

INTRODUCTION

Contexts of Popular Culture

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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 privileged large media conglomerates over individual media users. 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 updating federal tax

codes, was a provision that film and television productions that contained content “contrary to public policy” would have their public funding withheld. Since so little film and television production takes place in Canada 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, and a controversial 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 pitted ideologies, regions (The 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 impossible to make claims about a unified Canadian culture. Yet, at the same time, these controversies 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, we are increasingly presented with an 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 have blurred the boundaries between art, media, and culture, making it increasingly difficult for stakeholders 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 media specificity (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. One contemporary response to this pessimistic attitude is the more egalitarian notion of the cultural omnivore. As Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. 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 investigation 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 become 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. The key question is not whether a particular text can be counted as “popular” according to varying criteria, but about the way that varying notions of the “popular”—economic, political, aesthetic—are enacted by different stakeholders, and to what ends. Our exploration in this volume begins from the 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 industrial practices, new media technologies, and government regulations. For this volume, we wanted to take that model further by considering the ways that 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. At the same time, 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.

Coterminous with this era of 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 chains. 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 arguments about 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 legitimation that 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 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 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 cultural expenditures 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 cultural sector, 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 their 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 do 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 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, Mary Hemmings, and Helen Clarke show how librarians and other memory professionals, once the very guardians 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 losing contemporary relevance. In his contribution to this volume, David Gregory alerts us to this fact and offers a warning about potential repercussions to a sense of national cultural identity. However, other contributors note that new cross-cultural formations are accelerating and embracing alternative forms of identity that can lay equal claim to national culture status. 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 2008 economic downturn 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 influential argument for the "creative class" in attracting all kinds of entrepreneurial talent to urban centres can be seen as influencing the thinking of 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. 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 who are, by implication, 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 his book *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism and Television in a Neoliberal Age*, 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 contem-

porary 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 long-term 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 traditional Quebecois cinema—realism and auteurism—Loiselle's reflection on the implications of a new emphasis 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.

David Gregory's analysis of Canadian folk music offers a provocative counterbalance to many of the arguments presented here. He offers a new reading of what he calls the Anglo-Canadian vernacular folksong, broadly defined as any song that has seeped deeply into the national cultural memory. Furthermore, he points to a longstanding and still vibrant tradition of songwriters and performers working in various folk idioms who deliberately appeal to a notion of "Canadianness," albeit defined in a multiplicity of ways. Whether this is a form of nostalgic longing itself or a politicized form of resistance to globalization and neoliberalism is an important consideration at a time when it can be all too easy to dismiss the idea of "national culture" as residual in and of itself.

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.²⁶ 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. Books such as *Slippery Pastimes*,²⁷ *Mondo Canuck*,²⁸ *PopCan*,²⁹ and *Canadian Cultural Poesis*³⁰ 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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3. Don Martin, "No Pride in Ablonczy Getting the Hook; Harper Gov't Shows it Still Doesn't Understand Basic Arts, Cultural Funding," *Edmonton Journal*, 10 July 2009, A18.
4. Theodor W. Adorno and Anson G. Rabinbach, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," *New German Critique* 6 (Autumn 1975): 12–19.
5. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Brooklyn: Verso Books, 1997): 120.
6. Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. Kern, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore," in *American Sociological Review* 61:5 (October 1996): 905.
7. Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium waged a long battle against Canada Customs for what they claimed were discriminatory practices against gay and lesbian erotica. In 2000, and again in 2002, Little Sisters went before the Supreme Court of Canada and won partial victories. However, by 2007, they had run out of money and the Supreme Court of Canada ruled they were ineligible for legal subsidies. See Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium v. Canada (Minister of Justice): [2000] 2 S.C.R. 1120; and Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium v. Canada (Commissioner of Customs and Revenue): [2007] 1 S.C.R. 38, 2007 SCC 2.
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