnamese workers are being exploited because they earn much less than their U.S. counterparts, but the Illusion Factory argues otherwise, insisting its motives to hire overseas workers were first humanitarian and developmental—an opportunity for the developed world to contribute to the less developed—and that lower labour costs are a fortuitous by-product.⁵⁶

Clearly Chinese gold farmers and Vietnamese designers view themselves as profiting from the virtual fruits of their very real labour. In an ideal situation, these professional gamers and designers would work fewer hours and be better recompensed, but the same can be said of millions of other workers worldwide. One can argue that workers in the South are being exploited by employers in the North, but classical Marxism long warned of this predicament: labour's struggle must be international, not national, because national gains will always be undermined by capital's flow to nations who do not share in those gains. Until North American labour establishes fair pay and working conditions in all North American workplaces, and until those same conditions are established worldwide, capital will continue to seek workers who do not share those gains. In fact, this is exactly what happened with gold farming, which was a predominantly North American industry until overseas entrepreneurs entered the lucrative market.⁵⁷ In sum, there is nothing *inherently* exploitative about virtual world labour practices, and an analysis with labour as its central focus does not appear to move us beyond antithetical views on the subject. However, a labour-centred perspective does provide a richer analysis, because it allows us to include such questions as those raised by Ge Jin's documentary: "How big will this virtual economy become? Who owns the virtual properties in the game worlds? What will IRS say about your income from virtual trades? Can we tell the virtual from the real after all? How do we distinguish work from play?"⁵⁸

But if a central focus on exploited labour cannot move us beyond the seeming deadlock on the subject, what kind of analysis might? Perhaps one that focuses not on excluded labour, but on exclusion per se, a perspective, it turns out, that virtual worlds are inherently suited to teaching. As we have seen, contrary to popular opinion, those who choose to participate in virtual environments are not solitary loners who are disengaged socially and politically, and, in fact, the proclivity

of gamers to protest opens the door to a perspective on virtual worlds that focuses not on what they include, but what they exclude.

Virtual World Protests

Entrance into any virtual world requires acceptance of the developer's End User License Agreement (EULA). EULAs are designed to protect the intellectual, copyright, patent, property, database, and all other rights of the developer and are densely written in a legalese few outside the legal profession understand; yet players must signify their agreement with EULAs every time they engage in play.⁵⁹ Developers exercise total control over EULAs, and although there is a movement toward defining a democratically-based process of establishing and amending EULAs,⁶⁰ a number of protests against developers who either fail to exercise power, or choose to do so arbitrarily, have been initiated. Linden Labs, for instance, initially hosted a free play/speech zone, the Outlands, within *SL* where weapons and violence were allowed, even encouraged. But this precipitated in-world protest and eventually close-quarter combat between pro and con Gulf War supporters, resulting in many "deaths" and significant property damage. As a result, Linden closed the Outlands. Soon after, in August 2003, protests against the *SL* in-world tax system resulted in members re-enacting the tax protest that precipitated America's break from English rule—tea crates and signs of protest were strewn across the virtual landscape. Linden, again, reconsidered its position.⁶¹

Such protests are not peculiar to *SL*, however. In July 2006, "what some are describing as 'the largest political protest gathering in a virtual world game ever' occurred within the Chinese Massively Multiplayer Game *Fantasy Westward Journey*." Chinese gamers protested the imprisonment of one player's avatar and the dissolution of his 700-player guild (The Alliance to Resist Japan) because of what the developers insisted was anti-Japanese sentiment. Subsequent actions by the developers resulted in a massive in-world protest: "almost 10,000 player/protestors on the first day. The 'Summer Palace' server group, where much of the protest occurred, was almost overwhelmed when 80,000 players joined the protest—a huge increase over the 20,000 users the server normally accommodated."⁶²

More recently, in September 2008, players of *Spore*, a much anticipated single/multiplayer hybrid game, began protesting against Electronic Arts' decision to embed Digital Rights Management (DRM) software into the game and to restrict

each purchasers to only three installations, in an effort to thwart piracy.⁶³ According to the *Financial Times*, irate gamers protested by awarding the game a single-star rating out of a possible five on Amazon.com (as of 22 June 2009, 2663 of 3227 reviews rate *Spore* one-star). Initially, Amazon and other online retailers began clearing the negative reviews, but Amazon repented and re-instated them after customer complaints. *Spore* players have also resorted to using the game itself to express their malcontent by designing creatures that express their ire: for example, “Donald Ronald Sop—Description: the Donald Ronald Sop, or DRM for short, is an incredibly stupid creature that should be wiped from the face of the earth,” “Space Police—Description: Ready to destroy consumers in all galaxies, 3 shots and you’re dead,” and “EA Sux—Description: Maxis rules, but EA Sux!”⁶⁴ Players are also protesting by downloading illegal copies of the game that bypass the draconian DRM and installation restrictions.⁶⁵ On 19 September 2008, Ars Technica reported that EA had relented, but wondered if it was too little too late; and five days later, Today.com reported that a class action lawsuit against EA had been launched in California.⁶⁶

Even though dystopian critics of the virtual often label those who participate in virtual worlds as socially and culturally disengaged, gamers continue to be involved in active protests, and not just against game developers, as player-initiated protests against political, corporate, and cultural opponents prove. In January 2007, the French *Front National*, the political party of Jean-Marie Le Pen, arrived in *SL* to establish a new virtual headquarters. Their arrival was immediately protested, initially with peaceful demonstrations of their presence, but later with violent opposition accompanied with gunfire and explosions. Within two weeks, the *Front National* had abandoned its new headquarters and vacated *SL*.⁶⁷ In November 2006, *SL* Residents voted to ban public relations and marketing firms from over four hundred islands because of “flack” publicity campaigns that identify retailers and corporations as being “the first” to offer services pioneered by *SL* Residents.⁶⁸ And in September 2007, a day-long protest organized by Italian workers against their employer, IBM, resulted in over 2000 protesters from thirty countries joining their campaign and IBM reinstating the lost benefits that triggered the protest.⁶⁹ As *The Economist* notes, “The Internet allows expressions of discontent to be aggregated, giving workers the opportunity to stage protests without actually going on strike.”⁷⁰

On 7 October 2008, Trade Unions staged an International Day of Action in *SL*. The day focused on rights at work, solidarity, and ending poverty and inequality.

On 20 February 2007, the *Second Life Herald* reported, “Protesters from a wide variety of groups converged on the Capitol Hill sim today to speak out against the proposed attacks on Iran. Word spread from one group to the next organically, and suddenly the sim went from completely unoccupied to full in less than fifteen minutes.”⁷¹ And finally, in July 2007, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and fashion designer Stella McCartney (daughter of Paul McCartney), invited Residents to join them at *SL*’s inaugural annual anti-fur protest.⁷² It would seem, then, that a significant number of gamers are far from socially and culturally disengaged. But to find analyses of virtual worlds that focus on the principle of exclusion per se, we have to turn to less orthodox protests that have emerged in *H3* and *WoW*.

Innovative Forms of Protest

In October 2007, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that Peter Ludlow, a then University of Toronto (now Northwestern University) philosophy professor and *SL* Resident (Urizenus Sklar), accused Linden Labs, and the developers of other virtual worlds, of behaving like Greek gods. In an interview with MIT Press⁷³, Ludlow states:

What you get in all of these games is a kind of Greek-god method of running the show. There’s no really set established policy, but they refuse to be completely hands off, too. So they reach in like Greek gods reaching down from Mount Olympus, and they dabble in stuff and screw around and get involved to bail out their friends.

No stranger to controversy, professor Ludlow, before joining *SL*, had been ejected from *The Sims Online* for expressing opinions not to the liking of Electronic Arts. It was, however, one such god-like decision from Blizzard Entertainment (BE) that resulted in an innovative and particularly striking “protest” to a change in *WoW*. In a beta of *WoW*, seemingly to BE’s dismay, gamers discovered it was possible for players from the two warring factions, Alliance and Horde, to communicate in “leetspeak”—a combination of ASCII letters and numbers initially devised by programmers to mask their programming comments from prying eyes, but later adopted by Bulletin Board System (BBS) users (typically known as hackers) to

defeat attempts (text filters) to censor their discussion of forbidden topics. BE's next update of *WoW* removed this possibility. In response, Tristan Pope, a student of theatre in New York, produced an in-world video, a "machinima," entitled "Not Just Another Love Story." Pope's protest was to demonstrate to BE that they can neither control the ways in which *WoW* is used nor restrict collaboration between Horde and Alliance players. The short video depicts a troll and human who fall in love and eventually engage in coitus, which Pope emulates with the same range of movements characters normally employ to engage in combat (fundamental avatar movements BE cannot remove). The video ends with members of Alliance and Horde in a vast dance extravaganza. Pope's protest does not involve a call for BE to allow members of warring factions to communicate, *but to demonstrate that the ways in which those who run the system envisage its use are always underdetermined and that those without power to implement system change can always subvert the proscribed use*. Pope's machinima ends with the statement: "You Can Take Away Our Leet, But You Can't Take Away the Love."⁷⁴

"Machinima," using the scenery and characters of virtual worlds to produce videos, began with the introduction of the first-person-shooter game, *Quake*. In fact, the first videos produced this way were called "Quake Movies." The Quake Movie "Diary of a Camper" is usually credited as being the first ever machinima production.⁷⁵ As virtual worlds proliferated and 3-D game engines progressed, so did the number and production quality of machinima. *Red vs. Blue: The Blood Gulch Chronicles* was introduced in 2003 as a parody of first-person-shooter games, militaristic living, and science fiction films—the series is now in its seventeenth chapter. Staged in *Halo*, produced by Rooster Teeth, and distributed via the Internet, *Red vs. Blue* proved immensely popular (20,000 downloads the first day) and is credited with firmly establishing machinima as a legitimate artistic genre.⁷⁶ But the aim is not to recount the history of machinima, but rather to set the stage for a particular machinima production that reveals how virtual worlds are particularly well suited to help gamers develop a perspective that focuses on exclusion.

Playing the System

This Spartan Life (*TSL*) is a machinima series created by Bong & Dern Productions, and produced and directed in *Halo* by Chris Burke.⁷⁷ Burke's character, Damian Lacedaemion, hosts a talk show in *Halo's* sparse, largely inhospitable environment and interviews guests with an interest in the innovative uses of virtual worlds. Both humorous and entertaining, the show features skits and tours of the *Halo* virtual environment, and a troupe of performers (The Solid Gold Elite Dancers) who use combat moves to perform choreographed "dances." Early shows were often interrupted by real *Halo* players, who inadvertently stumbled onto the "sound stage" and engaged the host and guest(s) in combat, requiring the interlopers to be dispatched before the show could proceed. The possibility of the sound stage being usurped eventually by a very skilled young gamer who could not be so easily dispatched was incorporated into later versions of the show with the appearance of "Mr. Poopy Doo Doo," no doubt an allusion to *Halo* prodigy, "Lil Poison," who started gaming at age two, played his first tournament at age four, and was signed to a professional contract at age eight!⁷⁸

In a special edition of *TSL*, Kurt Andersen, host of the weekly U.S. arts and culture radio show *Studio 360*, interviews Burke, who reveals his motivation for allowing the tables to be turned on *TSL*:

This is a great opportunity for us because we've always felt that online gaming is a really interesting development in communication that non-gamers might want to learn about. To put it in a little perspective, the game we're in now, *Halo 2*, has logged in cumulative hours on X-Box Live, over 10,000 years worth of games. All those people interacting in a virtual space for all those hours is creating a mighty dense chunk of popular culture that will impact the world at large in ways that we're just beginning to understand. These are some of the things we like to talk about on *This Spartan Life*.⁷⁹

Burke next explains to Andersen how he and his colleagues were able to devise the "virtual camera" they use to capture episodes of *TSL*: "In a first-person-shooter game like this, you always see the gun in front of you. But some resourceful gamers figured out a way to drop that gun, thereby giving them a clear view to record their game play, or comedy skits that they write, or in our case a talk show."

More to the point, however, relinquishing the weapon requires “no physical hacks of any kind; it’s literally just within the game play. It’s just a little bit of trickery that was not intended by the game designers,” so any gamer can record videos in the same manner. It is in multiplayer mode, Burke explains, that *Halo* offers the greatest opportunity for innovative uses: “It’s more like a big sandbox ...you can just go in there and do other stuff, talk, hang out, so it kind of becomes a social space, an online social space, which is a very interesting development for gaming.”

But it is Burke’s exchange with a *TSL* guest, McKenzie Wark, who teaches media and cultural studies at New York’s New School University, that offers a key for understanding the truly radical potential of virtual worlds. Wark, the author of several books on cultural studies, most recently *Gamer Theory*,⁸⁰ suggests the world has progressed through two stages of development (topical and topographical) and is entering a third (topological) stage wherein we will all become “gamers” performing in an imperfect “gamespace.”⁸¹ The topical refers to the fabric of the ancient world (“little spaces that are very, very imperfectly and tenuously connected”), the topographic to the industrial (“where railway and telegraph start to sort of thread it together”), and the topological to the emergent virtual world (“a sense in which every place and everything in it is connectible to everything else”).⁸² Wark’s primary interest is virtual worlds that presage the topological, virtual environments within which gamers can begin to “think through our culture, what it means to be in that kind of topological space.”⁸³

World as GameSpace

Wark, in fact, contends a sense of “world as gamespace” already exists and is evident in such laments as “work is a rat race,” “politics is a horse race,” and “the economy is a casino.” The problem, he maintains, is that although the world is becoming more game-like, the rules are not clear, and the odds are stacked in favour of the Enrons of the world, not the ordinary person—a state of affairs Wark attributes to the efforts of the military-entertainment complex. By comparison, he notes, “actual computer games, seem, you know, really a kind of blessed world. At least you know where you stand and that to me is one of the reasons that they might be so popular.” Wark, in fact, turns Plato’s metaphor of the cave on its head and argues that virtual worlds (the cave) are no longer the shadowy reflection of an ideal world that exists outside the cave, but the ideal to which an

increasingly algorithmic, but imperfectly implemented, world is aspiring. Consequently, Wark argues that virtual environments provide the best opportunity to explore and understand the increasingly topological world that is emerging. Contra Plato, Wark suggests: “the thing to do is not try to get out of the cave but stay in it to try to explore this world, this game world that we’re in, and try to see how that might be more true to the world outside of it than anything else.” Wark’s point is that “if the world outside is becoming more and more game-like, then this [the game world] is, in fact, the most real thing there is because it’s got almost perfect form of what it would be like to live in a world that’s been turned into one enormous gamespace.”⁸⁴

Increasingly, then, the world that confronts us is an emergent, totalizing gamespace hosted by a military-entertainment complex that aspires to the algorithmically governed perfection of a virtual world. Consequently, Plato’s idea of leaving the illusory world of the cave, the virtual, in pursuit of the ideal has to be turned on its head—the ideal to which the emergent gamespace aspires is now that of the algorithmically governed virtual world. What Wark proposes is that we all become gamers of the kind Bernard Suit, in *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*, describes as “triflers.”⁸⁵ According to Suit, triflers are one of three kinds of game players: 1) triflers, who play according to the rules but not the aim of the game; 2) cheats, who play according to the aim but do not follow the rules; and 3) spoilsports, who follow neither the rules nor the aim of the game. Trifling, for instance, is clearly what led to the discovery of machinima—disregarding the aim of a first-person-shooter game (*Quake*) but following its rules of movement and communication to discover alternative uses for the 3-D environment. A more popular gaming term is “glitching,” but a “glitcher” is more properly someone who exploits flaws or “glitches” in a game’s programming code to achieve something the programmers never intended. It is their ability to support trifling and glitching, however, that makes virtual worlds particularly well suited to teaching a form of analysis that focuses on exclusion—initially on aspects and uses of the game that were excluded from the developer’s intent, but later on the more general concept that *exclusion is the principle on which systematic integrity is founded*. A focus on exclusion *per se* facilitates the move beyond the binary stalemate of antithetical perspectives on virtual worlds, or any system for that matter. It is unfortunate that Wark chooses to forego a psychoanalytic reading of gamespace in *Gamer Theory* (“I have sworn off the strong brew of a psychoanalytic reading of gamespace”⁸⁶)

because the work of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan reveals the truly radical potential of exploring the unintended aspects and uses of virtual worlds.

The Virtual and the Real

In the opening of *TSL* Episode 2, Module 4, one of the characters, by way of introducing the guest, Marty O'Donnell, exclaims, "Closer my brothers and sisters, we Spartans and Elites only inhabit this universe. There are those beings who came before us and worked the void that was into the world that now is." The statement is a tongue-in-cheek reference to O'Donnell's status as a sound engineer with Bungie, *Halo's* developer, but it offers a key to Lacan's often-misunderstood notion of the Real:

We have the Real as the starting point, the basis, the foundation of the process of symbolization ... that is, the Real which in a sense *precedes* the symbolic order and is subsequently structured by it when it gets caught in its network," but "the Real is at the same time the product, remainder, leftover, scraps of this process of symbolization, the remnants, the excess which escapes symbolization and is as such produced by the symbolization itself.⁸⁷

Lacan's Real, then, is analogous to the mass of possibilities that constitute a virtual world (its millions of lines of programming code and intricately worded EULA—its Symbolic Order), *as well as* all the possibilities the process of symbolization (instituting the programming code and EULA) must exclude to maintain an appearance of integrity and consistency. The essential nature of any system, then, its "essence," is not a function of what it includes, but what it must *exclude* to maintain its appearance of integrity and consistency.⁸⁸ What that exclusion comprises, of course, remains a mystery, even to those who developed the system. So, analogous to the psychoanalyst who looks beyond the apparent integrity of her analysand's conscious mind for explanations of troublesome symptoms, one must look beyond the stated intent of programmers (glitching) and developers (trifling) to identify the radical potential of virtual worlds. This is why, as Wark suggests, gamers (all of us, in fact!) should be encouraged to explore the innards of virtual worlds and engage in glitching and trifling to expose the hidden price of their

professed consistency. Through practice of these principles in a virtual environment, gamers will come to understand the same practices can be generalized to all systems and will then be able to use their newfound knowledge in other contexts—to interrogate the systems of the non-virtual world. And if, as Wark suggests, the world system is moving closer and closer to an algorithmically governed, totalizing gamespace, such analytical skills will be crucial.

It would seem, then, that what we need to grasp the implications and consequences of virtual worlds fully is a Psychoanalytic Studies 1.0 perspective. That is not to suggest a psychoanalytic approach will provide definitive answers, for the point is that the answers remain to be found. And given that we are not dealing with an individual psyche, there is no single truth to discover, as in a clinical analysis, as each glitcher and trifler will be searching to unearth that which “liberates” her or him from the system’s totalizing logic—its Master Signifier.⁸⁹ What is most important, in fact, is not to teach a definitive answer (another Master Signifier) but *identification with the principle of exclusion* per se:

The duty of the critical intellectual—if, in today’s “postmodern” universe, this syntagm has any meaning left—is precisely to occupy all the time, even when the new order stabilizes itself and again renders invisible the hole as such, the place of this hole, i.e., to maintain a distance toward every reigning Master Signifier.⁹⁰

What is liberating about identifying with the exception to distance ourselves from the Master Signifier, Žižek explains, is that although we “are passively affected by pathological objects and motivations,” we who possess “the minimal power to accept (or reject) being affected in this way.” It is we, in fact, who possess the power to “retroactively determine the causes allowed to determine us, or, at least, the *mode* of this linear determination.” What we understand as freedom or liberty, then, is “inherently retroactive: at its most elementary, it is not simply a free act which, out of nowhere, starts a new causal link, but a retroactive act of endorsing which link/sequence of necessities will determine me.”⁹¹ Glitching and trifling, then, can reveal unanticipated possibilities that remain only to be acted upon to release their liberating potential, acts that break with present patterns, and in so doing redeem the past and reveal new possibilities. Glitching and trifling, in fact, may be the only “authentic,” truly innovative acts that remain open to us, acts that

we engage in within the parameters of the existing system but which serve, retroactively, to undermine the system's integrity. Žižek, in fact, argues that this "is the most succinct definition of what an authentic *act* is: in our ordinary activity, we effectively just follow the (virtual-fantasmatic) coordinates of our identity, while an act proper is the paradox of an actual move which (retroactively) changes the very virtual "transcendental" coordinates of its agent's being."⁹²

Glitching and trifling, of course, may not always result in the liberating effects of an act, since some of the alternative uses trifiers discover may well be consistent with the aim of the system, but the practice of *identifying with the exception*, with that which the system's apparent integrity secretes, is an important critical skill to practice, and has resulted in some spectacular virtual creations if not fundamental change.⁹³

Notes

1. "Maze War (also known as The Maze Game, Maze Wars, or simply Maze) was the first networked, 3D multi-user first person shooter game. Maze first brought us the concept of online players as eyeball 'avatars' chasing each other around in a maze)." DigiBarn Computer Museum. "The DigiBarn's Maze War 30 Year Retrospective," <http://www.digibarn.com/history/04-VCF7-MazeWar/index.html> (accessed 20 June 2009). Wikipedia currently lists 211 MMORPGs in existence. See Wikipedia, "List of Massively Multiple Online Role Playing Games," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_MMORPGs (accessed 20 June 2009).
2. Raph Koster, designer of *Star Wars Galaxies* and a leading figure of the gaming world, points out that although "the core systemic characteristics of virtual worlds include synchronous communication, spatial simulation, multiple simultaneous users, and use of publicly visible profiles (aka avatars)," their peripheral characteristics are expanding. Koster's point is that "virtual worlds are their own thing, and they have more in common with media than with message. They are more like television than like *I Love Lucy*. They are more like newspapers than like *The New York Times* or *The Weekly World News*. They have more in common with 16mm film than with *Casablanca* or *Fahrenheit 9/11*." Raph Koster. Raph Koster's Website. "Categories of Virtual World," 2 October 2007, <http://www.raphkoster.com/2007/10/02/categories-of-virtual-world/> (accessed 20 June 2009).
3. The term, military-entertainment complex, made its first media appearance in 1994: "Hollywood wants to get into multi-media, even if few there understand what it is. Computers can deliver interactivity not possible before. The main moves so far have been towards new graphically-sophisticated computer games and Location Based

Entertainment (LBES). These were important at this year's Siggraph computer graphics convention in Orlando, Florida. The process has been helped by Western military funding drying up with the end of the cold war. The switch of resources from battle-field simulations to theme park rides was described as the beginning of a new "military-entertainment complex." Bob Swain. "Specially Effective Fun," *The Guardian* (UK), (no section) 25 August 1994.

4. Miller argues that "Media Studies 1.0 is misleadingly functionalist on its effects and political-economy side, and Media Studies 2.0 is misleadingly conflictual on its active-audience side"; therefore, "to transcend these pitfalls, we need Media Studies 3.0": an analysis "animated by collective identity and power, by how human subjects are formed and how they experience cultural and social space." See Toby Miller, Chapter 1 of this volume, page 43).
5. Cf. Christian Renaud, "Mass Extinctions and the New Math," CISCO Virtual Worlds: Networked Virtual Environments and Virtual Worlds, 1 October 2007, http://blogs.cisco.com/virtualworlds/comments/mass_extinctions_and_the_new_math/ (accessed 20 June 2009); and Raph Koster's Website, "Categories of Virtual Worlds," 2 October 2007, <http://www.raphkoster.com/2007/10/02/categories-of-virtual-world/> (accessed 20 June 2009).
6. No longer a niche market, global revenues from gaming have surpassed those of the movie and music industry: "Worldwide, the game industry in 2007 was about \$41.9 billion. This number is expected to grow 9.1 percent annually to \$48.9 in 2011 and \$68 billion in 2012, making it the fastest-growing component of the media sector worldwide. ...According to *NPD Sales* data, the United States video game industry grew 43 percent to a "record-shattering" \$17.9 billion in 2007 plus \$910.7 million in PC game sales. 2008 is expected to see a large increase in sales to around \$24 billion. Since 2005's record \$10.5B to 2008's expect \$24B, the industry has seen remarkable growth of 150 percent in just 4 years. ...It surpassed the U.S. movie and music industry in 2005 and 2007 respectively. In the 2008, the UK industry blew past the music industry and is expected to top DVD sales in the near future." WikiGaming, Video Game Industry. http://vgsales.wikia.com/wiki/Video_game_industry#Worldwide_game_industry (accessed 20 June 2009). (*NPD's* 11 June 2009 statistics, however, reveal industry sales in the U.S. are down 23 percent to \$863 million in May 2009 compared to \$1.12 billion in May 2008, undoubtedly attributable to the global recession).
7. See Brendan Sinclair, "MS: 17.7 Million 360s Sold," GameSpot, 3 January 2008, <http://www.gamespot.com/news/6184291.html>; James Brightman, "Estimate: Halo Sells 2.34 Million Units on Day One," GameDaily, 28 September 2007, <http://www.gamedaily.com/articles/features/estimate-halo-3-sells-234-million-units-on-day-one/70978/?biz=1>; Emma Boyes, "Halo 3 Scores \$300 million in first-week sales," GameSpot, 4 October 2007, <http://www.gamespot.com/news/6180380.html?sid=6180380> (accessed 20 June 2009).

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South Park, Episode 147, "Make Love, not Warcraft," first broadcast 4 October 2006 by The Comedy Network. Directed by Trey Parker; written by Trey Parker and Matt Stone.
The Office, Episode 31, "The Coup," first broadcast 5 October 2006 by NBC. Directed by Greg Daniels; written by Paul Lieberstein.
Law and Order: Special Victims' Unit, Episode 902, "Avatar," first broadcast 2 October 2007 by NBC. Directed by David Platt; written by Jonathan Greene.
CSI: New York, Episode 76, "Down the Rabbit Hole," first broadcast 24 October 2007, by CBS. Directed by Christine Moore; written by Peter M. Lenkov and Sam Humphrey.
CSI: New York, Episode 86, "DOA for a Day," first broadcast 2 April 2008 by CBS. Directed by Christine Moore; written by Peter M. Lenkov and John Dove.
The Office, Episode 56, "Local Ad," first broadcast 25 October 2007 by NBC. Directed by Jason Reitman; written by B.J. Novak.
Numb3rs, Episode 407, "Primacy," first aired 9 November 2007 by CBS. Directed by Chris Hartwill; written by Julie Hebert.
15. *The Matrix* (1999), *The Matrix Reloaded* (May 2003), *The Matrix Revolutions* (November 2003). Directed and written by Larry and Andy Wachowski.

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of Michigan who's researching a book about online gaming, also runs a weblog, *alphavilleherald.com*, that covers *Sims Online* news. The weblog featured an interview with a man called "Evangeline" who claimed to run a brothel inside the game, one that featured simulated child prostitution. "My first thought was [*Electronic Arts*] might want to do something to clean up the game," said Ludlow. Instead, Ludlow was ejected from the game last month for publishing links to his weblog inside the game—a violation of the rules. "Justice Has Its Price in Sim World," *The Boston Globe*, Boston.com News, 14 January 2004, http://www.boston.com/news/globe/living/articles/2004/01/14/justice_has_its_price_in_sim_world/ (accessed 29 October 2008).

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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

DR. BART BEATY

*Faculty of Communication and Culture,
University of Calgary*

Bart Beaty is the author of *Fredric Wertham and the Critique of Mass Culture* (2005), *Unpopular Culture* (2006), and the co-author of *Canadian Television Today* (2006). He specializes in research on cultural value and the relationship between art and popular culture. Dr. Beaty is an internationally recognized arts journalist and the foremost comics scholar in North America. Dr. Beaty is a co-organizer and co-editor of *How Canadians Communicate III: Contexts of Popular Culture*.

DR. DEREK BRITON***Master of Arts—Integrated Studies, Athabasca University***

Derek Briton holds a Ph.D. in sociology of education, with particular interests in the intersections between psychoanalysis, education, and postmodern theory. His work on videogames is an exploration on online community development and popular forms of learning and doing. Dr. Briton is a co-organizer and co-editor of *How Canadians Communicate III: Contexts of Popular Culture*.

HELEN CLARKE***Head of Collections Services at the University of Calgary Library.***

Helen Clarke has worked extensively with questions of value and assessment of library materials and the cultural impact of acquisition decisions.

DR. HEATHER DEVINE***Faculty of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary***

Heather Devine is the author of *The People Who Own Themselves*, which won the Harold Adam Innis Prize for best English-language book in the Social Sciences. She is the Coordinator of the Museum and Heritage Studies Program at the University of Calgary, and an Associate Curator for the Nickle Museum. Dr. Devine's work on Métis and Aboriginal cultures and museum practices has been published widely across the country.

DR. ZOË DRUICK***School of Communication, Simon Fraser University***

Zoë Druick is Associate Professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. Her books include *Projecting Canada: Documentary Film and Government Policy at the National Film Board* (2007), *Programming Reality: Perspectives on English-Canadian Television* (with Aspa Kotsopoulos, 2008), and a study of Allan King's film *A Married Couple* (1969) for University of Toronto Press (forthcoming). In addition, she has published articles in journals such as *Screen, Television and New Media, Canadian Journal of Communication, Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, and *Studies in Documentary*, as well as various anthologies. She has served on the executive of the Film Studies Association of Canada and currently sits on the organizing committee of Cinephemera, Symposium of Canadian Orphan Cinema.

DR. GLORIA FILAX*Equality Studies, Master of Arts—Integrated Studies, Athabasca University*

Gloria Filax specializes in youth studies, gender and sexuality, equality and social justice, critical pedagogy, and popular culture. She is the author of *Queer Youth in the Province of the Severely Normal* (2006). Dr. Filax is a co-organizer and co-editor of *How Canadians Communicate III: Contexts of Popular Culture*.

DR. E. DAVID GREGORY*Department of History & Humanities, Centre for Global & Social Analysis, Athabasca University*

David Gregory is a popular music scholar and folklorist. He is the author of three books: *Athabasca Landing: An Illustrated History*, *The Athabasca Ryga*, and *Victorian Songhunters: The Recovery and Editing of English Vernacular Ballads and Folk Lyrics, 1820-1883*. He is a longstanding contributor and on-air personality for CKUA's first educational and public radio broadcaster.

DR. MICHELLE HELSTEIN*Department of Kinesiology, University of Lethbridge*

Michelle Helstein is a cultural studies scholar working in the field of sports and gender. She is the author of numerous articles on sports, popular culture, and gender roles. Her current research, for which she was awarded a SSHRC Standard Research Grant, is on intersections between public funding and private sponsorship of sports and their impact on gender roles and stereotypes in sports marketing.

MARY HEMMINGS*Assistant Director, Law Library, University of Calgary*

An academic librarian since 1980, Mary Hemmings has worked at Concordia University and McGill University before coming to the University of Calgary. She is author of a book chapter on the role of women in pulp fiction, and is a co-author of a chapter on libraries and popular culture. She has taught courses in Fundamental Legal Skills and Advanced Legal Skills and is currently working towards an LLM, specializing in legal theory and history, at Queen Mary College, University of London. Her research interests include interdisciplinary approaches to law and society.

DR. PATRICIA HUGHES-FULLER

*Centre for Work and Community Studies, Master of Arts—
Integrated Studies, Athabasca University*

Patricia Hughes-Fuller is Assistant Professor in the Centre for Integrated Studies and the Centre for Work and Community Studies. She has been employed by Athabasca University in various capacities since 2000. Her area of specialization is cultural studies and her research interests include the politics of popular and media culture, literary and social theory, and adult and labour education.

DR. ANDRÉ LOISELLE

School for Studies in Art and Culture, Carleton University

André Loisel is a well-known scholar of Canadian film and theatre, with special interests in Quebec popular cinema. He is the author of three books: *Le cinéma de Michel Brault, à l'image d'une nation* (2005), *Stage-Bound: Feature Film Adaptations of Canadian and Québécois Drama* (2005), and *Scream From Silence/ Mourir à tue-tête* (2000), as well as editing and co-editing others. He is past President of the Film Studies Association of Canada.

DR. TOBY MILLER

Program in Film and Visual Culture, University of California, Riverside

Toby Miller is the author of over twenty books and an international leader in Cultural Studies. His research spans media, sport, labour, gender, race, citizenship, politics, and cultural policy via political economy, textual analysis, archival research, and ethnography. Dr. Miller has held academic positions in both Australia and the United States, and has had his work translated into Chinese, Japanese, Swedish, and Spanish. Dr. Miller holds a unique position at UC Riverside, across three departments and one program, with the intention of sustaining and developing a dynamic interdisciplinary research environment in media and culture.

DR. FRITS PANNEKOEK

Athabasca University

Frits Pannekoek is the President of Athabasca University and one of Canada's leading innovators in online education and digital learning. One of the founders of the How Canadians Communicate research group, Dr. Pannekoek has co-edited

and contributed articles to the previous volumes. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the intersections between Alberta heritage and digital culture, and a member of the Alberta SuperNet Research Alliance. He is the Senior Editor of the Alberta Heritage Digitization Project.

DR. JOHANNE SLOAN

Department of Art History, Concordia University

Johanne Sloan is a scholar and curator specializing in contemporary art practices in Canada. Since 2000, she has been involved in a collaborative, interdisciplinary research project, "The Culture of Cities," contributing research related to public art and utopian interventions in the city. Dr. Sloan's current project, for which she was awarded a SSHRC standard research grant, is entitled "Visual Art and Popular Culture in Canada 1967-1992."

DR. WILL STRAW

Department of Art History and Communication, McGill University

Will Straw is currently Principal Investigator on a research team studying "Media and Urban Life in Montreal," funded by the Government of Quebec. With Douglas Tallack, Dr. Straw is the co-editor of *Global Cities/Local Sites* (Melbourne University Publishing/Universitas 21, 2009.) He is the author of *Cyanide and Sin: Visualizing Crime in 50s America* (2006), and of over 80 articles on cinema, music, and urban culture.

DR. REBECCA SULLIVAN

Faculty of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary

Rebecca Sullivan is the author of *Visual Habits: Nuns, Feminism and American Postwar Popular Culture* (2005) and the co-author of *Canadian Television Today* (2006) and *Becoming Biosubjects* (forthcoming). Her work centres on sexuality, popular culture, and social discourses of identity and citizenship. She is currently the President of the Canadian Communication Association. Dr. Sullivan is a co-organizer and co-editor of *How Canadians Communicate III: Contexts of Popular Culture*.

DR. DAVID TARAS*Faculty of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary*

Dr. David Taras is a University Professor of The University of Calgary and the Executive Director of the Alberta Global Forum. He is a co-founder of the How Canadians Communicate collective. Dr. Taras is the author and editor of over a dozen books and an internationally recognized expert on Canadian political media.

DR. SERRA TINIC*Department of Sociology, University of Alberta*

Serra Tinic is a media studies scholar and an internationally regarded expert on Canadian television. She is the author of *On Location: Canada's Television Industry in a Global Market* (2005). Her current project is on the global cultural economy for Canadian television, for which she received a SSHRC standard research grant. Dr. Tinic is an active member of both the Canadian Association for Cultural Studies and the Canadian Communication Association.

DR. IRA WAGMAN*School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University*

Ira Wagman has performed research on a range of topics covering media history, cultural policy, and the history of communication studies, with a particular emphasis on Canada. He is currently at work on a history of Canadian audiovisual policy, a comparative study of Facebook in different national contexts, and a historical project on the use of television at UNESCO in the immediate post-war era.

