Canadian Cultural Policy in the Age of Neoliberalism

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Over the past several decades, following from the dissolution of colonial regimes and the crumbling of Soviet barriers to the capitalist world market, there has evolved what some call a new form of global sovereignty; a new global logic (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p.xi). This logic, widely known as neoliberalism, is characterized by an unleashing of the market as the primary global authority – an authority that has subsumed even the power of the state, and that makes governments subject to its rule.

Some celebrate the rise of this authority as having liberated the capitalist economy from the "restrictions and distortions that political forces have imposed upon it" (p.xi). Within this logic, 'freedom' as suggested within the term 'free market' is translated into terms of democratic progress; and market rule deemed to be the most just and equitable means by which to govern global populations. Others view the rise of this new logic as having had a range of negative and largely irreversible effects on the propagation of democratic norms. David Harvey, in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2007), charts the rise in income disparity that has occurred concurrent with the rise of neoliberal globalization . He goes so far as to position this disparity as a defining feature of this new logic, viewing its rapid onslaught as the strategic enactment of a political power play by the world's most wealthy (p.15). Supporting this view is, among others, Pierre Bourdieu, who speaks of neoliberalism as a polarizing phenomenon strategically developed and *imposed* by elite think tanks, as well as a series of supranational organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, WTO and multinational media corporations: [These] new masters of the world [represent] a genuine invisible world government, [a] sort of Big Brother". (quoted in Lang, 2006, p.278). Neoliberalism, in this view, is a global phenomenon in which the 'power of the multitude' (a principle thread running through a large body of contemporary democratic thought) has been cunningly and concertedly undermined by the power of the 'few'.

Culture has been seen to play a varied and complicated role in the transition from a nation-based global governance model to one that is market-based. Bourdieu in *The Aristocracy of Culture* (2006) draws attention to the ways in which culture serves to propagate and maintain class systems, such as those purported to have been crystallized through the move towards neoliberalism. Speaking of culture in the sense of 'the best that has been thought of and said within society', Bourdieu highlights the linkages apparent between the appreciation of cultural expressions and the 'titles of nobility' implicitly awarded through this appreciation. The encounter with a work of art, he notes, "presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code (Bourdieu, 2006, p.324)". Within this view, "art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences (p.325)".

While culture might indeed be understood to legitimate social differences, it might also be understood to collapse these differences. Stuart Hall brings attention to the multifarious ways in which struggles for meaning are enacted through the vehicle of culture, and the symbolic languages deployed by culture. Hall puts forward the notion that meaning cannot be finally fixed; that every ideological sign, including those involved in the creation of class identity, is multi-accentual (to use a term coined by Valentin Voloshinov); and that a continuous 'shifting of meaning' within our symbolic landscape provides "the condition of possibility of ideological contestation" (Hall, 1996, p295). Culture is as capable in this view of manufacturing contestation to systems of class differentiation as it is of reinforcing them. This understanding is reinforced by David Gartman, who criticizes Bourdieu's cultural theory on the basis that it underplays the agency of the individual, who he views as holding the potential to engage in "praxis that is capable of revolutionizing as well as reproducing the class system" (Gartman, 1991, p.422). Here again, culture is positioned, rather than exclusively as an agent of the elite, as a complex phenomenon that may be deployed to a plethora of ends.

Through this debate emerges a series of questions as related to the role of culture in the neoliberal age. What role has culture played in the rise of neoliberalism? What role has neoliberalism played in the construction of culture? And how might culture serve, within this new global logic whose practice coincides with an increasing polarization of wealth and power, to champion, propagate and protect democratic norms and values?

These questions underpin my analysis of Canadian cultural policy as it has evolved over the past 30 years. My research investigates major policy shifts occurring throughout this time-period (while also acknowledging historical policy changes leading up to it), and hones in on the ways in which narratives of neoliberalism have interacted with cultural policy initiatives in the domains of arts funding and development (federally, provincially, municipally), and cultural industries development. It also contemplates a new set of problems and possibilities emerging within cultural policy in recent years due to rapid changes in technology. In attempt to position the Canadian cultural policy scenario within a larger international context, an analysis will be conducted in which Canada's cultural development is juxtaposed against that of Australia.

Part 1 - Concepts of Culture & Historical Trends (1950's – 1980's)
The first segment of the comprehensive examines various understandings of culture, and explores the impacts that these understandings have upon historical cultural policy agendas leading up to the neoliberal era.

Culture has been defined and understood differently in particular socio-historical contexts, and between differing interest groups within these contexts. An understanding of culture as 'the best that has been thought and said in the world' - famously articulated by Matthew Arnold and for many decades considered by cultural scholars as formative aesthetic and humanist definition of the term (Manganaro, 1922, p2), differs radically from one that perceives culture from an anthropological perspective, as the expression of a whole way of life: "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of

society" (Edward Tylor quoted in Tonneau & Thompson, 2000, p.74). The humanist definition has been viewed extensively, though not exclusively by anthropologists and others, as an elite definition, in the sense that "Culture (with a capital C) resides in or can be obtained through superior works of intellect and artistry" (Manganaro, 1922, p3). The anthropological definition has been critiqued for its over-inclusiveness and lack of specificity (Dewdney & Ride, 2006, p278).

Many observe the Canadian federal government's approach to culture in 50's and 60's to have been largely 'humanist' in nature. During this time, the federal government invested in key 'nation-building' cultural institutions, including the NFB, CBC, Canada Council for the Arts and National Gallery – agencies created to enact particular sets of ideals founded upon 'elite' notions of culture and Canadian identity. This investment was designed to fortify Canada's cultural autonomy in the face of rising American influence and integration. Leading up to this investment was the publication of the Massey-Levesque Report (1951) – a document regarded to have profoundly influenced cultural policy throughout the later half of the 20th century in its advocacy for the centrality of culture within federal policy agendas. The report, although passionate and highly influential in its demands, is seen by many to be premised upon a definition of culture that is, in retrospect, uncomfortably elitist and Eurocentric (Wyman, 2004, p19).

A move was made in the 1970's, alongside a rise in awareness surrounding folk culture, and the cultures of socially marginalized groups, to re-position cultural policy within anthropological terms. The multiculturalism policy of 1971, developed under Pierre Trudeau, introduced new funding sources for diverse programs of cultural development, including a multicultural grants program; a culture development program; an ethnic histories program and federal assistance to provinces for teaching official languages to children of immigrants (Tierney, 2007, p60). Many of these funds, however, were controversial. The pluralist approach advocated within multiculturalism was to find itself at odds, in certain circumstances, with the philosophy of unification propagated by a nationalist agenda. In spite of this tension, Canada was to assume a leadership role internationally in its inclusion of multicultural ideals within its cultural policy initiatives.

Part 2 – Canadian Cultural Policy & Neoliberalism (1980's – present)
The second section of this comprehensive analyzes the interplay between neoliberal ideals and Canadian Cultural Policy initiatives unfolding throughout the 1980's and 90's. It looks at major jurisdictional changes that occurred in federal, provincial and municipal cultural policy domains, as well as at some of the debates at play within cultural industries policy. The changing technological landscape brought about by the rising proliferation of the internet is brought to the fore, and the role of technology in cultural policy debates unpacked.

Jurisdictional Changes
The 1980s and 90's marked a time of drastic change as related to the cultural jurisdictions of federal versus provincial government agencies. Culture (with a capital C) had traditionally fallen under federal jurisdiction – following from the release of the Massey Report and its nationalist ideals. Provincial cultural jurisdictions tended, within the

1960's and 1970's, to focus on anthropological definitions of culture: ie: culture as related to education, labour and social policy spheres (Marontate & Murray, 2011, p4). This jurisdiction underwent a shift in the 1970's and 80's, as traditional definitions of big C culture were challenged and re-invented, and the gap between humanist and anthropological definitions narrowed.

From a birds-eye view, what we see occurring from the 1970's (though pre-dating this in certain provinces) and moving into the 1990's, is a rise in provincial and municipal responsibility for culture alongside a decline in federal responsibility. This inverse relationship between federal and provincial/municipal spending is coupled with an across-the-board move towards use of economic rationalism as a core philosophy within cultural development policy.

On the federal level, a landmark shift in funding occurred in 1990's, in which the government reduced funding to one of the largest Government-supported culture agencies - the Canada Council for the Arts. For a period of seven years prior to this funding cut, between 1986 and 1992, the Council had received no increase in its baseline allocation, which meant that inflation "accounted for a 20 percent drop in Council funding" (Corse, 1997, p.59) within this time-period. Then, in 1993/1994, under the Mulroney government, the Council "took a 10 percent cut to its $95 million grants budget" (p.59). Furthermore, it was proposed by this government in 1993 that the Social Science and Humanities Research Council be merged into the Canada Council – a measure that was defeated, but that was seen by many as a move to undermine federal arts funding (p.59). Similarly, the 1993 transfer of federal responsibility for culture from the Department of Communications to a new Heritage Department was also viewed ominously (p.59).

This move to cut funding to the Canada Council was proceeded, in the early 1980's, by a series of reports conducted by the Federal Cultural Review Committee; now collectively referred to as the *Applebaum-Hebert Report*. While many of the recommendations presented in these reports support those put forward in the earlier *Massey Report* (for instance – the two sets of documents emphasize the need to improve the status of the artist, and to retain an 'arms-length' philosophy in relation to federal cultural spending), the *Applebaum-Hebert Report* differs from the previous one in its pragmatic approach to cultural industries, and in its inclusion of a market-based logic for cultural development.

On the provincial level, cultural development was advanced through an array of differing contexts. Forerunners of this development include Saskatchewan (the first province to create an Arts Board in 1948), and Quebec (established a Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1961) – provinces with radically different histories but possessing similar political motivation for the inclusion of culture as a key generator of provincial identity. Nova Scotia and Ontario were late, in comparison to other provinces, in their efforts to create official entities responsible for cultural strategy and oversight (Nova Scotia established an Arts Council in 1990, and Ontario a Ministry of Culture in 1974).

While the provincial role in developing arts and culture was, by and large, strengthened throughout the 70's, and 80's coincident with the growth of provincial arts governance

bodies, many of these bodies eventually undertook initiatives that linked arts and cultural development with agendas of competition advanced by a global market economy. The Ontario Arts Council, in 2002, embarked on a massive strategic planning process that involved the development of new emphasis on 'applied' art (ie: the application of artistic practices to socioeconomic and community development problems). While numerous provincial arts councils adapted to this shift in similar fashion to Ontario - by re-engineering their mandates and activities - others suffered from an inability to do so. The Nova Scotia Arts Council was disbanded in 2002, leaving the province without an arms-length governance body for the arts.

On the municipal level, culture began to be activated, throughout the 1980's and 90's as part of a 'creative cities' discourse, and conceived as a solution to problems of urban renewal. Such theorists as Richard Florida became advocates of this new role for the arts, which included bolstering social and economic prosperity by applying art production and dissemination to the benefit of localized (ie: municipal) ecologies - thereby increasing competitiveness. During this time, municipalities increased their cultural spending, and developed, enhanced and expanded municipal arts governance entities (Jackson & Lemieux, 1999, para. 11).

Within the federal, provincial and municipal domains, then, we see rising a justification for culture that is based on principles of economic enhancement. While this economic narrative would seem, at first glance, to replace narratives in which culture is wielded towards objectives of national unity, in actuality multiple agendas were played out during this time (including, among others, agendas of nation-building, multiculturalism, community enhancement, provincial and municipal identity-building, etc.). These agendas will, within this section of the comprehensive, be examined, unraveled, and theorized.

Cultural Industries
Throughout the 1980's and 90's, cultural industries – in particular, film and television production, broadcasting and popular music - were similarly constituted as a battlefield for the enactment of diverse agendas. Here, however, the neoliberalism versus nation-building debate seems arguably more pronounced. Arguments for state-support of cultural industries as facilitators of democratic public discourse and nation building were raised, on numerous occasions within policy-setting contexts, against economic arguments that demanded the conformity of these industries to global marketplace standards.

Canada's participation in 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations constitutes one instance of this struggle. Cultural producers within Canada held (as they do currently) a weak position in their own domestic markets as related to U.S. cultural producers – a reality that caused Canada to assume within the agreement a protectionist stance in relation to its own cultural products. This protectionism resulted in the exemption, by and large, of Canadian culture from the agreement. In fact, a double standard was established within NAFTA – the large-scale exemptions made for Canadian

cultural industries in comparison to the U.S. do not apply to Mexico (Galperin, 1999, para. 36).

Within NAFTA, then, a nationalist agenda for Canadian culture can be seen to have won out over a globalization agenda. This said, it is unclear how long this cultural exemption will be considered viable, as Canada's NAFTA exemption has come "under heavy crossfire both from within and outside" (para. 37) the country. Recent cases of cultural protectionism playing out within the U.S. have created increased pressure on Canada to conform its cultural agenda with that of other industries covered by NAFTA. And given that the U.S. accounts for a significant portion Canada's overall exports, "retaliation threats are not taken lightly within the Canadian front" (para. 37). Here we see an instance in which a narrative of nation-building is retained, if only for a brief period of time, in the face of rising neoliberal logic.

While externally Canada can be seen through negotiations such as NAFTA to protect its cultural assets from the imperialism implicit to a neoliberalist agenda, a paradoxical picture of this protectionism emerges when examining the development of Canada's cultural industries internally. Michael Dorland, in his book *The Cultural Industries in Canada* (1996), takes on the task of unraveling the notion of 'Canadian Content' as expressed through the historical development of these industries. He observes that, beginning in the mid-sixties and continuing on into the present era, government funding for cultural industries was understood to support *private* industries – those demonstrating Canadian ownership, but also, ironically, producing "cultural commodities for the purpose of profitable exchange in the potentially global marketplace of cultural production" (Dorland, 1996, p.358). Such a regulatory framework produced a situation in which the content of Canadian-owned cultural entities became subject to the norms and ideologies of the international market. This situation served to complicate the binary nature of the nationalism/neoliberalism debate, and to draw into existence new realities and forces that, according to Dorland, served ultimately to foster the viability of these industries.

Technology & Globalization
Another cultural domain in which a complex series of dynamics emerge as related to neoliberal influence is that of internet publishing. With the proliferation and acceleration between the 1990's and the current era of self-publishing practices accomplished through newly-emergent internet technologies, amateur publishing, video and music production began to occur en-mass in an unregulated environment - presenting a glimmer of hope for an enactment of new-found forms of democratic cultural participation. At the same time, however, these eras were witness to the unprecedented convergence of media companies, as well as the rise of multi-national conglomerates. Within Canada, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has, in practice, supported this trend towards convergence, which has resulted in a highly concentrated media market. Within this section, I will explore the tension at play between the democratic freedoms offered by newly emerging internet technologies as juxtaposed against the power imbalances enacted through the same technologies by corporate interests.

Part 3: Australian Comparison
The third and final section of this comprehensive conducts a comparison of Canada's cultural policy landscape with that of Australia in an attempt to position Canadian cultural policy initiatives within a larger international context. Australian cultural policy as developed throughout the past half-century reveals a number of similarities to that of Canada – particularly in relation to its increasing affiliation with principles of economic development. The two countries share developmental, geographical and political commonalities (ie: both are independent former settler colonies of Britain; are large and relatively isolated; and are culturally influenced by the U.K. and U.S.). The two nations, it can be argued, have responded through similar strategies to the global onslaught of neoliberalism.

As in the case of Canada, Australia went through a phase between the 1930's and 60's in which culture was strategically deployed as a tool for 'nation-building'. Following Federation, the Australian federal government committed to supporting cultural development as part of its mission to create a national culture across its "disparate and sparsely populated continent" (Craik, 2007, p.10). In the 1930's and 1940's, a number of key iconic cultural entities were established by the federal government, including the Australian Broadcast Commission (1932), the Arts Council of Australia (1943), the National Film Board (1945) and a state symphony (1946). These investments were followed, in the 50's and 60's, in the Theatre Trust, National Institute of Dramatic Art and the Australian Ballet, among others.

Cultural development was accelerated during the 60's and 70's, and the cultural landscape transformed with the rise of widespread social debate surrounding women's rights, youth culture and multiculturalism. Here the elite definitions of culture harbored by the federal government were challenged and, as in Canada's case, definitions assumed that were anthropologically weighted.

Under the conservative government coalition of Malcolm Fraser, the Industries Assistance Commission released a report in 1976 entitled *Assistance to the Performing Arts* that presented challenges to the previous nation-building rationales underlying federal cultural funding, and that recommended, rather, the implementation of rationales founded on direct community benefit and economic progress. While this report failed to generate immediate buy-in from the parliament of the time, it is seen to have set the terms for policy during the next decades (Gibson, 2001, p.78).

In 1994, a signature cultural policy report was released by Paul Keating's Labour government entitled *Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy*. A strong economic agenda is expressed in this report, however, there remains in it a residual commitment to principles of nation building (Craik, 2007, p.12).

As is the case in Canada's cultural landscape, funding throughout the 80's and 90's was to a certain extent devolved from the Australian federal government to state and local government entities. This devolution occurred in such a way that cultural policy was

increasingly conceived as "a reflection of regional and local priorities rather than of national agendas" (p.18). Here, culture was increasingly framed as a means to stimulate the economic prosperity of particular geographic domains.

Currently, an initiative is underway within Australia to cultivate a national vision and policy with regards to the future of culture. Recognizing a vast spectrum of change (technological and otherwise) as having occurred within the cultural policy landscape since the release of the *Creative Nation* policy, the Labor Party Government presented, in 2011, a nation-wide public discussion document entitled *The National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper*. This document frames culture as a vehicle for economic progress, however, it also puts forward a range of alternate agendas related to culture, highlighting its role in fostering inclusivity, strengthening Indigenous communities, improving education and building community identity through storytelling. The document also recognizes the *intrinsic* value of the arts in "creating a strong Australian culture" (Australian Government, 2011, p.11), and articulates a commitment to culture as a means by which to meet a new set of challenges posed by the present age.

This move to develop an evolved and comprehensive cultural policy designed to meet the demands of a new era appears to be absent within the Canadian policy landscape. While the beginning of such an initiative might be seen to have been spearheaded by the Chrétien government in 2001 through a policy entitled *Tomorrow Starts Today* (designed to foster and improve access to culture, and to include it as a key pillar of Canadian foreign policy), this agenda was dropped when the Paul Martin government came into power in 2005.

The current Conservative government's cultural agenda appears to be focused almost entirely on copyright reform. The recently released Bill C-11 designed to this end has raised controversy in its valuation of the rights of cultural producers over those of consumers, and in its valuation of Canadian cultural products as saleable commodities rather than as public assets (Wegert, 2012). Such agendas are also evident in Australia's *Copyright Ammendment Act* (2006) – produced as a means to achieve compliance with the 2004 *Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement*.

While Canada and Australia can both be seen, as related to copyright reform, to push forward agendas related to free-market politics, the Australian government's current attempt to activate a national imagination surrounding the role of cultural policy within the larger context of nation-building is (in this reader's view) admirable. The Australian case presents a distinctive challenge to Canadian governance entities, as it carves out a role for culture in enabling nations to meet the challenges posed by the current age.

Conclusion
In closing, I again return to Stuart Hall, whose approach to the study of cultural phenomena presents the condition of possibility for diverse, multifarious and sometimes contradictory readings of such phenomena, as well as of their outcomes. Within this comprehensive, I hope to utilize this approach in my investigation of Canadian cultural policy – recognizing the multifarious ends to which cultural policy is wielded, and the

array of discourses through which culture is valued and understood. While I will make attempts within my research to uncover broad trends as related to Canadian cultural development (paying heed, in particular, to intersections between cultural policy and neoliberal logics), such over-arching narratives will be presented in recognition, also, of the counter-narratives at play, and of the overall complexity interwoven into these struggles. As part of this research, I will also aim to uncover various roles for cultural policy in cultivating democratic engagement and participation.

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Reading List

PART 1 – CONCEPTS OF CULTURE & HISTORICAL TRENDS
Setting the scene, defining terminology, describing conceptual frameworks, situating the field within an historic context

Concepts of Culture / Context

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