

**The Unreasonable Artist:
A Political Economy of Artistic Experience in Canada**

**By
Kirsten Brooks**

A Thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

Master of Arts

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Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

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Of

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Abstract

This work examines the ways in which economic and political relationships are carried out in Canada between artists, the public and private sectors, and the general public. I view these relationships as hegemonic, carrying with them the structure and style of an internal colonial relationship. Themes of identity, colonialism and power are examined with a focus on symbolic and Neo-Marxist theory. Therein, I explore ways in which artists are stripped of power and alternately find ways to regain it, and the interplay between the artist as an agent of autonomous power and the artist as subject of colonial structures. Issues of exoticism, small-scale politics, stereotyping, and othering are also explored, within this, I ask in what manner artistic lives are appropriated, demonized, idolized and exploited by those outside the arts for personal or public gain. Additionally, I examine how relations play out within the community in terms of small scale politics, infighting, abuse of symbolic power and how each of these elements are viewed in terms of an economic trickle down effect. In essence, this study aims to look into how the Canadian government and the public and private sectors create stratum of power in the life of the artist and how the artist utilizes the concept of identity both as a weapon and a method of resistance.

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This thesis is dedicated to Gary Granzberg,
for his Wisdom, Reason, and Magic,
and for never once pulling me off the path.

And to Brock Adams. Who came into this world dancing.

“Don’t you want things nice?
Don’t you want to have fun?
Don’t you want your dinner?
Clap your hands and wish very hard.
That’s what we’re eating:
Wish food.”
-- Margaret Atwood
From: *The Door* (2007:94)

“It’s so very difficult making a life in the arts. ... I have one friend who says: “How do you fix a life?” Susan McNamara in Nova Scotia, who has committed her life to the theatre, and to writing and to acting. And to working with writers. And an extraordinary woman. And she breaks my heart when she says that. But I know what she’s speaking of. She’s speaking of the poverty, and the loneliness, and the alienation. And so many artists, that is their experience. And that’s the complexity that this path can lead to.”
(Dagmar Personal Interview:2006)

“Melissa: Magic imbues art, and I think that artists are sort of the ultimate technicians of magic in our society.

Kirsten: In what way?

M: In the way that they open doors to joy, and doors to salvation in the loneliest and darkest places. And that doesn’t mean to say that what we are presenting is always necessarily joyful or beautiful -- some of the things that we present are painful and take people down into very dark places.

K: But even the darkness can save us.

M: But the darkness can save us, oh yes, the darkness can save us.”

(Melissa Personal Interview: 2006)

Prologue

- 2001: 1) It is five o'clock p.m. I am straightening the straps of my backpack, preparing for a long walk home over dark patches of ice and snowdrifts -- across wastelands of empty shopping lots and parking lots. 2) I am steadying myself to face this city full of mean, this city full of contradiction, this upside down city of ley lines and stories and old stock beer and opera and warehouse architecture. This City of Ghosts and Aberrations, this City of Mediocre Intention, this Rusted Busted-up Ship of a City slogging it out in the heaving pitch of night.
- a) His office smells sick and musty, but it almost feels like home. Above us, and everywhere, the lights are discordant, buzzing beetles. He is uniformed in an ivory-colored sweater with wood buttons and dark jeans, fiddling with a necklace, talking through me. I cut in and out of his words, raking at the letters rising suddenly through the air, gathering in circles, lighting down around me like thousands of little feet. b) In the perfection of youth, I believe he wishes nothing more extravagant or human than to see me do well. c) "*Kirsten*." He sounds like hunger moving through the woods, snapping branches, cracking ice. "You need to understand. There is no such **thing** as an anthropologist-poet." d) He catches me in the middle of steaming breath, he catches me with a trickle of blood winding from my temple to my chin. He catches me writing this story inside of his words -- and, okay, maybe writing once upon a time and happily ever after and it once was said that human connection was easy and naturally beautiful like a sunset or a commercial for shampoo or a family-pack anything. He (dis)orients me, looks for calendar dates to set up new meetings, asks questions, pulls references from his shelves, looks concerned. He thumbs through the book of family, the book of experience, the book of bitter holidays, the book of nomenclature, the book of eroded

lives. Inside weathered pages, crisp and fragile he pulls well-oiled sentences. e) "I don't think you're cut out for graduate school." "You don't have what it takes." "You're too much of an *artist* to do this work." f) My hands are melting paper dolls, dresses spreading across my skin like drops of ink in water, disintegrating into nothing, into nothing at all.

- i) 2002: I wash up small on the beach somewhere, turning up on the tide like an odd stone or a worn piece of glass, tumbling in with the foam and broken seaweed. ii) *This Self* is a Slivered Piece of Memory, or Someone to Watch Over Me as the standard goes, or a post-modernist fragmentation of Real. iii) Incant the scraps of truth, recant the punctuated parts that are feasible later to a feast of collegial minds, entangled in political Sundays when all anyone really wants to do is go home and walk dogs, play with children, have supper, move on. iv) I will not be the good kind of graduate student anyway. I am not the one you ask to the prom, or talk with about Foucault until the dawn comes and you are wretched with wine.
- *Figure 1*) 2003: *Outside*: The buildings are Bergman-like black and white archetypes cinematic bric a brac bricks pulled taut like stretch marks. *Inside*: the metronome of legs emit a soft hiss. Mirrors jut at odd angles, hook students silver-backed and flecked. No regret. No regret. Catch the tail between the teeth and roll. *Figure 2*) The day outside is quietly yielding, trees veining up through that belly of sky. Her office is thick and soundless and I am prepared for my usual enforced stance/academic chitchatter/the sublimation of self/and of course I don't believe in creativity faeries only in Foucault/the birth of the prison/the spectacle of the scaffold/docile bodies (1975) and an open relationship with ideals.

Now, Plucking, unspoken words from the air she is

Now, Gliding, hands past slick flesh flooded bone

Now, Slowly, she unzips my heart.

Now, Pizzicato: *What moves you?*

Now, Glissando: *Why can't poetry and anthropology coincide?*

Now, Adagio: *How can we make it happen?*

Chapter One: Whose Anthropology is it Anyway?

For the ethnography is always to be compared and brought into relationship with a body of shared knowledge, and the contrivances of method and theory... This body of shared knowledge is clearly foreign to the experience of the people we study. (Brettell 1996:102)

We need imagination, metaphor and empathy more than ever... to help us remember each other's essential humanity.
(Homer-Dixon in Wyman 2004:48)

In the mid to late 1980's and into the 1990's, there was a shift in ethnographic representational and writing strategies¹, influenced and ushered in by people such as James Clifford, George Marcus, Michael Fischer, Renato Rosaldo, Stephen A. Tyler, Ruth Behar, and others. These strategies emphasized the understanding that ethnography did not merely impart representations of culture to the wider world, but imparted information about individuals who were engaged by the business of living within a culture in ways that were messy, exquisite, agonizing, and ultimately human.² This gave the ethnographer a certain reflexive freedom, allowing for a space to understand themselves in the scheme of the ethnographic landscape. It gave permission to explore their roles, desires, thoughts, biases, and placement within the somewhat subjective nature of this process. A space was created for exploring the notion of authority in terms of structure and voice, and ultimately made a new construct with which to address, and grapple with the nature of cultural anthropological knowledge: where it came from, who it was written for, how it was created and by whom.

There is no such thing as an Anthropologist-Poet: Betwixt and Between Realities

Fieldwork Journal Entry: "[T]here is nothing safe about anthropology. [I]t's full of too much blood... it's full of flesh... it's like someone has used an invisible blade to cut a notch on my bone and said "Now, there. Now you know. Now you will remember."³

Wendy Bishop, when she was beginning her ethnographic process, found herself asking why it seemed "to have elements of "doing literature" and "doing creative writing" that no one and no methods book was mentioning" and asking how "could research that seemed more and more to rely on... [her] subjectivity, interpretations, and, finally,

storytelling skills be a vehicle for reliable and valid results” (1992:148)? It is this line of questioning that has prompted me to write this work in a fashion that bridges these two worlds. The mistrust I encountered in both of my communities, whether mistrust of the artist⁴ as academic, or the academic as artist has pushed me towards a keen awareness of the so-called rift between academics and the arts.

One of the least expected of the strange experiences I had during this decade⁵ was the realization that writers and professors don’t mix in Canada. I was a writer for a decade before becoming a professor.... a few years after I became a professor, the writing world seemed to slip away. I eventually discovered that I was losing my community, the writing community, because there is a deep-seated distrust of the academy among artists and writers. Suddenly I was on the other side of the fence: I was establishment. My job represented power. I had a salary and did not need to be a part of things. Readings slowed down. The conference circuit went on without me. I applied for grants to get time off to write and was rejected. When I asked some professor-writer friends of mine why I was no longer getting grants, they said such grants were not handed out to professors. Something had set in, I felt, and I did not understand it. But I was pretty staunch and undaunted, so I thought it would not be the end of things to be cut off from that community. I turned to the community of academics instead, and discovered more strange things. Not only do writers not care for academics, but academics have a distrust of writers. They are not bona fide. Not real and don’t belong. (Gunnars 2003:203-204)

My experiences as a student, as well as those during my fieldwork have in a sense reflected those of Gunnars. In part, the initial experiences I had during my undergraduate degree were still imbued with those older representational and academic modes, steeped in a more authoritative vision of what anthropology and ethnography “should” be, as opposed to what they “could” be or in all reality, were becoming. It was that older vision dictating the notion that academics and art were engaged a boxing match where scholastics was a ‘superior’ or ‘real’ method of engagement and creativity was ‘inferior’ and ‘not real.’ Indeed it was this perception that kept me keenly aware, through the time line of this project, of what Glenn Bowman discussed regarding the 2003 conference in London on dialogues between art and anthropology. “[F]or a number of artists there was a manifest fear of exploitation based on a perception that the anthropologists ‘wanted’ something from them that they were far from clear they wished to deliver” (2004:25). During the interview process for this thesis, I spoke with many people who were uncomfortable with my identity as a student academic, although I was clear about my

“alternate” identity as a writer, performer, and advocate. In some cases, these were people I have known for years, or even known my entire life. The mistrust and wariness I encountered both saddened and shocked me.

What flowered from these experiences was a giant red flag -- an indication of the reality of our situation as artists in this city, and in this country. This is “anthropology that breaks your heart” (Behar 161-177:1996). Yet, as counter-intuitive as it may seem, my belief is that artists and academics are wholly capable of having meaningful conversations. To this end, I find myself agreeing with Mary Carol Hopkins’ assessment of anthropology as “lying in that borderland between art and science⁶,” (1996:128) and Max Wyman’s assessment that “[e]ngagement with art synthesizes the rational with the emotional, the imaginative and the intuitive. It releases the visionary impulse, bringing an innovative dimension to problem solving. It adds judgment and wisdom to information” (2004:6).

Indeed, the very act of “writing culture” should engender and foster “questions about modes of representation, about objectivity and accountability, relativism and ethnocentrism, science and truth” (Brettell 1996:2). Perhaps it is within this that anthropology may find a use for art after all. As it struggles with its own identity and being-ness, it may find that as a social science it has the same creative potential as the rest of us who are denizens of a life well lived betwixt and between realities and intellectualities. Perhaps then it may let go of what John Messenger notes as a paradox of anthropology: “when observations similar to those made by ethnographers are embedded in novels, plays, and short stories they are read as accurate and acceptable. As part of a work of social science, they are challenged” (ibid:13-14).

Conceivably this is because of an actual site of contestation between academia and the arts, which I perceive as the right to talk with a measure of authority about the spiritual, mental, physical, or emotional experience of the human venture. The irony here lies in the fact that as academics and artists, we⁷ utilize many similar concepts in order to draw conclusions for our work, in order to find our way into the thrum of human life. Identity, displacement, boundaries, representation and engagement are all key analytic tools utilized in the uncovering of lives, intellectual landscapes and personas in the framework systems of both ethnography and art. To this end, George Marcus pointed out both the value and effectiveness of crossing these kinds of borders when he stated: “the

future of critical ethnography itself depends on our ability to understand its affinities with critical sensibilities in other power/knowledge domains" (1999:15).

The Wizard and the Witness: Dovetailing the "T"ruth

Anthropology... is the most fascinating, bizarre, disturbing, and necessary form of witnessing left to us at the end of the twentieth century. (Behar 1996:5)

Poets are magicians without quick wrists. (MacEwan in Atwood 2002:111)

As an archetypal figure, the artist wizard is a kind of supernatural performer who lives outside of the normal rules of societal engagement. They can be hucksters, charlatans, cheats and tricksters, yet also visionaries, alchemists, intellectuals and shape-shifters. They push against the limits and boundaries of society, creating change and new growth on all levels (Atwood 2002:93-122).

The anthropologist witness, if we can make her or him into an archetype, is a kind of cognitive shaman. They can be colonizers, thieves, fanatics and elites as well as healers, advocates, artists or explorers. The witness is more than a bystander to the event, and less than the catalyst. "In minimalist terms this might be described as the difference between the anthropologist as 'spectator' and the anthropologist as 'witness'" (Scheper-Hughes 1995:419). They are those who help to bear and balance the pain and joy of the people and society they support vis-à-vis acts of observance and participation. Moreover, the witness is "accountable for what they see and what they fail to see, how they act and how they fail to act" (ibid).

Yet, who then is the Witness, and who is the Wizard? As diametrically opposed as they may initially seem, artists and ethnographers are mutually and unapologetically embedded and engaged in humanity and all of its beautiful and heart breaking shortcomings and successes. I see a mutual striving to shift the inter and intra personal mythologies of others, those paradigm modifiers of cultural and creative thought. How, as a culture, we receive and perceive. Both viewpoints teach that what can be learned from the values and mores of "the other" has the ability to instruct, guide, and adjust our perspectives, perceptions and realities. Cultural anthropology, like creative writing or theatre, I see as a liminal activity, existing on the interstices due to its paradoxical nature of scientific observance, human engagement (with subject, object, idea, or place), and

individual reflexivity. Perhaps because of this academics and artists are neither here nor there -- consistently living with one myth in this world, and one myth in the next. As artists or ethnographers, we are only travelers, and the journey is participating through us, and because of us, just as much as we are created and creating through it. Life itself is liminal, reflexive, engaged.

Perhaps herein lies the largest strength of the injection of an artistic framework into the ethnographer's pen. It is an essential nature or function of art to engage, study, process, and disseminate the fragmentary (and fragile) nature of human existence, and as such, it has much to offer an anthropological viewpoint. Yet ethnographic writing "in part... [is] less the mastery of a form of knowledge and more a collection of excerpts, outtakes from a continuous conversation about what happens on the edges of multiple forms of knowledge" (Emoff and Henderson 2002:3). Indeed, an integral understanding for the ethnographer that the "very methods [we use] are constructed, interpretive" helps us to understand that what "one has been through 'out there' [as opposed] to what one says 'back here,' is not psychological in character. It is literary" (Bishop 151:1992). Herein, is the discovery of a tipping point between ethnography and the arts -- within and through the exploration of fragmentary lives, methods, theories, conversations and ideas that reside on the edge of accepted norms. Together, art and ethnography can possess a unique balanced strength -- to open us to unseen possibilities, emotional and intellectual connections and values, to shift and positively challenge dynamics of "power and its disguises" (Gledhill:2000), therefore opening us to seeing identities and lives in ways that explore the intellectual landscape of our "essential humanity" (Homer-Dixon in Wyman 2004:48).

The concept of studying "art" in anthropology is not new in and of itself; even early anthropologists (for example, Malinowski, Boas, Evans-Pritchard) discussed aspects of it in their work, albeit emphasizing more its social functions. British anthropologist Victor Turner first coined the term "Social Drama" in his book *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* in 1957, and his work regarding performance and creativity continued for the rest of his career until his death in 1983, influencing other notable successors such as Richard Schechner, director and performance studies scholar. During this course of study I have come across a measure of resistance to the theory that those in the arts are subject to certain forms of political and economic disenfran-

chisement. Nevertheless, I ask the reader to maintain an open mind, and would like to state that the chapters that follow this are nothing more than an attempt to begin a conversation about the subject. That said, Chapter Two of this thesis provides some ethnographic background on the topic, as well as addressing theory and methodological concerns. Chapter Three examines identity politics and power, exploring themes of exoticism and colonialization, viewing how the artist is framed and disauthenticated within the government and the public eye. Chapter Four looks not only at funding options for artists, but at systems of belief that surround the community in terms of value, both monetary and symbolic. Chapter Five discusses the “trickle-down” effect of economic strain, looking at the way in which it plays itself out in the field of relations between artists and art groups, including methods those in the arts community utilize to confine and oppress one another. Chapter Six discusses possible solutions, strategies and sites of power and reclamation, and contains concluding remarks.

Chapter Two: Details, Dramas and Derangements: Theory and Method

The indigenous voice speaks critically to the narrative (some would say myth) of the nation-state -- the hierarchical, incorporative, coercive state that exists, in part, to facilitate the process of creating economic surplus---
(Smith 2002:111)

Shifting Locales

In the winter of 2006, I went east. In the middle of my fieldwork and interview process here in Winnipeg, I left for National Theatre School (NTS) in Montreal. It was important for me to gain a comparative perspective in terms of an urban community -- local versus national arts, French versus English arts, and small city versus large city arts. I wanted to ask: is our local experience of support comparable, and do we, Montreal and Winnipeg, come into contact with similar levels of disenfranchisement and prejudice? Ultimately, I was curious about whether or not the ways in which these two cities navigate were related in any manner.

My experience of NTS and of Montreal itself I found to be unique. One informant, Bonny⁸, referred to it as “cooking” and “bubbling” as an arts scene, where everywhere you went, something artistic was happening, and the audiences showed up in droves. From talking to those in the Anglophone arts scene, however, it was explained that this experience tends to be angled towards Francophone arts and artists. The Anglo arts scene is not as prevalent or heavily funded and there are more people competing in a much smaller market. The Quebec government heavily funds the arts, partially in order to instill a sense of nationalistic pride, and partially because, as one informant points out later in this thesis, the Francophone population does not see art as “peripheral to their soul,” indeed, it is something more integral and essential to living a good life.

And here in Quebec the Charest government, the now Liberal government, they cut back in the arts, and the *opposition* from lobby groups was *phenomenal*. They tried to cut back, and they really haven’t succeeded all that much.... Art as an expression tied to nationalism: I think the PQ governments, regardless of one’s politics, the successive PQ governments through the seventies, eighties, and even into the nineties were *huge* advocates of the arts. Because they saw the artists as being *representatives* of Quebecois culture. So, it was very important for them that we had artists, not only here but artists that go to Europe. A lot of artists, Quebecois artists go to Europe and perform in Europe. So they became *ambassadors* if you will, of Quebec. And so the government saw that there was a huge payoff there. Pride in who we are. Pride in what we do and

how we do it and the way we see the world. (Bonny Personal Interview: 2006)

In fact, the support systems, the availability and quality of art as well as the audiences I encountered while I was in Montreal showed me how relationships between artists and the public and private sectors could play out in ways that were more encouraging.

I had been to NTS before, in the 1990s, visiting a friend who had been talented, driven, and blessed enough to be accepted into their theatre program. I remember walking into the marble foyer, how immense everything felt, and how I got a zap up my spine when I walked in. At the time, in the arrogance of youth, I thought I was feeling something prophetic, but in hindsight I was merely feeling something at the time beyond my emotional and intellectual grasp. In 2006, when I walked in again, I understood. It was the power of deep real creative magic, with all the veils lifted, no stops, no gauges. It was the power of yes. I was feeling the power of a place where anything was possible, and all you had to do was ask. In our society, an organized sanctuary like this for artists is virtually unheard of. Belief, for artistic people, is at the axis point of who we are. We fight against the naysayers everyday of our existence in order to retain some small part of it. In close focus, every single working artist you see has retained a kernel of this, tucked inside the soft folds of flesh and word and color.

As artists, we need that seed, because without it, we wouldn't be able to continue. We wouldn't be able to fight through long periods of activity without rest or respite, while not being paid properly for our efforts. We wouldn't be able to stand up and choose a career in the arts fully knowing that at the end of it, there is no pension plan, or traditional benefits of any kind. We wouldn't be able to deal with a never ending stream of people who judge who we are by what we do, as if that gave them a free pass to comment on our lives and our internal landscapes. We wouldn't be able to deal with people in our own communities creating internal politics born out of pettiness, jealousy, ego, ignorance, and desperation over funds and opportunity.⁹ We wouldn't be able to handle the systems that pin us down, that displace us and force us to grow in unexpected ways and places. We wouldn't be able to deal with our very real insecurity about not knowing what comes next, not knowing what is around the corner, not knowing if we will still be able to be working artists in a year, of not knowing how we are going to pay the bills that month.

An Unreasonable Ethnography

Fieldwork Journal Entry: I was hoping for someone to push their hand inside my head and run like a river, run like a river all the way back to the beginning -- before I knew pain, or fortitude, or tenacity.

At a ground level, the essential (questing and inquiring) nature of the anthropological venture demands the ethical ethnographer to move beyond comfortable tropes. "Witnessing... is in the active voice, and it positions the anthropologist inside human events as a responsive, reflexive, and morally committed human being" (Scheper-Hughes 1995:419). Moreover, anthropology was not built to live in stasis, the spaces we have the ability to explore are endless. A subtle blending of anthropology and art does not mean erasing meaning or substance, but instead makes space for an approach that teeters between systemic and non-systemic approaches, with compassionate possibilities for creating rich, substantial and engaging new life forms. As Pat Caplan (Hopkins 129: 1996) notes "An ethnography should not be homological... positivist, or analogical. The name of the game now is aesthetics, pastiche, collage, juxtaposition."

This form of ethnography is not a proverbial extra limb, even though questions as to its use may be asked: "what is the point of 'making space for heterogeneity' in a text by a technique such as collage? Is it a matter of better representing the world?" (Gledhill 2000:239). I contend that there is a need to create room for understanding "ethnography... [as] a thoroughly textual practice... [where] texts are... [understood as] authored, that is, constructed" (Bishop 152:1992). The "point" is nothing less than a deeply political act, a quest for answers to some extraordinarily pressing contemporary questions. To simply dismiss this kind of work as a kind of sweeping narrative navel gazing denigrates its salience to challenge the way in which knowledge is structured and produced, as well as a method of decolonization by confronting normative principles in addition to producing spaces that encourage our "authentic humanity" (Smith 2002:23).

Indeed, forms of art (and creation making) are "not ancillary to or reflect...the social scene but a major and integral part of the transaction which engenders political behavior" (Edelman in MacClancy 1997:2). This is not to say that all anthropology has to be full of auto-ethnographic reflexive literary postmodern analysis, and, absolutely, nor should it be. But there is a need to make actual space for this kind of investigative and

critically engaged examination. And to make space in a manner that is not paternalistic -- certainly not by viewing it as a quaint momentary fad, like a longhaired counterculture that just needs to get a good job to smarten up. As Wendy Bishop stated about her own "initial struggles" in ethnography:

[I]t was impossible to move from the hard data of interview transcripts to the "warm" shaped descriptions I was weaving, without seeing the subjective nature of my enterprise. I worried that my stories and narratives while "convincing" would be suspect. Starting in positivism, I too confused the imagined with the imaginary, the fictional with false, making things out -- people, situations, patterns, understandings -- with making them up. (1992:150)

Or, as Geertz himself notably stated "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (1973:4). Engaging in research that combines and refigures how we view self, subject, object or place (and how they interrelate) is not disrespecting conventional standards of analysis. It is one method to find different meanings, acquire fresh metaphors, "pose new mysteries" (Chomsky 1997:30) and travel further than we have before. In essence, by momentarily putting aside an either/or concept in our social and cultural fields of relation, understanding, and analysis we may turn toward beginning to investigate a world that is strangely and unapologetically imaginative, delicately interwoven, uniquely interactive and elegant far beyond the boundaries of our own limited wanderings.

Unreasonable Methods

There are no "methods" leading to decolonization, only successful or failed experiences, inconsistent strategies, movements that cannot be easily foreseen or predicted, improvisation, the power of the unexpected.
(Savigliano 1995:16)

The methods governing this work are an *experiment*. They are an effort to find complementary voices that open little slices -- small windows of common ground between a creative and scientific point of view. Therein, it is my intention to explore the notion that "a personal voice, if creatively used, can lead the reader, not into miniature bubbles of navel-gazing, but into the enormous sea of serious social issues" (Behar 1996:

14). Within the landscape of so-called experimental ethnography, I intend to reconfigure and rearrange concepts of “distance, objectivity... abstraction” (Behar 1996:13) and rhetoric vis-à-vis the insertion of artistic conceptual frameworks and voice within the body of the thesis, both visible and (seemingly) invisible.

As art tends to ‘show’ and academia tends to ‘tell,’ a gentle balancing of the two is adopted. Therein, this thesis touches upon problems of representation, not only by subject, but by the manner in which it is written, and accepts the Marxist approach that “invite[s] us to follow our informants’ intuitions and our own common sense by focusing on the interaction between material circumstances and the thoughtful, active, imaginative human beings who interpret and respond to them” (Littlefield and Gates 1991:3). To achieve this requires a willingness to reconfigure a representative mode and reject “assumptions about anthropology and fieldwork that continue to reinscribe various “Others” of internal and external colonialism, [which] is part of a struggle to understand how we can best participate in ethnographic practices of liberation” (Passaro 1997:161). In the interest of decolonizing methodologies (Smith 2002), this work makes no apologies for engaging with the inconsistencies and eccentricities inherent in the self as it interacts on familiar terrain with new eyes. That said, I have found it true that “studying a less “alien” culture can intensify the reflexive experience of the ethnographer. The experience of writing about people “who read what we write and then talk and write back to us undermines our ability to construct an unproblematic Other, and hence, an unproblematic self” (Jaffe 1996:52).

***Conversation:** I find myself repeating over and over again the same thing when close friends ask how the writing is going. I tell them it’s like being in a giant black ocean, under a moonless sky.*

One day someone asks: What else is in the ocean?

I reply: A giant orange buoy.

She leans in closer: And what else?

I reply: One light, swinging out into infinite darkness and back again.

This work is written as an engaged anthropology that takes a side and a stance in regard to its subject. As a student academic and artist, I have geared the methodological framework of this work as a tool for decolonization, debunking and advocacy. The strategy follows, perhaps, an unconventional path, as it is written with an audience in mind that supposedly straddles two radically disparate groups -- the academic and the artist. Therefore, an over-determined framework or theoretical jargon is either omitted or

greatly reduced, in order to not cut off those people for whom this thesis is ultimately intended (as well as those who participated in it) from the study itself. This is done in part with respect to the notion that patterns of colonialism can occasionally be embedded in anthropological discourse.

As such, it is important to comment upon my own ethnic location in this work. Certainly, I could spend an entire chapter discussing my own whiteness within the broader context of the work, specifically with regards to being a white researcher utilizing an analysis of an internal colonial process within a political economic framework of Canadian artists. It is important to note, however, that my primary focus is (and has been from the inception of this project) on the artist as other -- and not artist as ethnic other. Regardless, the issue of ethnicity as it relates to the artistic venture does erupt inside the text, as it erupted within the interview process, and as such it is important to at least briefly touch upon these kinds of understandings. As a white artist, there is no possibility that I can understand the struggles, for instance, that an Aboriginal artist or a Japanese artist living in Canada faces. Additionally, I am aware that my own location of whiteness will inevitably play a role in how I understand any analyses of colonialization.

This work is structured with the understanding that ethnographic research methods and modes of analysis function optimally when “dealing with the way institutional politicians interact with popular social movements, or with informal aspects of power relations in which the way people understand the situations they face and the options open to them” (Gledhill 2000:7-8). And, as ethnographic methods of research are “essential for investigating the dynamics of political processes at the local level” (ibid:7), they are well suited to provide the kinds of investigative frameworks that work in conjunction with the reflexive, poetic approach of autoethnography. As Richard Schechner states, “Human creativity works the field betwixt and between the ethnological, the neurological, and the social” (1993:318). Therefore, the basis for this project considers how the artist is situated and situates his or herself within a context of identity, power and colonialism, whether that resides within the realm of the intrapersonal, the arts community (interpersonal), the city of Winnipeg, or Canada itself.

In total, twenty-six unstructured and semi-structured interviews were conducted, with one group interview consisting of nine participants. In addition, there have been innumerable informal yet passionate, insightful, demanding, and caring discussions

between myself and other artistic friends, colleagues and artistic “elders.” These ongoing conversations have deeply and irrevocably contributed to the shaping and final outcome of this experiment. Furthermore, I am in the fortunate position of being able to draw upon long years of growing up in an artistic family with working artists and their peers, as well as years of being involved in the community in Winnipeg.

Participant-observation for this project has heavily involved interview and engaged conversation. Additionally, I attended book launches, poetry slams and open mic nights, dance, visual art and theatre events. To further widen my field of vision (along with the group of people I collectively create with) an application was made for a Canada Council grant, and two new works of art were created and performed for fundraisers. I engaged with two new art forms that I previously had no experience in, and farmed out some of my writing to magazines and contests. I have tackled my fieldwork while writing this thesis as an ongoing experiment -- and while having a set cut off point, have continued to explore the experiences of friends and colleagues, as well as my own artistic experiences in order to gain extra insight. Some of the events I attended were utilized for snowball sampling in order to find extra participants for my research. This, combined with my own resources, enabled me to find a wonderful cross section of identities and lives. At the outset of this research I made the decision to not limit myself in terms of perspective. I feel it absolutely essential to address the fact that art is so intimately tied to a uniqueness of identity and voice, speaking to the concept that “[a]t the core of all artistic efforts is the concern to express and experience what it means to be human” (De Staebler & Apostolos-Cappadona 1984:24) in all of its various facets. Therein, I interviewed beginning, intermediary and established artists, both male and female, approximately eighteen to seventy five years in age, from varying social, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and orientations.

This said, there are some ideological considerations and ethical concerns that require me to address them. I realize it is considered good anthropological practice to give a breakdown of who participated in any given study (in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity et cetera), and I understand this system is in place for ethical reasons related to academic truthfulness as well as giving the reader a greater understanding of the political and social voices that emerge within the text. I strongly feel, however, that in the case of this thesis, with regard to content and the people involved herein, this view is

limited. That one's personal identity (of orientation, et cetera) would override the identity that is the specific focus of this study (that of the artist) is a difficult concept to grapple with. As people often self identify in ways that are not limited to one specific set of boundaries, or self identify privately in ways that are not for public knowledge, I cannot make judgments on what those may be. Explaining these kinds of differences also changes the terms of the conversation as well as the focus.

Furthermore, I found that subjects framed any number of personal marginalities within their marginality as artist, and these erupt within the context of the thesis *only* as they relate to the artistic endeavor. With the identity as artist focal point in mind, I have prepared an appendix that gives an approximate breakdown of what stage in their career those I interviewed are (beginning, intermediate, advanced), the different artistic disciplines the participants are engaged in, their current and past places of residence in Canada, and whether they identified as male or female.¹⁰ Pointing out other sociological markers will only serve to cause great offence and anger to those who participated in this study, those people who are part of my community. This is not only due to the ethical nature of this as seen by the arts community, but also because of identifying markers. Perhaps most importantly, as half my participants are from a small arts community (Winnipeg), pointing out specific markers in this context will seriously contravene informant anonymity.

While I primarily interviewed people in the theatre and writing communities, those in other artistic professions were also consulted. In the theatre community, I interviewed people who were playwrights, actors, producers, directors and artistic directors. In the writing community, I interviewed writers of young adult as well as adult fiction, novelists, and poets. As well, I talked with those who are heavily involved with the arts, but are not "producers of art" in a conventional sense themselves. Approximately fifty percent of my participants were originally from Manitoba; the other fifty percent had their places of origin in various other provinces. I relied heavily on media accounts as public perception, but also from interviews and informal discussions with peers and other artists.

While research was principally conducted in Winnipeg, data collection also occurred in the Montreal area, and interviews with those from other provinces took place via telephone. Montreal is host to the premier school for theatre in Canada, the National

Theatre School (NTS). The artists involved with teaching at the school represent a vital database of research knowledge regarding the thesis subject, and are among the top people in their given professions. Additionally, NTS is renowned for producing some of the best and brightest young up and coming actors, playwrights and directors in Canada. Therein, NTS has provided a necessary bridge between the national and local levels I am addressing in this research, as well as an East to West perspective.

All participants¹¹ have been given an alias, and identifying information has been scrambled to the best of my abilities. Many participants are squarely in the public eye, and as such I have responded with extra care in terms of respecting privacy needs, in some instances using two aliases instead of one. In part, this is due to the fact that Winnipeg is a small community, and the smallest clue can potentially tip people off as to who may be speaking. It should be noted, however, that every person participating in this study has been given the option of using his or her real name and identity.

Unreasonable Theories

[E]conomic and political interests interpenetrate... and react on one another. (Cohen 1979:88)

This thesis takes a political economy approach, viewed from an anthropological standpoint. In this manner, it addresses the interplay between power and structure, and understands that “practices and institutions must be understood as situated within historically shaped systems of power [herein viewed as colonialism] and value [monetary and symbolic], from local to... [national] levels of analysis[,] and that communicative, [artistic], [performative] practices are themselves a crucial means through which power is constituted, exercised, resisted, and contested” (<http://www.temple.edu/anthro/cult.htm>). As Kurtz states, “The paradigm of political economy remains a vital paradigm for exploring the agent-driven politics of dominant and subordinate social categories in different kinds of political systems” (2001:15).

A political economic system is both “made and chosen,” giving social actors within a scene differing levels of agency (Littlefield and Gates 1991:2), therefore providing individuals and groups varying abilities to choose how that agency is utilized within the system. Looking from this angle, politics can then be understood as “the distribution, maintenance, exercise of, and struggle for power within a social unit”

(Cohen 1979:88), whereby “groups in ‘society’ construct or reconstruct identities for themselves in their struggles and negotiations with dominant groups and the state” (Gledhill 2000:199-200). Ultimately, these concepts lead towards broader explorations in terms of political economic relationships between artists, the general public, and the private and public sectors. A specific focus on symbolic, individual and structural dynamics of power aids in revealing the purposes, functions, and locations of a political economy of creative life. In turn, I define these dynamics vis-à-vis three key analytic concepts: power (symbolic), identity (individual), and colonialization (structural) within a dynamic capitalist economic system.¹²

Therein, the questions addressed in this research will: 1) explore the relationship between capitalism (macro) and the local (micro) arts scene, and how this relates to the larger arts scene in Canada; 2) inquire into the nature of economic relationships between the various players of artists, corporations, private and public sectors; 3) investigate the political context within which the local arts scene is situated. This includes how the local arts scene relates to itself (small scale politics) and to the national arts scene; 4) ask how shared artistic constructs of creative identity are structured, asking in what ways do they create distinct layers of symbolic power with regard to those both in and outside the arts community and; 5) consider how individual and collective agency can be utilized within the system to create shared structures of knowledge and meaning, resistance and recovery.

Power and Symbolic Action

Power relations are objectified, developed, maintained, expressed, or camouflaged by means of symbolic forms and patterns of symbolic action--- (Cohen 1979:89)

This work takes a bottom up approach, accepting and delving into the concept that a “micro-analysis of the symbolic dimensions of power in everyday life can be related to macro-structural analyses” (Gledhill 2000:148). This approach to power enables me to ask vital questions relating to ideas of dominance, resistance, and agency with regard to small-scale politics within the arts community and the economic factors that effect it, as well as identity and decolonization; this sets the stage for asking what are the levels of

power are that affect artists, and how they play out relative to the experience of those in the arts community.

That said, the meaning, role, nature and use of the concept of power are difficult to define (Jones 1983:195), and even among power theorists there is disagreement as to how to “conceptualize” it (Wartenberg 1990:7). However -- and briefly stated for the purposes of this thesis -- power is dynamic, reflexive, engaged, and can be viewed as “capillary” in the way it moves through society and “enters into everyday social relationships and the bodies [lives, identities] of individuals” (Gledhill 2000:149-152). In the political, as elsewhere, power is continuously present, and can just as easily refer to “positions of dominance, subordination or equivalency” as it can to relations of self-determination and freedom” (Menzie, Chunn & Boyd 2001:17). In an economic sense, power “aris[es] in the course of production, exchange, and distribution” (ibid). Within the political economy power can be viewed as a “derivative of either influence over or control of the means of production, and this control provid[es] both a source of political power and a means of extending it” (Kurtz 2001:27). In and of itself, power appears to wield a strange dichotomy in that, depending on the specific hand it is placed into can be utilized for purposes that are positive or negative, constructive or destructive, beneficial or corrupt. It can be used to subjugate or liberate, make clear or obfuscate, colonize or decolonize, or all of the above at once. Additionally, it shows “or rather hides... itself in the forms of everyday life” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:22). Because of its innate nature of concealment and abstraction, power is often found to be pernicious in the ways that it both presents itself and moves through a given field.

Within this, the power order and the symbolic order filter through and coexist with one another (Cohen 1979:105), and thus continually create the “bivocality” and thus “ambiguity” that “forges symbols into such powerful instruments in the hands of leaders and of groups in mystifying people for particularistic or universalistic or both purposes” (Cohen 1979:103-105). In terms of the arts, “[t]he challenge [then] is to demystify, to decolonize” (Smith 2002:16). The more we are aware of the pre-existing conditions and particulars that surround our situation, the more we can exert our resistance to those circumstances and environments of power. Indeed, as symbols are polyvocal and polysemic, they therefore contain the ability to create relationships of political or economic power within systems of dominance (hegemonic) or resistance (and therefore

agency). The concepts of symbolic action and capital are useful tools for understanding issues of value, and for understanding the fields of relation, social interaction and representation within the arts community. This concept is made clear by perceiving that “social fields and practices... are not themselves ‘economic’ [but] nevertheless obey a broader kind of economic logic, that of increasing some kind of ‘capital’ -- symbolic or cultural, political or linguistic” (Gledhill 2000:138). In terms of artists and art manufacturing, the production of ideas and even identity is one aspect of this type of symbolic capital. In a “resource-driven system” such as capitalism, identity can become a “potential resource... a part of human capital” (Edelman 1999:18).

Identity and Agency

Dominated groups do not simply appropriate the symbols of the dominant order but subject them to powerful inversions. (Gledhill 2000:85)

Identities are multilayered, multivocal, and multidirectional, holding “symbolic and cognitive value” (Beverley 2005:550), and can be inherent or constructed, given or taken, real or represented, and create a sense of belonging or isolation. They are “shaped by various kinds of social and cultural processes” (Gledhill 2000:90), which not only refer to an individual, group or organization, but also to a site or locale. The latter emerges by the “intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality” (Gupta & Ferguson 1992:8). Indeed, culture can be seen as a space of “signifying practice, the semantic ground on which human beings seek to construct and represent themselves and others -- and, hence, history and society” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:10). In this way, culture is empowered (ibid), holding its own particular forms of agency.

Agency itself is a motivated practice “invested with subjectivity, meaning, and to a greater or lesser extent power” (ibid). It is integral in action, utilizes methods of self-determination and resistance, and therein has the power, both “implicit and explicit” (Smith 2002:43) to manipulate and influence symbols, challenge, construct and transform structures, systems and “practices of domination” (Gledhill 2000:90). Agency can give purpose to ideas of otherness, therein empowering, crafting, negotiating and performing alternative notions of identity and its locales, thereby “shield[ing] against... [its] dissolution” (Savigliano 1995:4) and lending to its “legitimacy” (ibid:5). It can also be

found in processes of restructuring, transformation, and in the challenging of dominant “knowledge and systems, rules and values” (Smith 2002:42).

For the purposes of this work, I view agency and identity as twin engines of change and resistance, utilized by artists as part of a “meaningful form of *political* action rather than a product of ‘anomie’ or cultural ‘breakdown’¹³” (Gledhill 2000:69). This is placed into motion via an understanding of the arts (and artists) as holding the power of agency (incidentally, that power which drives emergence and creation); this notion holds an ability to underscore the ability artists have to define not only themselves, but their work and the greater world around them. As MacClancy states, “[P]eople use art objects (and other formats of art making)... to resist colonialism, to subvert racism, to demolish demeaning stereotypes, to better their own position or that of their own group, to defend a challenged notion of their people’s identity, to reinvent that identity” (1997:2).

Ultimately, art is a tool of agency that can be utilized to resist the kinds of hegemonic relationships and totalizing discourses found in a late capitalist society. This ability is the very thing that gives its wielders so much power. At the same time, this is often what keeps its detractors motivated to keep that power at arm’s length. This is also why we are damaged when our identities are “displaced or decentered” (Gupta & Ferguson 1992:12) by processes of internal colonialization and disenfranchisement via those in positions of power, as well as those within our own communities. In essence, this line of thinking enables me to ask how (and question what processes are involved when) artistic identities are disauthenticated, utilized as commodities and conversely (sometimes concurrently) utilized as methods of resistance, advocacy, and agency.

Colonialization and Imperialism

[C]olonialism... [is] a system of economic exploitation. (Gledhill 2000:71)

Colonialism, as a mode of power, is one of many interconnected expressions of imperialism (Smith 2002:22). Imperialism, in its purest form, is a “system of control which secure... markets and capital investments... [with] [c]olonialism facilitating...expansion by ensuring... control, which necessarily mean[s] securing and subjugating... indigenous populations” (ibid:19-21). Imperialism is a historical system of exploitation, “with many forms of realization” (ibid:21) entrenched in layers of power, consciousness

and will. Colonialism, as the “outpost” (ibid:23) of imperialism is engaged in the business of “seizing and transforming “others” by the very act of conceptualizing, inscribing, and interacting with them on terms not of their choosing, in making them into...pliant objects and silenced subjects” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:15). Part of the “culture bomb” of colonialism teaches the groups which it exercises its power with, at, over and through, that who they are as human beings is essentially a personal and social position of other (Savigliano 1995:25). It is true in some sense of the word all of us are “other,” entrenched in various notions and versions of otherness, yet colonialism holds a special sway to effectively yoke its subjects to imposed realities.

An internal colonialism refers essentially to the experience and social position of certain minority segments in society as analogous to the traditional colonial situation. In terms of the materials present in this thesis, the dominant power (the public and private sectors) extracts the material and human resources from the weaker nation (artists) while exercising political and economic control, with the oppressed and oppressors residing within the same national political and economic system. This view tends to see the racism within society (a prejudicial attitude towards the arts) as an essentially economic phenomenon -- inherent in the structure of a capitalist system.¹⁴ As Roseberry states, a dominant culture is never “a coherent integrated cultural system of structure but rather an inchoate set of lived experiences, feelings and relationships within a political and economic order of domination” (Vincent 2002:131). These paradigms of dominance are but one aspect leading to our decentralization and separation (from each other as artists and from the communities we are a part of), hierarchies and hegemonic relationships with the private and public sectors and the general public. With that, we must begin to ask the hard questions: What is the artistic experience in terms of an internal colonialization of creation and production, identity and mind, speech and imagination? How do we engage in processes of decolonization, which remove us from, lay bare symbols and engagements with, the “cultural” “bureaucratic” and “psychological” (Smith 2002:98) power of those with their fingers in the pie and on the button?

In order to engage with the questions raised in this chapter, this thesis embraces an ethnography of creative resistance, accepting Marxist approaches that “invite us to follow our informants’ intuitions and our own common sense by focusing on the interaction between material circumstances and the thoughtful, active, imaginative human

beings who interpret and respond to them” (Littlefield and Gates 1991:3). In order to do so, the theories and methods utilized herein are those that embrace action and inclusivity, that challenge and resist, that make space and develop room, aiding in uncovering overt and covert multi-layered stratagems of power. These approaches enable me to look into the ways in which artists construct their identities or are constructed, speak or are spoken about, are enmeshed with or gain agency and power, have access to the systems in which they are engaged or from which they are disenfranchised. With this, my wish is to allow for, at the very least, spaces of decolonization, not only by following a well trod path of anthropological ancestors, but by allowing for the understanding that ethnography has many faces. Some faces are those who have spoken to me and those who have not, of those who are waiting for answers, of those who do not care. A brave ethnography is not only one which demands us to address those voices, to cradle and challenge them, to care for and feel them deep inside our raw open hearts, but a willingness to face the self who is writing these words, the self who is watching, the self who is waiting, the self who is anticipating.

I wander all night in my vision,
Stepping with light feet ... swiftly and noiselessly stepping and
stopping,
Bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of sleepers;
Wandering and confused ... lost to myself ... ill-assorted...
contradictory ...

(Walt Whitman, “Leaves of Grass”)

Chapter Three: Government-Subsidized Whiners

Prime Minister Stephen Harper cast his lot Tuesday with “ordinary working people” and not with a cultural elite he characterized as government-subsidized whiners. (Cheadle: http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/capress/080923/national/fedeln_main)

[O]ut there in the real world there are people questioning, “Well, what’s the use of this?” I mean, more than once, in the early days I had people say, “Well, if it’s so hard, why don’t you get a real job?” I mean that’s a cliché Kirsten, but it was said directly to me. “Well, you know if you had a real job...” (Faye Personal Interview: 2006)

But at the same time...the general public just doesn’t know what artists do, and how they live their day to day.... They think that maybe they’re not talented or hardworking enough to get a real job. (Ari Personal Interview: 2006)

Rollo May asks: “In our day of dedication to facts and hard-headed objectivity, we have disparaged imagination.... What if imagination and art are not frosting at all but the fountainhead of human experience?” (Fox 2002:143). In this country, in order for those outside the arts to fully understand the weight and gravity of this statement, they must do away with notions that art is an embellishment, and understand instead that it is central to our survival as a nation. In one sense then, our decolonization “has to do more with an attitude, it has to do more with ideology, it has to do more with political will, than anything else” (Chris Personal Interview:2006).

The arts, in all of their various forms connect, penetrate, and gift society in ways that are of enormous social, symbolic, philosophic and economic value. Yet, in a late capitalist society, a “society of massive, intensive, hyper-rabid consumerism” (Savigliano 1995:20), with its focus on creating money to purchase items of consumption, there is a certain amount of suspicion that follows the artist, with the inevitable assumptions and mindset that accompanies it: Artists do not make any money. They do not have a real job like I do. Therefore, they are not contributing. Therefore, what they are doing isn’t real. Therefore, they are playing or pretending. Therefore, they are falsifying and covering something up. Therefore, they are not to be trusted. Barring lengthy discussion on the value of the arts, which will be covered somewhat in Chapter Six, perhaps my best

response to this is that our work in fact is to discover, uncover and recover that which has been lost and buried, forgotten, not talked about or shared. As Richards mentions, “‘The purpose of the word is to reveal.’ (...) ‘Isn’t this what we try to do in our artistic work...to bring something to light, to manifest, to reveal?’” (Fox 2002:59-60). Artists have the very real job of bringing us into direct contact with our contradictions, asking difficult questions, showing us the larger world in shades of grey and forcing us to interact with it.

Beginnings: A Short History of the Arts in Canada

I can tell you that when I first started... [at] the university, in 1958/59, there was really no Canadian Literature. There was one course called “Canadian Commonwealth” and the general feeling there really wasn’t much Canadian Literature. And I had professors who made fun of Canadian writing, and thought that too.... Canadians didn’t write. Writing was done by great Brits and great Americans. So, I decided quite early that I wanted to be a writer, but I also saw a real need to create the cultural organizations that would support and make this possible. (Ingmar Personal Interview: 2006)

See, where I come from, I really believe that at that time, so that would have been maybe 1979/1980, there weren’t any writers. I mean, you’ve heard that said before, but there really weren’t, in my world, that I grew up in, anybody who’d really grown up to be a writer. I ended out finding there was one, but she had died, and everybody forgot about her for awhile.... But there were men. There were a few dead men poets. (Faye Personal Interview: 2006)

We came here [as immigrants] stunted by leaving the places where our cultural traditions were firmly entrenched. It is this artistic beheading that we are still recovering from as a nation. (Melissa Personal Communication: 2007)

A playwriting professor I had while taking my undergraduate degree in theatre spent much of his classroom time disparaging Canadian playwrights, and extolling the virtues of American ones. He felt that there was no tradition of playwrighting in Canada, and therefore anything that came from a Canadian playwright was a childish imitation of the real thing. The “real thing” being from someone from Europe or America, essentially speaking to anything that did not smack of what he perceived as backwater art. At the time I had no idea where he got his ideas from, and they confused as well as amused and enraged me, which possibly points to how far we have come since the appointment of the Massey-Levesque Commission¹⁵ in 1949.

Why did my professor believe that any playwrighting that came from Canada was far too provincial to be trifled with? Simply put, he came from a time and generation where that kind of thinking was far too often accepted as true. As Margaret Atwood and Rosemary Sullivan have stated, in the 1950's:

There were few local publishers, and those few made their living from acting as agents for imported work, and from selling school texts. They weren't inclined to take risks, since there wasn't much demand for indigenous¹⁶ writing. The colonial mentality was still in force, meaning the Great Good Place for the arts was thought to be somewhere else, such as London, Paris, or New York, and if you were a Canadian writer you were assumed by your countryfolk to be not only inferior, but pitiable, pathetic, and pretentious. (Atwood 2002:67)

[I]f you... wanted to write, the best solution was to get the heck out of Canada. Many did: Mavis Gallant and Mordecai Richler went into self-imposed exile in France and England, Sinclair Ross went to Spain. Margaret Laurence lived outside of Canada for ten years. Why? Because there was no cultural fabric to support writers: there was only... indifference on the part of the public... taught to believe there was no culture... [in Canada]. Writing was something done by Americans and Europeans, preferably dead Americans and Europeans. (Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage 1999: 12)

When the Massey-Levesque Commission began its inquiries in 1949, there was no "world of Canadian arts and letters of the kind that existed in European countries and the United States" (Woodcock 1985:46). When their report was published in 1951, they found that no writer of any kind could make "even a modestly comfortable living by selling his work in Canada," that no musical composer could "live at all on what Canada pays him for his composition," that only a few producers and actors could "live by working in the theatre in Canada," and that only a handful of painters and sculptors "outside the field of commercial art and teaching" could "live by the sale of their work in Canada" (ibid:46-47).

Ultimately, the commission's report created thoughtful and analytic research on the state of the arts, and made recommendations for educational and cultural improvement. One of those recommendations was for the creation of the Canada Council of the Arts, which was established by 1957, and whose primary goals are to "foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts, humanities and social sciences" (<http://www.canadacouncil.ca/aboutus/Background/kd12722903794>

9843750.htm). The Canada Council, which reports to Parliament via the Minister of Canadian Heritage, is “a national arm's-length agency which fosters the development of the arts in Canada through grants, services and awards to professional Canadian artists and arts organizations¹⁷” (ibid). Prior to the development of the council, primary sources of funding for Canadian artists were American.¹⁸

Certainly the arts in Canada existed before the 1950s, but were seen as rarefied, apart from the everyday business of actual life and real living. The condition of art across the country truly was that thing, out there. This condition was “partly due to the lack of interest on the part of most Canadians, still barely out of the pioneer age, in art” (Woodcock 1985:47). But even more so it was “due to the lack of the kind of infrastructure which transforms a scattering of people working in virtual isolation into a really functioning artistic and literary world that reaches out to audiences both urban and rural and in all regions” (ibid). Consequently, the creation of the Canada Council had an enormous impact on the lives of artists and on the condition of the arts in this country. The upsurge of art in the 1950s and 1960s was obviously not the sole result of the findings of the commission and its recommendations (including the creation of the Council), yet the impact was unquestionably widespread. For instance, in 1965 here in Manitoba, the Manitoba Arts Council was created. The council, “an arm's-length agency of the Province of Manitoba... makes awards to professional arts organizations and individuals in all art forms including arts education, literary arts, performing arts, and visual arts” (http://www.artscouncil.mb.ca/english/about_role.html). The creation of the council spelled good news in particular for individual Manitoba artists, providing them with more avenues for funding, within a smaller competitive arena.

East Meets West

One might think that looking holistically at the arts scene in Canada, even for the purpose of a national perspective, is an egregious error. However, when looked at from a historical perspective, a different pattern of understanding emerges. We can trace our roots to very recent beginnings, with a very small countrywide arts scene. As Margaret Atwood states: “[In the late 1950’s] [t]he artsy scene [I was a part of] was small, like the artsy scene in Canada itself” (2002:20). The arts community has blossomed out from this point, over the past fifty or sixty years.

After speaking with artists from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, the Maritimes, and Ontario, the kinds of issues and problems Winnipeg artists face in terms of unequal funding and stereotyping appear to cross provincial borders. Francophone Montreal, however, seems to hold a special appeal other cities lack. In contrast to Winnipeg, my experiences in Montreal were truly astonishing.

Honestly, I think it's [Quebec francophone arts scene] healthier [than the Anglo Canada arts scene] for a few reasons. It doesn't hurt that say here in Quebec everything is so centralized. So much of the activity happens in and around Montreal. Not all of it, but a lot of it. So, geographically there's like this hotspot, right? So that helps. It's less spread out than the rest of Canada.... Two more factors: the fact that the provincial government here has always supported the arts way, way more than elsewhere in Canada in the past. And still does. And the municipal government does too here, and has done for many, many years. That really doesn't hurt. And that, oddly enough... audiences here really go, really follow the arts. And it's amazing, and you can hear it in my voice, I'm always surprised.... You go to Place Des Arts to some big concert, and the place is jammed. Again. You think "God".... The working environment, because it's supported, is bubbling. I mean it's just cooking. And *people go*. (Bonny Personal Interview:2006)

Certainly, my experiences whenever I have been in Montreal over the years have reflected this -- I have gone to music or writing events I thought would only have a few people there, only to find them sold out. On several occasions, to my utter amazement, I have observed people lined up around the block -- to watch live theatre. During my fieldwork, I went to see a visual arts exhibit one weekday afternoon: *Ciel et Terre* -- Heaven and Earth, created by Anselm Kiefer.¹⁹ His work is stark and metallic, and combined with a sheer immensity of canvas, the effect is dizzying and disorienting. The place is hopping and buzzing with people. Not just adults or the elderly, but teenagers and children. Aside from festival events, I have never once seen anything like this in my own city. Not the diversity or the sheer volume of people. This said, all the artists I interviewed from Quebec, or who had lived there over ten years, told me that while the Francophone arts scene in Montreal was in full swing, the Anglo and Allophone arts were struggling for audiences and funding.

While Francophone Montreal hasn't created a utopia, I believe that Winnipeg, and most likely a few other cities in Canada would do well to look at the kind of phenomenal support systems and programs they have put into orbit for their artists, and how they have managed to garner such fantastic public support. Part of this does have to do with the

kind of funding the province of Quebec both receives and allots for their artists. As Bonny tells me:

Canada funds Quebec artists. In Quebec -- there's *a lot* of art in Montreal. And there's some people would say there's a terrible imbalance in terms of federal funding. That Quebec gets way more. But there are way more artists. And then some people will say, "Well, there would be more artists in other places if you funded them." So that's a big argument. And it's a valid argument. (Bonny Personal Interview:2006)

The question becomes what the visceral difference is between English and French speaking Canada in terms of how it views artistic support. The best explanation came from Simon Brault²⁰, Director General for the National Theatre School and Vice Chair of the Canada Council:

I think... it has to do more with an attitude, it has to do more with ideology, it has to do more with political will, than anything else. And the proof is that one of the poorest provinces in Canada is Quebec. And it's where you -- I mean we spend more -- the biggest public budget for culture. Why? Because we understood, and I think it's understood not only by decision makers, but by ordinary citizens that if you don't have art and culture, we will not survive. I mean, we won't speak French anymore in Quebec, we don't be this distinct society that we are anyway. So, there's a direct connection between the notion of survivance and the notion of arts and culture. And I guess that in English Canada, what I see is that people see arts and culture as something peripheral to their soul, to their very existence. And I think that one of our biggest challenges now is to demonstrate that it has to be *central* to the experience of individuals and collectivities. (Brault Personal Interview:2006)

Creating an understanding in the public sphere and in the arts community itself of the necessity of centralizing art is an essential key factor in raising us up from the places we have been languishing in. We must open doors for others to understand that the artistic is (and is in) the continuation of our cultural health and survival. Without the arts, who would we be? Where would we be? Those people who have had the greatest impact on public lives, the way people think, feel and act, right down to a molecular level are artists. The arts ground us in ways we can't even begin to understand unless they were to vanish. The arts allow all of us spiritual spaces of humanity. As an example, when I took the metro to see Keifer's work at the Musee D'Art Contemporain De Montreal²¹, I immediately heard music as soon as I walked off the metro and into the station. When I got closer, I saw an enormous crowd had gathered. People came and went, but the energy was so different than what I had experienced in my own city. People stop to appreciate

the music, not because they have no place else to go, or because they are desperate for something to do. We all stopped so that we could be suspended, together, in a moment of communion.

In 1982, the Applebaum-Hebert Committee²² stated, as had the Massey-Levesque Commission in 1951, that “[t]he largest subsidy to the cultural life of Canada comes not from government, corporations or other patrons but from the artists themselves, through their unpaid or underpaid labor” (Woodcock 1985:126). In 2008, artists are still the biggest subsidizers of their own art, through “unpaid or underpaid labor.” In order for us to grow, to heal, to change, certain realities must be acknowledged and not glossed over or glad-handed. Artists, government and the public alike must all stand up, and recognize that, in spite of inevitable changes that have occurred over the last sixty years, including the creation of much needed and valued arts councils, the artistic community is not that much further than where we were in 1951 in terms of how we are funded. Again, as individual artists, we are still our own biggest subsidizers. Instead of making light of this fact, we need to instead ask ourselves what it actually means, how this reflects on support of the arts, how this reflects on promises that are made but never delivered, and how this reflects on our own ability to obscure painful truths. And then we need to ask what we are going to do about it.

The Exotic Other

The gaze with the power to exoticize is the colonial gaze--- (Savigliano 1995:75)

Chanting for my house
My friends
You want it all
The pillows on my bed
The visions in my head
You want too much
You want too badly
You want everything for nothing.
(Joni Mitchell, “The Windfall (Everything for Nothing)”)

The concept of artist as “exotic other” or “novelty” produces some of our most toxic artistic stereotypes. These have the unfortunate effect of separating us from our actual identities; we become a caricature built on others perceptions. Artists are often well aware of their stereotypical “role” as novelty, and resent it as often as we joke about

it. "Because, see, if I go to a party, someone introduces me as a poet, right away four people will [say]... 'Oh. Tell us a poem.' 'Can't you just make a poem right now?' 'Say something that's poetical, say something deep'.... It's like a dog and pony show all of a sudden. You know, like I became a writer to put on the Ritz every second. It's weird"²³ (Salvadore Personal Interview:2006).

Interestingly, "the party" was a theme often rolled around inside conversations with the digital recorder on and off, over dinners, nestled in living rooms filled with colorful throw pillows and cheerful kitchens, or in the cool grey light of my borrowed Montreal office space, overlooking buildings and birds spiraling up and down in the winter sky. Independently of each other, Melissa and Hiroshi explain in quick sarcastic tones their experiences as artists of "the cocktail party:"

Melissa: You don't fit in. I mean you go to cocktail parties, I mean you can't have a meaningful conversation with somebody at a cocktail party, unless you meet somebody who's as screwy as you are. But there's something about -- people will ask you what you think about something or how you feel about something. And you tell them. (laughs) And they really don't want to hear it. To the detail that you will go into. Certainly that -- I'm sure other artists have that. That sense that other people -- that you overload them with your passion. (Melissa Personal Interview:2006)

Hiroshi: Sometimes you walk into a room full of people that you don't know, and everyone's making small talk, and someone says to me "What do you do?" and I say, "I'm a poet." And the conversation just stops. It just *ends*. And people have no response to that. They think that poets are *different*. Different and incomprehensible. Are so different from the rest of humankind that there's not even a way to communicate trivial discussions with them at a cocktail party. (Hiroshi Personal Interview:2006)

Conversations such as these are common enough that many if not most of us already brace ourselves for the incoming negativity and intolerance, shielding from the barbs before the first arrow is even fired. We are already on the defensive, and ready for the attack. It is a sad truth that we hold a certain amount of expectation that we will be kept on the margins, treated like second-class citizens and discriminated against because of who we are. At a Christmas party I attended in 2006 another student who had asked about my thesis topic turned to me, bemused and accusatory, and said: "Well yes, but what about *all* the leeway *we* give artists? We give artists a lot of leeway because we just say oh well, they're just being artists." He was, in his mind, being genuine, but had no understanding of how uneducated, and more to the point, how bigoted his statement was.

Yet, somehow this identity as exotic often becomes an integral part of how we end up surviving in the world. The mystery that frequently surrounds the arts is what often inexorably draws people towards them. The ability to watch, read or participate in something that is seemingly unattainable holds a certain appeal, shown for instance by the masses of people who turn out to watch (fantastic and fantastical) groups such as Cirque du Soleil. There has always been a certain thrill of the unknown surrounding the lives of artists; the public is continuously fascinated, for instance, at what goes on "behind the scenes" in the theatre, or what a writer must *really* be like. Often yearned for past the words, the songs, the syllables and the stage, we accept these moments as harmless parts of our job, a natural curiosity on the part of our audiences. However, there are those times when we are wanted far beyond what we are willing or able to give. I recall several years ago going to a book club with a friend who writes novels, and who was going because she was asked to give a reading. The main theme of the book centered on a dysfunctional family within which one of the characters was gay. At the Q&A period, two of the first questions people asked her were "Does this mean that you are a lesbian or have maybe had lesbian experiences?" and "Is your family dysfunctional like in the book?" I was expecting them to ask her the latter question, as audiences tend to think that what is in fictional writing is an exact (or almost exact) replica of the writer's life, but the abruptness in the former question threw me somewhat. "Are they always so forward with you?" I asked her afterward. "That was nothing" she said to me, "you should hear some of the personal questions people want answered."

It is this passion to have and hold and consume the exotic that becomes part of the dance between audience and artist. In *Negotiating With the Dead*, Margaret Atwood (2002:35) gives insight to this thought:

There's an epigram tacked to my office bulletin board, pinched from a magazine -- 'Wanting to meet an author because you like his work is like wanting to meet a duck because you like pate.' That's a light enough comment upon the disappointments of encountering the famous, or even the moderately well-known -- they are always shorter and older and more ordinary than you expected -- but there's a more sinister way of looking at it as well. In order for the pate to be made and then eaten, the duck must first be killed. And who is it that does the killing?

Perhaps a difficult question to pose -- as artists we give of our work and ourselves freely, in hopes of gaining an audience to listen to us, buy our work and come to our shows;

essentially this is in the hope they will partake in what we have to offer. However, in doing so, sometimes the pendulum swings to the other side. In these cases, the audience becomes cannibal-like -- they can never get enough, dissecting the lives and minds of artists down to the last morsel, the last molecule, the last drop. And we become misrepresented and misinterpreted in the process. And appropriated. And stereotyped. And made fun of. And lauded. And wanted. And loved. And praised. And all the other pleasant and unpleasant vagaries of being in the public eye. The irony of the artist is that we are desired, and at the same time undesirable. "And that's the frustration, is that at the one hand, the artists are at the forefront of society, and they're sort of paraded out when we want a photo-op. And I know that's a little bit of the cynical purview, but... then the artist is left" (Dagmar Personal Interview:2006). Our flesh and words are yearned for, yet at the exact moment of touch, or perhaps in the luminous afterglow, we are asked to return to wherever it was we emerged from. Left outside. It is living within this schizophrenic pendulum of wanting and not wanting that we find difficult, complex and thorny. Perhaps more to the point, this is also where we discover that our specific "use" in the society we live in is reflected in a capitalist mirror, one where people are product. Additionally, this model inevitably raises the question of our fitness for economic consumption: as artists, how we are passionately confronted and consumed as exotic artifacts, why, and for whom?

The Artist as Untouchable: Metaphors of Justification

Exoticism... is the seemingly harmless side of exploitation... a legitimate practice of discrimination... [and] representation through which identities are frivolously allocated.

It is also a will to power over the unknown, an act of indiscriminately combining fragments, crumbs of knowledge and fantasy--- (Savigliano 1995:169)

When looking at the artist as object of consumption, the primary stereotype that requires addressing is "artist, the endless resource." The overflowing cup, with an unending capacity to generate and keep generating, because we are inexhaustible like our passion, like the wild, like nature. The human fuel that miraculously makes and continues to make something from nothing. Without end. Without those on the receiving side needing to give anything in return. And why? In part, the answer lies in the notion of a relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer places his or her own "progressive identity" -- the "Civilized, Enlightened, Democratic, Postmodern [person]"

(Savigliano 1995:2) in opposition to the exoticism of the colonial other. What develops from this is a “cycle of production, distribution, and consumption, including... [a] cyclic crisis,... [which is always continuing, unending]: Exotic Passion, by (imperial) definition, is untamable and inexhaustible” (ibid). Within this colonial mode, it becomes justifiable for civilized society to keep the artist economically and politically bereft in terms of our symbolic power (placing us at the bottom rung), and enables others to maximize our “potential” as value rich resources.

The notion of exotic passion, for the artist, is part of a larger representation that includes artist as the anarchistic, the unknowable, the unattainable, the unworkable, the untouchable. They are extensions of a larger “Romantic Artist” stereotype, and help to ensure that we are not taken seriously as astute contributors (a role typically reserved for those persons who are institutionally embedded, such as political leaders) to a larger conversation about the state of the world, whether through fear of the artist as “hell raiser” or from a more paternalistic view of them as “inept child.” This only further serves the agenda of those in positions of power to justify why we are not meant to partake in the systems we are actually a part of, and have every right to be contributors to. The stereotypes forced upon us (or truthfully, ones that we decide to embrace) often deal in ways of attempting to maintain an image (as individuals and community) -- one which is unsophisticated in its reason, intelligence, and organization.

And I’ve had radio [announcers say], in the beginning days [in a schmaltzy voice]: ‘Well, Hi! You got a nice book out there now! Writing one for the little kiddies?’ You know that old radio voice. Oh my Jesus, Kirsten. ‘[W]ell now tell me how you do those little ditties! ‘And you know it’s taken you four years to write the little ditties and probably one poem you’ve re-written eighty times. And it’s just the condescension, because it was a ‘Kiddies Book! You just write the little ditties!’ (Georgia Personal Interview:2006)

Nothing could be further from the truth. Artists continually grapple with complex processes and frameworks that our creativity fosters and utilizes to challenge, educate, entertain, or create “social shifts... [and] penetrate beyond the outward appearances of things to reach the essential aspects” (Guttsman 1990:181). Far too often, the fact that artists “possess [our] own conceptual frames, modes of representation, and interpreters ...[and that our] concepts, actions, and knowledge are...[not] ‘raw data’ [but]

sophisticated systems of knowledge” (Bacigalupo 1993:45) is overlooked or completely missed altogether. It should simply be taken as a given that we “systematically intellectualize...[our] worlds, recreate meaning, and analyze” (ibid) in ways that are beneficial to the society we live in. Instead, artists are often left feeling frustrated and weary with the notion that what we do isn’t worth the price of admission. Unfortunately, all too often it is a lack of education or understanding about how our process (or culture) works, that eases the public, the media, or the government towards our political and economic marginalization. Due to the widespread nature of this issue, sometimes even our own personal support networks fail to offer support, refuse to understand our choices, deny our worth, or dismiss the work that we do.

I have had countless dismissals and insults at the hands of friends and family.... The usual polite ‘How’s your work coming?’ never gets asked. It’s like the work doesn’t exist.... And then when you’re asking about how they feel about me becoming an artist it’s like, ‘Well, it’s my own unfortunate choice’.... It’s something where I think people are very sort of unaware and very abusive of. And these are people I love. (Maria Personal Interview:2006)

My family has *no* concept. I think my family thinks I should have been a teacher, or an accountant.... So, I hear tell that some of my books have been burned by family members. You’re shocked.... So, yeah I think my family tends to be very status quo-ish. (Demitri Personal Interview:2006)

Whether it is our own family, friends, and loved ones who marginalize us or it is those outside our inner circles, certain clarities emerge with regard to how deep the roots of negativity go. The mythos of the artist is extensive, often touching and corroding the interiors of our most private existence. “Actors are stuck with the ‘rogues and vagabonds’ myth. No matter how grownup our behaviour is in public or private, we suffer from society’s view that we are not quite trustworthy... much of our bad press comes from ignorance and misrepresentation” (Newhouse & Messaline 1990:151). Sex-crazed, lazy, stupid, unpredictable, unreliable, self-indulgent, good-for-nothing, alcoholic, substance-abusing, crazy, immoral, charlatans, liars, non-productive members of society -- as artists we are placed in the same roles as any other colonized group. “Representations of ‘native life’ as being devoid of work habits, and of native people being lazy, indolent, with low attention spans, is part of a colonial discourse that continues to this day” (Smith 2002:53-54). Whether we are sketched as the poor unenlightened, the ignorant, the child-like, the

romantic, the unpredictable genius, or the passionate untamable wild of the soul, it matters not. The end result is always the same: it becomes acceptable and reasonable to deem the artist unsafe, uncontrollable, foolhardy, incapable and simple.

This is not to say that as artists we do not have our own avenues of power. We often utilize our stereotypes, our identities as exotics, as a method of agency. These may be employed for a number of reasons: in order to create gains economically or symbolically, or to flip our own stereotypes on their heads to mask or disguise ourselves, thereby drawing our enemies away from our sometimes fragile borders. As Savigliano states, "[T]o the colonized-exotic-other... [the] allocation of passionateness provides both a locus of identity and a source of contestation vis-à-vis the colonizing-civilized-desire -- the Desire of and for the One" (1995:2). While we utilize our identity as exotics as a method of agency, this often works against us. By taking on the exterior, imposed mantle of the colonizer we are making space or allowing for negative or unwanted behaviours from outside sources towards the artist to take root. However, what must be kept in mind is that the choices artists are often left with are scant. With stunning frequency we only endure via our own creativity and identities in order to make gains or to protect ourselves. "Exotics negotiate their status as passionate objects so as to gain agency over their passionateness. Passion is the currency through which exotics negotiate their identity with other exotics and with exoticizers" (Savigliano 1995:169). Referring then back to Atwood's question: Who is it that does the killing?

Conversation:

She says: They made us wait around at this [jazz] gig to play last, even though they told us we'd be up first, and they knew one of my players had another [paying] commitment right away.

I say: So what happened?

She says: The lady organizing it felt bad, and went to apologize to my player. When I brought it up with her later she looked at me with relief and smiled and said "Oh, it's okay, he told me that you people are always late anyway, it's a musician thing."

I say: Oh god.

She says: I corrected her.

We must be cautious in how we navigate and communicate, not only with those inside our community, but outside it as well. When stereotypes that keep us silenced are embraced, for whatever reason, we can effectively shut ourselves out of the larger picture by removing our own voices from the equation, thereby removing our ability to

contribute. By denigrating our own value, we rob those very systems we are a part of (whether we like it or not) of deeply complex and beneficial knowledge that can and does alter and shift perception. This is the *magic* of what we can bring with us to share with others, and thereby share with our communities and ourselves.

Rumpelstiltskin: The Problem of Mental Poverty

[My parents] didn't understand what it was to support me in a movement towards making a living. And so art, when it came right down to it, was considered playing. And it wasn't the really work that you did as a serious person. And art wasn't a *real job*. (Maria Personal Interview: 2006)

As Cavendish states, artists are "the ones who oxygenate the blood of the country, and yet all too often we are perceived as a novelty, to be appreciated but not valued" (Wyman 2004:99). Frequently, the public is excited about the idea of the arts, about the concept, but not the reality. In her cool kitchen, wrapped in blankets and sipping mugs full of tea, Maria tells me, "[Y]ou think of what hockey players are paid, you think about what most professionals are paid, and you have to see that society is not really valuing art. It may be mouthing that it is, but it really isn't" (Maria Personal Interview:2006). In Winnipeg, community and economic support is often "mouthed," yet when reality sets in, the streets are rolled up and the shutters locked down tight. In her interview, Hiroshi echoes this problem:

I was talking with a friend yesterday who moved here from Toronto. And she was saying when she first came to Winnipeg, she'd go to a reading, there'd be nine people there. She'd think 'Nine people?!' Like, 'That's ridiculous! Why are there only nine people?! Where are all the people?!' And after now having been here for a number of years, she's like 'Great! Nine people! It's a successful reading.' So, it's hard sometimes to pull people out for events. (Hiroshi Personal Interview:2006)

Indeed, in thinking about various poetry slams and readings I have attended over the years in Winnipeg, my experience echoes that of Hiroshi's. At the slams, almost everyone who attends is another poet (and a few of their friends), and half the audience leaves after first break, after the first set of readers have finished. Typical of this kind of attitude is the time I went with a friend to a major bookstore for coffee, and to our surprise found a book launch in progress. Only two people had come out for the event, and upon further exploration, it turned out that one of these people was the author's

father. Getting ‘asses in the seats’ is a perpetual issue in Winnipeg for writing and theatre events²⁴, unless you are booking large venues for big name acts.

Certainly, Winnipeg is a poorer city, with a population that does not have much “expendable” money, and is often known as a city of bargains and deals. Within this, a certain kind of mentality arises with regard to the worth of things. Often, artists from “away” are seen as much more valuable than the ones living here. Somehow, the value system in Winnipeg is set that the public will spend three hundred dollars to go and see a big name act at the MTS Centre, but when it comes to local artists the mentality is (as a friend who is a photographer pointed out one day): “Three hundred bucks for a photograph? What? C’mon, I’ll give you twenty five bucks for that.” My belief is that this type of problem is in part reflective of a continued refusal to celebrate the tremendous creative abundance we have in Winnipeg, in terms of public support as well as hard dollars. As Genny said in her interview “We don’t *celebrate* what we have. *In* Winnipeg. For sure. [We] just get Boorley [Morley Walker²⁵] writing sarcastic things” (Genny Personal Interview:2006).

It is important to note that, as “writers from Mead... to Bakhtin... have emphasized, the essence of who we are, what we think, and how we talk is largely contingent on the others we celebrate” (Austin 2006:206). By refusing to celebrate the richness of the arts we have in Winnipeg, and in Canada, it is not just artists who lose out, it is everyone. And why? It is because the “celebration²⁶ of others through dialogue (and action) bends back on us reflexively, sustaining, altering, or transforming our comprehension of ourselves and our social world” (ibid). Simply put, we value what we celebrate. Perhaps it is easy arithmetic to understand that if the public celebrated and thereby inevitably supported artists and the arts, the economic and social problems that we face would not be as significant as they currently are. In the public sphere, there still remains far too much ignorance of the fact that, as Hopkinson²⁷ states, “Arts organizations and artists deliver a tremendous amount to society and [yet] are among the lowest paid workers in Canada” (Ditchburn 2006:C6). Again, a portion of this mentality stems from this notion that artists do not create things that are of actual value; western society tends toward being deeply focused on capitalist modes of production. In this manner, “value” tends to translate into hard currency, economic growth and societal prosperity, of which it is

believed the arts community contributes, at best, very little. As Dagmar so pointedly stated:

And I think there is a kind of attitude that, 'Well, if you choose to live that [artistic] life, it's your own fault. You know, what do you expect? You expect the corporate world to support you? We're getting up at six and going to work by seven-thirty. And we're earning our dollars.' I think that kind of attitude is common. I was going to say rampant, but I'll soften that and just settle for common. And that's where there is a breakdown between what the artist provides society, is that there isn't -- it's not an equal relationship between what the artist can do and can make and receive for it, and what they're expected to do when need be. (Dagmar Personal Interview:2006)

The poverty we face is not simply economic, easily boiled down to a dollar value, neatly folded and placed on some future government "to-do" list. Daily, artists are pushing themselves against the hard tide -- a poverty of mind and of experience. This kind of poverty is reflected and funneled into a public refusal to celebrate, a refusal to educate, a refusal to share, and a refusal to see past personal and societal assumptions.

Faye: I mean, people just don't know. They hear me on the radio. This includes other artists too. Or they see my books in the store. So they assume I must be making "X" amount of dollars.... And don't know how royalties work, and advances, and all that. And people would be so shocked. Like on twenty books, last year I think my income was eight thousand dollars? And I have public lending rights on top of that. So that was, probably [got] me up to twelve? The public lending rights thing is a really good thing. But I mean I make less than fifteen thousand dollars a year. *Way* less. And that's a *good* year. Like eight thousand would be a good year. And most of my books are still out on the shelves, still in print. So, you know when you get 20 cents a book, or 40 cents a book... and our book buying club is so small. That's the other thing, again you know, it becomes a question of if people *really* want to support the arts, then *buy* what it is we create. (Faye Personal Interview:2006)

We have now skipped past the place of public support being a good idea, or necessary, and have gone straight to mandatory. The fact of the matter is public experience brings necessary levels of support to the surface, and without it we drown. And yet the problem remains: the idea of having an arts community is terrific, but when it comes to celebration and support, either socially or financially, words are air and everyone wants something for nothing.

Diana: Most people, I think, they don't value it enough to put in the kind of money into it that I think needs to be there. I think if you ask just about

anybody 'Do you like movies? Do you like books? Do you like art? Do you like theatre, or dance?' or whatever, I don't think very many people would say 'Nah. I can't be bothered.' Not many people that I know. But then, to recognize that if you feel that way, you have a commitment to not only get out there and support those things, but to encourage your politicians to put more money into the arts. That's where I think it kind of breaks down. They want it. Especially if it doesn't cost them anything, right? (Diana Personal Interview:2006)

In order for the arts to thrive in any fashion, there must be fundamental changes in where we as a nation direct our energies as well as an understanding of the value of the artist -- not simply as a commodity, but as a cultural life force that has worth beyond what is immediate.

The challenges to understanding loom heavy over us. It is a matter of waking people up to understanding that the arts are not simply something on the periphery of their lives, or has no direct effect on them.

And I've thought about that a lot in my life. About why it is that the arts remain so far in the periphery. At least in North America. And why we have been relegated to poverty. And such difficult struggle. And why our challenges have remained outside of a realm of acceptance that would make for a not so difficult life. And I do have to say that I believe that there is a very strange and deep-seated complexity in society in an attitude toward the artist. And I sometimes think that the artist is kept outside of society because we have dared to make a choice to live differently from the guiding or determined norms of a patriarch and a corporate agenda. A patriarchal society and a corporate agenda that has really no place for the artist, other than on the outskirts. And I think that that enables those who have an appetite and an aptitude for achievement, and even perhaps for power, to be able not to include the artist in that. I think that there's something intentional about it. And I know that sounds very cynical. (Dagmar Personal Interview:2006)

Mental poverty comes in the form of not understanding the centrality of the arts in the day-to-day life of the people, of being so far removed from what the arts have to offer that those who disengage us from the rest of society feel justified in doing so. It comes in the form of not having a basic comprehension that what we do for a living is even real -- a "real job." It comes in the form of not comprehending that culture itself is an essential "dimension of the lives of individuals and communities" (Brault 2005:58). Moreover, it comes in the form of not understanding that "human beings... organizations... cities and nations... [are] incubated, sustained, [and] provoked by the vibrancy, originality and authenticity of the artistic and cultural life that inhabits them" (ibid). Mental poverty

breeds a most difficult form of control -- that of indifference. Nameless, faceless and absolutely devastating, indifference is a power line that shoots straight to the heart, and clears away our ability to communicate, create understanding, communities, and alliances. Indifference asks: the arts have no real impact on my life, so why bother? What good are they to me? Why should I care? Indifference is the breeding ground for pulling the arts away from the centrality of people's lives, instead of making them something to work towards and care about. It takes away our ability to name and claim the actual issues, instead fogging them into incoherent hazes of apathy.

Have we come so far since the 1950's and yet still not far enough? Over dinner in her motel room, Faye explains to me:

Is it easier today? God almighty Kirsten, I want it to be, because I don't want to think that we all fought those fights and it isn't better for people coming up in the arts. And I look at somebody like a Margaret Atwood who yes, you know, cleared the trees, blazed the trail for all of us who have come after, and how hard it must have been for her.... And so to think that those people [Atwood and others] worked the way they worked, and took the arrows and the slings and fought the fights that they did, and that they -- you know I even struggle to do that little thing that I did, and then I think 'It's not gotten better? You know, God. You want to think it's better.' (Faye Personal Interview:2006)

If we want to honor those artistic elders and ancestors who have gone before us, if we want to honor those who were the first trail-blazers and the work that they bled and cried and sweated over we must stand up and keep standing up to the inequities we all face. We must continue to do not only for ourselves, but also for the generation of artists who have yet to arrive on these shores. Things are not as they were, and never are, but they are not where they need to be yet either. Culturally, we still have gigantic hurdles to cross in terms of mental poverty and education, internally within our own borders and externally within the public eye. We must be cautious in how we approach these problems, in terms of how we present ourselves, as well as what we allow for. Recognizing and naming are important components of this process. And when we finally reach towards the essential goals of centralization and celebration, it is French Canada that can offer us an active working model and potential platform from which to learn and build.

Chapter Four: Mechanisms of Survival

Dagmar: Keeping artists poor, it's sort of like -- to me it's in the same category as equal pay for equal work. You know women still don't get paid the same as men. And because why? The government can't afford it? Oh. So artists live -- we aspire to the poverty line. Most artists live under the poverty line. Why? Because we can't afford it. I mean it's ridiculous. And it's very foolish. And it's unjust. And it's unconstitutional. But it's not going to change anytime soon. And neither are women going to be paid the same as men. And artists and women have been subsidizing the economy forever. And we'll just continue to do so for a very long time.

(Dagmar Personal Interview:2006)

Shoot the Piano Player: Economic Realities

Every group can't get everything it wants, he added. 'Ordinary people understand we have to live within a budget.' Prime Minister Stephen

Harper discussing funding for the arts in 2008 (Cheadle:

http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/capress/080923/national/fedelxn_main)

Yes Boss. The government handshake

Yes Boss. The crusher of language

Yes Boss. Mr. Stillwater,

The face at the edge of the banquet

(Paul Simon, "The Cool, Cool River")

In 2006-2007, the Canada Council awarded "6,634 grants to artists and arts organizations... [and] also made payments to 15,417 authors through the Public Lending Right Commission.²⁸ Grants, payments and awards totaled \$152.6 million" (<http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/0C9CEE3C-39BF-46B9-BAF2-17D55E11BFC6/0/OverviewEN.pdf>). Of that, "21.2 million (2,204 grants)... [were] awarded to individual artists and 119.6 million (4,430 grants) to arts organizations" (ibid:3). Additionally, "\$9 million in payments was provided to 15,417 authors through the Public Lending Right program, as well as \$2.7 million in special funds (Grants by Program and Province or Territory) in 2006-07. This brings the total amount of Canada Council funding [per year] to \$152.6 million" (ibid). Approximately 6,000 grants are awarded annually through the council -- 85% of that funding going to "arts organizations (dance, theatre and opera companies, orchestras, music ensembles, arts festivals, art galleries, book publishers)" (ibid:7) and 15% going to individual artists.

Certainly, we have developed since the 1950's -- within two generations artists now have the option to be able to stay in their own country, and given a cursory glance, the funding available, strictly in terms of dollars, appears reasonable. However, as Chris stated in his interview: "[A] hundred and fifty million dollars [for the budget of the Canada Council] seems to be a big number, but once you consider the economy of a country like Canada, it's *so* small, it's almost ridiculous. It's so small, I mean... why is it so difficult to convince people to spend that money?" (Chris Personal Interview:2006). In Manitoba, the annual budgets for the Manitoba Arts Council and the Winnipeg Arts Council are far below this.²⁹ The issue remains: if we don't stand up for our own, no one else will. As Margaret Atwood so eloquently discusses:

It's Use It or Lose It time for the artists of Canada. Thanks to the Stephen Harper government's Shoot the Piano Player policies, the Canadian creative community now finds itself pondering some rabble-rousing in relation to government non-support for the arts.... It's bothersome rousing rabble -- the writers would rather be writing, the dancers dancing and so forth -- but the consequence of failing to act could be evaporation, since it seems to be the intention of the Harper neocons to bleed and starve Canada's cultural institutions until they croak. (Atwood 2007:R7)

Under the previous Liberal government, the Canada Council had been promised a per year doubling of their budget. After the election of Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party, these numbers were put under review. The council was then promised numbers in dwindling amounts, until they were finally awarded a grand total of thirty thousand dollars spread out over two years. The final irony is, as of August 2008, the Conservative government has now made over forty five million dollars in cuts to a variety of federal cultural subsidies. Stephen Harper's rebuttal to this was to explain that the overall budget of Canadian Heritage has actually gone up by eight percent. There is an important distinction to be made here. The Culture and Heritage sector of the Canadian Government covers a wide variety of programming including museums, heritage sites, "sport[s], youth, citizenship and identity, diversity and multiculturalism" among others (Burgmann 2008:A6). Additionally, the forty five million in cuts that have been made have "so far [have] only targeted the department's arts-and-culture arm" (ibid). The cuts will affect more than half a dozen arts programs, which "aided the export of films, provided administrative support to culture groups and funded training, among other initiatives" (Cowan 2008:A4).

As in the above example, issues often become coated in elusive terminology, glossed over, or removed entirely from the equation in order to deflect away from what is actually happening. Therefore, often pre-existing patterns of poverty we encounter in our community are not necessarily understood or even discussed in a public arena, and this creates room for wrongful assumptions about how our incomes perform. To elucidate, for Canadian artists a large majority of our artistic work falls under the “self employed/freelance” category. Indeed, “[m]ost artists supplement their income from artistic activities with earnings from entirely unrelated occupations” (Jackson & Lemieux 1999:3). The issue here is that the government’s approach to employment in Canada is primarily based on an assumption that the work force is primarily made of “employees” rather than people who are self-employed. Many artistic existences teeter on a feast or famine principle. As Melissa points out:

[I]t’s a constant struggle. Whether through the indifference that [we as artists] come up against, within society or within individual situations. And here I am one of the premier writers in this country. And you know, I have my days when I wonder how it’s all going to shake down. Because it’s a feast or famine thing. You can have... a very good year one year, and the next year is not so good. And you sort of think ‘God. How am I going to manage all of this?’ (Melissa Personal Interview:2006)

Artists may have several “lean” years, and then one “banner” (well-paying) year. However, what this means for us is that if we make thirty thousand dollars in one year, we are taxed *exactly the same* as a business person who makes that same amount *every year*. The government used to make allowances for the continual fluctuating incomes that artists invariably have, but after the mid 1980s these were halted. For decades, the CCA³⁰ has “called for restoration of “income averaging” provisions within the *Income Tax Act*... [but have only] received detailed responses from a series of Ministers of Finance over the years telling... [them] why this is not feasible” (Canadian Conference for the Arts:http://www.ccarts.ca/en/documents/cca_2006_prebudsub_050906.pdf). Additionally, over the years Revenue Canada has “developed a complex and elaborate system of assessing the tax status of grants, prizes, bursaries and other forms of assistance to individuals” (ibid). For artists, this means that any grants, “prizes” and so forth received are immediately taxed. This only adds to the problem of getting ahead, saving money or paying existing bills that were racked up in the years where there was little or no income.

Diana: Your income goes up and down. And when it's up, the government says 'Thank you very much' and takes a big chunk of it....When I first started writing they had a system of -- you could average over five years. That was *great*. It's a really good idea for writers. So when you do have a good year, you don't lose half of it to the government, right? And you can sort of spread it out, and even it out. (Diana Personal Interview:2006)

These cycles of impoverishment also effect our net worth, creating difficulties for many artists to obtain something as straightforward as acquiring a basic loan.

Faye: I still, and I'll tell you when it happens to me, and I don't know if it ever happens to anybody else, but it's income tax time, when it gets me down. Other than that, I can live the rest of the year. But I usually have a real kind of yucky time right around that time. Because I look and I go: one more time I'm that woman in the bank, [to] who[m] the bank manager said: 'You have no net worth because you're a poet.' (Faye Personal Interview:2006)

Additionally, due to the fact that so many of us self-fund or are self-employed, we often do not have access to basic programs and benefits that many citizens in Canadian society take for granted.

In the current tax system, self employed Canadians must pay the employer and employee share of the Employment Insurance (EI) and Canada Pension Plan (CPP) programs. The irony of this situation is that while the premiums must be paid, self-employed Canadians are de facto excluded from Employment Insurance and many of the so-called soft benefits from the Canada Pension Plan, such as maternity benefits and disability allowances. (Canadian Conference for the Arts 2006:4)

Moreover, we do not have any health insurance plan beyond the basic package provided by our provinces. Or worker's compensation. Or dental insurance. As an artist, if something goes wrong with your teeth, you better have a lot of money, or be willing to put up with rotten teeth until you do. Of course, this can work in your favor: "There's a film here right now... and I'll be doing a scene with the two lead characters in a couple of weeks. And normally I play the bad guys. And mostly they say, I think, because of my crooked yellow teeth. And that's about it" (Peter Personal Interview:2006).

Like the myth of the established artist making indefinite gobs of money, or even making enough to sustain them in comfort until the end of their years, there also exists a myth of the established arts institution. Public perception might shift upon discovering, for instance, that "[f]inding support for publishing [is difficult] -- publishers are not big money makers. Even the biggest ones in Canada collapse from time to time. And it's

been a problem for a very long time” (Ingmar Personal Interview:2006). Indeed, as Hiroshi explains: “the people who run literary magazines don’t get paid well. People who run publishing companies in the small presses, they’re not making it rich. They’re -- most of them are living at or near the poverty line. And doing it because they love doing it. Not because it’s financially lucrative. Or even financially advisable” (Hiroshi Personal Interview:2006). Similar examples of impoverishment can be seen in established theatres, dance companies, and so forth.

The brands of public and government support we need to keep these organizations going do not currently exist. The Canada and Provincial Arts Councils do what they can, but they too have limited resources, and a primary amount of funding simply goes to keeping arts institutions afloat. This makes matters difficult for individual artists. In 2002-2003 the Canada Council for the Arts “received 8,246 grant applications from individual artists...and only 28 per cent received funding. These investments are not just about satisfying demand -- they are about supporting artistic excellence, and many applications are denied simply because of insufficient funds” (<http://www.canadacouncil.ca/aboutus/advocacy/xx127323086798281250.htm>). Certainly, the provincial and city arts councils (such as the Manitoba and Winnipeg Arts Councils) supplement the individual artist where the Canada Council leaves off. And while the various arts councils are far from the only source of funding for artists, they often provide a much-needed supplement for artists, both emerging and senior. As Jackson and Lemieux (1999:3) discuss:

Most artists supplement their income from artistic activities with earnings from entirely unrelated occupations. Artistic organizations, such as orchestras and theatre and dance troupes, supplement their revenues from ticket sales with government grants and donations from individuals and business. With very few exceptions, being a creator or cultural producer in Canada is not economically viable without government intervention, a fact that endangers the very existence of Canadian cultural production.

Interestingly, while some older professionals in the field I talked with have said they felt arts council money tends to be for younger, less established artists, or artists who cannot generate money in other ways, just as many said they use the system on a continual basis, especially in lean years. Moreover, several younger artists I spoke with felt that the grant system was for older, more established artists, and that the established artists were the ones receiving the funding. The reality simply is that the dollars we need are not there,

and nobody is receiving the kind of funding they would like. To this end, I received a phone call around the end of my writing up process from one of the people who had participated in this study. They had received a letter from the Canada Council of the Arts regarding an application they had made as a very established senior artist. The letter said that their application came “highly recommended” but that it was “turned down due to lack of funds.” When our senior artists, who are published, with well-established track records, cannot find their way to receiving a grant because the money simply isn’t there, the rest of us might as well just pack up and head for home. As Maria states in her interview: “I can say after applying for grants it’s just too hard. It’s too discouraging. To be turned down. And that’s most people’s experience” (Maria Personal Interview:2006).

What happens when we don’t understand the actualities of our avenues of funding is that a belief arises that “someone else” is actually getting paid for what they do, when in fact we are all in the same boat. These misunderstandings lead to a certain amount of resentment and finger pointing within the community. The reality of our situation is that what we receive, as a *cultural industry* from the government system, even just in terms of dollars, is a pittance compared to what we actually generate for that system.³¹

Strategic Politics: Demonizing the Arts

Once exoticized -- that is, transformed into an enjoyable and exciting practice through a careful screening of “indecent” features as well as through the establishment of a distance/difference between the ways of the “primitive” and the ways in which “primitiveness” could be appropriated by the “civilized.” (Savigliano 1994:146)

One of the first programs to be eliminated in the Conservative cuts to the arts from August of 2008, called PromArt, provided travel grants to artists. Interestingly, a “leaked government memo questioned the appropriateness of handing money (from PromArt) to Holy F***, a rock band, along with broadcaster and “general radical” Avi Lewis and “left-wing columnist” Gwynne Dyer.... [T]he document hinted at ideological reasons for the program’s demise” (Cowan 2008:A4). Jim Flaherty, the current finance minister, said while the cuts were “cost-containment measures,” that politics also “played a part in the decision-making process” (ibid). To this end, Flaherty stated, “We are a Conservative government and the ministers who sit on the Treasury Board have that hat on as well...[t]his is not a bureaucratic process, the decision is made by ministers who sit

on the Treasury Board and they have views on certain programs” (ibid). The government may be doing something as simple as following a conservative mandate, which places little emphasis on a need for the arts. However, it is possible there exists a silencing of the arts community that is pointed rather than accidental.³²

Recently, in what appeared to be a bid to create votes, Prime Minister Stephen Harper “called the arts ‘a niche issue’ that ‘ordinary Canadians’ can’t identify with” (Bradshaw 2008:R3). Harper commented that “When ordinary people come home, turn on the TV and see a gala of a bunch of people... all subsidized by taxpayers claiming their subsidies aren’t high enough... I’m not sure that’s something that resonates with ordinary people” (Thanh Ha et al 2008: A13). The insinuation was that artists are not the “ordinary people” in question, that they are rich, elitist, removed from the public, and the arts are so far removed from everyday life that “ordinary people” (the rest of Canada) cannot find their way to relating to them at all. According to Foucault:

[T]he art of punishing... brings five quite distinct operations into play: it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the ‘nature’ of the individuals. It introduces, through this ‘value-giving’ measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal.... The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*. (Foucault 1995:182-183)

As seen in Flaherty’s and Harper’s statements, artists are differentiated from the rest of the public and framed as the antithesis of ordinary or normal -- thusly abnormal vis-à-vis our supposed inability to conform to specific ideologies of the government and of “ordinary people.” Therein, an atmosphere is created whereby it becomes acceptable to punish the artist by exclusion. Through this model, we can see that only by accepting a conformity to those institutions and persons in power will the artist then become normal, ordinary, real. Additionally, as Shiva states (Smith 2002:100), “[R]endering local knowledge invisible by declaring it non-existent or illegitimate the dominant system also

makes alternatives disappear by erasing and destroying the reality which they attempt to represent.”

When our government and Prime Minister state that the arts are not important in any manner to their agenda and that they are to be held in contempt, there exists a problem beyond a simple economic argument, and speaks volumes about how the arts are valued in English Canada. Tellingly, even after being asked, Harper refused to repeat his comment in French. As earlier stated, the French population in this country treats its artists with far more integrity, have, as Feore notes (Bradshaw 2008:R3), “a sharply defined sense of their culture... [and are] examples to the rest of Canada about how to support...culture” Harper’s comments caused a cultural storm in Quebec where “issues of culture are viewed not as frivolous excess but rather a means to protect the French fact in an English North America” (Reid:www.globeandmail.com). Indeed, his remarks “angered and rallied the *pequiste*/artistic base in Quebec and... [in so doing gave] Gilles Duceppe a new lease on life” (ibid).

In English Canada, there seems to be a strange assumption that the arts are an endlessly renewable resource, removed from the business of day to day life and not essential or central to the quality of living. Therefore, it becomes perfectly acceptable to indefinitely put off investing any kind of energy or money into them. As Wendy Crewson³³ (Burgmann 2008:A6) recently stated “I’m tired of being told (culture) doesn’t matter.” Deeper workings of the real issue simply do not get discussed or talked about in a broad way that would garner any kind of deep public attention. It is the “western imaginary... [which] has always been based on the assumption that all humanity could benefit from allowing the West to exercise domination, reinforcing its case with democratic, capitalist, industrial, scientific and rationalist imaginaries” (Gledhill 2000: 241). Even as seen by the comments made by the Prime Minister and his Finance Minister’s assessment of arts funding, our value as artists is settled inside this imaginary, and it is a value that states the arts in this country can be consciously and consistently put off in lieu of more ‘pressing’ or ‘practical’ issues:

Diana: So I think it tends to be disposable, in a sense, to a lot of people.
.... I go to a young girl for massages, and she was saying one day ‘You know, we’ve got to fix the roads. We shouldn’t be spending any money on the arts until we fix the roads’.... [T]here’s ignorance there too in the sense of it’s such a small fraction for instance on what the city spends on

art, to what they are spending on roads. It's just not even an issue. (Diana Personal Interview:2006)

Ironically, our jobs and our creations are often seen as frills, as extras, and therefore not necessary to the business of everyday living. It all too often seems that the government and the media will use any scrap or thread they can find to generate a culture of fear publicly about the arts. The grand translation being that the artists are going to take away all of your resources if you're not careful, because they don't understand what goes on in the Real World. "What is essential to understand is the way in which... stories [function] to create, through magical realism, a culture of terror... [which then has the potential to become] a high powered tool for domination and a principal medium of political practice" (Taussig 2002:181-182). The real issues become cleverly buried, for instance, by the media, who are more than happy to tell the public that yet again artists have jeopardized their way of life by spending hard earned tax dollars (which of course in no way the artist has contributed to) in ways that are immoral, scandalous and unjust. The real issues become buried by big business telling the public what they need to make their city great is, for instance, a new mall multiplex, not arts funding. The underlying premise is that artists don't do anything for the public, but big business can by delivering more and more goods and services. The real issues are buried by provincial and municipal governments insinuating that funding to the arts will take away basic necessities -- if the arts are given money nobody will have good roads, proper waste disposal, health care and on and on.

Artists are told what the public wants is safe neighbourhoods, better living conditions and enriched quality of life, none of which we can apparently provide. By the very essence and nature of what we do, artists are never going to "take away" from the experience of living, only build upon it. Our works engage with life. In doing so we raise the cultural value of society, both symbolically as well as economically. As Jean-Daniel Lafond³⁴ (Posner 2008:R1) mentioned recently in the *Globe and Mail*, "We need to sensitize people to the importance of the arts. Don't forget, culture is oxygen. We have to protect it and [spending on it] is not wasting money."

In 2001, Hill Strategies research, an organization in part funded by the Canada Council, conducted an analysis entitled "Diversity in Canada's Arts Labor Force."³⁵ The data findings showed that the "gap between artists' average earnings and overall labor

force earnings... [as of 2001 was] 26%” (Hill Strategies Research 2001:1), meaning that the average worker in the Canadian labor force makes approximately 26% more than the average worker in the arts labor force. Not only this, but that artists were found to be “in the lowest quarter of average earnings of all occupation groups” (ibid). Make no mistake, most artists are living very close to the bone economically. As the Canadian Writers Foundation³⁶ (canadianwritersfoundation.org/home.html) states: “When writers [and other artists] can no longer support themselves they have almost nowhere to turn for help Unlike other Commonwealth countries, Canada does not have a tradition of helping artists in need through annual government allocations. Many famous Canadian authors [and other artists] end their lives in poverty, disease or indignity.” Why is it then that we hear it on the radio, on the news and read in the paper about “all the funding” the arts receive? Why do we hear co-workers griping in the hallways about the gravy train those in the arts community are riding on? Why do we hear friends and family say that they would love to get a ton of money to create things that their “kids could do”? As Bonny and Naomi express, the financial realities that we face are often not understood by those outside of the arts:

Bonny: I accepted to edit an anthology of plays for the Treetop Press. Doing that, which is a tremendous amount of work. It pays me fifteen hundred dollars. Okay? That’s *all* I have for the entire year, so far. So there I am, as someone said to me ‘This is impossible, you’re at the top of your profession.’ I’m at the top of my profession, apparently, you know. And *that* is what I’m facing. That’s right now for me, 2006. (Bonny Personal Interview:2006)

Naomi: I mean even now I kind of get pissed off when people say ‘Oh wow! Money must be good with a TV series.’ Well, I got paid six months ago. And at the time, I *owed* everything I got paid. Like I *literally* just handed it to people. I didn’t keep any. I didn’t get to keep any. Same again this year when it comes up. I’ve already got the *next* level of people I owe. So I took care of priority one debts. Now, I’ve got my priority two debts to take care of. And then, if there happens to be a season three, *maybe* I’ll get to save some money.... But right now for example, I’m working full time for... [the] theatre... and I have a hundred and fifty bucks in the bank. And just *hoping* that everything will go well for the next eight or ten days and with no surprises, so when the next cheque comes, I’ll be able to pay for a couple of things. And really that’s what it’s been like the whole 25 years. (Naomi Personal Interview:2006)

Adding to the milieu of public misunderstanding is the constant barrage of negative press regarding unconventional art projects that are created with help from Canada or

provincial Arts Council money, such as Diana Thorneycroft's *Monstrance*.³⁷ Even if the public does not agree with the money being allotted to these specific projects, why is it all arts funding gets tarred with the same brush? Why are these projects the ones that are gaily trotted out anytime anyone mentions the word "grant," causing "taxpayers" to flee like roaches after the light has been turned on? The recent cuts to the arts and the ensuing debate have provided good examples this kind of thinking. In a letter to the editor of the *National Post*, J. St.Gelais writes:

Our federal government recently cut some funding to the arts because it was wasteful. The 'arms-length' funding, which gives the arts community free rein to decide how public money is spent, must cease. As an example, the following description of Istvan Kantor's 'performance art' can be found on the Canada Council for the Arts' Web site: 'In *Liason Inter-Urbain*, he dug a shallow grave, inserted a vial of his blood into his anus and contorted himself upside-down so that the blood flowed into his mouth.' (2008:A13)

In fact, the numbers of projects artists in this country generate involving blood and anuses are rare. It is ludicrous to make a connection that, just because a handful of visual or performance art projects are disagreeable, it justifies taking an economic sythe to arts funding in this country. Yet, time and time again, the same argument with a new face surfaces and resurfaces.

Assimilationist Strategies: Colonialization, Corporation, Control

[T]he paradigm of political economy, [is that]... power... [is] a derivative of either influence over or control of the means of production, and this control provid[es] both a source of political power and a means of extending it. (Kurtz 2001:27)

Currently Canada is operating, as Bradshaw³⁸ (Ditchburn 2006:C6) states, "[A] great and rich country, the only country in the world in the G8 with a \$10-billion surplus and yet... a Third World country where [the] arts are concerned." Juxtapose this understanding against the day-to-day reality of the artist maneuvering inside a world increasingly overwhelmed with dialogues of "marketability," "mass appeal," and "best seller," and unsettling economic patterns begin to unfold. What do decreased government funding and increased corporate involvement mean for our community and for us? Perhaps it may not mean much. As one interviewee stated: "They [corporations] don't

need to come sniffing around our little world to see if there is something that they can kill as an idea. I just don't think they'd bother" (Naomi Personal Interview:2006).

While there may be a large amount of truth to this statement, we must be cautious in how we frame and approach these kinds of issues. There is a potential, due to economic need, that we will discover ourselves in a startling position being driven toward creating art that is purely to appease, pander, or arc towards a corporate/commercial market. Moreover, if pushed into a corner where we cannot make art that is in any manner sustainable, we may find ourselves making creative choices that are increasingly about the bottom line, and diminishing in their quest for quality and meaning. Consequently, there is a need to be vigilant to the fact that, as Marino (Cavanagh 72:2006) states, "Our corporate reality... is educating us, focusing our attention and actions to suit the political economy of profit" Corporate choices are already being made daily for us, witnessed for instance in the way many larger theatres in Winnipeg and across Canada have begun to operate over the last ten years.³⁹ Often, these changes are so subtle and slow over time it is difficult to see a broader picture developing. This eases people into acceptance, something that may not happen if those same changes came together suddenly, or all at once.

At the moment, you go to see a play by MTC, you're spending the first, used to be eight, but I'd say clean-house, twelve minutes at least [listening to corporate speeches]. When you're supposed to be anchoring down. [I once listened to a CEO give a speech]... about how *his* company, business furnishings, compares to King Lear.... So it isn't good enough [for the corporations]. Used to be good enough to have their names in small letters. Now you get this *huge* thank you.... [A virtual] *bible* of how they're to be featured, et cetera et cetera.... [I]ts turned *it* into this kind of trickle down theory [of] *how much* the corporation owns, and what their *name* is on. You know, it's the *Investor's Group* Contemporary Dance Series.⁴⁰ But it isn't. In the end, it's those bodies of those dancers up there. (Gajendra Personal Interview:2006)

Diana: I also am a big stage writer, in a time when all the big stages seem to be getting more and more conservative, and they're running scared and they're doing musicals, and comedies, and really *really* easy dramas, and they don't want to upset their audiences and all that... [p]lus they're into all these co-productions. So, if you're writing for the big stage... they probably need a co-producer, so they've got to find somebody who likes it as much as they do, and what's happening with co-productions, it's great if you get them, (laughs) but if you don't.... [T]he market is narrower, at that level.... I don't like the trend. Because it means that fewer plays are produced. (Diana Personal Interview:2006)

In Winnipeg, corporate sponsorship plays a role in how many arts organizations and arts festivals operate, to the point where we must consider how we are potentially impacted in the long run.

Interestingly enough, the Canadian government has increasingly “not only come to accept an increased role for corporate interests in the arts and culture, they have encouraged it” (Schuster 2003:143). As one example, corporate funding is now listed as one of the necessary options in the guidelines and criteria for Canadian professional artists, arts and cultural organizations on the foreign affairs and international trade website. It states that for any support given to international touring projects that “projects **must** [original emphasis] include other sources of funding such as corporate sponsorship, provincial or other government grants requested or confirmed as well as a displayed investment by the artist or company” (<http://www.international.gc.ca/arts/perf-en.asp>). On this same website, the budget section for festivals and conferences⁴¹ states that the application made “must reflect the expenses directly linked to the international presenter programme including any other Federal, Provincial, Municipal or Corporate funding” (ibid). Alternatively, look even at the instance of then Chair of the Canada Council, Karen Kain, in her June 2006 speech to congregates at the Art Gallery of Alberta:

We know that cities must be able and willing to nurture, support and celebrate creativity in all its dimensions if they are to be economic leaders in the future. This was recognized by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, Canada’s leading CEOs and entrepreneurs, in its recent report “From Bronze to Gold: A Blueprint for Canadian Leadership in a Transforming World.” The report acknowledged Canada’s financial and economic success but said that if we are to make it to the top internationally, we have to unleash a more creative economy. One critical aspect of that economy is cultural development. The CEOs said -- and I quote -- “The quality of a community’s cultural infrastructure... has a direct impact on quality of life and therefore on the competitiveness of communities in attracting people and investment. (<http://www.canadacouncil.ca/news/speeches/wu127940055178310230.htm>)

Kain’s reasoning is sound. Following scholars such as Richard Florida,⁴² she asserts that “[r]epeated studies have shown that social and economic development is profoundly connected to -- and dependent upon -- cultural development” (ibid), and this is what the CEO’s in the above statement have recognized. Corporate funding of the arts can and does provide large sources of revenue for organizations, and the possibility that private

and public funders can work together to create a vibrant economy for the arts is both innovative and exciting if looked at strictly on an economic level. The potential for change is enormous, and the prospects and financial payoff for everyone involved may well be sizeable.

It could be said, however, that government encouragement or involvement in corporate funding for the arts is a precarious possibility. Even if unintentional, costs are already starting to add up. Corporate realities have already begun to manipulate what people consume creatively, whether it's what music is hip to listen to, what authors (we have surpassed the point of merely books) to buy, or what movies to watch. Go to any Starbucks, and among the mints and individually wrapped biscotti, there will be an assortment of music for purchase, which are playing on the stereo the entire time the consumer is sitting at a table drinking a latte. As Naomi Klein, citing the example of Virgin Records mega stores, points out "why wait around for something as temperamental as audience demand or radio play when by controlling all the variables you can create the illusion of... success before it even happens?" (2000:160). Even in a small city like Winnipeg, corporate money is already starting to have an effect on, for instance, how theatres are run, what kind of plays are put on stage, and who is able to stay in business.

Supposing corporations are merely funding the arts as an easy way of gaining public support for backing a "good cause," without a hidden agenda, there are still unsettling issues to consider. As Bakan states, "[T]here's rarely going to be a situation where philanthropy or corporate giving will undermine the corporate performance from a financial perspective... corporations exist solely to maximize returns to their shareholders" (2004:39). Any philanthropic goals corporations hold on their agendas "are, and must be, strategies to advance the interests of their companies and share holders" (ibid:46). This potentially spells disaster, considering the current economic climate for the arts. Under this kind of circumstance, corporate dollars become appealing. The song of the corporation is dangerous, however, because we don't know where the rocks are, how deep the water is, or how close we might be able to get without crashing. Signs are all around us, if we care to pay attention to them.

Gajendra: What I *hate* is, how the people who create don't get to say boo. We used to have at least meetings as an artist community. The last one was when Michael Springgate⁴³ was here, and *everyone* was invited. Directors and actors. And actors stood up and said 'Mmm. Not many local actors are being hired at PTE, or MTC.' We don't have meetings like that

anymore, because the only meetings that really matter now are the meetings that boards have with corporations to support the theatre. Does that come because *governments* decided to provide less money? Possibly. But there was a point at which if governments provided less money, you could have said, 'Okay, the alternative is that we shut down the theatre. Or we do less plays.' As opposed to, we now are run by corporations, and we make the carpets look that way, and the lights. And why do I care so much about it? Because it *changes* the work.
(Gajendra Personal Communication:2006)

Bobby: I mean in some sense, I am kind of against it [corporate money] in principle, but at the same time, we live in the real world. I think it's a very complex issue, and I think you could compare -- I think that a culture where the principal money has in, for example, the United States, most arts money comes from corporations. As opposed to Germany, where most money comes from the government. I mean they're two very opposite cases. And Canada's sort of in between. But we don't have the kind of intense philanthropy that they have in the United States. I think that there's a real problem with corporate money. Because corporate investors want to invest in 'winners,' right? They don't want to invest in 'losers.'
(Bobby Personal Communication:2006)

As Gajendra and Bobby discuss, when corporate funds pass further into the pockets and hearts of arts organizations, the nature of the work does change. Perhaps corporations may not be trying to kill an idea on purpose, but we must be awake to their nature that inevitably dictates the outcome. The very essence of the corporation is, as Monks (Bakan 2004:70) puts it, "[A]n externalizing machine, in the same way the shark is a killing machine." Ideas can be killed accidentally, as by-products of a bottom line mentality. In this, we must grapple with the concept that the primary nature of the corporate identity mixed with the artistic has a very real potential to debase the essence of who we are and what we do. Indeed, as Chomsky (Bakan *ibid*:69) mentions, corporations deal in dehumanization. They are the antithesis of who we are as *creators*. The language of the corporation is, as Roddick (Bakan *ibid*:56) puts it, "[N]ot the language of the soul or that language of humanity... it's a language of indifference[,] it's a language of separation, of secrecy, of hierarchy." To them we are not "human *beings* so much as human *resources*" (Bakan *ibid*:69). As resources in a capitalist system, we are expendable and are around only as long as our usefulness allows. The artist best serves the corporate agenda when we (at best) allow or (at worst) lead ourselves into a position where we are not only getting out of the way so that their desires can become a reality, but help to serve them. At a minimum, if we decide that engaging with corporate financing is a good business

solution, it is prudent to at least do our homework. Having an awareness of their mandate, and how they operate with other individuals or arts organizations will be worth the effort in the long run.

Free Work Does Not Equal More Work – The Business of Art

*Conversation: A friend and I are talking over a coffee early one morning.
He says: The only way we are going to get anyone to listen is if we're firm
with people. You know, tell them 'No, I need to get paid the price I
stipulated. No, that's not negotiable. No, you can't pay me in liquor.'*

I laugh.

He laughs.

It's funny for a reason.

For the author... or the theater manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore give [symbolic] value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation. (Bourdieu 1993:75)

In Canada, it is a common practice to finance our own work and be our “own biggest subsidizers,” (Thomson:<http://canadacouncil.ca/prix/ggavam/sn127240198387656250.htm?subsiteurl=%2Faboutus%2Fadvocacy%2For127233262775312500.htm>) whether through fundraisers for our theatres, or part time jobs to supplement our careers as writers, actors, dancers, musicians and so forth. In fact, according to Hill Strategies Research, approximately fifty percent of *professional* “cultural workers hold multiple jobs” (2001:29). The concept of not having “quite enough” is a common condition in the art world, for both institutions and individuals alike. As Penny Dickens, former Executive Director of The Writers' Union of Canada states:

I'm convinced there is an acute need for recognition of the difficulties many Canadian writers face, most do not earn enough during their writing lives to afford even basic necessities in retirement [never mind all those who barely earn enough to afford basic necessities before retirement].... [T]hat wealth accrues to all published writers is a myth; their contribution to Canadian literature is real and often financially unrewarded. (www.canadianwritersfoundation.org/home.html)

If anyone doubts the legitimacy or veracity of this claim, take as an example the following excerpt from a 2003 parliamentary session with then Poet-Laureate of Canada, George Bowering.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Could you give us an idea of the real cost of the job of a poet laureate? On paper, it is \$22,000 but from what we have learned this morning, this amount has now reached over \$30,000. Therefore, it is already \$10,000 or \$15,000 more than the amount suggested to us and it seems that there are other people working with you. Can you tell us...what are the real costs for the House of Commons and the Senate, of having a poet laureate? This is my first question; I will have others afterwards.

Mr. George Bowering: In my estimation, I'm probably making about \$1.00 an hour over the year, in terms of the work I do as poet laureate....I haven't added up the number of hours I have spent as the poet laureate over the last year. My guess is that I'm probably making about 20% of the minimum wage, depending on what the minimum wage is in the various provinces.

(<http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/Content/HOC/committee/372/lipa/evidence>)

It is ironic that many of us work in a business where a myriad of our most fundamental requirements aren't met. A lawyer, for instance, would never think of being employed at a business where, at the most basic of levels, steady employment, a simple benefits package and regular income weren't part of the deal. Yet, for *professional* writers, actors and directors, this is reality. For those of us who are at the beginning of our careers, the actualities are often far more discouraging.

In my mid-twenties I decided I needed a change. I had been involved in amateur theater for years, scraping shows together at fringe festivals, at poorly run venues with managers that took what little funds you had left, sometimes without asking. At that time, everyone I knew who was my age ran their productions on the "beg, borrow, steal" adage, and were grateful for gigs in restaurants and other places where free meals and sometimes drinks were available if you were charming or well connected enough. At one point, I was involved with a really terrible improv troupe that had a fluctuating membership between eight and fourteen other people. We often did our shows in a small bar, with irregular crowds -- some nights were good, others not so good. One night three people showed up, and one of them was my father. There were plenty of people in the group who had little or no money -- living hand to mouth. Things fell apart when we collectively found out one day that the director had been "skimming" heavily from the door take. I was tired of the politics, the poverty and mostly the hopeless feeling that nothing would ever change. Those who wanted to be "serious" actors, and stay in Canada, went to Vancouver or Toronto to starve there. I watched as people came and left,

and came and left, hungry for work and recognition. I watched as loved ones who stayed scraped money together for bus tickets and coffee. I watched as the surrounding community pushed against one another, jockeying for some misdirected sense of social position in the rat cages of beer tents and pubs. The dis-integration was, for me, unbearable. In the simplicity of youth, I wanted to be enmeshed and enfolded in a loving community of like-minded artistic souls. The reality of what I found was a barbarian invasion, where the only thing that you could actually do was barter your name, your charm, and your tenacity.

Naomi: And it took me quite a few years, easily a decade of those ups and downs, before I said to myself 'Okay. It's not going to happen. You're not going to get *discovered* in the midst of your brilliant performance. And then get moved into this world of working from one job to the next, and getting a career, and getting money in the bank, and buying new clothes.' None of that stuff happened. And so finally, I reached the point where I recognized that in this world, no doubt, you have to continue to do what you're doing, to try to raise *your* value. So that *my* name is more recognizable than *your* name, which means my name may sell more tickets than your name, which means that even though you and I may *both* do a brilliant performance, they'll pick me instead of you, because my name would sell a ticket. (Naomi Personal Interview:2008)

For the majority of artists, this is our reality. Value and capital are often determined symbolically, because so often the public wants to purchase a ticket, a painting or a book produced by artists who are known quantities. This, of course, creates difficulties for young and emerging artists. There is a deeper issue, however. It points to the fact that the products we create have a real dollar value which is simply not understood in the public consciousness. As Karl Pruner (Burgmann 2008:A6), president of ACTRA⁴⁴ Toronto asserted: "Why is it we talk about investing in the auto sector, investing in the energy sector, and handouts to the arts?" Part of the problem for the public is that there is a question as to what that value is, and how it is assigned. This question is part of a broader conversation far too large to be tackled in the space of a thesis. A good place to start, however, is to find ways to show the public that arts are part of a business; many of the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the cultural sector come from the concept that artists are not involved in an industry. However, as artists, how we navigate through our own value is a huge step towards solving this issue. The more value we place on ourselves, the more we stand up for ourselves, the more we don't undercut ourselves or other artists, the more we assign dollar values to our products and then stick to those nu-

mbers, the more others will accept that what we create is worth the price of the book or the ticket they hold in their hands.

Growing up in a family surrounded with an eclectic mix of business people and artists, I was often told that prudent artists run their careers like small businesses. You have to, if you want to survive. Managing your career this way in part means limiting the things you do for free, and the amount of free time you dole out to others. It means placing value on yourself, and assigning proper dollar values to the things you create. It means being willing to say to people "No, I cannot come and spend a week at your school for an honorarium," or "No, I can't spend twenty-five hours [or more] a week for the next two months directing your show for free" or "No, my fee is higher than that." It means being willing to deal with the anger and confusion that often result from standing your ground. All too often artists pick up the phone to discover someone on the other end asking for a donation of our skills and time, and would you mind coming in just for them for free, just for this one time, to speak to a literacy group, perform for a fundraiser, give a workshop for children, be a moderator for a conference, and on and on. Many of us are more than willing to do things for free, on occasion. The fact remains, however, that we need to get paid to live, to eat, to have shelter and basic necessities. Nobody would ever dream of asking a carpenter to come and build them a new addition on their house for nothing, just for this one time, just for them. Carpenters are paid not only for their time and material, but also for their accumulated body of skills and knowledge. It is a given that carpenters are part of an industry that expects payment for service. Small time contractors and other various small business owners are often even applauded for their tenacity in being able to go about the difficult task of keeping their business afloat in a competitive market.

Rebecca: [U]nlike other people who stumble and fall, and stumble and fall -- for instance if they are in business -- you can expect that that might happen, you can go bankrupt and then you rise from the ashes and you build another business and you do very well with it. People watch the progression of that and they say 'Okay, this guy has worked really hard and he *deserves* to succeed at what he's doing.' But you don't look at the artist and look at the failed novel that's in their drawer, and then the one that they created that has all of a sudden catapulted them to the public eye, making them seemingly overnight successes. You don't make assumptions about business people in that regard, but you will make those assumptions about artists. (Rebecca Personal Interview:2006)

When others expect our time and services to be free as a given, in part it occurs because we encourage this behavior via engagement, acceptance and compliance. Organizations or individuals for their part who want to “hire” us often see other artists giving away their work for free or a drastically reduced rate. They notice our need for jobs, and have some understanding that artists possess a certain need to have our value raised by being in the public consciousness. These “employers” realize that too many of us are far too often saying yes when we should be saying “pay me for my time, pay me for my knowledge, pay me for my skills.” One of the largest barriers to doing so, however, is the fact that in a late capitalist society art is often not a commodity that translates well -- one page of a novel equals a coffee at Starbucks, one chapter equals a cellular phone. In this formula, artists find themselves continually striving to explain what we are actually worth and why we are worth it.

Jodie: And that call came. ‘I hear you’re a storyteller and you write stories for kids’... and [I said] ‘yes, I do.’ ‘Well, do you think you could come to our -- we’ve got a summer camp, and do you think you can come tomorrow?’ And I said ‘Oh yeah, I can.’ And I said, oh thank you God, one more time, just when I’m ready to bang my head and say I’ll never write again, and I can’t do this, I can’t put food on the table. The phone call comes. A sign that I’m supposed to keep doing it. And she goes ‘Okay, before we hang up, I hear you have a professional fee.... What is it?’ Well, Canada Council rates then were two hundred dollars. I was really broke and really hungry and I thought, oh I should put it up. So I put it up fifty bucks. I said ‘Two fifty.’ She said ‘Oh, that’s not a problem, come tomorrow.’ So I go to Daniel... who is my youngest son... [and it’s] like ‘Guess what?!? I’m going to work tomorrow! And we’ll go and then we go to the bank... and we’ll get groceries’ and [I’m thinking to myself] ‘Oh good we can go buy groceries.’

And... I did the reading, the reading from *hell*, kids aged two to twelve. And anybody who works with kids knows that that’s too wide an age gap to really work with, in an hour, doing story telling, but you do your best. It was outside, the acoustics were bad, the wind was blowing, I was hot and sweaty. And when it was over the woman came and she was clapping and crossing her arms. I still remember her doing this [crosses arms over and over]: ‘Oh! You were so good!’ Like so flattering. And “I knew you did storytime but I didn’t know it was that! Oh, thank you so much!” And I said ‘Thank you.’ And... she said ‘Before you go, I’ve got to pay you. I’ve got to get your money.’ And she reached into her purse and she pulled out a ten dollar bill. And she said ‘I’m sorry, this is all I have. Do you have change?’ And I didn’t register. I said ‘Pardon me?’ And she said, ‘Well, you said two fifty right?’ And I realized she thought I meant [two dollars and fifty cents]. I said ‘I meant two hundred and fifty

dollars. Not two fifty.' And she said '*For an hour?!?!?!?*' And I said 'No. For seventeen years.'

And the message of course was: '*Pat, pat. nice girl. You make our kids laugh*'.... [U]ltimately I had to go to her boss. I asked who her boss was... and it was a member of the church, I won't say which church. And he looked at me, frigging right in the face and said 'There seems to have been a misunderstanding.' And I tell him and he looks at me and he goes 'You know what? We're a non profit summer camp.' And I said 'I'm sorry. I'm *not* non profit. I'm *not*. And *I* have to feed my kids and your church is a whole lot richer than I am. I want my money.' And he reached in the drawer, he wrote me a cheque, he didn't look at me, Kirsten, he just passed it across just like that. And I remember walking out and going -- that was the day. I mean that was the day that I went 'If you don't fucking value yourself, who else is going to?' (Jodie Personal Interview:2006)

Being labeled a trouble-maker, unreasonable, and saying no are things artists on occasion worry about, because standing up for ourselves can potentially mean losing much needed business, contacts and money. This is easier said than done, especially when you need money for rent or bills. Sometimes the hunger simply wins out, because it has to -- an extra fifty dollars can mean the difference between eating and not eating. In the final analysis, however, we *must* learn *how* to value ourselves as artists as well as those things we create. This may be tiresome and difficult, but worse is a silent and continuous acceptance and assertion that this is "just the way things are." By accepting this model we lower our own worth and make room for those people who attempt to lure us under the guise that what they are offering in terms of notoriety, getting your name out there, or even work is some kind of grand prize. And in fact it is not a prize, it is part of the colonial objective:

The cultures of the colonized were a source of enjoyment, of pleasure, not a serious exercise in representation involving questions of legitimacy or truthfulness.... As a matter of fact, the colonized should be grateful for being chosen as a source of enjoyment -- which implies recognition -- and for being subjected to a civilized refinement -- a benefit that the colonized could enjoy, thereby improving their resemblance to the civilized colonizer. (Savigliano 1995:141)

Huston: And when I won the Boston Globe Honor Book award I asked was there money involved? 'Oh no, this is wonderful, we bring you down, and we'll put you up at Cape Cod, and pay your weekend.' And you know, it was lovely, but I had won an Honor Book award. And it was a *small* tray that was so badly silvered the silver covering is flaking on this thing now. That was my prize. (Huston Personal Interview: 2006)

This objective tells us that we should be grateful for the crumbs we receive, that we should be grateful for any attention given to us -- that paying us for the work we do is not always necessary because recognition will improve our image, it will improve our place in the world, and most insidiously, it will improve our status.

Strongly affected by the "free and or cheap work for notoriety" concept are young and emerging artists, as well as others who are starving for work, or who are armed with a conviction that this it is a necessary evil, in order to build a name, or a portfolio, or contacts. It should be noted that these assumptions are not without merit (especially for those who are trying to jump start or launch their artistic careers), via the simple fact it is such an accepted norm. What isn't realized is the effect it has on the community as a whole. Not only does it denigrate our collective worth, ultimately it denigrates the actual quality of the work by glutting the market with (often) young, cheap and inexperienced labor. As this practice is perpetrated most often by beginning artists, it can have the unfortunate effect of squeezing those who are further along in their careers (who paid their dues and should have earned a measure of respect), by constantly undercutting them. In the end though, these choices come back to haunt all of us. It gives the impression that we can be undersold and undercut, that price is always unquestionably negotiable. It tells people that no matter what, our skill, time, effort, training, working and sweating doesn't require payment. That other people working hard at their businesses and professions are worth paying, but we are not. And ultimately, if the only thing that is consistent is the understanding that price matters over quality (for instance: "as long as we get a trumpet player in here, it doesn't matter how well they play") the only education audiences and those who hire us ever receive is a lesson in mediocrity. The only lesson artists will ever receive will be that quality doesn't matter, that craft doesn't matter, that time and skill don't matter; and all that really matters is the bottom line. As we can still steer our own outcomes, there is a real need to ask: what are the times and places that are appropriate to give of myself and give my gifts away and what are the times and places that are not?

Thandiwe: Sometimes I'll direct for free though. I mean, that's another thing.... And it's horrible. And it's just wrong.

Kirsten: So why do you do it?

T: Because we're in this catch 22 situation where you need a portfolio, you need to establish yourself before you can start getting money to do it. So you have all these artists out starting companies that will attract young artists to do work for free. And you work for free in order to put on shows that could then get reviews, that you could then build a portfolio with, which you can then sway a jury to give you money to do your next project.

K: Get your name out there.

T: Get your name out there. How are you going to fundraise if no-one knows who you are? (Thandiwe Personal Interview:2006)

Those ideas that appear in the public consciousness, circulated as a given to create jobs, like networking or portfolio building, often work against us, rather than for us. For example in Winnipeg, networking and relationship building have the ability to make you a part of an artistic community, depending on your level of skill at it, and your patience. Many small groups eek out a measure of survival fueled with a clique following of friends, family and die-hard admirers. Writing and theatre events are sometimes seemingly almost entirely run by the community's ability to have its own come to and support events. None of these things, however, make for raking in the big dollars, a climb up the artistic ladder to fame, or even an ability to make a modest living. They are mechanisms of survival.

In the end, it is within varying economic systems and models that both artists and the arts community operate in order to survive, as both opportunities and funding are scarce. The Arts Councils and the grant money they provide are essential to the continued survival of the arts in this country, but without the kind of funding we need to back them properly, they can only provide band-aid options at best. As long as our own government is working against us, our community and organizations, nothing will change. As a result, alternative methods of funding are often sought, such as corporate investment, which the government has encouraged. These problems are exacerbated by the kinds of financial myths that surround the arts community, fueled by the media as well as public misperception and misinformation. Part of the solution is to lead by example: not believing our own financial myths, valuing ourselves and our work, being firm in our business dealings and letting the public and the government know that we are a living and thriving industry that contributes to and deeply impacts the overall economic and social welfare of this country.

Chapter Five: "Eighty-Eight Hobos in a Room"

Naomi: Celebrating after the fact isn't necessarily support. So, I would say it sounds silly but I mean it just reaches the point where I'm sick of hearing the word *fundraiser*. I'm sick of the idea that the Uptown Theatre is *always* one plumbing nightmare away from closing. That people can't go out and support each other and relax and go see each other's shows, because you're too busy struggling to keep *your* theatre going. And I don't think that makes for an arts community. I just think it's like sticking eighty-eight hobos in a room. What do you got to say to each other? 'Yeah, I'm hungry.' 'Yeah, me too.' You know. 'Nice coat. Same one as last year?' 'Yeah.' 'Okay. Hope I see you next year. And if I don't, hmm hmm hmm. I'll get your coat.' And sometimes it feels more like that than a supportive community. (Naomi Personal Interview:2006)

Faye: Well, lobsters *can* get out of the pot. But usually what happens is the one that's at the top almost ready to get out is dragged down by the rest of the lobsters who aren't going to get out. So we call that jealousy of success the Lobster Pot Mentality. It's like 'Well, we're not getting out. You're not getting out either.' The idea being that you can't get away. And if you do, you're too big for your bootstraps. (Faye Personal Interview:2006)

Diana: Having a success too quickly, and the way that people turn on you. It happens. It's not really fair, but I suppose you have the compensation of knowing you've been successful, or you can pay the bills, or whatever, right? But it's a sad thing. I remember Arthur Miller said he'd run across it in his life, and he said he had decided that the world is like a barrel full of crabs, and if one tries to get out, the others will pull him in. And that's sad. And that doesn't suggest a very supportive community. (Diana Personal Interview:2006)

The Silent Artist: Strategies of Power

Often Westo-centric notions of Otherness have been used to establish distances and positions of hierarchy that can be economic, political, theoretical, epistemological, or ideological. (Bacigalupo 2003:34)

Currently, artists are engaged in a politic of identity economics that has a three-pronged effect on our communities -- fiscal, professional and personal. It is a self-feeding paradigm that is difficult to step away from with any kind of clarity, as artistic economics often work on an identity scale. A lack of funding in terms of hard currency places specific pressure on the arts community to find alternative methods of sustainability. These

methods often garner monetary incomes via routes of symbolic value, wherein our identities become the bargaining chip with which to gain an economic foothold. Within this, it can be understood that “identity influences economic outcomes” (Akerlof and Kranton 716:2000) and that symbolic value is “correlated with the multiplication and diversification of agencies of consecration placed in a situation of competition for cultural legitimacy” (Bourdieu 1993:112).

Artistic use of identity economics stems from monetary need as well as an intrinsic understanding of the need to utilize symbolic value (to symbolize) as a method of revenue generation. As art is identity, identity often becomes a commodity, commodity equaling currency, or barter value. In anxiety regarding funding, or the opportunities that lead to funding, artists often turn inward, marginalizing each other both politically and economically. Artistic communities, in particular those that have small, tightly interlinking groups such as Winnipeg, often have difficulties with internal politics as artists vie with one another over scarce funding and resources. These difficulties are often displayed within a wide range of negative behaviours, including exclusion, verbal and emotional maltreatment, exploitation, plagiarism, gossiping, and jealousy over success.

Melissa: I think in every artistic community there's a lot of jealousy. It's a natural *human thing*. And I think especially when people are *struggling*, you know? There's a lot of nastiness. And hurtfulness. I hear that in the stories that young artists tell me.... Winnipeg after all is a pretty small community. It's very insular. (Melissa Personal Interview:2006)

Julip: I've had friends who are...very jealous or competitive, and working in the same industry, it just poisons the relationship from within *so badly*. (Julip Personal Interview:2006)

Perhaps a cursory look would suggest a certain truth to some of the negative stereotyping that exists for artists. However, a closer inspection reveals a more complex entwining of problems, similar to an abuse cycle in its presentation: artists are subject to maltreatment from outside the community, which we then direct toward one another inside our own community -- engaging in a range of self-protective behaviours as coping mechanisms. Notions of otherness often become directly hooked into this experience, whether through struggles with sexism, class division, misogyny, racism, prejudice, or simply feeling different and outside a norm of acceptability. Feeling as other is a common experience for artistic people. These problems are exacerbated and often brought on by colonialist

attitudes perpetrated by the government, corporations, and the public. The fallout from the kinds of colonial attitudes those in the arts experience is far reaching -- even into how we navigate, relate and live our identities as artists and as people. This is because the fields of persona and creative action within which artistic people operate are intimately tied in some manner to our identities as artists.⁴⁵ The frameworks used to navigate our inner worlds are the same ones drawn upon to comment on the world at large. As Bourdieu states, "The true subject of the work of art is... the specifically artistic manner in which artists grasp the world, those infallible signs of his mastery of his art" (1993:118)

Like many academics, artists are observers of the human condition. In doing so, we question our own identities, boundaries, and meanings; then we re-focus our internal gaze to question and comment on the outside world. Our communicative processes as a result occasionally differ from those not in the arts, as well as our reactions, our frameworks, and the ways in which we conduct ourselves socially and culturally. Therefore, patterns of marginalization, censorship and silencing deeply affect our creative spaces and spheres of interaction, often with politically charged and long ranging effects in our communities. I would suggest that the dye is cast when we begin to believe in our exclusion, that our contributions don't matter and that art itself therefore is only a decoration, a lovely idea, an afterthought. To this effect, approximately two thirds of the people I interviewed explained that they didn't feel they contributed to society in a way that was meaningful or had any real worth, and that they had many days when they experienced deep feelings of uselessness and futility with their given artistic professions.

Faye: So, 'what's it for?!?' 'What good is this?' happens on a couple of levels. Does anybody appreciate it, number one. Except for my other writer and artist friends.... But also, what's it for in terms of the greater good of the world, which yes, I think I'm doing something great here... *but* there are starving kids in Africa. Why not be that nurse that you started out to be, learn some good medical skills, and contribute to the world that way? So it's that kind of usefulness question. That over and over again for me has come up. And I have wrestled with that for many, many years.... You know, has it been wor[th it]? T.S. Eliot asked that question, in the Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock, "Has it been worth it, after all? Has it been worth it, after all?" (Faye Personal Interview:2006)

Diana: Sometimes I feel that what I am doing is quite self-indulgent. And my nieces and nephews... when they are struggling to decide what they want to do, unless they express a *definite* artistic bent, my advice is always

do something where at the end of the day, you can feel you've helped somebody. And I don't have that.... And I'm always waiting for the time when I feel like I can set my writing aside *enough* that I can go out and do something for the community that's *definite*, and gives me that sense of contribution. (Diana Personal Interview:2006)

Gerard: And you have to question yourself constantly -- is this thing what I'm doing, is this helping the world better than me going over to Africa and building outhouses? Because that's not an easy question.... It's the biggest question for me, because some days you're just like 'This is useless.' 'What the hell am I *really* doing here?' Other than living off of people. But you *hope* -- you just hope you're contributing. (Gerard Personal Interview:2006)

Julip: About every month or so I go into a slump where it's like 'Screw this.' I have a body and a brain and I should be working with something that I can see some tangible effects to what I do, and that it actually helps people... that actually makes a difference in the world. And I have *no idea* if anything I write will ever actually do that. And then I feel guilty. (Julip Personal Interview:2006)

Most of us see these kinds of sentiments as "just how I feel" rather than for the symptom it actually is -- a pattern of repression designed to restrain and contain the voice of the artist. Most often, silencing arrives via subtler methods and mechanisms as seen in our society: "These include self-restraint by speakers themselves, effective censorship by peers and superiors, a variety of market devices, social implementation of norms of unacceptability, and the **systematic marginalization of groups who are discouraged from speaking their minds and feelings** [my emphasis]" (Langton 1998:271). Often our silence occurs because of a belief, built over time, that if we speak up and defend our choices, ourselves, our art or the usefulness of what we do, we will be placed in a situation where "the artist" is yet again "stretching the truth," being "dramatic," "overly sensitive," "whiny," "unreasonable," "bitchy," "childish" or possessing an "overactive imagination." These patterns occur when we are stripped of power, and believe we are powerless. They occur when artistic "perspectives are cast to the side or excluded" (Tsing 2002:325). They occur when nobody is paying attention, and nobody is listening. It is alarming when we as artists struggle to believe in what we do. We are putting stock in something that isn't real -- our own downfall. We are placing belief in those who tell us that what we do isn't worth the dear price we already pay.

Censorship often comes to the artist through silent avenues. Although, if the debates that raged about Bill C-10 throughout most of 2008 are any indication of where we are at as a culture, these avenues may be louder than we think. C-10⁴⁶ is an omnibus bill amending the income tax act containing a clause that would have allowed the federal government to “cancel tax credits for projects thought to be offensive or not in the public interest” (<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2008/02/28/film-tax-credits.html>). The clause amendment, which as of February 2008 had already been passed by the House of Commons and making its way to the Senate, “would have allow[ed] the Heritage Minister to deny tax credits for Canadian productions, even if federal agencies such as Telefilm and the Canadian Television Fund... [had] invested in the production. Representatives from the Heritage and Justice departments would determine which productions are unsuitable and therefore ineligible for tax cuts” (ibid). As of October 7th, 2008, just days away from the federal election, Harper abruptly pulled the plug on the controversial section. Regardless of any possible last minute attempts to appease the arts sector, acts of this caliber speak of the kind of attitude those running the federal government have towards the arts. They are telling of the manner of systems they are angling towards putting into place -- those that make room for censorship through legislation. Under these kinds of colonial frameworks the Canadian government can “direct state regulation of social life through [the] repression” (Gledhill 2000:149) of artistic freedom. Indeed, “Western legal discourse participates in processes of power by creating modern realities of a special kind” (Asad 2002:138). These realities are “special in part because they define social relationships -- for individuals as well as for corporate groups -- in terms of legal “rights” and “duties” within the modern state” (ibid). Taken to the extreme, this kind of control is more than stifling, it becomes dangerous. As MacClancy (1997:10) states, “Hitler knew well the power of paint. A failed painter himself, he knew that if tightly controlled, the production of art could enhance the authority of his regime; if uncensored, it could contribute to its undermining. Thus culture had to be regulated ruthlessly and the avant-garde obliterated.” The lack of support artists consistently encounter creates a situation where making enemies with all the right people becomes dangerous, especially in our current political and economic climate. As Brian McGarry, Conservative MP for Ottawa Centre recently stated at the Ottawa Centre debates in response to those questioning him about the Conservatives

stance towards the creative community: "If there's changes to be made in any government, you work better from inside the government. And in this case, I'm the guy that's likely to be inside the government" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uMg6M4qpqI>). There is a reason that, in all the conversations I have had regarding this thesis topic with other artists, the deepest concern centered on their true ideas and feelings "being found out" by those who have authority, power and money. Any reassurances made that aliases would be provided were met with great suspicion. In fact, the best conversations took place when no interview was happening at all, with the safety that nobody would know their true thoughts and feelings. While completely understandable, it was indicative of a broader pattern of secrecy within the community -- a secrecy that unfortunately and ultimately does nothing but reinforce a code of silence. This is bolstered by the fact that artists already have a public reputation as "whiners" and disturbers of the peace; those of us who stand up in any fashion for ourselves and our rights are immediately seen as pre-pubescent trouble-makers, ungraciously and ungratefully biting the hand that feeds us. Take, for instance, the following samples from letters to the editor in the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail*: "I have just endured a week of listening to the arts community whining about the imminent annihilation of the Canadian arts scene" (2008:A10). Or: "If you want to observe the manufacture of outrage at work, just try yanking Canada's artists away from the public nipple. Hell hath no fury like a culture 'worker' disturbed" (2008:A14). The problem arises when we don't push, instead insisting on wearing our mantles of silence and constantly "making nice" so that we can prove we aren't like those outside our community portray us. Doing so will effectively kill our own communities without anyone ever having to directly step in. We will do the colonizer's job for them, succumbing to colonial stewards, policy makers, and benefactors who wish to "desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas" (Smith 2002:1).

In essence, any assimilationist strategies utilized by government and corporations (cognizant or not) are put into place to get us out of the "wilderness" and into "civilized society," to modify our position to a place where we can be easily manipulated; to maneuver us into a position where we will be more willing to give ground; to move us into a position where the creative culture we produce is "safe," inoffensive, menial, easy

or dumbed down so that the status quo won't be rocked; and even to shift us into a space where the rest of civilization wouldn't need to concern themselves with the perceived dangers of the artist -- L'enfant terrible. These are colonial attitudes of the oldest order. In fact, Canadian and American governments utilized very similar methods in order to break down Aboriginal resistance, and "integrate" First Nations people into "civilized" European culture. "American [and Canadian] government authorities saw trade with the Indians as a means to break down Native culture, and, eventually, clear the pathway for Indian assimilation into the mainstream culture" (Rand 2002:150). Colonialism rarely moves across a straight path, and in the instance of corporate colonialism, it is perhaps "less a directly coercive conquest than a persuasive attempt to colonize consciousness, to remake people by redefining the taken-for-granted surfaces of their everyday worlds" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:313).

Unfortunately, imperialist attitudes towards the arts are able to flourish to a certain extent due to a definitive lack of awareness or misunderstanding in public perception regarding creative impetus, and thereby creative identity. The job and role of the artist is, in part, to challenge and remove old paradigms, frameworks and modes of perception that are weak, dying, sick or outdated and to refashion, reconstruct, reenergize or transform them into being functioning healthy systems for the good of all.

Sometimes it may seem that there is a perversity in human intelligence, particularly in the arts, that seeks out or deliberately manufactures... dissonances in order to challenge us in the way that we are thinking, to shake complacency or to deliberately ferment change.... It is the tensions of such dissonances that are the impetus to creative development. (Radford 2004:54)

All too often, the wisdom and healing that the artist brings is misunderstood as a kind of thoughtless anarchism designed to dismantle civilization and all of its foundations, birthing society into total chaos. Perhaps this is because we are thought to be too dangerous to have, as Dagmar succinctly put it, a place "at the head table."

Dagmar: [It is] this notion of who the artist is that... keep[s] us outside. Because, I think it's safer that way. I really think it's a form of persecution. And I think that the reason for it has to do with the terrible fear of truly free thought. As though the artist might carry anarchy into society, if we were to sit at the head table. And I know that there are great

theories about how the artist needs to be outside of society in order to observe society. In order to comment. That that's where the dialogue really happens. Well, that may be sort of an interesting theory, and something worth discussing. I'm interested in sort of hearing the discussion on that. I'm more interested in seeing the artist at the head table.... (Dagmar Personal Interview:2006)

Art is a vehicle for culture, for expression and free speech, a vehicle for change, and a vehicle for challenging the "moral order." Its very nature challenges the hegemonic discourse of society, and this is perhaps why those in positions of authority and power can view it as dangerous. However, keeping artists away from the "head table" by framing us as less than "ordinary" (for example, in the instance of Stephen Harper), as anarchists threatening the progress and foundations of society (as seen in the example of Jim Flaherty and the Conservatives), or as childish whiners (as seen in examples of the media and the public⁴⁷) in order to prevent us from having any kind of voice is not a new strategy.

Ward Churchill argues that the myths and stereotypes built up around the Native American were no accident. He maintains that they served to explain in positive terms the decimation of Native tribes and their ways of life by 'advanced' cultures in the name of progress, thereby making it necessary to erase the achievements and very humanity of the conquered people. 'Dehumanization, obliteration or appropriation of identity, political subordination and material colonization are all elements of a common process of imperialism' (http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/aboriginal_people/aboriginal_portrayals.cfm)

These kinds of imperialist processes turned toward artistic practice, frameworks, and knowledge is a common refrain in our lives, and a worry of anarchy the trump card those in power often utilize to keep artists in their place at the bottom of the food chain. All too often we experience an overriding feeling that we are easily relegated to the back of the bus, only to be brought out when it's politically safe, to raise consciousness on an issue or to promote a public feeling of national or civic pride -- to be put away as quickly as we were brought out. Ultimately, we are up against those individuals in power who do not understand the necessity and worth of what we do for the society we contribute to, those who would keep us in our place for their own ends and those whose idea of "value" lies inside a capitalistic ideal which makes no room for anything outside of immediate gratification, immediate results, immediate economy. As John Akpata so eloquently stated at the Ottawa Centre debates:

If you're an artist, don't be offended that the government has cut your funding. It's not about art, it's about freedom of speech. Artists are the best people that can criticize the government, that's why they took away our money.... And god help us, if we want to create something that actually talks about Federal politics, because no one's going to want to touch that with a ten foot pole. Fortunately for us, the CRTC has approved "The Pornography Channel" with required fifty percent Canadian content so... you can have a job as an engineer, an editor, a writer, costume designer, set designer -- the Federal Government under the Conservatives would rather you make pornography than make art. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uMg6M4qpqI>)

While support for the arts is always talked about, the reality of the situation is that there is always time, space and money in this society and economy to put into sustaining oil, soft lumber, hydro dams and corporate investments. But at the end of the day, these will not be what sustain, educate, and maintain a culture. Hydro dams will not motivate society towards understanding, celebrating and connecting with its own humanity. Oil companies won't encourage free thought. What they will do, however, is encourage Canadians to push for a society where our collective idea of value is the lowest common denominator.

Profit vs. Creativity: The Stickiness of Engagement

Gerard: Without support of the ruling class, there's not that much space for people making their living as artists unless somehow the society gives them the means to survive otherwise, right? (Gerard Personal Interview: 2006)

As of late, scholars such as Richard Florida⁴⁸ have brought the notion of "creativity" into public consciousness as an economic boon, rather than a drain. Florida has been actively and positively changing perceptions of creative people in the public consciousness, by proposing the idea of a Creative Class. "[T]he basis of the creative class is economic. I define it as an economic class and argue that its economic function both underpins and informs its members' social, cultural, and lifestyle choices. The Creative Class consists of people who add economic value through their creativity⁴⁹" (Florida 2002:68). While Florida's theory takes into account a variety of artists, it also includes architects, engineers, designers, think-tank researchers, analysts, and scientists⁵⁰ among the creative class -- those people who traditionally do not experience the difficulties of having to hustle to find work, low income, and intolerance and prejudice the same way or to the depth a sculptor or actor experiences those difficulties. Because of

Florida, “[b]usiness journals like *Harvard Business Review* are [now] full of articles about creativity,” (Hartley 2004:130) and corporations and businesses are now discussing notions of the “art of business” and “corporate culture.”

It is encouraging to see people outside of the arts becoming interested in our values and what we can bring to the national table economically and culturally. As well, new studies and research into the arts and artistic methods are enormous improvements over the trenches they have been languishing in. However, the fact remains that the people who are in the business of writing plays and poetry, or dancing, or acting, are still struggling along as they always have. And a professional engineer works no more as a professional actor than a professional actor does as a professional engineer. Those who would deforest our creative landscape in order to find more effective ways of generating profit for corporate business interests is more than discouraging, it is telling. In an example from the United States:

[T]he company Raymond James Financial, Inc., who labeled their annual report from 1999 ‘The Art of Financial Planning’ and explained on the first page that designing a plan is an art: ‘We instruct our Financial Advisors in the art of financial planning so that each one can design customized solutions to financial problems.’ This is later expanded, ‘just as an artist brings a canvas to life, the art of financial planning can bring our clients’ visions to life.’ Apart from using art as a metaphor in their annual report, the company has a large art collection, supposedly one of the largest privately owned collections in the Southeast of the United States. The collection is maintained by a full time art curator, who regularly conducts art tours for clients and community members. At the same time he explains the vision and the mission of the company. (http://www.creativityatwork.com/Newsletters/artfulcreation_ch1.pdf)

When individuals actively invested in the business of making money begin to hook into our system as “profit for profit’s sake” our disenfranchisement becomes closer and closer to being something that will make recovery a devastating task.

As corporations do not have a culture or a community per se, they are forced to look outside of themselves in order to find it, to beef up their image, to “enrich” their voice in the community, and ultimately manufacture more wealth by luring more consumers. My concern here is a matter of appropriation of the artistic voice and identity -- utilizing these things in order to mine the arts for the culture that corporations find “themselves” lacking. Co-opting artistic frameworks and passing them off as their own is an excellent method of gaining much needed value. This is because the products of

artistry -- poems, paintings, and so forth are specific techniques of symbolizing. These symbols, when placed in the hands of corporate and business leaders, can be utilized, to use a magician's phrase -- to misdirect people's attention. And, when art is used to corporate ends, it may play "on the sentiments of the participants [the public] and sways their belief and action in this direction or that" (Cohen 1979:98). This is because "it is... ambiguity in their meaning that forges symbols into such powerful instruments in the hands of leaders and of groups in mystifying people for particularistic or universalistic or both purposes" (ibid:103). As a fundamental example of the above, examine the following excerpt from the business consultation group Creativity at Work:⁵¹

Unilever's⁵² project Catalyst applies the arts strategically... [and] has focused a lot on expression and emotion, and one of the skills that are important for business is expression through writing. Isabelle King, Catalyst assistant, told the following story..., "[A]nd then a final element of that program was to have literature events.... We got the poetry books here, which people have bought, and as a result of the creative writing program we launched a competition for staff here [at Unilever]. We wanted them to write a children's story aimed at children between 9 and 11 because we thought children are some of our most important consumers, we have got all these products for kids; captain Birdseye, kids' ice cream, kids' food and actually how do we connect with them, are we good at communicating with them? We wanted to find out what it is that makes them tick. (http://www.creativityatwork.com/Newsletters/artful_creation_ch1.pdf)

Art, placed into the hands of corporations, has the potential to become a powerful machine of mystification, with the purpose of exerting "influence on contemporary culture" (Schuster 2003:144) vis-à-vis artistic frameworks, modes of thinking and ways of knowing, further toxifying a system wherein artists already feel overwhelmed, unheard and sense a certain lack of control over their artistic vision. Furthermore, if we view "colonialism... [as] a system of economic exploitation" (Gledhill 2000:71), and "[b]oth the private and the public sectors... [as] 'instruments of the dominant class [in this instance the corporation] striving to establish its hegemony'" (ibid:102), then the arts have a potentiality to become mere 'instruments' of the corporation. This is not necessarily an actuality, but a *potentiality* that needs to be addressed within the artistic community. To reiterate, as seen by Ward Churchill (http://www.media-awareness.ca/English/issues/stereotyping/aboriginal_people/aboriginal_portrayals.cfm), "Dehumanization, obliteration or **appropriation of identity**, political subordination and **material**

colonization are all elements of a common process of imperialism... [my emphasis].” The arrogance of those who strip the arts of their basic precepts and then pass them off as their own is beyond plagiarism. The issue here is not only identity appropriation, but also the “depoliticizing” of artists that “serves to make the discussion” of art “more palatable” to business people and others by “sanitizing it of the ugliness of colonization and injustice” so that they can then “potentially engage with the knowledge but not the people who... live that knowledge” (Simpson 376:2004). Artists sleep and arise with creative knowledge, engage with it, struggle with it, work with it, cry with its failings, and rejoice with its prizes. It is not just *what* we do, but *who* we are. It is our culture, our community, our family, our identities and our lives.

Colonial Outcomes: Patterns of Hegemony in Creative Communities

Exotics are identified in terms of the qualities of passion they offer to the agent of exoticism, but the passion of the exotics is molded by the exoticizer's Desire. It is neither an essence nor a drive; it is a stigma of the colonial condition. In dealing with each other, those identified as exotics refer to the very categorizations that keep them bound and struggle to expand their identities through exotic reappropriations. (Savigliano 169:1995)

How often the oppressed turn into their own oppressors or, worse still, into the oppressors of others. (Scheper-Hughes 1995:419)

Gerard: Artists better support other artists. Or else all they're going to do is create... some big monument to themselves. (Gerard Personal Interview: 2006)

The truth is I have had both tremendously beautiful and destructive relationships with other artists. Sometimes at the same time. I have been lauded, ignored, loved, and shunned. I have been talked about behind my back, I have been treated as a joke, I have been given more respect than I deserve, and I have been understood. I have been a curiosity, an oddball, a bright light, and a failure. I have been fragile, egotistical, small and frail, larger than life. Young artists in particular are vulnerable to a host of insecurities, because they are just finding their footing, their ability to make their way in the community, and their voice. It's a dangerous time, full of dangerous people. Dangerous, because in those periods we are more prone to believing in a world full of naysayers, instead of in a world full of our own instinctual voice. During that dangerous

period, I chose study theatre in a university setting, thinking that this was the training I needed to help me become an actor. I knew theatre school wouldn't necessarily be what I hoped for, but the sheer brutality and emptiness of it was shocking. It was amazingly unsupportive -- a kind of get them in get them out as fast as you can mentality, with no room for nurturing, or even something as simple and necessary as having a system in place to show young actors how to navigate as professionals in the community. At the time, I was too young to be able to articulate what I was feeling and experiencing. At the end of my second year, I experienced something that would eventually take me away from the theatre. Not because it was anything special, but perhaps because it wasn't. *It is my turn to perform for the class. Our mentor flicks meaty fingers across his thinning hair. Watches me carefully. Slowly crosses and re-crosses his legs. Sips coffee. Moves from side to side in his chair. Pulls on his chin. Waits. I stop, shaking, attempting to appear like I'm not upset, like I don't know what's coming. But I do. He takes a long breath, leisurely dismantles my performance, my ability, my personality -- finally resting on the deeply personal. He runs his tongue over the lid of his cup, the edges of his lips, smiles, and settles in for the response he knows I won't be able to give. The silence in the room is suffocating. None of my classmates say a word. I am sitting near the edge of the stage, trying to move through my growing heart sickness and into the filmy apparitions of their faces lost in the darkness. Searching for anything comforting, anything I can latch onto to keep me from falling. The room spins and slows down. Maybe everything just stops. My feet look funny; maybe I've worn the wrong shoes. Maybe I should have gone stage left in that moment and not right. Maybe I should have been angry, quiet, sad, happy, complex, better, more skilled, dyed my hair blonde, listened to myself, ignored myself, gotten a low cut top, chanted anthems, railed against God, done the hokey pokey. Maybe.* It is only much later I discover what was expected. Years later, well-respected actors in the community that I knew who had worked with or taken classes with him would explain that he had a fondness for young women who were open to his flirtations, and performed scenes in class that played to that particular delectation.⁵³

The experiences I had in theatre school were certainly not unique to me. A broader pattern of small-scale politics, in the guise of sexism, misogyny, homophobia, racism, ignorance, infighting and elitism exist in the theatre and elsewhere in the arts world. While it's accurate that there is an abundance of free and progressive thinkers in

the arts, the system is like any other, with all the good and bad that humanity has to offer. We sometimes trick ourselves into thinking of the arts as a space where the socially enlightened all congregate -- huddled together in a corner awaiting a right-wing storm. Unfortunately, there are far too many occasions when nothing could be further from the truth.

Sabastian: It's tough being an actor especially in the west when you're a visible minority... it translates into a lot less castability. I think that other major cities I've worked in have a lot more openness to the notion of someone who looks a certain way being able to play a variety of different characters. I remember when... I was in theatre school, one of my professors taking me aside and saying 'Sabastian, we really like your work. But we think you should pursue the directing vein, because you look too exotic to be an actor.' (Sabastian Personal Interview:2006)

Warren: We've had some unpleasant surprises. I guess the *jury* system⁵⁴ for selection of specific project grants can be a *bit* strained -- strange. And we've had some *strange* reasons for being turned down for arts grants. One was that we were told by a jury that naturalism was an inappropriate form of expression for a gay and lesbian theatre company. (Warren Personal Interview:2006)

Jack: And I've also learned it's very difficult for me to get support for a piece about black people that doesn't involve racism. And I'm going through that right now, with a film script that I have been working on. Where a number of the... business industry partners we're trying to connect with have come back to us saying the racism in the script isn't pronounced enough. And... they make references to movies like: 'You know, this could be like *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Or this could be like *To Sir, With Love*.' And I'm saying: 'My reality as a black person...[in the western provinces] is not *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Or, *In the Heat of the Night*. It's much more subtle.' And I'm reflecting what's my reality. You know? Because what they want to see, is they want to see a form of racism that they find offensive. Not the kind of racism that they do. That they commit. You know? Themselves. (Jack Personal Interview:2006)

The problem is that we often tend to pretend that these kinds of negatives don't exist, pushing aside some of the uglier realities in the name of the "outside" world not tearing us down more than it already has. But the truth is that these dilemmas happen all the time in our creative communities. And the truth is that *our job* is to hold up the mirror, is to positively shape our society (by construction or destruction), is to push and rail against these kinds of negativities (or unpack them), to shake people from their reverie, afford them a space to laugh or cry at the inconsistencies of life, lead them away from being

“swallowed up in unconsciousness and dissembling” (Maria Personal Interview:2006), and not to be the ones caught with our pants down committing the act. To illustrate, according to a 2001 report on arts funding by Hill Strategies, First Nations artists earned on average “28% less than other artists” and “visible minority artists... 11% less than other artists” (Hill Strategies 2001:1). Additionally, as of 2001, visible minority artists made up only 8.9% of the total arts labor force. The number for First Nations artists is even lower, making up 2.4% of the total force.

Ironically, the methods we use to marginalize each other are often created by an understanding of, and sensitivity to, the human condition, and what works on a social scale to gain leverage. “[S]ocial interaction... is a source of social [symbolic] power. It may be at times, therefore, the occasion for coercion, conflict, or complicity” (Gal 2000:131). Because many of us have a disposition of sensitivity to the human condition, we are given insights that others may miss, because we have *educated* ourselves to operate in this manner: to pick up nuance, subtlety, emotion, articulation, body language. Every theatre, dance, and writing workshop or class you will ever take as an artist encourages and enforces these kinds of watchful mindfulness. In doing so, you develop or encourage a particular kind of sensitivity to the world and the people around you. It is a language of its own, and artists can use it negatively or positively to explore, navigate, create, and communicate with each other and with our audience. As Radford (59:2004) mentions:

[I]nsofar as the creative act involves mastery within a particular conceptual space, it may be seen as one of complex information processing. The effective execution of this processing depends on the deployment of emotional markers on certain items of information or certain lines of connection within the informational complex.

These methods of communication are *indirect* routes of power and often become part of a system of discourses of marginalization. Other devices that can also be employed indirectly in order to marginalize others and to gain power are status, alliances, image, beauty, age, class, art form and even regional affiliations.⁵⁵ Indirect communication can be a very effective language of authority and domination -- leaving the recipient to wade through landscapes of doubt and uncertainty. Following Foucault (Gledhill 2000:149), this is a strategy of disciplinary power, wherein individuals are trained to “regulate themselves.” Feelings of discomfort, confusion, or even paranoia with regard to how

others view you, how welcome you are in a given situation and so forth can cause artists to modify behaviours in order to stultify potential negative outcomes.

Thandiwe: Because dammit, this world, the theatre world is run by men. It is. And I think [this] is becoming more and more true.... Sometimes I want to say Well, fuck it.' I was at Stratford for a season, being an intern.... But just being in that world, being run by these men, of a [certain] socio economic [status] -- theatre animals. Men in their forties, and fifties, and sixties, and the place nearly killed me. Watching the way it ran, and the kind of energy. I can't even really describe [it]. But it's just such... a[n] *uncreative* energy. And you look at the roster, and you see that there may be one or two women directing there, out of seventeen to eighteen shows. You just feel, you feel like you need to run. Right? You feel like 'So, who's being represented here?' And 'Who are the people on our stages, at Stratford?' And 'Who's putting on these shows, and how are they being put on, and how do we think about theatre? And what is this machine?' Is this theatre? What is this? I don't know what this is. And it's being run by people who I have absolutely no connection to, and I have no way of penetrating. And when you look, and you say 'Two women are directing here.' And they are women who have been at Stratford for twenty or thirty years. Then you go, well, who gets there? There *are* women directors in Canada. Why aren't they here? And, okay, it's not my imagination -- the biggest theatre company in Canada is being run by this group of men. That seems like an impenetrable fortress.... But again, do things like that get published with my name on it? I don't know. Do I want to stand up and be the one who says that?.... So, how many women don't speak about it? Why isn't the fucking *Globe and Mail* doing a story about this? Why isn't there a front page story about Stratford Festival? The most funded festival in Canada, has two women on their directing roster for how many seasons now? Like that story is needing to be told. Or what roles are being given to people of color at Stratford? Where is the multiculturalism at Stratford?.... I think I want to think about how much I've just said, and how much I want to stand behind it.

Kirsten: You're going to be given an alias.

Thandiwe: Oh yeah. See, even that even feels like a copout. (Thandiwe Personal Interview: 2006)

The fear Thandiwe expressed in her interview is characteristic of those artists worried about being made outsiders in our own communities. Speaking up, speaking out, associating with the wrong people, making social or public missteps can all result in a vicious kind of non-engagement. As previously mentioned, the arts tend towards working on a scale of identity and symbolic economics that is often generated from within the community. When that support is withdrawn it can become very difficult to engage socially due

to petty behaviours such as gossip, the result of which can be alliance destruction. Taken to extremes, and over time, this can eventually lead to difficulties finding opportunities and work.⁵⁶ This is what Foucault identifies as “techniques of control,” (1995:160) which can be utilized politically or economically to silence, keep others in line, or maintain existing systems of power.

These techniques are undeniably a part of how the politic is played out and encountered on the artistic field. For instance, many professional artists, as a result of years of dealing with these negative kinds of behaviors, have a developed tendency towards being self-protective.

Soleil: So I think when you start getting into the professional world, people can tend to be more protective. And that’s my experience.... And I left that collective [in Montreal] about three years ago, and I mean I rehearse in my living room. It’s a bit of an oddity. (Soleil Personal Interview:2006)

Diana: But I have to say, Kirsten, that most of my friends are not in theatre. And one of the reasons for that was because when I started to be produced... and was having these successes that of course everybody wanted, I began to feel uncomfortable. I just was more comfortable with people who weren’t in the same -- who weren’t competing for the same piece of pie.... And I just don’t want to spend -- I just haven’t chosen to have any of them as really close friends. I think to protect myself. Because... the hunger is so great.... And so I *totally* understand why other people feel that way. I totally understand anybody resenting me. But I just don’t want to -- I mean why open myself up to that? That’s not comfortable. (Diana Personal Interview:2006)

Melissa: And I guess I don’t go out into the writing world, here in the city. I choose not to. Not because I don’t feel supported, but because I *just*, there’s a sense of feeling *exposed* somehow.... [A]nd I’ve done pretty well in what I’ve done. And the artists in this community *know that*. And I’m not sure how they feel about it. (Melissa Personal Interview:2006)

Often, the methods that artists use to marginalize one another are both learned and inherited behaviors. Learned by how we have been treated by those outside the arts community, and inherited by how we have been taught to leverage power over each other via our own methods, in our own communities. Cycles repeat themselves over time and often become deeply ingrained within the community. Negativities we encounter in our interpersonal relationships with each other can extend into our business and social relationships with the community and the arts institutions that hire us.

Peter: Because that's a *huge* part of it, is those disappointments and depressions are the things that'll knock you out of this business. Because you start taking things personally. You forget that it's because -- like right now I get jobs because my hair's a little bit longer than the next guy's. And that's it. And if his hair was longer, *he'd* get the job. And *especially* once you reach this point, you start recognizing that stuff. I've gotten work after having done just *horrible* auditions. And thinking 'Oh. I sucked in that one.' And then they call you the next day and they offer you the role. And it's *just* because they liked the way you look, you're the right height, your elbows remind them of something. One guy told me he cast me because I looked like a lizard. And... a *lizard* aspect had absolutely *nothing* to do with the part. But he had just seen two hundred faces, in a week, and he decided my face was different from everyone else's. So he cast me. And he thought it was hysterical. You know, to say to me 'That's the only reason I cast you. You remind me of a lizard. Anyways, see you on set.' And off he went. And it's that stupid a business. (Peter Personal Interview:2006)

Arts institutions (such as theaters, dance companies, and publishing houses) often face similar economic problems to those of individual artists. It makes it difficult for our organizations to do the job that they are supposed to be doing -- both symbolically and financially for themselves as well as for the artist. Instead, there is an increased focus on revenue generation, "the bottom line," and "hit show" or "bestseller." Sometimes this means a decreased focus on the kind and quality of art that is produced, sometimes it means a decreased focus on giving the artist the network they need in order to produce and feel supported.

Delila: [M]y book was one of five for a literary prize that was being honored in Los Angeles, and my publisher in the States... brought me down to LA to -- ostensibly to honor me, and to have me wait in an auditorium with everybody else the way they do with these arts awards, to find out whether or not my book had been chosen as a winner. And it wasn't, someone else won the award, but my publisher did happen to be at this big... literary festival so there were artists -- writers from all over the place... and hundreds of thousands of people come to this thing. But my publisher did happen to have a booth there. Did they come and take me for coffee? No. Did they offer me dinner? Did they even come and offer me a handshake? I didn't see them, the whole time I was there. And when I got home, they sent me a mug. With the Los Angeles times literary prizes on it. And I was very pleased, because it's a latte mug, and I picked up one for free myself when I was down there. So now I have two. (Delila Personal Interview:2006)

It is this kind of negative behavior that leaves the artist floating in a netherworld, a liminal space where they are supposed to be a part of these systems, their *own* systems, yet are somehow not allowed inside of or to partake of them in ways that are meaningful. The irony lies in the fact that without the artist, none of these organizations or institutions would ever exist. There is an alternative to locking ourselves away from the fervour and the hunger. But it involves understanding that we must look for alternatives to the situation we find ourselves in now. It involves understanding that, in the end, the ways in which we shut one another down, silence each other, hold each other back, and pull one another back into the bucket, are the ways that will be our ultimate undoing.

When power has been removed from a person, situation, or community, there is a predictable result -- wherein those people involved inevitably look for ways to regain what has been taken. In the arts, elitism is a tool that can be utilized in order to regain those things that we have lost or strip mined out of the community.

Marc: I sort of have a beef about elitism and art.... [I]t just seems that many...theatre artists are beaming toward an audience that are other theatre artists. It's just some kind of, well inbreeding's not the right word. Or maybe it is. I just have a bit of a chip on my shoulder about theatre artists writing solely for other theater artists.... That no one outside the theatre community itself would even think of seeking out. Or even *caring* about.... You know 'I don't care about some esoteric little performance art piece that you're doing in the Schoolhouse Theatre. What does that have to do with me?.... [H]ow well does this add to my life?' And of course the artist would say 'Well, of course it's completely relevant because I'm saying *this* about [*this*].' But, the person would respond 'Well, give it to me in a way I can understand.'.... [T]he artist has to acknowledge that they have to speak in a language that the audience can understand. (Marc Personal Interview:2006)

Jack: I went to a play by a local arts organization in town. I went to a function, an evening, and I brought a couple of friends who were not involved in that art, in that group. And they felt like they were complete outsiders. They felt like all of the jokes were inside jokes. And they felt that nobody came up and talked to them, and made them feel welcome. And they're not artists. And they have absolutely no reason to want to go and attend another event like this. And it was unfortunate. It was a fundraiser for a local group. And, I had a hard time trying to explain to the group that this was the case. And that, if my two friends felt that way, maybe others did too, you know? (Jack Personal Interview:2006)

Sadly, methods of exclusion and elitism towards the public often work to our complete and utter detriment, pushing away the one thing we want and need, someone to listen to

the call we are sending out to the world. The relationship of the artist and the audience is symbiotic, and in order to survive, we must be willing to be accessible to those who would listen, appreciate and celebrate. As Melissa put it, it is our job to open the door to beauty, ecstasy, pain, joy, or love. It is not our job to be self-protective, standoffish, elitist and selfish in our creation.

When thinking about patterns of power and social relations within the community, we need to be aware that “[c]hallenges to racism and authoritarianism continue to be blunted by the practices of different oppressed people toward each other” (Gledhill 2000:204). We cannot be effective advocates for ourselves externally if we cannot act with integrity and find common ground from within. In order to do so, we must first acknowledge the subjugation of identity that we are subjected to and run concurrently as a part of our own systems. The danger in not doing so will be in allowing ourselves to be pulled further into economic and political structures of colonialism -- those frameworks which are utilized in order to censor, exploit, silence, subordinate, appropriate and control the artist, as well as what we create. Through awareness, we can comprehend how these processes of imperialism (Churchill:http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/aboriginal_people/aboriginal_portrayals.cfm) work against us to create rifts in our community, through which small-scale politics and negative behaviours arise. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith mentions in her discussion of colonial power in indigenous communities: “[d]ivide and rule still operates as a basic strategy for dealing with indigenous peoples. It still operates because unfortunately it still works” (2002:99).

Conversation: I say: She was at this awards function and said that whether it was true or not, she felt like everyone in the room was pushing all of their jealousy on her, that no-one wished her well, and it actually made her feel physically sick.

He says: Man, that's too bad.

I say: It's difficult to be nice to one another when everyone is gathered around the last grain of rice left in the bowl...

He says: You have to fight damn hard for that last grain.

Chapter Six: Being an Unreasonable Artist

Dagmar: Okay, this is not my joke. I heard this, and it's attributed to Margaret Atwood, who apparently was at a party, and got talking to a brain surgeon. And they were chatting away, and he said 'You know I was thinking that when I retire, I would love to write a book.' And Margaret Atwood said 'You know I've been thinking, when I retire, I'd love to be a brain surgeon.' (Dagmar Personal Interview:2006)

"Kirsten: [W]hen... people meet you, and they find out you're a writer---
Melissa: Mm hm.

K: What kind of a reaction do you get?

M: Very often, especially if they are business people, they want to tell me about the book that they want to write when they're retiring. Teachers do that. *Anybody*. And I find that deeply offensive.... Because it *devalues* the *difficult* journey that we must all take to become artists.... [T]here's something about art, especially if it's well done, if it looks effortless, then the assumption [is] that everyone must be able to do this. They wouldn't assume for instance that they could be dentists, automatically by osmosis. You know, I could be a dentist, or I could be an engineer.... I could be a brain surgeon, I could be a nuclear physicist, I could do these things.

K: Magically.

M: Magically.

(Melissa Personal Interview: 2006)

Divesting Power

[T]he problem is how to extricate oneself from the field of discourse of a dominant Other. (Friedman 1992:854)

The reach of imperialism into 'our heads' challenges those who belong to colonized communities to understand how this occurred, partly because we perceive a need to decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves
(Smith 2002:23)

Dissociation from colonial influence cannot be reached merely from an economic standpoint. As Audre Lorde tells us, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (1984:112). More money from the government or the public does not mean we are automatically free from the disenfranchising frameworks that have been superimposed over our community for so long. Indeed, "[d]ecolonization, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of

the government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (Smith 2002:98). This process requires us to detoxify our structures, asking how we can be active participants (agents) in our own decolonization.

We cannot underestimate the kind of power that we possess -- toward positive or negative outcomes. There are interplays at work between the artist/artistic community as an agent of autonomous power, the artist/artistic community as a subject of internal colonial structures, and the kinds of problems generated by artists and within artistic communities themselves. This understanding is of the utmost importance, because the more polarized we become, the more those with the power to confine and define can continue to eat us from the inside. The truth is that we have no defense against ourselves. The “challenge is... to demystify, [and] to decolonize” (Smith 2002:16) our community and ourselves.

Kirsten: What would you like to see for Canada’s future in terms of its arts community?

Chris: More unity inside the arts community. I think it’s a very divided community. People are constantly fighting against each other. And that reflects really badly on the community. And I think that people, I *hope* that the arts community will develop a sense of *pride*. See them as contributing to the well being of the society... I think that if someone *makes* the choice to be an artist, they should be proud of that choice, and they should *act* with dignity, and act also with being more assertive about their work... I think there are problems, but nobody will pay attention to those problems, and nobody will be -- will want to be associated with a community that is not arguing for herself, that she is a contributor. And I think that artists actually can make a *huge* difference in terms of the quality of life and in terms of the sense of meaning and all that. And they *should* use that possibility as a powerful tool for advocacy, instead of repulsing people. (Chris Personal Interview: 2006)

Fragmentation and disallowing growth by politicking allows for and creates an enormous gap where we are then open to dissolution. One step towards healing this is by celebrating ourselves as a vibrant, whole community -- not just as city factions (such as Winnipeg or Calgary), but one that accepts an inclusivity for all artists in both nature and action. As Lorde (1984:112) mentions, “[w]ithout community there is no liberation, [as without it there remains] only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between and individual and her oppression.” Through community-centered approaches, we begin to

unhook ourselves from unhealthy patterns and ally ourselves against those who wish to co-opt, destruct, reinterpret, stereotype, and bind us to categories that are not beneficial towards our growth. Community does not mean “a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist” (ibid), but rather a connection to and an understanding and celebration of our collectivities. In this manner, we may see the deep effects of what our community really can do and contribute, instead of corroding in paradigms of anger, confusion or resentment. By celebrating our strengths, our individualities and collectivities, the raw and unpolished aspects as well as the perfect, we are wielding the power of choice, and the power to undermine the colonial objective. Lorde reveals that it “is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master’s concerns” (ibid:113). Celebration allows us to possess a healthy gaze, one that is focused all directions.

Celebration is a powerful route of connection, and when connected, our community has the potential for holding remarkable power and creative agency. It is important to recognize that:

[T]he specificity of the literary and artistic field is defined by the fact that the more autonomous it is, i.e., the more completely it fulfils its own logic as a field, the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization; but also that, whatever its degree of independence, it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit. (Bourdieu 1993:38-39)

Certainly, the economic and political fields that surround us will always affect us, but to a large extent we can choose how that will play out within the field of our community. In order to do so, comprehending those systems from which we are birthed, and those we are still encapsulated inside of will go a long way towards creative enfranchisement. Creative work is a vehicle for expression, free speech, change, and for challenging the “moral order” of society. The very nature of art challenges the hegemonic discourse of society, because it “demands from... [its] audience [and the artists who make it] a willing-ness to step forward into the unknown” (Thompson 2000:1). When we generate combined (and connected) agency through education, contemplation and will, we become dangerous artists. By exerting resistance we are challenging systems of hegemonic power, and letting others know that we are well aware of what goes on behind closed doors.

Genny: There'll be rules like "Excellence is rewarded" and.... "Diffusion in the community" and *all* this stuff. But in fact, the *money and the political body* is ruled by *boards*, who are people who *own* things. And that moves very, very slowly. So, the rhetoric, compared to what *actually* happens, in terms of funding, [is different], right? (Genny Personal Interview:2006)

Ultimately, if we are open to honest exploration, without buying into hierarchies of power (our own or others), we will have the chance to challenge those who wish to keep us in the dark about the reality of our situation -- the difference between what is being said and what is actually being done. Community aids in this by asking us to turn away from isolating situations, and gifts us a space of mobilization where we can work collectively, however awkwardly, toward solutions, support, and gifting. This can happen on a number of levels, from education, outreach, and activism to simply being aware of the issues and talking about them. Every act, even in minutia, is an act worth doing because it adds to our collective healing and power, sometimes in unexpected ways. When we educate each other to, and become aware of, the real effects of what is tearing us from the inside we are on the path to finding voice. Joining together, and building *like status* in opposition to the status hierarchies of, for instance, the government, big business and so forth, we create a self-generating energy. Over time, this energy has the capability to sustain itself.

Resisting Power

The first point of resistance to power... must... be individual strategies which counter specific forms of domination, even in minute, everyday ways. (Gledhill 2000:150)

As a community and as individuals, it is a toolkit of agency, identity, representation and voice that will help us stand up against, or positively work with, corporations and government authoritative voices who feel they have a say in what we are doing, thus removing, erasing, or dampening our voice. It may also help us to identify capabilities and strengths we didn't realize we possessed. We "mediate different constructions of self and resist colonizing norms through resignification, parody, and mimicking" (Bacigalupo 1993:47). Like many other groups subject to a colonialist mentality, artists "have learned to develop a tolerance for contradiction and ambiguity"

which deals in “multiple narratives, multiple selves, multiple possibilities for action that are context specific” (ibid).

It is an informed agency and identity that will be enormous allies in overcoming those challenges that have led to our marginalization. Agency is a powerful method with which individual artists and the community can assert power and engage with, resist, or challenge existing negative patterns. “[P]eople actively engage their marginality by protesting, reinterpreting, and embellishing their exclusion” (Tsing 2002:325). Agency helps us to step out of disenfranchising situations through awareness, action and reclamation of authority. As Langton states “[s]peech acts of ranking, legitimating, and depriving someone of rights and powers are *authoritative* [emphasis hers] illocutions. It takes authority to be able to perform them” (1998:263). A strong sense of individual and community identity lends the ability to stop giving away our power. Agency helps us to move forward and not to backtrack.

The weapon that is used to ‘politicize,’ and ‘colonize’ is the very thing we have (at least) a partial antidote for. Ironically, even though notions of our professions and who we are as a result are rife with stereotype and prejudice, it is our own concepts of identity and selfhood that continue to force others into difficult choices about who we are. “Colonialism reduced and simplified native peoples constructing them as homogeneous bounded cultures in order to control them.... Colonialism rarely sees indigenous people as they really are: crossing boundaries, having overlapping cultures, and juggling multiple cultures, perspectives, and epistemologies” (Bacigalupo 2003:35). Interestingly, it is the artist’s profession to be interested in these types of issues, to highlight them, to struggle with them in all of their complexity, as they are part of the artist’s own identity. Understanding and recognizing that we possess powerful tools of representation and utilizing that knowledge and ability in ways that are meaningful, is one route towards collective decolonization, and a key method of resistance.

Melissa: We are society’s jesters. The wise fool sometimes. We are able to tell the king off. In a way that nobody else can. We get the chance to tell society off, in a way that someone for instance who is a chartered accountant wouldn’t be able to do. We have powerful tools at our disposal. We tell society where they are *at*. And where they have *been*. And where they are *going*. And we’re a mark on the wall, all of us, in the here and now, of what is happening in the world. (Melissa Personal Interview: 2006)

A willingness to use the concept of identity as a voice against injustice, both inside and outside of our system, is an inestimable ally in how we can push against and negotiate between those organizations, groups, and individuals that wish to keep us a non-threatening, limitless pot of free resources. However, it is dangerous to view identity merely as a blunt weapon, using methods like elitism to keep us 'safe.' Doing so will only further "[o]ur' definitions of 'our' culture and views of 'self'... [as] constructions that [only] occur in relation to structures of power and issues of dominance" (Popkewitz 1988:78). Instead, I believe we can think of identity as an actual system. A system that has the capacity to unplug us from those structures which dictate that toeing the line, silence and censorship are acceptable, and instead plug us into those structures that have the capacity to create health, wellness and longevity for ourselves and our community. We must understand and embrace the notion that we "are not passive victims, but politically conscious subjects who interact with and resist colonialism and have fluid boundaries in which to constantly recreate... [ourselves]" (Bacigalupo 1993:51).

Often, dimensions of authority utilized to keep us silenced are seemingly invisible, as "[o]nce... circuits of power are seen as capillary, diffuse...and difficult to trace to their sources, the idea of resistance becomes meaningless" (Scheper-Hughes 1995:417). Identity gifts us with a richly dense locale through which we can create tension, craft pathways, and find a voice loud enough to call out to one another. A healthy personal and collective identity can give us a *flexible mode of resistance*; through this, we may begin to recognize, challenge, and transform existing patterns of power. It allows us "possibilities within which information can be combined and separated, grouped and regrouped" (Radford 2004:53) and which can "generate multiple possibilities in terms of meaningful articulations" (ibid). In doing so, we may discover how to belong to each other, and to the world at large. "Belongingness often depends less on a person's knowledge of traditional lore and more on their ability to recreate their identity and that of others; to adapt themselves to situations; to manipulate competing systems of knowledge and reality; and to negotiate between realities" (Bacigalupo 1993:42). As artists, we need to ask ourselves what the reality is of how we want (or indeed if we want) our identities to be consumed, bought, sold, co-joined and redefined "[W]e must not forget that the very idea of socioeconomic development is a quintessential modernist concept developed out of Western colonial situations" (Fischer 1996:68). In this, we must begin

to ask ourselves: how far are we willing to go in order to become part of the very society which keeps us underfoot and underfed? What will happen to us if we do? What shifts? What changes? What is it that we really want? In terms of our own cultural artistic fields of representation and discourse, are we asking to be part of a “politics of integration,” a “politics of disintegration” (Friedman 1992:845) or something else entirely? What is the model we should be looking to for our continued growth? Is there is a need to “create a cultural identity that is viable in the...political economy as well as uniquely... [our own]?” (Fischer 1993:1001). If not, what other models could we utilize?

Claiming Power

The literary or artistic field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces. (Bourdieu 1993:30)

While rhetorically the indigenous movement may be encapsulated within the politics of self determination it is a much more dynamic and complex movement which incorporates many dimensions, some of which are still unfolding. It involves a revitalization and reformulation of culture and tradition, an increased participation in and articulate rejection of Western institutions, a focus on strategic relations and alliances (Smith 2002:110)

In order to achieve a measure of acceptance, understanding or simply tolerance from the outside, we have to be able to argue for our own advocacy in a way that does not sidestep the issues, but tackles them head on, in a manner that is both accessible and unapologetic. This entails accountability, support for one another as well as our audience and embracing community approaches. In order to accept, understand and create new paradigms and possibilities for our community, opening our minds to new modes of thought, new translations and new stories are imperative. “Claiming” does not mean taking what does not belong to us, but standing our ground in what does. It means refusing to accept scraps in exchange for our time and energy. It means knowing where we are at, with an eye on where we can go, together. In the end, old paradigms of “divide and conquer must become define and empower” (Lorde 1984:112). And why? Because, as Rubin (1970:142-143) states, “The role of the revolutionary is to create theatre which creates a revolutionary frame of reference. The power to define is the power to control.” Artists are in a unique position in this sense, as what we create gives us power to define and frame our realities.

In order to do so to a full extent, we have to find ways of pulling people inside the art, find methods of being interactive in order to get our audiences to invest emotionally, spiritually and mentally in what it is we do, to care about the work. The more the public invests, the more central it will become to their lives, instead of being in a state of non-engagement with the work. As Wyman states, "Modern society has allowed much of our experience of the arts and culture to slip into a negotiated deal based on spectatorship" (2004:147). Part of this issue stems from how modern audiences have been trained to see and interact, led by the media and new forms of technology. Modern audiences are encouraged, and often even rewarded by becoming spectators in the artistic process.

Peter: Because I mean right now I'm feeling... [that] we're *this* close to disappearing off the face of the earth. That right now, there's so little reason for you to go out your door. Whether it's because we've lost the social skills, and that people *fear* socializing so they just stay home, because you've got eighty eight choices of what to do that night. Each one of them quite interesting. I'm not begrudging people their surround sound big screens, or all-stream computer. You know... I want to watch ballet tonight, I'm pretty sure I could go online and get a live feed from somewhere.... And there's so many different reasons for people to *not* go and be out there....

[P]eople have spent so much time setting up a system where you're coming to the play -- are you going to that play tonight because *I'm* in it, and I'm doing a performance that is touching people? And you're going out because you want to be touched? Or are you going there because a marketing firm has spent twenty-one dollars, on *you* as an individual, to convince you to be a *subscriber*, to a season. And you're going because it's Wednesday, and that's what your ticket says. And since you've already paid for it, you might as well go. I mean, that's always our dilemma.... Because everyday, what's it now? You can watch TV on your phone.... You know, you can do everything from the inside of your car, you can do everything from the inside of a cardboard box in your basement. The chances that you're going to come out anywhere, and interact with a complete stranger beside you, with this play being presented in front of you, are getting smaller and smaller. Like, there's just *no reason* to [go]. (Peter Personal Interview:2006)

As a friend pointedly said one day while we were discussing this topic: "It's a matter of accessibility -- many members of the public don't know what to look for because nobody's shown them." And certainly, "[a]llowing someone else to think for us is what the entertainment industry desperately wants us to do; it aims to make us docile and manipulable as consumers, all the while deluding us into thinking that we are in control of our choices" (Wyman 2004:148). Dangerous for both audience and artist alike, this

aim for docility creates, as Corradi (Savigliano 1995:25) puts it, a “culture of dependency” for the consumer. Reclamation strategies then, must involve some kind of open-ended educational process. As Ingmar (Personal Interview:2006) stated to me during his interview “to appreciate art you need education. And you need to be trained to appreciate it. Trained to read. Trained to look.”⁵⁷ Hiding under the guise of “entertainment,” mass media can produce and has produced schisms between the public and the warm immediacy of what art actually is and what it brings on an emotional connective level. Creativity requires a “true open endedness” (Wyman 2004:148) that the media, by virtue of its very nature, possesses very little of, if any at all. This leads the public toward a concept Genny explored in her interview; many people don’t know how to experience art anymore, and part of this comes from a deficit of education, understanding, and experience.⁵⁸

Art was never meant to be a one-sided affair; it is an engaged gift -- one that comes through the artist to the audience. The audience, receiving the gift, put it back out into the world by interacting personally with the art in ways that love, hate, rage, in ways that feel joyful, erotic, proud, shameful. In fact, anything is better than apathetic, anything but a state of gluttonous spectatorship. Art was always meant to be cyclic -- an endless circle of sharing⁵⁹ -- gifting and regifting.

Faye: That’s the bottom line.... And for me I go back to that.... If we can begin to think of art, which I think theatre people do, as an act of giving and sharing to community. Then, if we can take that back to the book writers, to any other, to musicians, to dancers, to whatever. *Then*, we have a society that no longer questions *what it’s for*. We go ‘Right! You’re good at this, you share this skill with me. You’re good at this, you share your music with me.’ If we start to see that the primary purpose we are put on earth is to exchange the gifts that we have, and to help each other with the places that we are limited in, then it’s a moot point. So, to see it more as a *sharing*, and not you know just a creating world, or just a -- it’s a real transmission of being to being. And if we can keep that faith, then we don’t question it as much. (Faye Personal Interview:2006)

While relationships in the arts can be tumultuous, the power of having strong alliances and friendships is essential in the ability to keep getting back up and keep going. As Diana (Personal Interview:2006) states:

Diana: I would never underestimate the importance of having friends who are in the arts. If you are a creative artist yourself. They have been so important to me. And I don’t mean just writers but friends who are in

visual arts, and musicians. And that's where... I feel enfranchised. Is with other creative people. Who really understand.

In my own experience, often the deepest, most meaningful, and closest relationships I have are with other artistic people. This thesis wouldn't have been finished without their support, and I would have given up creating a long time ago if it weren't for their love, honesty and unwavering belief in my potential. Alliances and partnerships across disciplines, boundaries, and borders have that same ability to enfranchise, repair, encourage, and create new spaces and opportunities. As friend and artistic partner Jolie Lesperance⁶⁰ pointed out to me, there are a lot of people in Winnipeg (and indeed elsewhere in Canada), including her and me, who barter skills between individuals or groups. Skill sharing or work exchange is a fabulous way to discourage self-protective and elitist behaviours, and to encourage positive sites of reclamation, discussion, and movement. It encourages community behaviour, and strengthens our ties. Remember that "[d]ivide and rule still operates as a basic strategy for dealing with indigenous peoples [and other peoples those in power wish to silence]. It still operates because unfortunately it still works" (Smith 2002:99).

In order to recover what has been lost, we must be willing to become dangerous artists. Doing so entails an understanding that "no order of domination is total. There are always sets of relationships and experiences that are excluded and that may serve as points around which alternative, perhaps oppositional, cultural forms can emerge" (Roseberry 2002:200). We are not powerless victims, since the cultural vehicle through which we operate as "emergent [and]... continuously created" (Gailey 1992:1) counteracts this notion. Again, this is one of the most potent abilities the arts hold -- the power of agency -- that power which drives emergence and creation. To reiterate, this notion has the ability to underscore the "Marxist point that our own political economy [in the West], like that of other peoples, is both made and chosen" (Littlefield and Gates 1991:2). In order to do so, however, we must ask ourselves what it is we desire, ask how we engage with our own locations of passion, wonder at what is to come next if we make decisions that pull us away from the locus of our own creative culture. Indeed, to reiterate Tsing, "[P]eople actively engage their marginality by protesting, reinterpreting, and embellishing their exclusion" (2002:325). Certainly then, beginning strategies should reflect a need for a tender and tenuous claiming and reclaiming outside of ourselves but also in

our community, our disciplines, between genres and between so-called “lowbrow” and “highbrow” art.⁶¹ This is of the utmost importance, because ultimately “people construct projects that transform who they are through social action and thus do gain a voice and in some ways change history” (Ortner in Gledhill 2000:90).

In the end, we must be conscientious about our own recovery, and where we “focus our efforts in order to ensure that... [our] foundations... are protected and... maintained” (Simpson 2004:376-377). This is because the “most vulnerable and fragile components are often those that are subversive in nature and that are a direct threat to those who maintain their power as beneficiaries of the colonial system” (ibid). We must be careful to not engage with systems that are damaging, or injure what positive systems we already have in place. For example, what if we decide to disengage from colonial social norms by “developing economically” (Taiaike 2007:37). It could be said then that the problem becomes that artists simply do not have “the kind of incomes and bank accounts and jobs and houses that everybody else in society has. We don't have as much access to medical care. If we... then develop a political strategy and organizations on that basis, the inherent logic... is that we will develop inside the economic and political system that we're struggling against” (ibid).

In order for art to remain not just ‘relevant’, but intricately tied to the social landscape of human interaction, it must find a way to connect, and to keep connecting. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992:8) state, “if one begins with the premise that spaces... [are] hierarchically connected, instead of naturally disconnected, then social and cultural change becomes not a matter of cultural contact and articulation but one of rethinking difference *through* connection.” Certainly, part of this comes with shifting the way we perceive and treat others outside of our artistic circles, and from opening from within. Ultimately, we are not only fighting for our community and ourselves; we are participating in the “struggle for culture... [which] by definition, [is] against all those forces that reduce people to productive and reproductive social mechanisms” (Diamond 1987:270). When we become fierce with understanding and fierce with an awakened sense of identity, we open ourselves to “opposing ideas and systems of knowledge” and therefore “negotiat[ing] between them, and recreat[ing] [our]selves in different contexts. In so doing... [we] are true to... [our] ‘traditions’ while adapting and implementing change” (Bacigalupo 1993:47).

Final Thoughts

Dagmar: I don't want it to sound like a terrible life. It's a very great life. It's just very difficult. And for a lot of people extremely painful. Painful. Spiritually, and psychically the cost is great. (Dagmar Personal Interview:2006)

This work has been an exercise in an ethnography of creative resistance utilizing unique methodological avenues, embracing inclusivity and mindful artistic/academic negotiations as methods of uncovering and therein making room for spaces of decolonization. It is this approach that has allowed for revealing layers of power, on levels that are both etic and emic⁶² in nature. Seen within this is an interaction and enmeshment between the individual, the community, and the material circumstances that the system itself both constructs and bestows on its citizens. This approach has allowed me to view, from an ethnographic standpoint, how a holistic identity and agency negotiate and deconstruct pre-existing colonialist norms by creative acts of decentralization.

Within the above, this argument has regarded the ways in which power systems and relationships are carried out in Canada between artists, the public and private sectors, and the general public, and that these relations are essentially hegemonic in nature. In this, I have referred to the experience and social position of individual artists and artistic groups in society as analogous to a traditional colonial situation. I have framed this relationship as essentially a prejudicial attitude towards the arts by the general public, as well as the public and private sectors, arising as an essentially economic phenomenon that is inherent in the structure of a dynamic capitalist system. This system has been seen as extracting material and human resources from the arts while at the same time exercising political and economic control. Therefore, I have explored issues and themes of internal and external marginalization, identity, resistance, small-scale politics, symbolic and economic capitalism, and how they relate to the overall question of an existing colonialist structure in Canada for artists. Indeed, Bourdieu (Gledhill 2000:138) "stresses the connections between social fields in which the accumulation of symbolic or other non-economic forms of capital is predominant... [along with] the accumulation of economic capital and class structures."

It is within both a traditional economic model and a symbolic one that the artist teeters in order to endure and persevere in a system where funding and opportunities are

often in short supply. While the various arts councils and the services they provide are essential to the arts community in Canada, the amount of funding that is provided to them by the government is minimal at best. Consequently, it is becoming more common for the arts community to seek out corporate funding, which brings its own particular dilemmas, as corporations hold a bottom-line mentality and are self-motivated in terms of their shareholders and economic growth. The poverty that artists face is only aggravated by the financial myths that burden our community. These myths are often a result of a misunderstanding of the actual amount of income the majority of artists living in Canada in fact earn and receive. This situation is provoked by the media, who frequently spread misinformation about not only the financial status of the arts but of the very nature of artists themselves. To understand this is to understand, as Savigliano states, that we are "the actual meat (bodies, people) processed by the Western exoticism machinery" (1995:9) and concurrently to be aware of the "voraciousness imbedded in manufacturing the exotic" (ibid). The exotic and other negative stereotypes and false impressions (of economy and otherwise) often lead the artistic community, the government and the public into open conflict, creating unnecessary rifts and tension. Part of these tensions are examples and results of "[t]he 'cultural bomb' of colonialism" perpetrated in the public, corporate and government eye, and has a deafening and dangerous power to teach us "to hate ourselves... to look at ourselves as if we were an Other... to hope for ourselves the worst in order to attain the colonizer's best through a magical leap or a paradoxical slippage of appropriation" (ibid:25).

The economic strife that artists experience translates itself into a particular kind of small-scale politics and methods of marginalization between individuals and inside the community itself. These have the effect of tearing our community apart from the inside, with a variety of tactics of suppression and silencing (which are, in fact, learned devices of colonial subjugation) employed by community members on each other. This is a result of a specific well-worn practice of divide and rule -- where individuals and the community itself become too busy in micro-political struggles over resources. The larger questions and concerns that need addressing for actual change to be implemented are never focused on, and our gaze, as a result, is continually misdirected. Advocacy efforts are therefore stultified. This is also resultant of a broader pattern of silencing and suppression of identity and voice, externally as well as within our own communities. It is only by

active awareness that we can unhook or disengage from the political and economic disenfranchisement spun through a discourse of imperialism.

Extracting ourselves from prevailing dialogues of authority entails a process that works on all levels -- spiritual, psychological, emotional, mental, economic, social, bureaucratic, ideological, and cultural (Smith 2002:98). The power to do this is in our own minds and hearts, even as we are subjects of the imperial structures that bind us, we own the power, by the character and essential make-up of our own creative abilities, to enfranchise, to claim and reclaim, to take control of what is ours, to frame, and to "define and empower" (Lorde 1984:112). Within this, community-centered approaches of celebration help us to identify and build strengths through connection and aid in engaging our collective marginalization. The power of our collective agency vis-à-vis action, connection and claiming will enable us to continually march ahead, instead of becoming stuck in old paradigms of the past. Identity aids us in this by helping us to understand that we are active participants in our own healing, instead of passive victims. Identity is a powerful mode of resistance and representation, as its flexible nature allows for a measure of fluidity and ever changing perspectives that challenge entrenched colonial models. Identity and agency help us to stand firmly in our own power. By being interactive with our identities and our creations, we get our audiences and the public to invest on all levels. This is what will pull people away from spectatorship and toward the true work of art, which is gifting, participating and interactive. In this manner we *all* claim power -- both artist and audience alike.

Certainly, there are still enormous divides to cross in terms of education, but by exploring our own markers, frameworks and as well as recovering, naming, recognizing, uncovering and discovering the optimal workings of our own systems we may find the essential strength of our communities and find paths to fully embrace our voices. We must be conscientious about our own economy and how we proceed -- as we do not want to grow within those very political and economic systems we are in opposition to (Taiaike 2007:37). To understand this is to understand that "[i]t is the final triumph of a system of domination when the dominated start singing its virtues... believing colonialism will be exorcised when in the hands of the colonized" (Savigliano 1995:25). It is by our own definition that we will forge new paths of communication, friendships, alliances, and community amongst ourselves and with others.

The number one thing people asked me while conducting the fieldwork for this thesis, or when they found out what my topic was -- in café's, bus stops, and over dinners -- some version of "Do other artists feel the same way I do? Experience the same things I do? Have the same problems as I do?" Far too often we say, "I'm overreacting," when we should be saying is, "what I am experiencing is genuine." As long as we insist on pretending we are making things up, we are denying our own self-worth, and we will slowly continue to destroy ourselves as individuals, and therefore as a community. One of the most hurtful thoughts I found that stemmed from my interviews was an overwhelming sense that what we do is not "useful" or "beneficial" to society in any "real" way. We have to believe that what we do is real. That who we are is real. That what we offer society is valuable and invaluable. Otherwise, no amount of activism or education will help us. We must realize that we are faced with ignorance about our community that is so epidemic, we don't even know what the questions are.

As creative people, we contain the ability to carry "the discourse of opposition to the system and of defiance of those who represent it[;] its formal properties and context of performance enhance its ability to subtly carry messages counter to official ideals" (Gal⁶³ 2002:218). Yet, often there remains a collective refusal to stand up to those in positions of power who flagrantly and willingly exploit our basic vulnerabilities to fit their own economic or political agendas. Our reality is not the reality of those who hold all the cards, and as such it is *imperative to our future* to find methods of political, social, and personal claiming and reclaiming. Not only for us, but also for those who believe in the necessity of art, as well as the health and well-being of our society at large. We need to wake up and remain awake, educate, be proactive in our own decolonization, be agents of change for our own truths, and ultimately be mindful in how we affect those with whom we wish to have the most intimate relationship -- our audience. By allowing ourselves to touch and be touched, both artist and audience, we might find, to quote a friend and teacher speaking about love, "a drink so deep it would bring us to our knees."

Society needs artists because we all need a collective voice, a personal voice. Everyone living in this country has a need to communicate, to feel heard, to be understood. We⁶⁴ need compassion. We need to challenge and be challenged. We need to feel less alone. We need to understand one another. We need to understand who people are and why they do the things that they do. We need someone to help us stand up and be

accountable. We need to tell our stories, and the stories of those who have nothing. We need culture. We need beauty. We need to be nourished. We need something to take our minds off of our problems, or to help us understand the problems of others. We need a way that keeps us questioning, keeps us real, keeps us pushing and growing and thinking and changing. So when we ask -- Why do we need art? Why do we need artists? -- Why shouldn't the arts be funded after everything else is taken care of? Aren't we just wasting our money? Why don't we put funding into real problems, like health care and schools? My answer is this: if we don't start caring about our collective creative legacy, we won't have any of these real problems left, because we'll have already torn it all down. As Matthew Fox says in his illuminating book *Creativity: Where the Human and the Divine Meet*, "I do not see any way out of humankind's multiple dilemmas except that one route that got us here in the first place: our powerful creativity" (2002:9). Yes, there are large looming problems that need addressing, very far beyond what this thesis or any book or play or movie script can touch. Yes, there are problems that seem far too large to even begin to think about, that seem as if they will never be solved. Perhaps it even seems that nothing will ever change, that we don't have the kind of power or capability we need to fix them. But herein lies what we can do -- we begin the conversation:

Peter: The one thing I do want to say is I *do* love it. I do, I know I'm still in it because *enough* times I've been recognized. Whether it's by a reaction from an audience member *while* I'm performing, or after a show. Or whatever. That's kept me in it. Where I have had enough positive experiences to keep trying. Because I'm certainly not doing this so that I can get on the cover of 'Theatre Review.' So, I do know that it's been the reactions from ordinary people that have kept me in. I know that. And I know that I am looking forward to the day when I can *relax* a little more while I'm doing it. But I certainly am doing it and have done it because I love it. And I love having that feeling of the appreciation that people show you when you've done a good job. Because otherwise you'll reflect back on this last hour and a half and I sound like some kind of Doom Boy.... And I don't want to come across *totally* that way. I mean I fear it. But there's nothing like that inner roar you hear from an audience as they are all about to react to something you've done. And you know it's coming. You can feel it coming. Before they even make a sound or move, you can feel that energy tiding back towards you. Here it comes. Whack. (Peter Personal Interview:2006)

Endnotes

Chapter One

¹ “In the United States and elsewhere, recent decades have witnessed a profound challenge to the purpose and styles of theory that have guided the social sciences since their late nineteenth century origins as professional academic disciplines. Widespread perceptions of a radically changing world order have fueled this challenge and undermined confidence in the adequacy of our means to describe social reality, on which any generalizing social science must be based. Thus, in every contemporary field whose subject is society, there are either attempts at reorienting the field in distinctly new directions or efforts at synthesizing new challenges to theory with established programs for research.” (Marcus & Fischer 1986:vii)

² A postmodern anthropology “characterized by reflexivity, self-criticism, and increasing eclecticism” (Brettell 1996:1) made way for a renewed ethnography, wherein the experience and interpretation of the field as well as the personal experiences of the fieldworker were given (ibid).

³ Throughout this work I will be utilizing snippets of journal entries, experiences, or casual conversations with friends in the arts community to interrupt, challenge, shift, and decolonize the work itself.

⁴ All through the course of this thesis, I will be referring to the terms “arts,” “artists,” and “arts groups.” While these terms are meant to be somewhat inclusive of all the creative arts, I have specifically focused on creative writing and theatre arts in order to narrow my narrative field.

⁵ During which the author had moved from being a full time writer to an academic.

⁶ And indeed there is an art to science, as well as a science to art.

⁷ Please note that throughout this work is the use of the word “we.” Unless otherwise indicated, this is utilized to indicate artists, of which I am including myself, as a group.

Chapter Two

⁸ The name “Bonny” is a pseudonym. Please note that, unless otherwise indicated, with respect to ethical considerations and privacy, pseudonyms are utilized throughout this entire work for names, as well as places (i.e.: theatres), and groups (i.e.: writer’s collective).

⁹ As Naomi expressed in her interview, opportunity for many artists is difficult to find. The job market is slim, and more often than not, opportunities are often carved and created by the artists out of seemingly nothing.

Naomi: “And because I certainly naively had it in my head that ‘Once people see what you can do, that’s it. They’re just going to hire you.’ Or bring you into the fold. Or whatever. And it’s just not true. They need you for the six weeks that they need you. And then that’s it. They *really* don’t have much need for you after that. And when people talk about networking and things like that, I mean you can try to do stuff like that all you want. But there’s *so* few jobs, and there’s so few opportunities that, *really*, I mean that doesn’t really get you anywhere either.... I would go into fairly big depressions and stuff after something great would happen, and then nothing would come of it. And then I’d go into a depression that could last months. Because I would be like, ‘Okay. Look at that! Look at the *Globe and Mail* said I am the sharpest and funniest writer they’ve ever read.’ Things like that would happen, or sold out runs, or things where you would think somebody else would be interested in taking advantage of that. And *nothing*. And the nothing, *really*, I found hard to take.” (Naomi Personal Interview:2006)

¹⁰ Please see Appendix A.

¹¹ With two notable exceptions: one of my artistic partners, Jolie Lesperance, who was not interviewed but added valuable information, and Simon Brault, who has been given an alias with the exemption of one quote.

¹² It should be noted that capitalism, while being an economic system, is also a “system of social relations and political power” (Nesbitt-Larking 2001:113).

¹³ But, in the case of the arts, a culture *shifting* as part of that political act.

¹⁴ Please note that this thesis uses a framework of colonialism to describe a situation involving a subaltern group that has not been subjected to colonialization and colonial control in the same way many other groups [such as Aborigines in Canada and Australia to name a few] have been. Please note that I am using a framework of an *internal* colonialism, which places the argument inside an economic agenda. Additionally, I am saying the climate which currently exists for artists is *similar* to a colonial situation, and as such the kind of frameworks utilized to keep the artist in their position of subaltern mimic the colonial condition.

Chapter Three

¹⁵ The Massey Commission is also more formally known as the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters & Sciences. Members consisted of Vincent Massey (Canadian High Commissioner in the United Kingdom), Arthur Surveyer (civil engineer), Georges-Henri Levesque (Dean of Social Sciences at Laval University), Hilda Neatby (historian) and Norman MacKenzie (President of the University of British Columbia). The brief history of the creation of this committee is as follows: in 1941, a conference in Kingston arranged by the Royal Canadian Academy led to the creation of the arts activist group the Federation of Canadian Artists. As the second world war was ending, the government “foreseeing... the problems of adaptation that would follow... set up the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-Establishment” (Woodcock 1985:43). This led to the creation of the Turgeon Committee, who brought a recommendation to the government to “establish a royal commission to look into support for the arts” (ibid:44). While Mackenzie King was opposed to the idea, many of his associates, including Vincent Massey, were not, and in fact were “intent on action” (ibid:44). When the commission was eventually established by Privy Order Council on April 8th 1949, it was chaired by Massey, who incidentally became the first native born Governor General of Canada. The report that emerged from the commission in 1951 was a result of a succession of hearings in major cities and towns “eliciting almost five hundred briefs, hearing twelve hundred witnesses, and commissioning Canadians eminent in their fields to write critical studies of the conditions of the various arts and sciences” (ibid:50). The committee was also instrumental in establishment of the National Library.

¹⁶ In this context, Atwood is speaking about Canadians as a whole. The Federation of Canadian Artists saw this as “an opportunity to get a public hearing and perhaps even the ear of a government about to undertake a major reassessment of public objectives” (ibid).

¹⁷ Additionally, the council administers scholarly awards, and has “under its aegis the Public Lending Right Commission and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO” (<http://www.canadacouncil.ca/aboutus>).

¹⁸ Such as the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations.

¹⁹ Born in 1945, Keifer is a German painter and sculptor. The Kabbalah, as well as German history and the holocaust are all major themes in his works, aided by his interest in the poetic works of Paul Antschel (pseudonym: Paul Clean).

²⁰ Real name for this specific interview quotation has been used with permission. Other quotations from this interview have been placed under a pseudonym with respect to privacy.

²¹ A major Canadian institution, dedicated solely to contemporary art, they were founded by the Quebec government in 1964 (<http://www.macm.org/en/informations/historique.html>).

²² The Applebaum-Hebert Report is the “[n]ame commonly given to the report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee appointed by the Liberal government in August 1980. This was the first review of Canadian cultural institutions and federal cultural policy after the Massey Commission report of 1951” (<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0000093>). There were eighteen commissioners in total, and two co-chairmen: composer Louis Applebaum and writer-publisher Jacques Hébert. They produced three publications in total: “*Speaking of Our Culture* (Ottawa 1981), a guide for submissions; *Summary of Briefs and Hearings* (Ottawa 1982), and its final *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee* (Ottawa 1982), which contained 101 recommendations” (ibid). The mandate of the committee was to “investigate and represent the situations and needs of those ‘thought to have an active interest in our culture and its institutions’” (ibid).

²³ Or, as a friend occasionally jokes, it’s a “Dance for me, Clown” mentality.

²⁴ I include poetry slams, book launches, readings, improv, small and medium scale theatre -- both amateur and professional.

²⁵ Morley Walker is the main arts critic and culture columnist for the Winnipeg Free Press. A surprising majority of people I interviewed from Winnipeg brought up something negative about him during the course of our interviews, whether “on or off the record.” His columns, while they are purported to support the arts, sometimes end up denigrating them, or perpetuating negative myths, such as in the following article entitled *Layton excelled as poet, failed miserably as dad*, “David Layton once caught his famous father, the poet Irving Layton, peeing in the bathroom sink. He was a child of 10 at the time. David, not Irving of course. Irving was putatively an adult.... Layton, an absentee father, a philandering husband, a domestic incompetent, knew he had another gift [the gift of poetry]” (Walker 2006:C3). In another article, Walker discusses the 12th annual Winnipeg International Writers Festival: “The 100 or so individual events -- readings, book launches, panel discussions, poetry slams, film screenings, boozy late night pickup attempts -- are set for various venues around the city.... So if you find yourself in the... Current Restaurant and notice a pair of bespectacled types engaged in a steamy tête-à-tête over, say, the size of their respective advances or the unseemly flaunting of metaphors, do not fear. They are only writers at work” (Walker 2008:D1). And, in a column supposedly decrying Harper’s recent cuts to Canadian arts funding, Walker discusses the reaction of the arts community to the reduction: “It is true, those artists can be a demanding lot. Not to mention possessed of an enormous sense of entitlement” (Walker 2008:C5). Critics and arts columnists wield tremendous power, and when misused, can and do cause career-damaging consequences. In addition to his sometimes backhanded columns, many high-profile artists that I interviewed expressed concern at the methods he often utilizes to gather information on them for his columns.

²⁶ During the course of this thesis, the concept of celebration is discussed as a method of advocacy and connection. In this way, celebration is seen as both a tool and as a social mechanism for change.

²⁷ Executive director of the Toronto Arts Council.

Chapter Four

²⁸ The Public Lending Right (PLR) Commission (in partnership with the Canada Council) was created in 1986, and “distributes annual payments to Canadian authors for the presence of their books in Canadian public libraries” (<http://www.plr-dpp.ca/PLR/about>). For application to the PLR program, writers “complete forms that provide necessary information about their new books to the Public Lending Right Commission.” Eligibility is reviewed by PLR staff, and the cycle of “registration of titles, the verification of title eligibility, the sampling of public libraries, and the preparation and issuing of payments” (ibid) takes a full year. It should be noted that public lending rights are not the same as royalties. While authors receive royalties from their publishers, which is based on a percentage of profits created from book sales, PLR payments are “provided by the federal government in recognition of the contributions that authors make to Canadian society through the presence of their books in public libraries” (ibid).

²⁹ The annual operating budget for the Winnipeg Arts Council is approximately four million, while the budget for the Manitoba Arts Council is approximately nine million.

³⁰ The Canadian Conference of the Arts, an arts information and advocacy group, the members of which include “tens of thousands of professional artists, creators and arts professionals” (Canadian Conference for the Arts 2006:4).

³¹ The problem here, especially in the public eye as of late, is trying to determine and unravel fact from fiction in terms of numbers. Many high-profile artists and arts activists, in an attempt to advocate for the arts (in an era where the conservative government has done its level best to push the arts aside) have cited that “culture supports 1.1 million jobs in the Canadian economy” (Editorial 2008:A10), and that “the economic impact of the cultural sector... [was] \$85 billion in 2007, or 7.4% of Canada’s GDP” (http://www.ArtsResearchMonitor.com/arm_details/php?armUID=1118). The issue here becomes what exactly does Statistics Canada count as a cultural occupation? “The definition includes translators, public relations workers, anyone involved in photography or printing, webmasters, publishers of research and scholarship databases, anybody who works in a cinema... industrial designers, zoos and botanical gardens” (Editorial 2008:A10). And, as I explain on pages 54-55 of this thesis: the Culture and Heritage sector of the Canadian Government covers a wide variety of programming including museums, heritage sites, “sport, youth, citizenship and identity, diversity and multiculturalism” among others (Burgmann 2008:A6). What writers and dancers and actors directly contribute to the Canadian economy therefore is difficult to precisely determine. This notwithstanding, even if we presume direct artistic contribution is potentially one third of 85 billion dollars, this is still a significant contribution. Compare this with the fact that average earnings for artists in 2001 were \$23,500, and “earnings gap of 26% compared to the overall labor force earnings,” and that “one half of artists in five arts occupations earn about \$10,000 or less. This means that a typical artisan, craftsperson, dancer, musician, singer, other performer, painter, sculptor or other visual artists earns about \$10,000 or less [per year]” (http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/C1093E44-A20C-4159-BD2B-15C2BB73BCBD/0/Key_statsENGLISH.pdf). And, even though the definition of cultural occupation is not entirely clear, according to Vik Singh, “average employment income earned by culture workers... [is] lower than the average employment income for all workers in Canada...not only [are] the incomes... lower, but their income growth...[is] lower than the national average” (2005:1).

³² Oppressive action isn’t necessarily overt, often insinuating itself in ways that are subtle and diaphanous. As Jack (one of my interview participants) mentioned, racism (or prejudice and disenfranchising behaviour) isn’t always pronounced and easily visible, and people often want to see is something that is overt, and easily identifiable. For instance, I remember a public talk I went to a few years ago, featuring the then Poet Laureate of Canada, George Bowering. At question period, I asked him what his thoughts were on the economic situation for artists in Canada. He responded by saying that artists here are in much better conditions than those of artists in the third world, and that we cannot understand the kind of poverty they face. While I agreed, I must say that we could also compare our situation to a European model that would have the opposite effect. And, in terms of our own (Canadian) markers, as the Poet Laureate of Canada, the most prestigious honor you can be awarded as a poet in this country, he was making approximately \$22,000 per year. For comparison’s sake, a garbage collector in Winnipeg working for a waste management company can make about eighteen dollars per hour, after being with the company for a year, plus benefits. That works out to \$34,560 dollars a year, at eight hours per day, before taxes and dues.

³³ Crewson is a Canadian actress whose television credits include the shows 24 and ReGenesis.

³⁴ Lafond is the husband of Governor General Michaëlle Jean, and is a documentary filmmaker, among other credits.

³⁵ Nine different arts occupations were included in the analysis:

- 1) Actors, artisans and craftspersons
- 2) Conductors, composers and arrangers
- 3) Dancers
- 4) Musicians and singers
- 5) Other performers
- 6) Painters, sculptors and other visual artists

-
- 7) Producers, directors, choreographers, and related occupations
 - 8) Writers

³⁶ "The Canadian Writers' Foundation, founded in 1931... is a registered charity authorized to collect and disburse funds to notable Canadian writers who, due to advancing years or infirmity, require financial assistance to meet their everyday needs." The CWF has "provided assistance to such notable Canadian authors as Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, E.J. Pratt, Alfred Desrochers, Norman Levine, Hugh MacLennan, Roger Brien, Milton Acorn, Irving Layton, Juan O'Neill and Dorothy Livesay, to name a few. **Many of our past and current grantees have been recipients of highest literacy awards** [original emphasis]" (canadianwritersfoundation.org/home.html).

³⁷ "In 1999, her site-specific installation *Monstrance* featured rabbit carcasses hanging from trees and begged the question: food or pet? With rabbits she purchased from a rabbit meat farm, she used the carcasses to reference life, death and rebirth but also to familiarize her audience with the very tangible smell of death. Borrowing from Christian mythology, Thorneycroft used the rabbit as a symbol of resurrection and renewal but also as a container for a revelation -- a monstrance." In Europe and Montreal, you can visit churches that have containers which house bones of saints, fingers of saints, and heads of deceased people. If you see the finger of the saint... it's called a monstrance." Thorneycroft sewed photographic relics into the rabbits, and her objective was to have the putrefaction and decay of the each animal reveal the relic inside it. Unfortunately, her intentions were lost in the media circus that followed the opening of *Monstrance*. Opposition from animal rights activists, outraged Catholics and those concerned with public arts funding overshadowed the poetic nature of the piece. "The whole exhibition of *Monstrance* had such silliness that had nothing to do with the work -- it was the politics of public funding," says Thorneycroft." (Nakagawa: <http://www.ffwdweekly.com/Issues/2002/0207/art2.htm>)

³⁸ Richard Bradshaw was the late General Director of the Canadian Opera Company.

³⁹ For instance, CanStage (The Canadian Stage Company, based in Toronto) has benefits for its sponsors including, but not limited to: "brand awareness and reinforcement, recognition in Canadian Stage advertising and promotion, special inserts in house programs, on-site signage, recognition for a year in the house or event program, on-site marketing, and access to a private reception space." "Additionally, CanStage states that "[a] sponsorship relationship can provide direct access to almost 200,000 individuals who represent an educated, affluent, diverse and sophisticated demographic of society. Production and presenting sponsors may also benefit from major media advertising and material drops in the Toronto Star, Toronto Life, and NOW... [as well as an opportunity to] reinforce... branding strategy, marketing goals, and client/customer and staff appreciation" (<http://www.canstage.com/2008-2009/content.php?ID=16>). Other theatre companies (i.e., Manitoba Theatre Centre, Theatre Calgary, Playhouse Theatre Company) have similar perks and provisions for their growing corporate sponsorship base.

⁴⁰ Referring to a dance series created by the Winnipeg Contemporary Dancers.

⁴¹ "The objective of this programme [Canadian Festivals and Conferences] is the promotion of Canadian interests abroad through forging relationships between international presenters and Canadian Festivals, Canadian Conferences and the Canadian artists present at these events." (<http://www.international.gc.ca/arts/perf-en.asp>)

⁴² Florida, whose work will be discussed in greater length in the following chapter, is best known for his for developing a theory of what he deems the "creative class" and its effects on urban renewal. Florida states

that today's economy is "fundamentally a creative economy" (Florida 2002:44). This economy is fueled by the creative class, whose "core group" includes "scientists... engineers, university professors... artists... designers... architects... cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts...and software program- mers" (ibid:69), stating that the places they choose to live and work correspond with a higher level of economic development for that area. Those who are beyond this core group include "'creative professionals' who work in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and health care professions and business management" (ibid). Florida asserts that having a creative class in urban areas encourages vibrant and thriving business environments. He states that this in turn attracts more "creative" denizens, thereby the increasing symbolic and economic capital of the area.

⁴³ Ex-Artistic Director of Prairie Theatre Exchange.

⁴⁴ ACTRA stands for the alliance of Canadian cinema, television, and radio artists. ACTRA is a professional organization for performers working in the area of recorded media (www.actratoronto.com).

Chapter Five

⁴⁵ Out of 26 interviews conducted for this thesis, every person told me that their artistic identity and their personal identity were engaged with one another.

⁴⁶ As found in Section 119: Amendments to the Income Tax Act relating to Films and Video Productions: "Canadian film or video production certificate" means a certificate issued in respect of a production by the Minister of Canadian Heritage certifying that the production is a Canadian film or video production in respect of which that Minister is satisfied that (a) except where the production is a prescribed treaty co-production (as defined by regulation), an acceptable share of revenues from the exploitation of the production in non-Canadian markets is, under the terms of any agreement, retained by

(i) a qualified corporation that owns or owned an interest in the production,

(ii) a prescribed taxable Canadian corporation related to the qualified corporation, or

(iii) any combination of corporations described in (i) or (ii), and [original emphasis]

(b) public financial support of the production would not be contrary to public policy. [my emphasis]"

(http://www.fin.gc.ca/news03/data/03-058_1e.html)

⁴⁷ Please see Appendix B.

⁴⁸ See *Rise of the Creative Class -- and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life* Basic Books/a Member of the Perseus Books Group: 2002.

⁴⁹ Florida also adds that his "definition of class emphasizes the way people organize themselves into social groupings and common identities based principally on their economic function. Their social and cultural preferences, consumption and buying habits, and their social identities all flow from this" (2002:68).

⁵⁰ "One line of research (Florida, 2002, 2004b) suggests an alternative measure for human capital, based on the occupation, specifically a set of occupations that make up the "creative class" including science, engineering, arts, culture, entertainment, and the knowledge-based professions of management, finance, law, healthcare and education." (Florida, Mellander, and Stolarick 2008:616-617)

⁵¹ Creativity At Work is a "consulting, coaching and training alliance... [aiding] organizations accelerate business performance through arts-based training, coaching and research-based consulting. Associates

include experts from North America, Europe, Australia and Asia to provide... resources for keynotes, corporate retreats, conference presentations, and consulting" (<http://www.creativityatwork.com/CW/Services/aboutus.html>).

⁵² Unilever Fabergé and Ice Cream & Frozen Food.

⁵³ These kinds of experiences with artistic teachers and mentors are more common than perhaps anyone would like to admit. Take, for example, the instance of Maria, a writer and painter: "[O]ur professor had told us that we could paint whatever we wanted. At Christmas time, after painting automobiles all fall. Because she had said you know 'Cars are our lives now, and we should really paint cars.' And I really disliked cars, but I painted them anyhow. And then at the holiday break we were to go and paint what we wanted. And I painted six portraits. Of friends. And I learned so much, I was just on fire with it. It was just learning what I needed to know. And when I came back, she assembled the class around my six portraits. And proceeded to verbally abuse me for the next hour. Just saying 'These belong in your grade 12 portfolio. Don't you know that you *can't* paint portraits now? This is just shit. And you are an idiot for doing this. And don't you know any better? Why haven't you learned this by now?' et cetera, et cetera. And the whole class sat and took it. Not *one person* spoke up, myself included. And it was terrible. And I went home and I was crying and carrying on to my mother.... And then after that I built a nine by twelve foot canvas. And I painted it mud green and magenta. And I put... Ronald Regan, I put his head on a male centerfold body and put heat seeking cruise missiles all around him and made it 'sex and death' and brought it in. And that professor was like 'Wow! This is great.' And by the end of the year, she was coming to me with her terrible problems. Her marriage breakdown, how her cat was dying, everything. And she apparently did this to cute little middle class girls, often. This was her habit. So that turned me off of painting." (Maria Personal Interview:2006)

⁵⁴ The various arts councils across Canada (Canada Arts Council, Manitoba Arts Council et cetera) work on a peer based jury system.

⁵⁵ For instance, in the following three examples, Peter, Fatima and Melissa discuss some of their difficult experiences with status and regional affiliation.

Peter: "I was part of a thing called MainLine Improv... [a]nd what it was supposed to be was bringing all these improv *professionals*, like the top line improvisers in Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg.... And the idea would be that there'd be ten or twelve of us in the show, and each night, one of us would direct the *tone* of the show, or the way the show would be *done*, or whatever. And what happened was, in the first few shows I participated in, the amount of egos involved was ridiculous. And if somebody wasn't particularly funny, they would blame the person with the least amount of status in the room at the time." (Peter Personal Interview:2006)

Fatima: "[I went]... into a CBC studio in Halifax one time to record something... there were a bunch of artists over in the corner and they look up and somebody introduces me, and they all give me this really cold cold shoulder. And I'm... feeling really [strange], because they're all actors... and I'm just a poet who's going there to record right? I feel... I'm a fraud in the midst, and they're all giving me the cold shoulder. And then somebody says something to me, and I say something about 'I'm from New Brunswick,' because I happened to be in Halifax. And they went 'You're from New Brunswick?!?' And I went 'Yeah,' and they went 'Oh! We thought you were from Toronto!!.... And all of a sudden the whole mood in the room changed, and it was like... I was one of them.... [I]f I was from Toronto they were going to snub me, but once they found out I was from New Brunswick, which is hey! compared to Halifax, like you guys are the big shits okay according to MY people. It's like 'Oh, they're from Halifax, don't they think they're good.' And the people in Halifax are going 'They're from Toronto, don't talk to them.' Right?.... Because I have seen artists be really, really anti-Toronto.... So there's a definite, I think, there's regional pockets of unfair jealousies that happen. And I think that's probably true in all the arts.... This has been my experience.... And the assumption was if you're from Toronto you're more successful and make more money than we do. And that's just what it was. You're more privileged. You have more -- access to more." (Fatima Personal Interview:2006)

Melissa: "But I think Winnipeg does have an inferiority complex, to some degree. Because I always, whether I'm entertaining or whether I'm telling people I'm a writer or whatever, people are absolutely *astonished* when they find out that I live in Winnipeg. Because if you come from Winnipeg, you somehow can't have that kind of talent. I mean, 'Why are you here then, if you're so talented?'" (Melissa Personal Interview:2006)

⁵⁶ For instance, finding work in Winnipeg for local stage actors has been a challenge for many years. Partially, this is a reflection of availability of resources versus need. Comparatively speaking, Winnipeg is not a large city, and there are only so many theatres, and therefore work, that is available to actors, directors, playwrights and so forth. Added in the last ten years is an increase in out of town hiring practices by larger theatrical venues, adding to the pressure of an already strained market. This environment creates a distinct need for opportunities to open up for Winnipeg stage actors, and therefore a certain reluctance to make enemies, or to do anything that might rock the status quo.

Chapter Six

⁵⁷ Indeed, others that I interviewed expressed similar sentiments:

Naomi: "I *want* artists to have a complete effect on society. But right now it seems like anybody who does anything that *may* have an effect, are instantly dismissed. 'Oh. Yeah. So you've made a dress out of steak. Wow. You're an artist. Anyways, back to Stephen Harper.' Wow. You know, I don't know if we're going to get the chance anymore. And I don't know if people *care* that they're missing out on it. It's like trying to convince you you want something that you've never experienced." (Naomi Personal Interview:2006)

⁵⁸ Genny: "There's an information attention. You know, when you sit in front of a computer for too many hours and you realize you have accumulated, you've seen a bunch of information, but you walk away with a kind of deficit of experience.... I think what's happened is we have a cultural deficit. We have a huge *looming* cultural deficit. We don't know *how* to experience it [art] anymore." (Genny Personal Interview:2006)

⁵⁹ As Faye mentioned in her interview: "If you're asked what Margaret Atwood said in this essay, it was in the Washington Post, on Saturday, it was just so right on...instead of saying 'What's writing for?' She said I think I'm going to re-phrase that question and say 'Don't you mean, who it's for?' 'Who's it for?' Maybe that's the question we should be asking. Because it's for all of us. So the question that's asked for artists, is wrong. We shouldn't have to justify the utilitarian aspect of art. And say 'It's got its worth in society.' We still do. To a lot of people. It's not as immediate as a bricklayer's work, where we can say 'Look.' But, 'Who is it for?' it's for -- it's a sharing art. And if we can get past saying that it's -- you never will ask yourself 'Is this self-indulgent?' or 'What's it for?' anymore if you can finally go, 'Oh my God, it's all about sharing.' It's all about *giving something to someone*" (Faye Personal Interview:2006).

⁶⁰ Who did not wish to use a pseudonym.

⁶¹ Examples of highbrow art include dancers, writers, actors, while lowbrow examples include jugglers, street performers, etc. While the borders between "lowbrow" and "highbrow" are slowly dissolving, they still exist. Some perhaps would say this was a moot point, but if you talk to people who are actually doing "low brow" art, they will tell you differently. There are multiple reasons for this divide, although perhaps one could point to a main reason being seen as economic, "the large amount you can make, if you cater to a "mass market," the small amount you make if you can't" (Applebaum:<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A56301-2004Apr6.html>). The tension between popular and high art is often visceral and palpable, with symbolic capital employed by both sides against the other. Take the instance of Stephen King in his recent acceptance speech for a special lifetime achievement award at the National Book Awards ceremony as an example. In his speech, which served as a "slap in the face" for the National Book Awards, King "claimed that he had been snubbed all of his life by snooty critics; that wonderful writers such as John Grisham were regularly ignored by snobbish prize committees" (ibid). On a more personal note, I have a friend who is a comic book artist and street performer who consistently has to defend himself as an "actual" artist, the most vitriolic comments and jibes coming from those engaged in highbrow pursuits who feel they are doing "real" art, while he is just "playing pretend." In fact, for my fieldwork I participated in a creative

seminar where everyone spent about five minutes at the end making jokes about jugglers. While it was meant lightheartedly, it did belie an underlying belief in the stereotype of the “lowbrow” artist as “not real.” New eyes are not only needed to see validity in both approaches, but to begin to see and understand the gifts each can give the other. In order for highbrow art to break away from its own internal colonialism, it has to acknowledge first that there is actually a problem with the way it treats certain members of the artistic hierarchy. We then can look further afield toward what others are doing, and try from there to simply understand their signifiers, thereby changing our own outmoded paradigms that don’t allow us to grow anymore as individuals and as communities. Indeed, much lowbrow art has managed something highbrow often doesn’t -- mass public interest. There has to be space for the understanding that lowbrow artists are not ‘dumbing it down,’ but finding new, unique, and different signifiers that *reach out* towards their intended audience. As barriers continue to fall, we may learn that each has something integral to give the other.

⁶² In this context, etic and emic refer to external and internal modes of viewing culture.

⁶³ Citing Abu-Lughod.

⁶⁴ In this paragraph, “we” refers to society at large.

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Appendix A: Table of Artistic Markers

The following is a list of artistic markers, as found in this study. Twenty-five persons were interviewed in total, with a twenty-sixth interview conducted round table style, consisting of several of the participants already interviewed. The amount of locations participants have lived in will vary, as well as occupation, as many of the interviewees have lived in multiple permanent locations and participate in multiple creative endeavors.

1) Stage of career:

1. Beginning: 6
2. Intermediary: 5
3. Advanced: 14

2) Artistic Occupation:

1. Artistic Director: 4
2. Chair of Arts Board: 2
3. Producers: 2
4. Director: 2
5. Playwright: 10
6. Actor: 4
7. Scriptwriter (film): 2
8. Poet: 7
9. Writer (books for young adults): 3
10. Writer (books for adults): 3
11. Musician: 2
12. Dancer: 1
13. Cultural worker: 4
14. Arts Teacher: 3

3) Residence:

1. Manitoba: 13
2. Quebec: 12
3. Ontario: 3
4. Alberta: 2
5. Maritimes: 2
6. Saskatchewan: 1

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7. United States: 1
 8. United Kingdom: 1

- 4) Sex of Participant:
 1. Male: 10
 2. Female: 15

Appendix B: Public Reactions to Recent Arts Debates

The recent debates in the media regarding Harper's views on the arts have sparked a great deal of public attention. The following examples of public reactions to news items about the arts, as seen on CBC's news website (<http://www.cbc.ca>), were selected in order to illustrate the pervasiveness of stereotyping and negativity surrounding the arts.

"Do all artists want to be welfare bums? If you can't make it as an artist.. [sic] GET A REAL JOB." (masterjackfish: Posted 2008/10/15 at 3:02 PM ET <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/film/story/2008/10/15/election-arts-reax.html#articlecomments>)

"High art is for those rich enough to afford it; not tax-subsidized by the hard-working middle classe [sic]. (especially when the "art" consits [sic] of semi-porographic [sic] movies and the like) I'm sick of hearing people say that wacky, eccentric, and extravagant art makes us "cultured"..." (PrairieBoy7: Posted 2008/10/16 at 2:37 AM ET (<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/film/story/2008/10/15/election-arts-reax.html#articlecomments>))

"These so called artists who think they are entitled to get whatever they ask for are behaving like spoiled children. I enjoy the arts; theatre, ballet, music museums, art galleries. But there is a limited supply of money from the taxpayers and sometimes there will have to be funding cuts." jw1965: Posted 2008/10/09 at 10:28 AM ET (<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/story/2008/10/08/artists-rally.html>)

"I'm an ordinary Canadian and I really could care or less if artists get funding. In fact, if forced to opine on the matter, I believe they should get funding from those who like thier [sic]garbage." (runningshoes: Posted 2008/10/09 at 12:50 AM ET <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/story/2008/10/08/artists-rally.html>)

"About 250 Canadian actors, writers and other artists gathered in a downtown Toronto park Wednesday" Gee, it looks like it was daytime when they were getting together. I don't know about everyone else in this forum, but I was at work while they were having their 'gathering'. MUST BE NICE!" (AlanHarrison: Posted 2008/10/09 at 12:06 AM ET (<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/story/2008/10/08/artists-rally.html>))

"Let's put the money from culture into something important, i.e.: Health Care, Old Age Assistance, curing the questionable global warming crisis, roads, bridges...If our culture

is so good, let it pay for itself. I've heard far too many years of gimme, gimme from this sector of Canada's wannabee's!!" (*bwallan*: Posted 2008/10/08 at 7:43 PM ET <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/story/2008/10/08/artists-rally.html>)

"These entitlement whiners make me sick. Produce something of VALUE, and you'd have people lining up down the block to pay you for it. Instead they lobby for the use of government force to coerce their fellow citizens into paying for their chosen line of work. Despicable." (*RogerKolbe*: Posted 2008/10/08 at 6:18 PM ET <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/story/2008/10/08/artists-rally.html>)

"I am glad that Harper cut the funding. ... [I]f you are an artist and are good enough than you should be supporting yourself, or get a real job. In Winnipeg they actually paid a woman to hang dead rabbits in her yard and her ART. Now that is crap. I know that Art is subjective but come on! And lastly this country and world are having hard financial times, why on earth would we care if the Ballet gets it's funding?????" (*AllforEquality*: Posted 2008/10/08 at 5:02 PM ET <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/story/2008/10/08/artists-rally.html>)

"How important can the Arts be if Canadians will line up for Slurpees at 7/11 but not the Hermitage show at the art gallery? I'm not sure Slurpees are more important, but they certainly don't require a gov't (read taxpayer) subsidy. If you don't like what your profession or career choice pays, get different one. Begging is soooooooooo uncool." (*inuk of the north*: Posted 2008/10/06 at 8:14 PM ET http://www.cbc.ca/arts/theatre/story/2008/10/06/politicaltheatre.html?ref=rss&loomia_si=t0:a16:g12:r1:c0.246284#articlecomments)

"If the arts fartzy [sic] community spend this much time and energy trying to promote and sell their so called art maybe they wouldn't need government welfare handouts..." (*tedbcowboy*: Posted 2008/10/06 at 12:27 AM ET http://www.cbc.ca/arts/theatre/story/2008/10/06/political-theatre.html?ref=rss&loomia_si=t0:a16:g12:r1:c0.246284#articlecomments)

"Again with the arts? Its a little pompous and more than arrogant to support artist's' belief that they provide culture for the country and its more than a little pathetic that the public is willing to concede this. Sounds like a racket." (*QuellcrisFalconer*: Posted 2008/10/04 at 6:15 PM ET <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canadavotes/story/2008/10/03/duceppe-to.html#articlecomments>)

"...All these so called artists of miniscule talent have been slopping at the public trough their entire "careers". I wonder what would happen to them if they didn't get their art-welfare? Fries with that?" (*Proveritas*: Posted 2008/10/04 at 8:08 AM ET [http://www.cbc.ca/news/canadavotes/story/2008/10/03/duceppe-to.html#article comments](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canadavotes/story/2008/10/03/duceppe-to.html#articlecomments))

"Spoiled little children having a tantrum. One of the loudest, Margaret Atwood said she would support the Bloc. Pack your bags honey, take the rest of the crew and join the others in Lower Canada. Don't ask to come back." (*statue*: Posted 2008/10/11 at 10:33 PM ET <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/tv/story/2008/10/08/artists-rally.html>)