19. CNN "World Report" (1987): Global satellite newscasts begin.

18. Palestinian Intifada (1987): War by children and bare hands.

17. "The '80s Are Over: Greed Goes Out of Style," *Newsweek* (Jan. 4, 1988): Citing "signs of increased altruism," the decade is declared dead over two years early.

16. Ellen Bass and Laura Davis's *The Courage to Heal* (1988): The recovered-memory movement rekindles the child sexual abuse issue.

15. Japanese purchases alarm Americans (e.g., Westin Hotel Co. by Aoki Corp., 1988; Columbia Pictures Entertainment by Sony Corp.,1989; Rockefeller Center by Mitsubishi Group, 1989).

14. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Canada and the United States (1988): Corporations abhor a boundary.

13. Seattle University sociologist David McCloskey publishes his map of "Cascadia," made of Western Canada and the Pacific Northwest (1988): FTA and Quebec separatism generate other ideas about redrawing borders.

12. "The postwar-era is over."—Cold warrior Franz-Josef Strauss, in 1988.

11. Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie for *The Satanic Verses* (Feb. 14, 1989): If he'd known what would happen, Rushdie later says, he'd have written a more critical book.

10. "Virtual reality" coined by Jaron Lanier (1989): A growing desire for simulated experience.

9. Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* is blow-torched and removed from Federal Plaza, New York (Mar. 15, 1989): The day Modern Art officially ended.

8. Beverly Hills bond broker Michael Milken indicted (Mar. 29, 1989): The feeding frenzy of junk bonds, hostile takeovers, and insider trading begins to wind down.

7. American Savings & Loans scandal (1989): It caps unprecedented graft of the '80s.

6. Carol J. Adams's 1989 paper eventually published as *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990): It calls for all feminists to become vegetarians.

5. Student occupation of Tiananmen Square, Beijing, violently suppressed by Peoples' Liberation Army (June 4, 1989): China is changing, but slowly and reluctantly.

4. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (summer 1989): "We are, certainly since Nietzsche and Spengler, 'terminalists.'"—George Steiner, writing in 1972.

3. Terror spreads from Reston, Virginia, near Washington, D.C., when Ebola Zaire begins to kill monkeys in a lab (1989): It presages an era of mounting fear over uncontrollable viruses.

2. Accepting defeat, the Red Army retreats from Afghanistan (1989): The Soviet empire starts to unravel.

1. State Communism in most of Eastern Europe begins to disintegrate, symbolized by the opening of the Berlin Wall (Nov. 9, 1989).

P.S. When will the Post-Postmodern era end? Presumably when the generation after the so-called "generation X" comes of age: those born between 1980 and 2000 will turn twenty from 2000 onward.

"When Does Postmodernism Begin?"—the prequel to this article—appeared in Border/Lines *31.*

CULTURE-SLASH-NATION

CULTURE ~~SLASH~~ NATION

CULTURE ~~SLASH~~ NATION

Introduction
Cheryl Sourkes, Lorraine Johnson

Culture ~~Slash~~ Nation Speaks
(excerpted from *Towards a Definition of the Cultural Producer*, a video by Cheryl Simon and Fred McSherry)

Lisa Henderson, Gerald Alfred,
Charles Acland, Jody Berland

Writing On The Wall
Barbara Godard

Politics After Nationalism, Culture after Culture
Jody Berland

Controlled Environments
Andrew J. Paterson

Visuals
John Marriott
Robin Collyer
Andrew J. Paterson
Laurel Woodcock
Dianna Frid
Gilbert Boyer
Kathryn Walter

Cover
(front) Laurel Woodcock, "bleuria," 1993
(back) Kathryn Walter, "Whitewash," 1995

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Editor, Stanley Fogel

CULTURE ~~SLASH~~ NATION: INTRODUCTION

This insert represents the written components of an exhibition Culture ~~Slash~~ Nation, on view at Gallery TPW in Toronto from October 21 to November 25, 1995.

~~SLASH.~~

to cut with a sweeping motion
to cut slits to expose the material beneath
to lash with a whip
to criticize severely
to reduce in a drastic manner

Culture ~~Slash~~ Nation is a response to the national and provincial policies that are reducing the frame of choice and limiting discourse about how we constitute ourselves as a nation. Specifically, we ask the question, if you squeeze the culture of the nation, if you slash cultural policies and institutions that have collectively defined that nation (and "administered" culture, with all the problems that suggests), what's left for the nation to know itself by?

Today, the frame feels not only shrunken, but mutilated. It seems that the language of commerce has co-opted any discussion of how we define ourselves as a nation. So, not surprising, the artists in Culture ~~Slash~~ Nation have turned to <u>texts</u> for expression of their frustration: from Robin Collyer's erasure of public text from the landscape of vision, to Kathryn Walter's performative narrative of "whitewashing" public space, to Andrew J. Paterson's video interrogations of language and subtexts of arts funding, to Cheryl Simon's and Fred McSherry's video explorations of how artists and cultural theorists speak about culture and nationhood, to Katherine Knight's and Garry Conway's reinsertion of the artist's voice into the cultural policy debate through oral texts found in the CBC radio archives, to Jody Berland's and Barbara Godard's critical investigations of how culture is constituted, instituted and suffocated through public policies.

Is the slashed frame fatally damaging public space, the space of collective invention? And how do we, as artists, critics and/or activists fight for culture as a public resource? In the current slashing/cutting/lashing/criticizing/reducing, just what material is exposed beneath...and beneath <u>what?</u>

Co-curators,
Cheryl Sourkes and Lorraine Johnson

CULTURE ~~SLASH~~ NATION speaks

<u>What follows are responses to slight variations on the question: Given the establishment of multi-national economic trading blocks such as the European Economic Community and the North American Free Trade Agreement, is the concept of a nation state or a national culture still functional? Is the idea of nation outdated?</u>

~~Lisa Henderson~~

There is something very luxurious about dismissing the idea of nation when you are, indeed, a powerful one... It reminds me of the language of postmodern discourse where a great deal has been made about the decentering of the subject and the loss of subjectivity... On the one hand I accept that postmodern inflected logic. On the other I've been very struck by how some of the theorizing about the decentred subject has come from people who, historically, are quite accustomed to being the centre of subjectivity... While this is a distant analogy the problems it points to are equally those of this discourse around the nation. Only with the privilege of global supremacy does one just dismiss with the idea of the nation state as the basis of any kind of policy making... But within that discourse of the nation I would guard against nationalism coming to mean anything pure or essential in ways that refuse the sovereignty of groups within the nation who exist sometimes in resistance to the nation... That's always the tension within the concept of "nationness."

~~Gerald Alfred~~

In the context of native/white relations in the past and present, nationalism has been the feature of the white perspective. [Canada] has a European style parliament... a charter of rights and freedoms which protects individual rights predominantly over group rights. All of the laws and different attitudes embedded in the Canadian system are white European values. And it is that [form of] nationalism that is reflected in the structure of Canada. I agree with the observation that the nation state, the myth or the fundamentally wrong belief that the state represented nations or the plurality of nations in Canada, has broken down and [I think] that is a good thing. Canada has never been a hospitable place for us. The more it breaks down and the more sensitive Canadians become to the fact that there are nations with competing sets of values and different cultures, the better because that opens up an opportunity to have ours respected.

~~Charles Acland~~

It is a very bleak situation and we are talking about a situation in which the possibility of even talking about the Canadian nation is an impossibility. I'm not suggesting the need to retain some kind of boosteristic patriotism. That's not what's involved. We're talking about the loss of a space in which we can talk critically about our place. Not ours in the sense of Canada but ours being the people around my neighbourhood and the people who happen to live in the city or province next door. That's part of a loss. I think one of the places for us to start is [with the] development of that discourse. To ask how we can talk about a strategic, contingent notion of national cultural life. This isn't to say that I haven't become increasingly suspicious about the concept of national culture. I think that maybe in fact it has outlived its usefulness as a site of cultural specificity. Rather, we need to talk about other things: the culture of a city, a town and its connection to a national and an international environment.

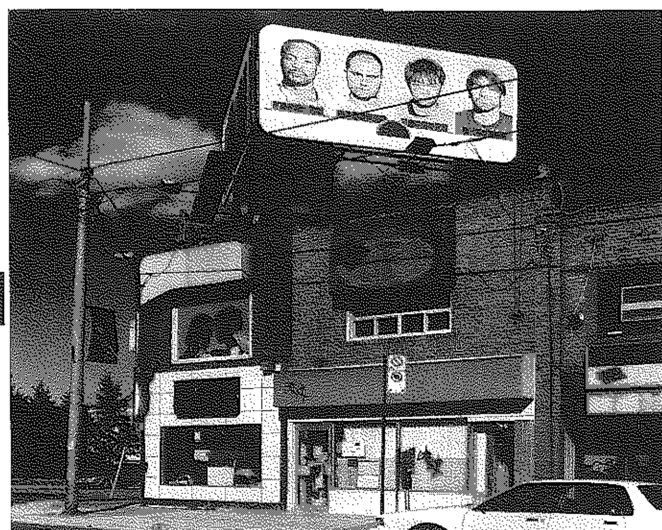
~~Jody Berland~~

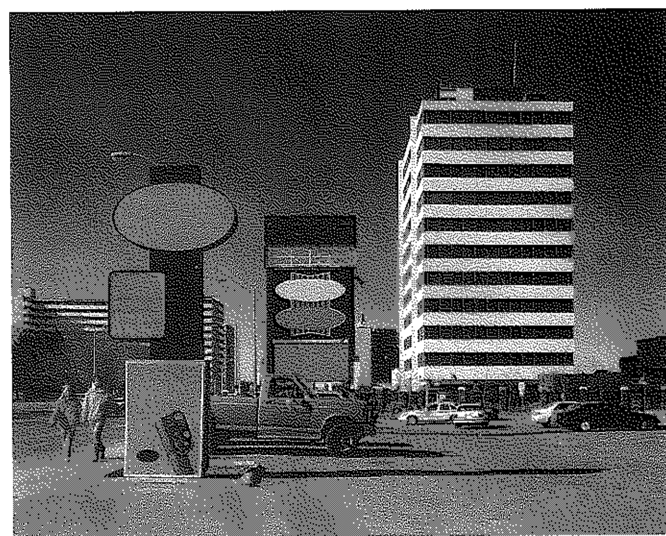
As soon as you start to define [the nation] according to modernist concepts, it's already outdated. Nations are supposed to be entities that share language, history, religion, tradition as well as boundaries. It's never just a matter of territories. When you introduce this definition to the Canadian situation, it seems outdated, and the nation appears an outdated concept. But in other senses it's not. It is still, however ineffectually, the sphere where political decisions are made and where people seek to intervene in the politics of those decisions. The swing to the right presents us with a crude choice about whether decisions are going to be made in the domain of the nation state or in the domain of the market, the corporation. Right now the state is still potentially more accountable than the corporation; until we have another space of opposition, we still look to the state as the place where we are or are not effective in meeting our needs—whether or not we have or want a national culture as traditionally defined. In this sense it is not an outdated concept. So it's outdated in some ways, but in other ways we're stuck with it.

Excerpted from Towards a Definition of the Cultural Producer, a video by Cheryl Simon and Fred McSherry.

writing on the wall

by Barbara Godard





Robin Collyer

Clockwise: "Yonge Street, Willowdale,"1994; "Election Signs," "Yonge Street, Willowdale," 1995.

Is there a crisis in the arts as the hint of violence in "Culture Slash Nation" implies? S/lash. Sl/ash. Am I writing a prophesy of doom? Or, graffiti on the wall? The sense of crisis has been instilled by a succession of newspaper headings announcing changes in the funding of the arts. Each day brings a new bulletin from the front: "CBC Under the Knife"; "Budget Cuts to Grants Will Force Shutdowns, Book Publishers Say"; "Metro Cuts Arts Grants by $345,000."; "Arts Voices Petition PM to Rescue Harbourfront"; "Telefilm Shuts Foreign Offices."

Such amputations of public policies and institutions in Ontario especially have been made tyrannically by cabinet fiat, with lightning speed and no consultation or public debate. More massive changes in social organization are still to come. "Arts groups fear the sky is falling," announces another article mooting the abolition of the Ontario Arts Council. How should artists, among the poorest members of Ontario society with average incomes of $14 - 15,000 for most arts occupations, with visual artists at the lower end with $8,800, expect to be spared in what is increasingly evident as class warfare between haves and have-nots waged with new tactics and ferocity? The vulnerable are being scapegoated for problems inherent in the economic system as the wrath of the middle-class in an age of downward mobility is vented on the marginalized, the poor. Indeed, it is precisely their poverty which makes artists targets of a rhetoric of marketplace success (exchange) as a criterion of value. Art, knowledge, health—nothing can be allowed to interfere with the bottom line! Advancing arguments of economic necessity in myths of massive government indebtedness is an attempt thus to legitimize cutbacks in metaphors of "good housekeeping." This ignores the historical causes in government policy changes which have produced new patterns of public debt. The advantaged are also intervening in discursive practices with a new inflection of the term "interest group" to delegitimize collective struggles for equality and stifle public debate in what is a radical restructuring of economic and social policies underway in Canada.

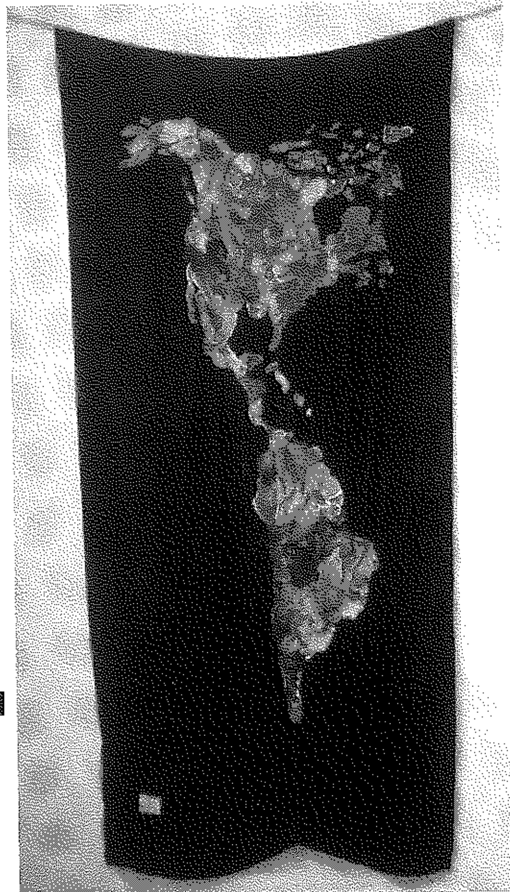
Political struggle is organized through signs with the mass media being one of the institutional sites for this contestation. "Public interest" is one semantic configuration currently undergoing such resignification. A recent column in the *Financial Post* by Michael Walker, head of the right-wing Fraser Institute, titled "Disarming special interests is key to re-engineering Ontario economy," exposed the neo-conservative strategy. Neither business groups nor bond-rating agencies, both of which have vested interests in government policy, are considered "special interests" by Walker. No concern is expressed over the $4.8 million in government support of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce last year in addition to the tax-exempt status of its membership dues, while grants of $250,000, to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women generated protest. The Canada Council has been a favourite target of attacks by conservative groups such as the National Citizens' Coalition that culture is just an expensive "special interest" the overburdened taxpayer should be spared. The label's effect in diminishing the force of claims to "public interest," a "civil society" or a collective project of society must be understood as a strategy in a discursive struggle around "interest" to position one group as speaking subject and relegate others to silence, so naturalizing a shift in relations within the social contract.

It is not my purpose to analyze cutback data but to isolate some of the episodes in a narrative that is fostering my unease. Both its repetitiveness and its generalization are disconcerting, for incident after incident involves the same two actants: state financiers and artists in fixed positions of subject and object. These tales signify a break, a

Gilbert Boyer

"Les Règles Que Je Ne Réussisais Pas À Lire" ("The Rules Which I Was Unable To Read") 1995. Photo by André Clément

Dianna Frid



"America is Shrinking," 1991.

shift in financial commitment that will transform the cultural industries in Canada. Of what magnitude? With what shifts in policy? What is being lost?

Never addressed explicitly in the newspapers are questions concerning the interrelationship of the threatened alliance, the signifiers "nation," "culture," and, I would add, "state." What are the implications of a rupture in this alliance? What "culture" is at stake here? Which "nation"? Among the many contradictions operative in the discourses of "culture" and "nation" in respect to government policies of support to the arts, those prominent since the nineteenth century engage the artist's heterogeneous role as "unacknowledged legislator" and as seer into a superior reality, as civilizer or dissident; this is where the reemphasis of "interest" around claims to the "public good" finds fertile terrain. Rather than reading the current situation within a rhetoric of crisis, as the news media would invite, I want to insist on the ongoing nature of this "crisis" for which there are many possible scenes of origin.

Within a set of perennial contradictions regarding arts policy in Canada there is nonetheless in the present conjuncture a certain shift in relations among the terms, epitomized in Susan Walker's Janus-like New Year's summation of the arts in 1994: "Ask not what your government can do *for* you, but what your government is doing *to* you" (*The Toronto Star*). What the shift in prepositions signals is a change in the role of the state in upholding and promoting a public concept of the common good, manifest in the establishment of arts councils, under the aegis of what Guy Laforest calls "procedural liberalism" with its privileging of individual rights, which has been reshaping the Canadian state since passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. There is an additional shift signalled in the ambiguity of Walker's title: "Professional arts nags had work cut out for them." "Arts nags" (descriptive or pejorative?) are organizations mediating the relations of artists and state, in this case the Ontario Arts Network, whose disappointment in the December initiative of the Canada Council's hastily planned consultation tour is noted by Walker. Michel Dupuy, Minister of Canadian Heritage, however, not Roch Carrier, head of the Canada Council, is the "Most Disappointing Man of the Year."

The artists' criticism of Carrier nonetheless highlights a difference from earlier moments when the Canada Council carried out "Soundings" with the arts communities in order to get feedback to enable it to perform more effectively its advocacy role with the federal government. Indeed, in another period of stress for the Council on its twentieth anniversary in the late seventies, when planned cuts following upon inflation, separation from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, as well as the real possibility of Quebec independence, curtailed the scope of Council action, Mavor Moore, its first Chair from the arts community, with the Advisory Arts Panel of Council, set up a "task force" from its members to formulate policies and initiatives for the renewal of Council's mandate to "energize" or "seed" artistic activity. This proactive stance was articulated in the twenty recommendations of *The Future of the Canada Council* which announced its difference with an introduction in the form of a concrete poem. Artists themselves formed the 1812 Committee, a common front to fight government cutbacks. Documenting the economic importance of the arts, this committee made the arts an election issue in 1979. Subsequently, the first conference of federal and provincial ministers of culture attempted to make their relations and policies more coherent. This scrutiny in turn resulted in the establishment of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (Applebaum-Hébert) whose report generated many counter position pieces from the Canadian Conference of the Arts, though little legislative action.

Presently, artists' support for the Council is lukewarm, squeezing it more tightly in its ambiguous "arms-length" position between arts communities and government. With per-capita spending on the Council at $3.40, the lowest in eight years, and anticipated cuts of 5% over the next four years pending the results of the Liberals' programme review, the

Council's panic is not surprising. The absence of any statement of policy principles or of a historical context for public funding of the arts in the "consultation workbook" sent to artists was disquieting in light of this critical negotiating role and the importance of such statements in previous government policy formulation. Such anxiety was justified by the subsequent decision following the federal budget to cut back funding to arts service organizations such as the Writers Union which formulate principles and open a discursive space for the arts in the political realm.

What may be forgotten, in current dissatisfaction with the Canada Council, is how it has radically transformed the situation of the arts in Canada over nearly every dimension in the last forty years from the diversification of art forms to the dispersion of venues and variety of languages. Particularly notable is the redrawing of the boundaries between professional and amateur, most visible in the theatre where the exponential rise in small professional theatres and theatre companies, the proliferation of fringe festivals, has been accompanied by a decline in the amateur little theatre movement, so important in the fifties. This explosion in the numbers of artists (double the growth rate of the total work force in the last twenty years) is the sign of the phenomenal success of arts councils—and of a limitation. Yes, there are many and varied venues for art; the CBC is no longer the only steady employer for actors and musicians. Yes; the standards of training of artists and production values of performances have increased enormously, as artists have moved through the ranks of the small professional companies to the stages of the large commercial theatres: a Mirvishization more than a nationalization of theatre! Though the existence of the arts councils has legitimated participation in the arts, authorized the profession "artist," it has not significantly changed the economic status of artists who remain mostly part-time professionals.

Artists today aren't baseball stars with million dollar contracts. Most still have salaried jobs in addition to their status as self-employed artists. There are major distinctions among the arts in respect to funding, with the three performing arts receiving 42% of grants in Toronto in 1988, museums and galleries another 40%, with writing, film and the visual arts sharing the rest in decreasing proportion. This discrepancy results from self-employment by the last-named group. Labour intensive, art becomes increasingly expensive in an age of mechanization. Yet salaries (time) are more flexible expenses than rents or materials (goods) and make weaker claims to support. Artists are still subsidizing the rest of the community by making art or performing for relatively low pay. The myth that artists are a privileged elite has itself become a form of oppression, suggests Heather Robertson, a means of segregation which, like reservations for the First Nations, works to keep them "powerless and poor" and, consequently, less creative.

Robertson's own response to this impoverishment and lack of respect has been to challenge the Arts Councils' bureaucracy, drawing attention to the inverse pyramid of benefits from grants subsidizing the art collector's speculation. The administrator is the only one with the permanent job. This situation might be overcome, Robertson suggests, by more direct government intervention to subsidize the artist without the intermediary of the arms-length councils. However, the history of the Canada Council suggests that a populist move to democratize does not automatically nationalize. Greater funding with the introduction of government appropriations in 1965 produced closer scrutiny and parliamentary interference to censor grants on moral and political grounds. Moreover, the current system of subsidy might be seen as productive in a different way, that of constituting a cultural community, both the artistic community producing a cultural discourse and the informed and involved audience to sustain the intensification of arts activity since the fifties. It is the availability of this audience to support Canadian artists which has enabled them not only to pursue careers in Canada but to produce original works responsive to the contingent, the local. With changes in the economic basis of art came changes in its production. No longer dependent on the market place of the metropole, artists could create more freely for the Canadian public. It is this explosion of creative work by choreographers, composers, poets, painters, filmmakers, photographers, etc. in the last thirty years that has transformed the arts scene, made it a place of creative innovation rather than colonial repetition.

This came about in a society with a new social contract forging an alliance between nationalism and the welfare state following the Depression and WWII which, with many contradictions, nonetheless made a space for the arts within a humanistic discourse of balance and harmony and a nationalist discourse of self-knowledge. Now, forty years after the establishment of the Canada Council, another change is underway—a shock to European humanism which has been obliterated in an era of continentalism and Free Trade and their promotion of individual rights over any collective goals a society might set. There is no place for art as a public good to be protected by the state within the individualistic, neutral, egalitarian discourse of procedural liberalism which misrepresents its production of inequality through the apparent symmetrical operation of exchange value.

The complex orientation of the Canada Council might be read in terms of shifting institutional lines of accountability from Secretary of State to Minister of Communications, then Canadian Heritage. How far back in the past does one unravel its genealogy? To the 1941 Kingston Conference of the Arts where 150 artists from across the country gathered to denounce the federal government for its apathy in regards to the arts? To the 1944 March on Ottawa by 16 artists organizations—who formed the Canadian Arts Council in 1945 (changed to the Canadian Conference of the Arts in 1958)—to present a paper to the Turgeon Committee on reconstruction demanding $10 million for the arts from the federal purse? So many men had sacrificed their lives during the war. For what? The national independence they had fought for would be meaningless if Canadians did not have an established and distinctive culture. To the Massey Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Science, 1949-1951, whose report inventoried the underdeveloped state of

Canadian culture, the absence or neglect or threat to cultural institutions little able to withstand the pressure of American invasion on the airwaves, in magazines, films, and advertising? To the British Arts Council, founded in 1947 to make permanent the support to the arts which had been important morale boosters during the war effort, model of government arms-length intervention adopted by the Canadian government in response to the Massey Report? To the British tradition of government support to the arts which since the eighteenth century founding of the British Museum had tentatively entered a kind of international competition for national glory? In contrast, republican France, which had launched this competition for the state as patron of the arts to ennoble its new form of government in the international sphere, supported the arts directly through a ministry of culture. The network of traces surrounding the beginning of the Canada Council is dense.

It was none of these examples, petitions or reports, with their appeals to romantic nationalism, however, that prompted the enabling legislation from the federal government in 1957, but rather the death of two business tycoons, Dunn and Killam, whose succession duties were used to set up a $100 million endowment fund for the Canadian arts and university capital grants. Though the Massey Report framed the need for support in the strongest terms of national interest in face of an American cultural invasion, and theorized culture as the perfecting of the mind through the arts, letters and sciences—a theorization of culture as absolute to get around the problem of the division of powers and the provincial jurisdiction over education—this was not effective in securing government action until the estates were available. While the arms-length principle of peer adjudication was adopted from the British Arts Council for the regulation of aesthetic value, it was the model of the American private foundation established by robber barons to perfume their money that was adopted to finance the project. Representatives from the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations attended the Canada Council's official opening ceremonies. This endowment gave the Council freedom from state intervention in the early years, though not from criticism: "100 million for eggheads; six bucks for old-age pensions." However, the contradiction between the vast and expanding scope of its mandate—which included support of educational institutions and research funding for universities as well as responsibility for culture in the international arena in support of UNESCO initiatives—and its fixed budget in what was to become a period of rapid inflation, quickly exposed the contradictions of this partnership of the state and business. In 1965, with the institution of regular government appropriations, the Canada Council entered a period of rapid expansion coinciding with the massive spending on culture for the centenary of Confederation. The addition of the national and international mandate of the Canada Council complicates its delineation of culture in ways different from that of the provincial arts councils. Provincial responsibility for education complicates the relation of culture and personal development in the discourses of the Canada Council which was assigned the role of expanding intellectual resources and stimulating research. The decentralization of the federal system promoted a tendency to diffuse contradictions by separating them into national elitism (excellence) and regional populism (participation).

A number of such contradictions emerged in the address of its Chair, Brooke Claxton, at the opening ceremonies of the Canada Council (1957). Claxton is remembered as one of the leaders of the Canadian nationalism that emerged in the thirties. Though, in his first paragraph, he focuses on the past and Thomas D'Arcy McGee's vision of the role of art in nation-building as civilizing to unify—the "great new Northern nation" that will emerge if "every gleam of authorship" is fostered so as to "keep down dissension" and "cultivate that true catholicity of spirit which embraces all creeds, all classes, all races"—yet in his second paragraph he centres on the future: by 1980 it is forecast the GNP will be $74 billion, bringing problems both of "more leisure" and of "more complexity," which may be solved with "higher skills" and "more education," that is, technology. Claxton perspicaciously foresees a number of problems the council will face, of constant public criticism and bureaucratization. However, he minimizes the potential conflicts between the claims of artistic and scientific contributions to nation-building, with their opposed agendas of imaginative stimulation and social engineering. Indeed, the order in which he frames their relation is significant, beginning each time with the engineer and scientist before referring to the humanist and artist: "We have long felt that material things cannot alone make a great nation...we must hope to advance, too, on the spiritual front, advance in our artistic expression as a nation, advance so that we can 'lift ourselves to the level of our destinies.'" The destiny, nonetheless, is figured in material terms in metaphors of profit, as the "dividend" realized from "investment."

A potential clash arises in the contrasting vision of the co-chair, Père Georges-Henri Lévesque, who speaks of "cooperation," of "Truth, " and "Beauty" that will result from the "expansion of humanism in Canada" through the work of the Council. The material is introduced only within an ethic of concern in relation to the poverty from which artists "suffer," a state of privation that prevents them bringing forth beauty for the "delight of their fellow men." Is the Council a response to their great need? Or guarantor of their equitable share of the public purse? What is clear in Lévesque's formulation is the responsibility of the state to create a climate for creativity. Between beauty and profit, between art as an end in itself or art as the glory of the nation and the marketplace—this is the complex relation the Council is designed to mediate as a "powerhouse," its arms-length status providing the requisite checks and balances. The Council has generally been squeezed, but is now in a stranglehold between the competing claims of its various stakeholders. And the number of underemployed cultural workers has grown rather than decreased.

Analyzing the Applebaum-Hébert Report on Federal Cultural Policy as a response to this crisis of underemployment, Thelma McCormack outlined a number of distinct models of the relationship between culture and the state in broadcasting: market, welfare, and nationalist. The crisis in the arts councils has been perennial, I would suggest, because all three models have been in competition. The divergence among the contending objectives of profit, where value is determined by supply and demand through the exchange of works with *consumers*; of access, to reduce cultural inequity of regional, ethnic or linguistic varieties for *citizens*; of collective identity, to develop national awareness for *patriots* where it has been distorted by colonialism, is constitutive in the contradictory tropes of the documents I have been examining. McCormack introduces a post-nationalist model as a corrective, one that would consider artists an *occupational group* and apply principles of affirmative action to equalize disparities. This introduces the important issue of symbolic capital constituted by grants, a recognition of the social production of creativity by the regime of power. However, this valorization is compounded by the involvement of audiences in the process of distributing funds in a communication model of art as interactional process. This returns to a focus on audience, on consumption. Recognition of different relations to the symbolic would frame culture in the plural. In the absence of an articulated theory of difference, McCormack's fragmentation of "public" into "audience" works to undermine a concept of "public interest" or "common good," the understanding of artistic activity as an integral part of public life demanding an equitable share in the distribution of public funds. Such claims to public access, as opposed to "special interest," to a sense of the demands of the polity as more than an aggregate of individual preferences, are what is at stake in the present renegotiation of the social contract.

The end of a period in which "culture and state relationships were shaped by nationalism" did not come about in 1980 with the cultural policy recommendations of the Applebaum-Hébert Report as McCormack suggests, though this was a moment of acceleration of the process along with the 1982 promulgation of the Charter of Rights: the claims of the marketplace have shaped cultural policy at least since the 1950s along with those of equalizing regional disparity among citizens and of decolonizing the collective identity. The tension among them arises from the ideal of balance in the distribution of resources not being fully met with the abdication of business from "investment" in the arts, its weakening sense of the obligations of the polity, while imposing its concept of value as exchange as absolute. In the privileging of a single fiction or frame (monetary exchange) constituting the "real," there is a constriction of a kind of exploration that makes demands beyond the instrumental, beyond the individual, which has a repressive effect on diversity and dissent. The sense of collective belonging withers in a proliferation of metaphors of "cocooning" and "dispersed systems." A force of private interest threatening to overflow its limits and to dissolve the bonds of the state is what Hegel considers the most significant menace for civil society. An articulation of the limitations of practice to bring the habitual to a crisis through critique would reframe this as a political struggle over discourses about modes of social organization. The discourse of exchange value is only one potential fiction framing the real.

In the 1940s, it was the artists' articulation of the significance of the arts in the understanding of the polity that placed the arts on the public agenda. In what is an ongoing discursive struggle over "culture" and "interest," artists' political action as resistance around the specific claims of the arts is critical to inflect the reordering of the body politic. Under the techtonic pressures of the threat to the entire post-World War II contract of the Canadian people with the state regarding social and cultural practices, new coalitions must be forged with other groups to reassert the state's balancing distributive function. This is all the more crucial in that the Canada Council, in opting to preserve grants to individual artists and cut funding for arts service organizations, sites for the articulation of artists' political discourse, is preparing the terrain for an arts community dominated by a few heroic individuals rather than providing continued support for a depth and breadth of talent and the institutional forms which have translated artists' discourse from the symbolic to the political with the power to affect the world around it.

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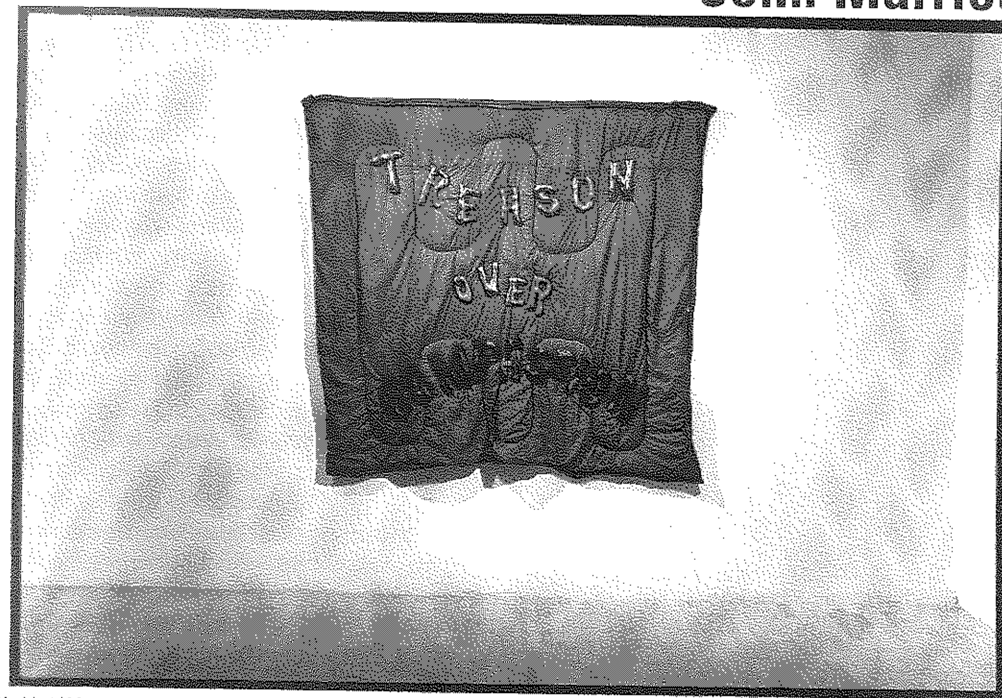
[POLITICS after NATIONALISM, CULTURE after CULTURE.]

by Jody Berland

One of the works exhibited in the Power Plant Gallery's recent "Beauty #2" show is a sleeping bag hung on the wall with the words "treason over compassion" stitched onto its surface. As the subtitle, "after Wieland," reminds us, John Marriott's work owes its genesis to a well-known earlier work by Joyce Wieland, whose 1968 quilt, bestitched with the words "Reason over Passion," slyly quoted Prime Minister Trudeau's summation of Liberal politics of the era. Wieland's earlier irony seems both poignant and quaint now, for the right-wing shows no evidence of reason or passion in its present transformation of Canadian society.

The newer work offers us a chilling reflection on our cultural history and our mean-and-meaner present in an exhibition whose curatorial coolness otherwise tends to a kind of sophomoric nihilism. Marriott's work refers to a time when Canadian artists, activists and intellectuals could associate justice and benign social values with national character, and project manifestations of nastiness outward beyond the national borders. Does that work any more? A lot of people are sleeping on our streets and there will be many more before the decade ends. The work evokes compassion in a tone that is cool, ironic, and reflexively historical. There's nothing comforting about this comforter, any more than if it were all that came between me and the night somewhere on a downtown street. Yet the new motto hit me at a visceral level —it evokes the antipathy and moral outrage we feel when we look at current attacks on public social and cultural policies that have always defined Canada as different. But — to what extent can we call on a special loyalty to Canada, i.e., nationalism, as an antidote to this treason? Were we to do so, what would we sound like?

English-Canadian nationhood and its sporadic eruptions into patriotism have never looked like the nationalisms I see described in newspapers or social or cultural theory. It doesn't matter whether such theory pursues a critical analysis of the nationalisms of an earlier era, or more contemporary issues informed by post-colonial theory. It also seems to make no difference whether the "nation" in question is posited as an imperial or as an anti-imperial entity. Either way, Canada never fits the pattern. This makes it frustrating trying to draw on such theory, for it sheds only partial light on the changing constellations of state/culture/nationhood which now confront us. The contrast does reveal one certitude, which is that the idiosyncrasies of Canada's national formation have been variously beneficial and disastrous for the evolution of cultural autonomies within its territorial borders. Perhaps a second certitude now follows, rather unhappily, from the first: that we have to learn new strategies and discourses if we wish to advance or even to maintain the public assets — cultural and otherwise — which were built in the last half a century.

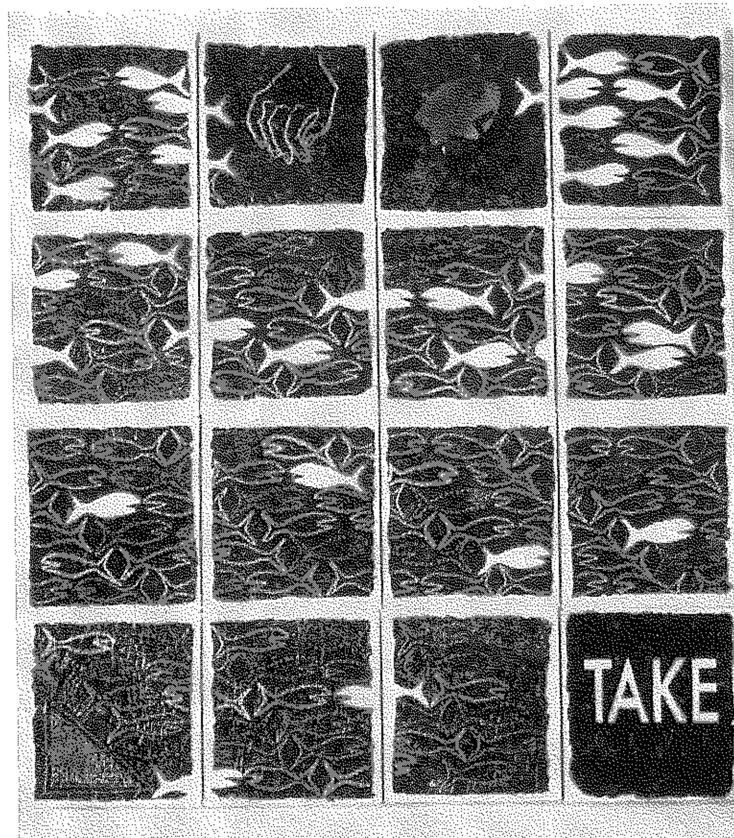


"Untitled (After Wieland)," 1995. From "Beauty #2," Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery. Photo by David Otterson

Canada's nationality is so peculiar and anomalous that one sometimes wonders how or why it does (or should) survive as a nation. It is hard to see any economic, cultural or topographic rationality to this identity, no matter how graphically illustrated are the history textbooks or how convincingly mundane are the debates that circle around the nation's capital. What do we have in common, after all? Not even language. We have no shared ancestors or genetic pool, no originary revolution myths, no common rituals for commemorating each others' births and deaths. The "natural" topography of economic flow is north-south, not east-west. Without a viable narrative or common symbolic culture (other than sometimes, maybe, perhaps hopefully, land and landscape) to legitimate the existence of this nation, why bother?

Nevertheless people intervening in public policy and cultural politics debates continue to speak as Canadians, i.e., to reconstruct a national(ist) discourse, which means not only taking a nationalist position on, say, cuts to film development funding, but also addressing the benefits, difficulties and necessities of speaking/producing Canadian culture. This discussion never reaches closure on a definition of what that is. In identifying oneself in terms of "Canada," one distinguishes oneself from the differently inferred positionings of British, European, or American voices, but each of these constructions evokes collectivity and cultural politics in a different way. Even if we wanted to we cannot situate ourselves as the-same-only-different in relation to Americans, for instance, by evoking a national identity. The sentence with the Canadian subject evokes and mobilizes too dubious and marginal a set of historical discourses to call it "identity" in any usual sense.

The sentence with the Canadian subject evokes rather a veritable catechism of national inventions: the CBC, the Massey Commission, bilingualism, multiculturalism, CRTC regulations, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, the Canada Council, the (ex-)Art Bank, community radio, public hearings, briefs and lobbies, government everywhere, probably subsidizing not only the speaker but also the very paper the words are printed on. The sentence with the Canadian subject thereby nominates the speaker as participant in and subject of a complex apparatus of agencies and institutions which for over half a century has sought to administer culture as part of the larger enterprise of defining the nation's borders. This attempt to constitute borders through the regulation of culture (and culture through the regulation of borders) is the endeavour American movie mogul Jack Valenti recently (*Toronto Star*, March 17, 1995) termed "an 'infection' sweeping the world." It's not clear who is the victim and who is the



Dianna Frid

"Pacific Cartography 1/Take," 1994

physician here. But we — Canadians that is —know Valenti's rhetoric better than anyone, since (is this a good moment for a touch of irony?) he so effectively lobbies Washington to denounce, penalize and criminalize Canada's association of culture with politics and values. All that is understood.

What cannot be spoken in the sentence with the Canadian subject is a claim to a coherent national identity with deep historical-cultural roots preceding such governmental endeavours. Unlike American, Irish, Polish or Quebecois citizens, no one recalls a strongly felt imperative to forge a collective destiny within the immanent form of a nation-state. This nation is a synthetic construction initiated by colonizers and designed by royal commissioners, lobbyists and civil servants. It is a pure colonial entity, produced by colonial powers and colonial practices. Canada exists because a state manufactured a nation, rather than the reverse. The process has met with limited success, presumably, in that few Canadians believe the nation-state can or should express any particular narrative of cultural identity; indeed we tend to attack government agents when they attempt to do so.

If Canada is a pure colonial product, then, it is, by the same token, intransigently IMpure. We are not the Irish against the British, blacks against white rule, Palestinians against Israelis, or Quebecois against Canada. Unlike many emergent colonies we are embarrassed by anything but the most subtle and ironic of patriotic gestures. We are only what we were "given," what we made, and what we took: land, trees, banks, railways and satellites, agencies and institutions, narratives and codes of citizenship cooked up from what was brought from various parts of the world. We neither sprang from nor produced a common culture, race, religion or language. As Kristeva puts it in *Nations without Nationalism*, we share a legal and political pact rather than a "spirit of the people."

This genesis is difficult enough, where nationalism is concerned, but the growing diffuseness of global power has also tended to prohibit the development of classic (anti-)colonial nationalism, if by this we mean a reconstructive mobilization of (pre-)colonial ethnicity, language, culture AGAINST external rule. Who or what nationalist discourses defend us from is comparatively diffuse.

There is no singular "us" here, but there is no singular "them" against whom we might gradually invent ourselves, either. We do not oppose ourselves to an external entity so much as to a system whose values and benefits "we" partly share. Perhaps that is why "we" always seem to capitulate, in the end. Canada's collusion with the imperial enemy doesn't take (so much) the form of self-hatred, racism or sectarianism, but appears rather as a kind of technological progressivism espoused on behalf of the national interest. Its rhetoric promises that pro-business economic policies, pro-consumer cultural policies and cutting-edge technological change will protect us from an otherwise ruthless history and draw us into a new pragmatic utopia of informed citizenry. What is born from this statist collusion is not the nationalism of "a people," but rather that of a technologically constituted cultural marketplace.

Now nationalism is an increasingly problematic mode of politics in any case, for reasons which are richly explored in many critical texts emerging from Anglo-American and postcolonial theory. In any case Canada's nationalism is as idiosyncratic as its nationhood discourses and dilemmas.

Historian Ramsay Clarke has suggested that culture is one of the few domains in which the Canadian government has been able to summon the political will to impose public policies even where these counter economic/continental interests. The astute reader will note not only that this agenda is disappearing from the public domain, but also that two different definitions of culture have been mobilized herein: the kind that one produces and writes about if given adequate time/funding, and the kind that one simply lives, for instance by eating donuts or (not) owning guns or activating one's beliefs about government through voting. But no one has convinced me (contemporary left and right skepticism notwithstanding) that they do not influence one another in the larger world. A "culture" which believes (rhetorically at least) in democratic access to all public rights and resources, including airwaves, and thus comes to privilege (if only fragmentarily) an "autonomous" non-market cultural economy as a public good, will produce different symbolic discourses from a "culture" which conceives democracy as adversarial competition, mandatory self-production and cultural pluralism; assigns culture, including the airwaves, to the "free flow" of an "open" market; and otherwise reserves the term "democracy" for when invading (through one means or another) a foreign country.

Culture became one of the principle domains in which nation-building emerged as a legitimate framework for social practice, not because there WAS "culture," as this term was understood in the nationalist paradigm, but because so many social actors believed there NEEDED to be culture to fill in the vacant spaces of the national social. Thus legislators and civil servants, artists and cultural communities, the trade union and women's movements, and the nationalist left built a political coalition around the imbrication of culture and nationhood, thereby forcing government to legislate into being a body of cultural institutions and assets to define and serve the Canadian public. The state policy of support for the arts was thus predicated on a rhetoric of national sovereignty and difference, while the state's claims to the governance of sovereign space were predicated on and legiti-

mated by its protection of culture, defined more and more metonymically in terms of select cultural spaces, from the free market. It's important to remember this genealogy when we consider how far government legitimation is being transferred, however subliminally, to the anti-territorial culture of business oligopoly. The indigenously Canadian response to this process surely begins with irony.

Of course the purposeful development of a "national culture," i.e., of state-national symbols capable of evoking loyalty from citizen subjects, is not unique to Canada. Indeed this process defined and legitimated the emergence of the modern industrial state throughout Europe and its colonies in the late 19th century. But certain features of this process, in combination, were unique to this country: the repetitive, indissoluble joining of culture, democracy, national sovereignty, and resistance to a "free" market economy, first advocated in Parliament by Conservative Prime Minister Bennett in the 1930s; the ability of this discourse to mobilize and incorporate a culture-producing community; the emergence of policies emphasing technological means of delivery (ultimately precipitating a practical reversal in the approach to democratic sovereignty, which has switched its focus from producers to consumers); a complex culture of (anti-)colonial politics; and the notable absence of a discourse predicating nationhood on uniformity in language, race, history, or culture in either the Germanic or modernist sense of that term.

What defines the prehistory of Canadian collective memory, then, is the transparency of governmentally driven processes of collective invention. Since 1929, massive public policy hearings involving various publics have preceded the establishment of public agencies dedicated to support for the arts, justified by the need for national cultivation and national defense. The genesis of Canada's arts and cultural policy was thus dominated by the attempt to create a bourgeois culture which could stand in for and play the role of a displaced national history. Certain limitations of this strategy became evident during Mulroney's reign, when "cultural industries" were exempted from an agreement that otherwise promised to eliminate anything in the economic or social realm that defined Canada as different; and when Mulroney himself advocated support for culture as a means to enlist the support of Canada's intellectuals and artists for free trade. But paradoxically this same project of cultural rationalization depended on a cultural community willing to fight for and to catalyze the spaces of that bourgeois culture for its own purposes. The artists' and writers' articulations of vision, location, value and difference helped to produce a symbolic space you could point to and call Canadian. Artists helped to give expression, affect, and material form (and sometimes, though rarely, profits) to the nation's claim to difference and autonomy.

But there is another paradox in this scenario The ongoing rationalization of culture and cultural policy which ensued helped to elevate and marginalize these discourses, building an edifice of elite culture separate from the larger culture(s) whose entertainments found no such protection. Today this already contradictory project of building a(n elite) national culture has crashed into the evolving, globalizing, middle-class-destroying and equally contradictory project of bourgeois economics. This confrontation implodes five decades of compromise between building a governable national culture and engineering a viable marketplace for cultural and other commodities. The tenuous infrastructure of collective cultural invention is collapsing.

The academic and artistic left, following Foucault and other theorists, has developed a sophisticated critique of the state as upholder of those same disciplinary powers displayed in war, and has learned to view all political (meta)narratives and institutions of social management in terms of a hegemonic dissemination of power. At issue here is not the accuracy of this theoretical stance—its emphasis on particularity and plurality has made a crucial intervention in cultural theory and politics —but rather its strategical adequacy to our political situation. First, globalization won't eliminate national governments, not in our lifetimes; what it does, rather, is gradually refunctionalize/disempower them, imposing changing expectations and possibilities in politics, economics and culture. Lyotard has observed that capitalism has no need to legitimate its spreading hegemony because it prescribes no obligations. Spending money is not an obligation, presumably, but a pleasure.

It is not the getting and spending of cash, though, that unites people; it is the actions of and contestations against governments that enable people to affirm and explore the "texture of many singularities" that Kristeva describes as the ideal nation. For Canadians this is not a new insight. But the "texture of many singularities" is newly endangered, however strongly we have come to feel its necessity as a mode of culture, a mode of life. Side by side with the increasing monopolization of cultural production, a brutal skepticism towards the legitimacy of government as repository for public interest marks "neo"conservative governments like the one just elected in Ontario. Their plan to dismantle and/or privatize our cultural bureaucracies will dispossess us of the historic achievements, values, rights and assets of our public culture. We are in danger of losing the instruments for building sovereign culture(s) that were bequeathed to us, with all their flaws, by our collective history. It is especially depressing to watch real social paradoxes being manipulated so brazenly by the right, which parades its antipathy to governmental traditions with the bravado of cowboys. Its unimpeded success will be disastrous from the vantage point of a democratic "culture" in any sense of the term, even if it was (among other things) the cumulative privileging and rationalization of culture which enabled this ghastly regression. For culture is still "managed" in the reign of globalizing economics. The spaces of culture produced and then vacated by the public domain are being remobilized to produce very different kinds of symbolic order and affective desire. I will give three examples of this trend and conclude with some thoughts about their implications.

In the late 1960s, the era of George Grant's *Lament for a Nation*, Trudeau's "reason over passion," Expo 67, the FLQ, courageous public affairs programming, regional art, Vietnam, and other lively anxieties, Canada witnessed a small outburst of patriotism. It saw itself symbolized in the new flag, in popular music and film, more widely in a new style of sophisticatedly affectionate iconography. A CBC public affairs television logo of the late 1960s, now a brief blip in Toronto's CBC Museum, featured playful graphics of maple leaves, Mounties and beavers cavorting antically around the screen. Today CBC Television features digitalized graphics and global electronic flows in comparable slots, and the Mounties have been sold to the Walt Disney Co., now among the largest corporations in world history.

The transformation of CBC self-presentation exemplifies a larger process wherein the attempt to incorporate dissent into citizen subjectivity through the ritual circulation of national symbols is being displaced by the equally disciplinary (but less flexible or accountable) circulation of commercial logos and corporate loyalties. At Ontario Place, the once public "Molson Amphitheatre" is subject to a union boycott (largely disregarded) because MCA's takeover led to the elimination of union contracts. MCA's purchase of the amphitheatre has also enabled Molson and MCA to practice near-monopolistic control over pop music performances influencing not only the acts in their own theatre, but because of vastly superior monetary resources, concerts in major music venues throughout Toronto. How many pop music fans or bands will choose union or public sector loyalties over seeing/being the acts that negotiate deals with MCA?

In the visual arts, the challenge to suspend public arts funding and replace it with corporate sponsorship inspired a recent exhibition at the Koffler Gallery, whose artists produced a series of works featuring images of Wrigley's and its corporate logos. The next logical step: not only will Canadian artists, publishers and producers have to seek — and often pay for — copyright permission from Disney Co. to play with images of the Mounties, but sponsoring corporations will increasingly insist on the right to make the kinds of aesthetic decisions now claimed by Molson's and MCA.

Canadians raised with public institutions such as the CBC, the Canada Council, and the public school system learned to picture a national community sharing a benign, good humoured mythic space contiguous with a naturalized collective past. The symbolic association of territoriality and public good, making Canada synonymous with (relative) compassion, acquired over time a genuine affectivity. One wanted to be the beaver, not the eagle: the Mountie, not the Green Beret; the kind of person who waited in line, looked after the old and the poor, and respected picket lines and trees as a matter of course. These symbols were myths in every sense: they reshaped history and imposed a unifying narrative on heterogeneous subjects. They also symbolized compassionate, democratic and anti-imperialist values whose political defeat is reflected in and exacerbated by the loss of shared symbols and meanings.

In recent years the pedagogical orientation of our public culture has changed, and we are seeing an entirely different lesson about the "good citizen." What we are supposed to value in the ebb and flow of everyday life — kindness, altruism and compassion, fairness, civility, respect for difference — is no longer a legitimate basis for public morality. The autodidacts at the helm insist that public good requires brutal slashes and a cool, tough economic rationality to keep Canada solvent in the world of transnational capital. Governments, cities, old age homes, film productions, schools and galleries must be run like businesses, and businesspeople must run them. We are witnessing no less than a fundamental redefinition of the concept of democracy in the public sphere.

Culture is crucial as both site and instrument for this transformative process. This is a consequence of our history, our location, and the legacies of our (broader) culture. The political crisis faced by people and institutions concerned with culture (in its narrow sense) compels artists and intellectuals to confront again questions of culture and democracy. Despite the rhetoric, these slashes are not motivated or justified by economics. They arise from imperatives generated by Canada's "relative location" (as cultural geography terms it) in relation to globalization, particularly U.S. trade and social policies. These are reactionary pressures which demand the transformation of culture in its broad and narrow sense. Resistance to this process means catalytically defending the agencies and institutions which have enabled creators of culture to imagine, to produce, to communicate, and of course to eat. It also means opening and extending the search for meanings, values, and beautiful particularities, in ways that can touch the larger culture. And it means fighting to defend the culture in an even broader sense, using art and communication to re-member and re-store the kinds of autonomy and democracy envisaged by the alliances that made these agencies and institutions in the first place.

We have not fully realized a "texture of many singularities," or even arrived at a satisfactorily complex view of singularity itself, or texture either. But this was the vision we grew into. If we don't pursue this goal through art and invention, and through respect for difference and commonality, communities and values, autonomy and connection, politics and policies, as well as respect for the people sleeping in the streets, then that vision is truly lost.

Andrew J. Paterson

controlled environ-ments

[A] "I still feel that memory provokes motivation."

[B] "And guilt provokes masochism. Which is probably how you came to be a cultural bureaucrat!"

[A] "You're out to lunch, B. Masochists control narrative. They're not pawns in anybody else's game.

[B] "Oooooh. I can tell what you've been reading in your off-hours."

[A] "Well, at least I don't wear my eyes out proofreading cutbacks!

[B] That will do, A. (B hangs up the phone)

"Etiquette"

"Propaganda"

[A] "Do you recall that application which seriously divided today's jury."

[B] "Yes, I recall you muttering under your breath about some sort of stalemate situation when I ran into you during your break. Now, what are the artist's initials again?"

[A] "C.P."

[B] "Right. C.P."

[A] "One of the jurors was persistently insisting that art cannot be propaganda; and that therefore propaganda cannot be art."

[B] "I'm not sure to what degree propaganda is meant to be art."

[A] "You sound like the particular juror who gave me such a headache.

[B] "Propagandists, if they truly believe what they are propagandizing on behalf of, are not concerned with subtlety. Nor should they be expected to be.

[B] "Where do you get your information, A?"

[A] "I don't even need to obtain such information about you. If you disgrace yourself at public parties then you blow your chances of being invited to private ones.

[B] "Oh. Listen to the recluse lecturing on the subject of etiquette."

[A] "There are many people, in fact a majority of people who, if they wish to be entertained, prefer to hire professional entertainers for the occasion in question. As opposed to constipated cultural bureaucrats who can't hold their booze and as a result metamorphose into fifth-rate standup comedians!"

"Etiquette"

CULTURE-SLASH-NATION