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Canada

"Oh say can you see, eh?":

The Canadian Identity Debate and Its Relation to Television

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Graduate Program in Communications
McGill University, Montreal
November, 1993.

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

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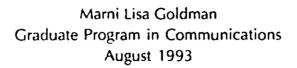
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Shortened MA Thesis Title:

The Canadian Identity Debate and its Relation to Television

ABSTRACT

There exists an embedded assumption that broadcasting must be employed to strengthen the Canadian national identity. Despite efforts to Canadianize our broadcasting system, however, Canadians are watching more and more American television and have more choice of American programming. This has led to a fear of American television as a threat to Canada's continuance as a separate and independent country. By studying the contemporary Canadian context with respect to Canadian drama, the following questions will be addressed: Are Canadian interests dependent on communication policy? Is Canadian dramatic programming essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty? Can the illusive quality "Canadian" be defined? Do television dramas made in Canada have distinctively Canadian characteristics and if so, how are these characteristics perceived by audiences? What are the options and alternatives that Canadian policy makers and programmers must face in the midst of the massive internationalization of culture and the onset of the 500 channel universe? In answering these questions, this study sets out to demonstrate how Canadian dramatic programming can be distinctive and unique in a way which still maintains an audience loyalty and a relevance to the Canadian way of life.

RÉSUMÉ

On présume qu'il faut employer la radiodiffusion pour fortifier l'identité nationale canadienne. Malgré les efforts d'introduire un système de radiodiffusion plus canadien, les canadiens regardent de plus en plus télévision américaine et ils ont plus de choix de programmation américaine. Ceci a produit une peur que la télévision américaine soit une ménace à l'abilité de Canada de continuer comme pays indépendent et distinct. On va poser les questions suivantes, en étudiant le contexte canadien contemporain, vis-à-vis le drame canadien: Les intérêts canadiens, dépendent-ils de la politique de la communication? Pour maintenir et accroître l'identité nationale et la souveraineté culturelle, a-t'on besoin de la programmation dramatique canadienne? Est-ce qu'on peut vraiment définer la qualité illusive "canadienne"? Les drames de télévision qu'on fabrique au Canada, ont-ils des qualités distinctement canadiennes? Comment le public perçoit-il ces caracteristiques? Quelles sont les options et alternatives des programmeurs et décideurs au milieu de l'internationalisation de la culture et l'assaut d'un univers de cinq cents chaînes? Pour répondre à ces questions, cette étude cherche à démontrer la façon par laquelle la programmation dramatique canadienne peut être distincte et unique dans une manière qui préserve la loyauté du public et un rapport avec la vie canadienne.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PREFACE

> He doesn't want to talk about Canada ... There you have the Canadian
> dilemma in a sentence. Nobody wants to talk about Canada, not even
> us Canadians (Moore 1972, 214).

It all started innocently enough, in an undergraduate communications course where I viewed the pilot episode of a new Canadian drama called E.N.G. This event marked my betrothal to Canadian television. At the same time, I found myself incensed at the apathetic response of my peers to Canadian drama. In my view, Canadian dramatic programming holds the ability to become an effective means of creating and communicating a sense of Canada to Canadians. However, after reading Richard Collin's Culture, Communication, and National Identity (1990), my blissful reverie was shattered. Is this belief of mine merely an unexamined rationalization for the pleasure I receive each time I divulge in Canadian fare? By my birthright, am I a victim of what Collins admonishes as Torontonian myopia? And exactly how and when did I wake-up one morning transformed into a cultural nationalist?

The persistent struggle to maintain a viable Canadian presence on our airwaves is indicative of a complex debate that can leave one floundering in rhetoric. But alas, I will strive to bridge the gap between theory and practice in an attempt to offer an academic response to the concerns of the Canadian broadcasting industry.

Yet what makes my argument different from the multitude that have preceded it? New information emerges all the time, changing and redefining the debate. Since the publication of Collins' text, a number of significant events have transpired, among them: the passing of the 1991 Broadcasting Act; an escalation in the constitutional crisis; intensifying racial and ethnic conflicts; the emergence of new Canadian TV fare, especially amongst independent production houses; and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's spring 1993 hearings on the future

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of television. Moreover, I am responding to a need for more vigorous textual analyses due to the critical and economic successes of recent Canadian TV programming.

Recently a friend handed me a hard-cover copy of Sandy Stewart's <u>Here's Looking At Us: A Personal History of Television in Canada</u> purchased for only one dollar at an innocuous discount store. It was then that I knew I could not give up, that something must be done.

1

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INTRODUCTION

> I have a great passion for where I am. It is threatened, right now,
> where I am. It is under a kind of seige. Sometimes, it feels as if I am
> alone in wanting to be here. Sometimes, it seems as if everyone around
> me wants to be somewhere else. America, perhaps - Never-never-land -
> or the moon ... I like it here. I want here. I need it (Findley 1992, 11).

> That mythical being so beloved of statisticians, the average Canadian,
> spends about twenty-four hours a week watching television.
> Furthermore, it is widely believed that the impact of television is so
> strong that it vitally affects the manner in which individuals perceive
> themselves, their country and their world. Since Canadian television
> viewing is overwhelmingly American, particularly in the most seductive
> field - entertainment - there has been considerable concern that the
> television habit insidiously robs Canadians of their identity and
> consequently threatens the long-term survival of their culture and of
> their country. No wonder then that every government since the
> development not only of television but of radio as well, has sought to
> devise policies ensuring that the country's identity is not compromised
> by the ubiquitous electronic media (Meisel 1989/90, 1).[1]

It cannot be proven that Canadian national interest and cultural identity are
indeed dependent on communication policy. Nonetheless, such policy has fostered
distinctive Canadian programming. To establish this, I will examine prime-time
English-language television drama in the contemporary Canadian context,
demonstrating how indigenous dramatic programming can be distinctive and unique in
a way which still maintains an audience loyalty and a relevance to the Canadian way
of life.[2]

Are the objectives of the Broadcasting Act being met by the Canadian
television industry? To answer this question, chapter two outlines Canadian content
regulations and their complex environment.

Chapter three contemplates the arguments presented by British academic Richard Collins. To the chagrin of Canadian cultural nationalists, Collins maintains that Canadian programming is not essential to the maintenance and enhancement of our national identity and cultural sovereignty. However, Canadian media scholar Marc Raboy argues that the entire debate has been miscast, that the cultural sovereignty argument thwarts the democratic potential of the media in Canada.

Underlining the entire polemic is the assumption that a Canadian culture can be defined; that the illusive quality of "Canadian" can be measured. Adding to the conundrum, illustrates Northrop Frye, is the fact that "Canadians are conditioned from infancy to think of themselves as citizens of a country of uncertain identity, a confusing past, and a hazardous future" (qtd. in Webster 1977, xi). Chapter four examines the attempts of various artists and academics to define the Canadian sensibility.

Chapter five investigates the possibility of explicitly Canadian subjects or styles of representation in Canadian television drama and touches upon how these characteristics are perceived by audiences. This attempt to define a Canadian identity through television content is accomplished through an analysis of the dramatic series E.N.G.

The study concludes, in chapter six, with a look at the impending 500 channel universe and Canadian television's place in it. More precisely, what are the choices Canadian policy makers and programmers face in the midst of the massive internationalization of culture and the onset of innovative technologies?

Towards these goals, I have sought to find a compromise between the English Canadian nationalists, such as Peter Harcourt, and their opponents (Collins et al.) on the question of Canadian broadcast and cultural policy. As a result, I have tended toward a pluralist conception of the problem: Canada is not one idea, and there is no one standpoint which commands an exclusive overview of the issues in Canadian culture. The answer is not to eliminate some imagined source of evil (private profit broadcasting or state regulations for example), but rather to have more of the best of what we have in this country. I do not adopt the arguments of Canadian nationalists

or their opponents, nor do I subscribe to the anti-Americanism of much contemporary media criticism. My thesis, however, remains a Canadian nationalist one.

Some will disagree with my choice of E.N.G. as an indicator through which to read the Canadian identity debate and Canadian television together. Some will argue that the text of E.N.G. structures the ideological subject within hailing distance of the Canadian nation state, and thus legitimates, without really questioning, the existing arrangements of power in this country. While I do not necessarily disagree with this potential assessment of the program, I have tried as much as possible to leave aside the questions of ideology and power in order to focus more directly on the question of indigenous production as conceived in the current debate on Canadian culture and broadcasting. What interests me at this point is to help identify the creative potential for Canadian broadcasting which may lie hidden in the emerging new constellation of technological and cultural forces. It is with this in mind that I have chosen to discuss E.N.G. as one of many possible televisual mediations of Canadian culture, and not for its specific ideological or political content. In the eyes of some, the show's popularity and saleability in the international market make the series problematic as a specifically Canadian cultural document. For my purposes these features constitute strong additional reasons for selecting E.N.G. over other Canadian productions.[3]

Others may deny the Canadian identity of E.N.G. on the grounds that its episodes are structured by an essentially American format. This brings me to the second reason why I have avoided a forcefully political reading of the program. I have approached the television form of E.N.G. as an ironic text with gaps - in short, as an invitation to ambivalent readers to produce interpretive variations, rather than as a commanding of belief or conduct. The epithet "American" is an ambiguous one in all contemporary popular culture. Since the latter has been shaped predominantly, though not exclusively, through the powerful American media distribution system, there is a sense that all television culture is American in form and inspiration.

The thesis of American hegemony, as advanced by Schiller (1969), Tunstall (1977) and others, while perhaps compelling from an economic viewpoint, is too simplistic to tell the whole cultural story. There are several reasons for this. First, the technological forms of the mass media are already being appropriated in other cultural

contexts, and not just in Western Europe. Second, the technology itself is in constant transformation, spawning new potentials and new uses, and thus, in effect, decentering and fragmenting itself. For this reason I am inclined to follow John Fiske in speaking of "television culture," and to situate Canadian television within the more complex and ambiguous field of possibilities, rather than trying to imagine it in narrow opposition to "American mass media hegemony." From this point of view, E.N.G. does not just "follow an American formula;" it initiates a Canadian elaboration of a television genre. This attempted elaboration is no less Canadian for the fact that it exploits the existing televisual media literacy of an international audience.

Although bracketing the question of political content in E.N.G., I am focusing on its narrative content. "Content" is of course not finally separable from "form" or "medium," and there is no reason to exempt "Canadian content" from this principle. It may well be that in the long run and with hindsight we will see more clearly that the decisive influence on culture, whether Canadian or otherwise, will have been affected by the structural characteristics of the new electronic media, such as television, and only secondarily by the "content" of the "messages" imparted through them. Of course, drama is itself a medium within the larger media system, and Canadian drama deserves to be considered in its own right, before being subsumed by the wider tides of sociological analysis. In any case, the Canadian identity debate has tended to privilege questions of content and so I in turn have tended to treat the diegetic content of E.N.G. as an independent variable. The historical importance of this kind of analysis in the formulation of Canadian broadcast policy requires us to grant at least provisional status to the otherwise problematic concept of "content." Other approaches to Canadian television policy and E.N.G. in particular may go beyond the parameters of the following study without necessarily invalidating its conclusions, which are appropriate at this level of analysis.

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MAKING PRIVATE DISPUTES PUBLIC:
THE DILEMMA OF CANADIAN CONTENT REGULATIONS

> The only thing that really matters in broadcasting is program content;
> all the rest is housekeeping
> (Fowler Committee 1965, 3).

On June 4, 1991, the long-awaited new Broadcasting Act was passed in Parliament. In its contentious policy section, it states that the Canadian broadcasting system should:

> 3.(d)(i). serve to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada.

> 3.(d)(ii). encourage the development of Canadian expression by providing a wide range of programming that reflects Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity, by displaying Canadian talent in entertainment programming and by offering information and analysis concerning Canada and other countries from a Canadian point of view.

Undoubtedly, this bidding to Canadian broadcasters is a largely rhetorical, idealistic statement of objectives, but it is one that recognizes a nation must have control of its own mass media, to expedite the formation and expression of its own culture. As the Act surmises, Canadian programming is essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty (Broadcast Act 1991, 3(1)(b), 119). However, there exists a discrepancy between the rhetoric and the reality. Despite efforts to Canadianize our broadcasting system, Canadians are watching more and more American television and have more choice of American programming.

American media imperialism has been said to lead to cultural assimilation, acculturation and cultural displacement. These concerns, however, are based on two

assumptions: that differences in values between the two countries exist and that these differences are being effaced by the U.S. mass media. For if Canadians were no different from Americans culturally, so the argument goes, then being inundated by American television programming would impose no cultural danger.

CANADA AS UNDERSTOOD IN CONTRAST TO THE U.S.

There are those who adamantly believe that Canada has a unique culture and there are those who see Canadian culture as merely a facsimile of the United States. Cultural critic Northrop Frye once declared:

> If the Canadian faces south, he becomes either
> hypnotized or repelled by the United States: either he
> tries to think up unconvincing reasons for being different
> and somehow superior to Americans, or he accepts being
> "swallowed up by" the United States as inevitable. What
> is resented in Canada about annexation to the United
> States is not annexation itself, but the feeling that Canada
> would disappear into a larger entity without having
> anything of any real distinctiveness to contribute to that
> entity: that, in short, if the United States did annex
> Canada it would notice nothing except an increase in
> natural resources (1971, iv).

Arguably, there are Americans who think of the Canadian experience as an extension of their own. Although Canadians disclaim this, self-definition has eluded many and they are unsure where the differences lie. As playwright and novelist Robertson Davies once declared:

> We are more like the United States than we are like any
> other nation on earth. Yet how quick we are to
> contradict an Englishman, let us say, who calls one of us
> an American. And when he says, as he often does,
> What's the difference? we are puzzled to give a short
> answer (qtd. in Webster 1977, 44).

In an effort to combat this nescience, sociologists, historians, political-economists, cultural critics and novelists are among those who have attempted to map the often subtle differences between Canadians and Americans. This tendency amongst

nationalists to uphold Canadian characteristics simply because they are not American, however, is a very negative way of defining the Canadian identity.

A customary illustration of such differences is the American constitution founded in "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" while the Canadian equivalent conservatively pursues "peace, order and good government."

Sociologist S.M. Lipset (1964; 1990), and others (Neagle 1968; Hardin 1974; Clark 1976) posited that Canadians are more conservative, more traditional, more collectively-oriented, less individualistic, less optimistic, less achievement-oriented, more leftist, less religious, and are less willing to risk capital or reputation, therefore exercising greater caution, reserve and restraint. Moreover, Canada was found to display greater tolerance and dedication to public good than in the United States.

Furthermore, Americans typically oppose government intervention in the exercise of individual rights and responsibilities, while the Canadian character is fundamentally compliant and accepting of authority and government involvement, a reflection of our colonial experience whereby nationhood came about through obedience not rebellion.

Other studies, (Truman 1971), found Canada to be more equalitarian than the United States because of its relatively higher post-secondary educational enrolment, more extensive welfare system, and the existence of social democratic parties. While others (Arnold and Tigert 1974) found that Canadians were more favourably disposed to changes in traditional values than Americans and are no less optimistic than their southern neighbours. Clearly, there are some discrepancies.

Surlin and Berlin's (1991) review of empirical literature on value differences between the two countries also found mixed results (431). Overall, including their own findings, only limited effects from watching American programming have been demonstrated empirically on Canadians. While U.S. media effects literature reveals an impact on Canadian cognitions (eg. knowledge of U.S. public affairs), it is inconclusive concerning U.S. media effects on attitudes, values, beliefs and norms (Surlin and Berlin 1991, 431-32).

Morris Wolfe's Jolts: The TV Wasteland and the Canadian Oasis, examines the differences between English Canadian and American culture through television

programming.[4] Wolfe discovered that "much of American television is about the American dream - the world as we wish it could be, a place in which goodness and reason prevail and things work out for the best. Much of Canadian television, on the other hand, is about reality - the grey world as we actually find it" (1985, 78). He argues that American TV fare is more fast-paced, violent, sleazy and misanthropic than its Canadian counterpart. Moreover, simple solutions are given to life's complex problems as no loose ends are allowed to worry the viewer (Wolfe 1985, 78).

Wolfe contrasts the United States, a society based on individualistic, competitive values with Canada, a more socially conscious nation which values communal cooperative responses. In America, Wolfe discerns, many believe in the right to bear arms and Darwinian survival of the fittest while Canadians pride themselves in the maintenance of a social safety net. In doing so, Canadians place value on communal, cooperative and collective activities and attitudes versus the value placed by Americans on heroism, isolated individuality and free-will. Wolfe, however, has been chastised for his oversimplified, unsubstantiated generalizations, and a lack of empirical data to support his analysis (Collins 1990; Carney 1991). Richard Collins admonishes that "false or unsustainable though many of Wolfe's assumptions are, they articulate promiscuously in English Canada's nationalist rhetoric" (1990, 207). The attempt to analyze cultural products in terms of a Canadian identity will be explored further in chapter four.

Undeniably, the debate surrounding the differences between Americans and Canadians is always slippery and occasionally humorous, as in the observation of Canada's former Ambassador to the United States:

> Americans are proud of what they are - Americans!
> Canadians are proud of what they are not - Americans!
> Canadians are very sensitive about their culture and, it is said, will defend it to the last subsidy.
> Americans have difficulty linking culture and subsidies, except a negotiator who once told me, "In America, sugar is culture."
> Americans think the best compliment they can offer is, "You're just like us."
> For Canadians, the highest form of flattery is to be told, "You know, you really are different!"
> And so it goes (Burney 1993, A17).

CANADIAN CONTENT QUOTAS

At the core of broadcasting policy are Canadian content quotas (CanCon), a regulatory device designed to foster Canadian culture, in force since 1 October 1970. These quotas are administered by the federal regulatory and supervisory body, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), to ensure Canadians create and preserve a distinctive broadcasting system.[5] All television broadcasters are required to air a certain minimum amount of Canadian-originated programming. For the CBC, this is no less than sixty per cent Canadian content during prime-time and for private broadcasters it is fifty per cent (Ellis 1991, 54).

In 1985, in an effort to augment Canadian programming, the CRTC introduced conditions of licence to supplement CanCon regulations. Attached to the renewal of all commercial television licences, conditions of licence are quotas for the number of hours of Canadian programming (with an emphasis on drama) and expenditures on such programming that are to be supplied by broadcasters.

While the CRTC continues to urge broadcasters to develop more Canadian programming with Canadian themes, concerns and locales, they have not been successful in enforcing such demands. This is an ongoing area of dissension, especially concerning television drama. Almost half of all English television viewing in Canada is of drama, yet only four percent of the popular drama available on Canadian television is Canadian (Ellis 1991, 26).

In fact, it is easy to get around the CRTC's Canadian content regulations. Private broadcasters frequently air less than the required amount of quota without any retribution. Furthermore, the CRTC's definition of prime-time is six o'clock p.m. to midnight, which is not the period when peak viewing is ordinarily measured for research intentions. The CRTC uses this extended definition for its calculation of Canadian content quotas. This eases the burden on television broadcasters, who can average their Canadian contribution over six hours instead of four, allowing them to continue scheduling a vast amount of American programming in the standard peak viewing period of 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Furthermore, the 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. to

11:30 p.m. viewing periods are typically filled with news - not drama - and news counts as Canadian content.

While many private broadcasters have not met the minimum Canadian content requirements, no television licence has ever been revoked. The CRTC has been accused of safeguarding private broadcasters. Many argue that this protection is unwarranted considering the contribution of the licensees.[6] Rianne Mahon confronts this issue in her article entitled "Regulatory Agencies: Captive Agent or Hegemonic Apparatuses". Mahon's paper puts forth the argument that regulatory agencies can become captive of the industries they are supposed to be regulating (1979, 162-200). Herschel Hardin raises a similar, but more extensive, critique of the CRTC in Closed Circuits: The Sellout of Canadian Television (1985). Yet opinions on the functioning of the CRTC are by no means unanimous.

In the 1983 CRTC Policy Statement on Canadian Content in Television, Commissioners Gagnon and Grace asserted that "the shortcomings of English-language private broadcasters are reflective of the reality of the competitive programming market and not of a lack of commitment by most broadcasters to Canadian programming (22). In this vein, CRTC regulations are often seen as hindering private-sector profitability.

The 1986 Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy (Caplan and Sauvageau) stated that: "private broadcasters in Canada have long agreed [if somewhat reluctantly] that in return for the genuine - and often lucrative - privilege of being granted a broadcasting licence, they are obligated to perform certain services for the system that are not necessarily in the best immediate self-interest of their enterprise" (381). Despite this claim, many Canadian nationalists argue that the demands of cultural sovereignty have been blatantly pushed aside for the economic demands of attracting viewership and advertising revenues. Appropriately, Gary Maavara, former Vice-President of Corporate Planning at CTV, bluntly stated: "forget all that stuff in the Broadcasting Act, our business is selling faces in front of TV sets" (1991).

Exacerbating economic exigency are the widely advertised and easily available American programmes which can be bought for telecast at a tiny fraction of what it would cost Canadian producers, public or private, to make their own - typically one-

tenth of the cost for dramatic programming (Caplan and Sauvageau 1986, 433).[7] Most of the expenditure on American programs by English-language private broadcasters is for entertainment programs. As mentioned earlier, these foreign drama programs account for almost half of English-language TV viewing in Canada, and hence revenues earned from selling commercials on these shows are to a large degree the major source of revenue for English-langauge broadcasters. Furthermore, popular U.S. productions typically generate more advertising revenues than those from Canadian productions, offering a further incentive for Canadian broadcasters to purchase U.S. entertainment productions.

Compounding the problem of revenue is the uniquely private/public make-up of broadcasting in this country. There is no clearcut public/private sector division in Canada television. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), unlike most other national public broadcasters, earns commercial revenues from advertising equivalent to two-thirds of its English TV programming budget, a fact which has angered private broadcasters declaring unfair competition. On the other hand, the private networks depend on government support to make money, primarily through Telefilm's Broadcast Development Fund.[8]

This ambiguous polarized pull creates a tension for government in terms of formulating policy to suit everyone, and for the CRTC in terms of implementing stated government policy. Furthermore, private broadcasters consider "acting in the public interest" to be in conflict with their profit making intentions. This is due to a fundamental contradiction between the high-minded objectives of the Broadcasting Act and the financial interest of private broadcasters.

The conflicts facing public-sector broadcasters in Canada are just as acute as those experienced in the private sector, but more difficult to sweep under the current regulations. Public broadcasters face an added dilemma as they "are caught between the imperatives of public service (demanding a range of different programs for distinct publics) and those of nationalism (demanding programming of mass appeal that will bind the different communities and interests in Canada together in a single Canadian culture and consciousness" (Collins 1990, 141).

Of course, the CBC remains the main Canadian presence on TV. Yet the programming crisis of the CBC is of such magnitude that it cannot be met by the CBC alone. This is especially so today given the corporation has been faced with huge cutbacks and forced to increase commercialization in the search for revenue.

To aid the CBC, the role of the private sector is to complement the CBC in the area of quality Canadian programming and to supplement it by providing American programming (Caplan and Sauvageau 1986, 645). In contrast, private broadcasters have only aided in the increasing Americanization of our airwaves. Moreover, there continues to be a decline in the amount of Canadian programming scheduled by private English-language television broadcasters during the heavy evening viewing hours. In particular, Canadian dramatic productions are highly under-represented during these times. Therefore, the only additional choice Canadians receive from private broadcasters is a "choice" between more American programs.

Moreover, cable television and satellite technology have exacerbated the problem of inundation by making it possible for most Canadians to receive many more American channels. Canada, in this sense, has become a "clinical case study of what happens when a country's lines of distribution exceed the country's ability to produce content" (Starowicz 1989, 2).

"The key regulatory issue in Canada," reiterate Caplan and Sauvageau, "is where the balance is to be struck between the business-like decision and the public's right to a return in Canadian programming for the private broadcaster's use of public frequencies and protection from undue competition under the licensing process" (1986, 443).

There are those who feel that all attempts to enhance the contribution of private broadcasters to Canadian programming are unrealistic and should be abandoned. Given the conventional cost/benefit rationales, it is in the interests of private broadcasters to air as many American programmes as possible; and not at all in their financial interest to provide quality Canadian drama; "it is little wonder, therefore, that even after 25 years of constant pressure, repeated exhortations and verbal warnings, they have never done so in a serious way" (Caplan and Sauvageau 1986, 469). With little financial incentive to make Canadian programs, the contribution of private

broadcasters towards Canadian drama has been notoriously ineffectual. Canadian private television remains a competition between importers, rather than producers (Starowicz 1989, 5).

There are signs, however, that this chronic standoff between cultural objectives and economic profitability may be changing. One need only to refer to the growing success of independent production companies such as Atlantis Films, Alliance Communications, and Paragon Entertainment, which air an increasing variety of programs on the private networks (in addition to the public network).[9] "The point is that there is momentum where, for three decades, there was only lip-service, way-wardness and entrenched audience prejudices against the work of their compatriots" (Borkowski 1993, 8).

CO-PRODUCTIONS: A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE?

In recent years, Canadian producers have turned more and more to foreign partners in carrying out their projects. Co-production agreements enable Canadian producers and their foreign counterparts to pool their creative, artistic, technical and financial resources in order to co-produce films and TV programs. Undeniably, they are "a competitive strategy in the increasingly global television market emerging as a consequence of the new technologies and trend to de-regulation" (Hoskins and McFayden 1993, 219).

Most importantly, these films and TV programs are accredited as national productions in each of the countries involved and thereby benefit from regulatory provisions and government assistance available in each of the countries concerned. These "treaties" are negotiated by the Department of Communications and administered by Telefilm Canada. Presently, Canada has official co-production agreements with twenty-four countries. Although France is Canada's greatest partner, the growing audience fragmentation in the U.S. has created a greater motive for U.S. producers to initiate co-productions with Canada.

The potential benefits of co-productions are outlined by Colin Hoskins and Stuart McFayden as the following: pooling of financial resources; access to foreign

government's incentives and subsidies; access to partner's market; access to third-country market; learning from partner; and risk reduction. The potential drawbacks include: transaction costs; loss of control and cultural specificity; exploitation or cheating by the foreign partner; creating a more formidable competitor (1993, 227-29). The potential loss of control and cultural specificity has caused the greatest concern among Canadian producers as well as nationalists. While the goal is to ensure a fair balance of both economic and cultural benefit to each country, this is an objective which in the past has not always been successfully achieved by Canada (Caplan and Sauvageau 1986, 113).

The most controversial and important element in the CRTC's definition is that it accepts what the Commission refers to as "co-ventures" as though they were official treaty co-productions. Co-ventures are productions involving producers in Canada and in some other country, almost always the U.S. These productions are not based on the kind of detailed negotiation which goes on in the case of official co-production treaties in order to ensure that both countries involved share equally in the economic and cultural benefits. The CRTC requires that the Canadian production company have an equal measure of decision-making on all creative elements of the production and administer at least the Canadian element of the production budget. Such formal requirements, however, cannot guarantee an equal division of real creative control in cases where the foreign producer has brought in most of the funding through a pre-sale to a broadcaster in the U.S. (Caplan and Sauvageau 1986, 114). For example, more and more CBC-TV production is going to independent companies who often need U.S. partners to make ends meet. Not only do Canadian dollars subsidize U.S. TV; worse still, these U.S. partners often have clout in making key creative decisions.[10]

In an attempt to compete against U.S. programming in the vital drama category and to combat the loss of creative control, Canadian producers are forging new alliances outside that of the U.S. An example of this is the CBC's alliance with the British Broadcasting Corporation and with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation for joint use of international satellite facilities and combined production resources. In

another alliance, the CBC has made a deal with Astral Inc. of Montreal to distribute CBC programming under the newly established label, CBC Home Video.

International co-productions and co-ventures are ideal, even essential it is argued, for ambitious, big-budget dramatic projects aimed at an international audience. Conversely, domestic production is fitting for relatively low budget productions aimed at the domestic audience (Hoskins and McFayden 1993, 234-5). An ideal situation would see a combination of the two forms.

Nonetheless, one must grant that American programming is essential for protecting the economic well-being of the private broadcasting industry as well as maintaining varied and comprehensive program schedules. To accomplish the latter, however, and to have a viable presence for Canadian drama, a healthier balance between Canadian produced drama and foreign import on our TV screens is deemed essential by many. Restating a view held by Caplan and Sauvageau, I believe that the quantity and quality of good Canadian drama that we wish to see in prime-time can only be achieved with the participation of private broadcasters (1986, 470). But this attempt to straddle art and industry, culture and entertainment, meaning and profit, without falling into the gaps between, is a daunting task (Banning 1988, 20).

3

BROADCASTING POLICY:
CULTURAL AFFIRMATION OR STATE INSTRUMENT?

> In Canada, nothing has ever been self-evident
> (Miller 1987, 375).

Ever since the <u>Aird Commission Report on Radio Broadcasting</u> in 1929, there has existed an embedded assumption that broadcasting must be employed to strengthen the Canadian national identity (Janisch 1991, 214). This belief has led to a fear of American television as a threat to Canada's continuance as a separate and independent country.

The CBC, in its 1985 testimony to the Caplan/Sauvageau Task Force Report on Broadcasting Policy, said that there can be no political sovereignty without cultural sovereignty. This perceived mutual dependence of cultural and political sovereignty has "served as the core assumption on which Canadian broadcasting policy has been based" (Collins 1990, 13).

In <u>Culture, Communication and National Identity</u> (1990) Richard Collins argues conversely that polity and culture need not be congruous and that the struggle to make them so merely inflicts on citizens unwanted costs and burdens. Therefore, Canada's sovereignty depends much less on Canadian content in television than has generally been accepted. Rather, Collins refutes the conventional image of Canada as a "weak national entity undermined by its population's predilection for foreign television" (1990, intro).

Collins would ardently agree with the following declaration put forth by two disgruntled CRTC Commissioners: "it is insulting to suggest that the Canadian identity is such a fragile thing that it will be either saved or doomed by regulatory fiat" (Gagnon and Grace qtd. in CRTC 1983, 20). Collins insists that Canadian national interest and identity are not dependent on communication policy as Canada and

Canadian nationalism have survived in "robust health" in spite of the extensive U.S.
presence and interest in the Canadian broadcasting system since its inception (1990,
64).

Collins distinguishes between *symbolic culture* (American cultural products
consumed as externalizations of ourselves or for pleasure) and *anthropological
culture* (political institutions). He asserts that while Canada possesses distinctive
anthropological traits (laws, systems of authority, daily practices and routines) which
distinguish it from the United States, it possesses a weak symbolic culture ("its
symbolization and representation of itself"). Examples of Canada's anthropological
culture are parliamentary government, no death penalty, health and welfare systems,
gun control laws, and progressive taxation. What it lacks, according to Collins, is
story-telling institutions and a public wishing to consume the stories of its institutions.
The outcome is Canadians sharing scant meanings and symbols. Collins surmises that
this supposed absence of a symbolic culture has in no way hindered Canada's survival.

On the contrary, our ensuing weak symbolic culture has resulted in the
strengthening of Canada's political culture. As such, argues Collins, Canada's
tolerance and respect for diversity has become coveted worldwide. For such reasons,
Collins sees nationalism, which advocates a congruent polity and culture, as
reactionary and hazardous, sanctioning old-fashioned identities rather than tolerance.

Collins finds his evidence for the weakness of Canada's symbolic culture in the
historic preference of Canadian television viewers for American content. Indeed,
former CRTC chair John Meisel once said: "Canadians regard their right to watch
American TV programming with the same passion as Americans regard their right to
bear arms" (qtd. in Vipond 1989, 120). Television historian Paul Rutherford supports
this claim: "the privates have commonly argued that they gave the public what it
wanted [American programming]; audience surveys, ratings data, and the like seem to
bear out the claim, no matter how unwelcome the evidence is to highbrows and
nationalists" (1990, 8).

Reiterating Collins view, Mary Vipond states: "clear proof that American
culture is not damaging to the Canadian identity is the fact that Canada still exists,
although it has been flooded by Americanized mass media for at least the past one

hundred years. Many strands, both material and spiritual, hold this country together; Time and Dallas cannot destroy it. Canadians are quite capable of intelligent selectivity" (1989, 122).

More evidence of the healthy continuance of the Canadian persona is that Canadian audiences overwhelmingly prefer their own news, documentaries, public affairs and sports programming to the American alternative. The argument is that the continuous supply of Canadian information programming was and remains sufficient to nurture a separate national identity and a distinctive civic ethic (Rutherford 1990, 491).

As journalist Robert Fulford notes, Canada is primarily a political gathering of many distinct cultures, rather than a cultural entity with shared tastes, myths, and beliefs (1987, 8). Aside from sports, a political structure is just about all we have in common, so politics naturally dominate Canadian television: our national drama is Question Period, our stars are political leaders and political broadcasters (Fulford 1987, 8). Similarly, Collins concludes that political identity and sense of citizenship are more easily related to consumption of political communications than to consumption of entertainment. The source of the problem, says Fulford, is that Canadians do not believe that drama is as important as information and sports.

Views such as these have led Collins to deduce that Canadian content is not representative of Canadian tastes but of a particular nationalist class interest, and that American content is probably more representative of Canadian tastes. Or could it be, as Paul Attallah asks, "that a liking for American television is precisely the proof that the only consensual symbolic culture Canadians can agree upon is one which does not bear the evident marks of our own class and ethnic divisions?" (1992, 232).

There are three central problems with Collins' thesis. First, the disjunction between culture and politics is not as clear as Collins' makes out. This presumption leads to the simplification of the impact of Americanization. Second, Collins' conception of the Canadian political identity as stable is questionable. Third, Collins' fails to consider the dramatic changes in Canada's political landscape, specifically the impact of the Canada/U.S. free trade agreement (FTA) and the possible North American free trade agreement which includes Mexico (NAFTA).

#1: THE DISJUNCTION BETWEEN CULTURE AND POLITICS

Collins' argument is compelling, but it is not finally decisive for a number of reasons. When Collins shows that Canadian sovereignty remains intact in spite of American cultural influences, he is referring to political sovereignty, not cultural sovereignty. According to Collins, it remains to be demonstrated that the viewing of American television drama weakens Canadian national identity. This is certainly true, but so is the converse. Moreover, it would be difficult for him to argue as persuasively that American television has no significant impact on Canadian culture. Collins avoids this problem by reducing the alternative position to an alarmist extreme. In the process, he sometimes goes to the other - complacent - extreme, too easily translating a valid distinction between cultural and political identities into an absolute opposition. When Collins urges that television drama is just a medium for relaxation and entertainment, he seems to want to deny that there is any meaningful connection at all between the political and the cultural aspects of the sovereignty issue. A more detailed position would recognize that while U.S. programming in itself is not a major threat to Canadian identity and cultural survival, it does represent a significant political and cultural problem, particularly insofar as it **"discourages Canadian self-expression by leaving few financial incentives for domestic production"** (Caplan and Sauvageau 1986, 272).

Collins sees the consumption of American programming as a free choice of Canadians when it could just as easily be interpreted as a false choice between more American programming, with few Canadian alternatives.

Paul Rutherford, in his exploration of indigenous drama between 1952 and 1967, elaborates on how the accessibility plus the popularity of Hollywood entertainment made the survival of an indigenous and vigorous "PopCult" in English Canada virtually impossible (1990, 491). Little has changed today.

A central problem with Canadian drama is that there just is not enough Canadian programming (and funds) to go around. A combination of privatization, indifferent regulation, and weakening of the public broadcaster has allowed Canadian

television to become more and more driven by market forces, which (as demonstrated in the previous chapter) favour importation over production (Starowicz 1988, 5).

Collins' distinction between symbolic culture and anthropological culture fails to account for any relationships which may be initiated *between* the two cultures, and hence between culture and polity (Attallah 1992, 226). What is more, Canada's "anthropological" culture did not develop by accident but by choice and "its ability to endure as a distinct way of life into the next century is in no way guaranteed" (Harcourt 1991, 28). In fact, nationalists believe that there cannot be a persisting anthropological culture without a symbolic culture to sustain it. The classic argument is that we must have representations of ourselves if we are to survive.

In a country as vast as Canada with two distinct and alienated language groups, Collins overlooks the variety of symbolic representations within our shared anthropological practices, and a plurality of beliefs.

In the past, symbolic representations of Canadians were found less in our songs, our literature, or on our TV screens, than in the surrounding civic culture - culture less imported from the U.S. than inherited from Europe (Harcourt 1991, 28). Representations of life in English Canada inherited from Scottish origins, such as architecture, schools, and churches, are not contemplated by Collins. Where, for instance, might Canadians of non-Scottish decent find their "anthropological" origins represented in some "symbolic system"?

But nationalists such as Peter Harcourt are not recommending traditional institutions so much as pointing out that the debate has been continually miscast: "whether as state or nation, Canada has been inadequately imagined. Our inherited mythology has been inadequate for the variety of changes that have taken place in Canada since the end of the Second World War - changes that are simultaneously economic, demographic and ideological" (1991, 28). Harcourt claims that the national symbolic culture of Canada began to deteriorate with the advent of television: "it is only when broadcasting, especially television broadcasting, begins to be the chief carrier of national images and attitudes that our right to our own symbolic culture has been called into question" (1991, 4). However, this problem is attributed to economics, rather than culture, a point Collins fails to consider.

> Nowhere in "Culture, Communication and National Identity" does
> Collins address this matter ... of control that has been relinquished, not
> to the people in the name of democracy, but to the private broadcasters
> and their advertisers in the name of money ... Canadian institutions and
> government agencies are increasingly espousing the dominant American
> values of exponential growth and the maximization of profits which,
> finally, are based on an ideology of greed (Harcourt 1991, 8).

Indeed, Harcourt connects nationalism not only with a defence of Canadian culture but
also with opposition to American values (Attallah 1992, 233).

#2 POLITICAL STABILITY

Collins' appraisal of Canadian political institutions as healthy and stable is
suspect. Collins pre-Meech Lake view is unduly optimistic, failing to consider the
forces threatening Canada's reputation as a "peaceable kingdom": the lingering
economic recession; constitutional and political strife; the embittered, persisting
language dispute; widening regional divisions; and the perceived rampantness of
racism and sexism. Moreover, "the citizenry is alternately disgusted and bored, and
the CBC is moving up all the bad news from ten o'clock to nine p.m. to make
completely sure we don't sneak off to bed with even a scintilla of hope" (Fraser 1992,
8).

Gaeten Tremblay ascribes the forementioned weaknesses in Collins' research to
his faith in the "Trudeau vision" of Canada. Under Trudeau's tutelage, the federal
government enacted policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism. Collins' sees these
policies as evidence of Canada's tolerance, and testimony that weak symbolic systems
(two languages, many cultures) in no way handicap the functioning of a viable polity
(one Canada) (Attallah 1992, 227). Regardless of its intentions, bilingualism fostered
a powerful resentment in many outside Quebec, who perceived it as a strategy to
reserve key federal positions for French-speakers. Furthermore, Quebeckers felt
bilingualism delegitimized any of their future demands, while many Canadians whose
first language was neither French nor English resented what they perceived to be the
special attention paid to the French and French-speakers. "By constructing artificial
symbols - a bilingual and multicultural Canada - the 'Trudeau vision' sought both to

couple *and* to decouple polity and culture. It sought to decouple the Québécois polity from its own firmly rooted symbolic system and, at the same time, to couple a new pan-Canadian polity composed of French, English, and multicultural Canadians to a pan-Canadian symbolic system consisting of pride in the vastness, natural resources, and cultural pluralism of Canada. The net result that the Trudeau vision is now ... seen in Canada, by different groups, either as the nirvana to which we must at all costs return, whatever the contradictions, or as a great political manipulation which we have fortunately escaped" (Attallah 1992, 227-28).

Thus, the link between culture and political unity has tended to reassert itself, as evidenced through the 1980 Quebec referendum on sovereignty-association, the Canada Act of 1982, and the rise and fall of the Meech Lake Accord (1986-1990). Many Canadians opposed the Accord on the grounds that the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society would allow Quebec to override The Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This opposition was perceived in Quebec as merely another example of English-Canadian hatred and intolerance. It is with the death of the Meech Lake Accord that a psychological break with Canada seems to have transpired. The Charlottetown Accord of October 1992 is yet another illustration of this break. In a Canada-wide referendum to amend the Constitution, citizens said "no" to a package agreed to on August 28 1992 by our federal, provincial, territorial and native leaders. In an unsuccessful attempt to intimidate Canadians, the referendum was framed as a vote for or against Canada, Quebec and national unity. As a result, the break up of Canada is now widely contemplated and Quebec seems to have become *de facto*, if not *de jure*, a separate country (Attallah 1992, 223).

Rowland Lorimer, a leading intellectual proponent of English-Canadian nationalism, ascribes the weakness of Collins' work to his assumption that his research, conducted in the early to mid-1980s, would remain valid. In Lorimer's view, Collins' has gravely misinterpreted the real political situation in Canada, and thus the entire origin and different meanings of Canadian and Québécois nationalism. Lorimer concedes that polity and culture have been decoupled in Canada because Canada and Quebec have dissimilar social, cultural and political tasks to confront (1991, 584). Moreover, these differences are the outcome of historical circumstance, not of rational

choice; the result is not tolerance and harmony but the difficulty "for either group to accept the central task of the other" (Lorimer 1991, 584).

Consequently, Lorimer rejects Collins' claim that both Canadian and Quebec nationalists "long for an old-fashioned nation-state where culture, language, religion, race, politics and economics are all congruent" (1991, 584). What Canadians want instead is "not to be deafened by the thunder of empire"; and Quebeckers want only "linguistic, cultural and political sovereignty" (Lorimer 1991, 584).

Lorimer's view is problematic because it advocates the strengthening of national institutions (such as the CBC) to produce binding symbolic systems. However, "there are many in Quebec who would argue that the institutional failure decried by Lorimer is actually felicitous since it releases Quebeckers from the domination of anglo-Canadian myths and ideologies, thereby allowing them to realize their own socio-cultural and national potential" (Attallah 1992, 224). Furthermore, Lorimer's centralist view leads to additional concerns related to the distribution of power, such as how to strengthen national institutions, which ones to strengthen, and for whom? This regionalizing tendency, nevertheless, is also evident in English Canada.

#3 IMPACT OF THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Particularly for Collins, Canada exists as a nation as a result of the rejection of the political goals of the United States. But what about the manifestation of the Canada/U.S. free trade agreement (FTA)? "On the economic front," argues Paul Attallah, "the FTA may seem to link the economic infrastructure of Canada so closely to American interests as to imperil Canada's survival as a separate socio-cultural and economic entity" (1992, 223).

In an 1991 article for the Canadian Forum, Colleen Fuller outlines the negative impact of free trade on Canadian television production and broadcasting. Fuller notes that despite the exemption of culture from the talks, the agreement provides for a "notwithstanding" clause - that is, culture is exempt, but any negative economic impact on U.S. communications or entertainment industries caused by Canadian regulatory,

tax, or fiscal polices in the cultural sector can be countervailed "with equivalent commercial effect" in other sectors of the Canadian economy (1991, 6). What is more, resulting drastic cuts in public funding to the cultural industries, among them the CBC and Telefilm Canada, further contradict the Conservatives' claim that culture was exempt from the free trade agreement.

To corroborate this indictment, six years after it negotiated the FTA, the federal Tory government has decided Canadians should not view secret documents from the negotiations concerning Canadian cultural policy. Coming from the Trade Negotiations Office in the External Affairs department, these documents are now kept under lock and key in the National Archives (Kennedy 1993, B4). Nonetheless, Archives did provide hints of the kind of documents being kept secret by revealing their titles, proving that culture did come up at the bargaining table. Thus, it is believed that "negotiators reached a 'tacit agreement' to reduce support for Canadian culture because agencies like the CBC offend the Americans free-enterprise approach to business" (Kennedy 1993, B4).

As the talks to include Mexico in an new North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) advance, "the American negotiators have made it clear that existing cultural policies are open for discussion" (Cameron 1991, 3).[11] Among the things that American corporations seeking "investment opportunities" in the Canadian television industry are unhappy about are: ownership restrictions, Canadian content requirements, unfair competition due to public funding of production, discriminatory tax policies, and simulcasting requirements.[12] Critics argue that an examination of the NAFTA text reveals that this is economic integration of the Canadian and Mexican economies with the U.S. economy (Cameron 1992, 2).

Were Collins to contemplate these changes he would have to modify his thesis which claims that Canada represents to the world an enviable model of the decoupling of culture and polity. Yet to thoroughly disprove Collins' hypothesis and prove that polity and culture must be congruent, Canada would have to fall apart. At the same time, one must be cognizant that Canada's "cultural or symbolic reasons for existing" have always been derivatives of colonialism or reactions to them. It is probably the case that Canada was at one time dominated by a power elite which exploited the

cultural differential (Canada-Commonwealth vs. U.S.) as a support for a nominal political sovereignty which worked to its own economic advantage (protectionism served small-scale monopolies like Molson and C.P./C.N., the CBC and <u>Hockey Night in Canada</u>). Perhaps then, "nominal sovereignty" is the pending geopolitical reality, and Canada must embrace this liberating potentiality aggressively instead of fearing it.

WORKING TOWARDS A RESOLUTION

The real issue, comments Canadian Forum editor Duncan Cameron, is that by pointing the blame on the need to reduce the deficit, national cultural industries that have yet to be abolished outright are continuously weakened (1991, 3).

On the other hand, Collins resolutely contends that political institutions are more significant than television and national culture ("a shared repertoire of symbols") in producing and reproducing a feeling of national identity among Canadians. Daily routines, health insurance and welfare plans, government institutions, a redistributive social ethos, deference to established authority and the attributes of "peace, order and good government" are what hold Canada together. As if to corroborate this, the new <u>Broadcasting Act</u> no longer requires the CBC to contribute to the development of national unity, and drastic cuts in funding and revenues foretell a more humble role for the national broadcaster (Janisch 1991, 215).[13]

Unquestionably, nationalists see the decoupling of culture and polity as the problem with Canada, not its promise. "In other words, it is precisely *because* culture and polity are decoupled, precisely because we have given ourselves unbridled access to American broadcasting, precisely because we have split broadcasting between English and French, that we are unable to generate the common symbols that would hold us together" (Attallah 1992, 224). It is here we can identify, perhaps, a reactionary element in nationalism - reducing politics to cultural loyalty.

Yet one cannot deny that polity and culture are decoupled in Canada. Canadian cultural nationalists grieve it as Canada's epilogue; Collins applauds it as the promise of the future. Both views are myopic.

The nationalists fear the decoupling will lead to the linking of Canadian polity with American culture. However, it is argued that because Canadians have consumed American culture without becoming Americanized (a debatable fact), culture and polity truly are unlinked. Instead, the similarities between U.S. and Canadian lifestyles have been described as "North American." Furthermore, public broadcasting, public health care and politics have become examples of our rejection of American culture. In this scenario, cultural consumption does not precede political behaviour (but rather is partially determined by political beliefs) (Attallah 1992, 234).

Despite all of this, claims Attallah, Collins fails to acknowledge the unlikelihood of a polity surviving without symbols (1992, 234). "Indeed, Collins seriously misrecognizes the extent to which the federal government has laboured to manufacture symbols and belief systems which would underwrite the polity and to which all Canadians would lend their allegiance. Furthermore, the federal government felt compelled to manufacture such symbols because without them individual Canadians would have no motivation to lend allegiance to one political structure, i.e., Canada rather than another, i.e., an independent Quebec or the United States. In that sense, culture and polity are linked" (Attallah 1992, 234). Instead of seeing the link between polity and culture as diametrically good or bad, Attallah suggests that the nature of the linking is much more free floating and soft, moving sometimes toward strict congruence, sometimes toward weak linkage; a point that has been overlooked by both Collins and cultural nationalists (1992, 234-35). Collins falls too far on the side of unlinking, seeing that as the promise of the future. Here Collins denies that complete decoupling might lead only to anomie, the absence of motivational structures. Nationalists, conversely, fall too far on the side of linking, seeing it as the hope of coherence and identity while neglecting that modern identity is precisely not to be tied too strongly to any one viewpoint (Attallah 1992, 235).

Attallah also notes that one of the exceptional features of Canadian polity is that it incorporates notions of individualism and free will. These notions radically change the nature of the link between culture and polity so that it is flexible and negotiable. Thus, by providing legal and practical direction for everyday life, a polity will develop its own culture. But the modern culture of a polity will not over-

determine the polity. Instead, "the culture of the modern polity will be expressive of difference as much as of unity, of individual preference as much as of ideological coherence" (Attallah 1992, 234).

AN INTERMEDIARY POSITION

To combat the increasing Americanization of our television screens, nationalists would argue for the strengthening of the CBC and stricter regulation of the private sector. Those defending a laissez-faire approach similar to Collins' would argue in favour of decentralization and deregulation. Policy pundit Marc Raboy occupies an intermediary position between the centralizing and dominating tendencies of both the state and the private sector.

Debates such as these are crucial to democracy, asserts Raboy, as they reflect diverse views and representations of reality. Central to this approach is the notion that broadcasting policy is the "playground" for conflicting notions of Canada, Canadian society and the Canadian public. Yet the public interest in freedom of broadcasting is habitually forgotten in this debate.

In Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada's Broadcasting Policy (1990), Raboy documents the Canadian fixation with American dominance claiming that it has actually confused the issues within Canada itself and has "mired TV in disrepute for too long" (544).

The emphasis on national considerations has been maintained at the cost of subsuming the other major tensions in Canadian broadcasting: between public and private ownership, between different jurisdictional models, between different structural approaches (Raboy 1990, 339-40). By continuously camouflaging these issues, the cultural sovereignty argument has prevented the expansion of the public dimension of broadcasting in Canada. "In fact," maintains Raboy, "if one were inclined to see things this way, one could argue that the thwarting of the democratic potential of media in Canada in the name of national interest actually serves American interests in the long run" (1990, 340).

The crux of Raboy's thesis is that the public interest has been consistently sacrificed by state policy-makers for the benefit of private broadcasters. For instance, federal cultural policies have been decided at the expense of the Canadian people in favour of corporate power within an increasingly international corporate state (Harcourt 1991, 29).

As a result, the concerns of those on the periphery - such as western Canada, voluntary associations, ethnic groups, and the "public at large" - have gone unheeded. The lamentable outcome has been that public broadcasting never fulfilled its promise: it failed to keep either American influence or commercial ambitions from "wreaking havoc" and it never became an articulation of democratic broadcasting, accessible to the public. Thus, Raboy is concerned with the ability of the broadcasting system to maintain some distance from both the state and the private sector.

Raboy's concluding chapter calls for the democratization of broadcasting. By democratic potential, Raboy is referring to a process that requires continual, direct and significant input from ordinary citizens in all aspects of decision-making from policy making and regulation to programming and access (1990, 356-7). This would prevent discrimination against or favouritism towards groups and individuals as well as raise critical awareness of and responsibility for the operation of media organisations (Raboy 1990, 341).

Raboy emphasises the need to differentiate the political rhetoric of nationhood from questions of the public interest. To this extent, Raboy's argument coincides with Collins'. The problem lies in equating "nation" with "public," a repressive reduction which serves narrow interests. However, Raboy departs from Collins in his view of the public interest as "a context for the just and equitable coexistence of different, distinct, and often conflicting publics" (1990, 356). National interest is based on a centralized vision of Canada, a federal strategy for maintaining Canada as a political entity distinct from the U.S., and as an instrument against the internal threat to Canada's national unity by Quebec. There is, I believe, reason to presume that we are moving away from this notion with the 1991 Broadcasting Act where the national unity clause has been changed to national identity. We cannot assume, however, that this change means that all Canadians recognize the "repressive potential" of

broadcasting when viewed as a national policy instrument. This occurs when broadcasting policy in Canada has been made to serve the shifting political agenda of the state. One example is the need for national unity in the face of perceived threats of external or internal adversity, such as occurred during World War II and the FLQ Crisis, during which the CBC was closely integrated to the Canadian government's war effort (Raboy 1990, xii-xiii). The answer, outlines Raboy is that the state may mediate but not control, and the only way to achieve this is through more public participation and controls.

To reframe the fundamental issues in Canadian broadcasting in terms of democratization rather than national interest Raboy calls for: (1) a less centralized and less commercial CBC; (2) grassroots, autonomous or community media; (3) access to media; and (4) as for our "cultural sovereignty" we must go beyond "national" or "Canadian" to reflect our multiculturalism (1990, 355-56). An historic failure to do so has lead to broadcasting as an instrument of state policy.

The current rethinking and repositioning of the role of the state and the subsequent trend towards privatization and deregulation has resulted in change. For Raboy, this is reflected in the rationale of Canada's cultural policy in the 1960s and 1970s which was political, and in the 1980s which was economic. In spite of such changes, broadcast consultant Tim Creery outlines how the new 1991 Broadcasting Act increases state cultural control in Canada in four significant ways (linking culture to polity in ways unforseen by Collins): (1) becoming technologically all-inclusive, the Act extends the definition of broadcasting, placing a wider range of culture under the regulation and supervision of the CRTC; (2) the prescriptives of the legislation, laying down the objectives of broadcasting, is more detailed and demanding; (3) the Act equips the CRTC with a kind of punitive taxing authority, allowing it to force its programming will over broadcasters; and (4) the existing government has the broad authority to issue policy directives to the CRTC, ending the arm's length relationship between the two, and jeopardizing the integrity and independence of the CRTC (1990, 15).

The new broadcasting act, argues Creery, "represents a consensus of special interests, brokered by the politicians, who have plenty of reasons to seek the favour of

the media and avoid their disfavour. The legislation is largely designed by cultural bureaucrats, with an eye to expanding their jurisdiction and administrative role" (1990, 15). Simply stated, the cultural industries want employment, licence-holders want protection against competition, over-the-air broadcasters want protection against cable, and cable companies want their profitable cable monopolies safeguarded from the phone companies and direct-to-home satellites. Thus, the CRTC, through its control over licensing, programming, advertising, and the introduction of new services based on innovative technology, is accused of being a powerful protector of the favoured (Creery 1990, 15).

John Fiske supports Creery's claim, reminding us "that attempts to produce or defend a national culture, whether by a national broadcasting system or other means, have historically been dominated by middle-class tastes and definitions of both nation and culture, and have shown remarkably little understanding of popular pleasures or popular tastes" (1987, 324). Many critics implicate Canadian content regulations in this complicity, believing the Cancon edit is imposed not to "preserve Canadian culture" but to safeguard jobs. While Creery is against the centralizing authority of the CRTC, we must ask ourselves what would happen if we removed these safeguards? This option will be examined in chapter six.

Raboy condemns the fact that within the broadcasting system, social and cultural aspects have been unfailingly subordinated to economic and political interests. He does so by illustrating how the idea of public broadcasting was actually appropriated, and thus perverted, by particular interests, including CBC managers, the Canadian state, the CRTC, and Toronto nationalists.

To combat this, nationalists argue that the CRTC must act independently of a government geared towards privatization and deregulation. While favouring costs, efficiency, and the profit-motivated private industry, it should do so within the guidelines established by Parliament; pursuing cultural rather than industrial objectives. Meanwhile, there is an additional problem in defining and interpreting the notion of "public" or public interest as Canada is made up of divergent, multicultural and multiracial publics. This situation has created a crisis whereby the public sector has become increasingly marginalized and reduced in function and importance (Raboy

1990, 267). And while criticism has fallen upon the CRTC for redefining the public in consumer terms, another problem lies in the notion of public which is aligned with the hierarchal, bureaucratic notion of the state. The response to all of this, demands Raboy, is the turning towards community and alternative media.

Raboy's notion of the public originates from renowned social theorist Jurgen Habermas' notion of the public sphere.[14] Habermas' public sphere is a realm in which individuals gather to deliberate on issues of public concern. Potentially everyone has access to it and no one enters into discourse in the public sphere with an advantage over another. Therefore, the principles of social equality and complete accessibility are indispensable ingredients.

In "Media and the Public Sphere" (1986), Nicholas Garnham exposes the fallacy of democratic participation in Habermas' public sphere by explaining that "all" citizens were really "all white bourgeois males." Indeed, early bourgeois public spheres were composed of narrow segments of the European population, mainly educated, propertied men, conducting a discourse exclusive of others. Another limitation in Habermas' account of the public sphere is its tendency to separate public discourse from questions of power and interest. Garnham sees public service broadcasting embodying the same principles as the public sphere.

Raboy is an idealist and thus very trusting in democracy. Garnham is more cynical, not believing in the democratic potential of the mass media. Contrary to Raboy, Garnham sees democratic participation as a fallacy, hindered by racial and gender discrimination. What is more, although Raboy discusses concrete examples of what he considers to be democratic alternatives to state broadcasting, such as Northern native broadcasting, community radio, and grassroots groups active in policy intervention, he does not address in any depth who will pay for such services and who will make the decisions.

From Raboy's viewpoint, the notion of showing Canada to Canadians through national programming becomes an illusion as it masks the conflicts and possibilities of a truly democratic structure and places issues of economic control and institutional change on the backburner. Yet it is here that Raboy rejects the notion of a national public sphere too quickly. The potential of new communication technologies as a

form for democratic debate and discussion are vast (and will be dealt with further in the concluding chapter), although for this debate to be genuine there must be direct access to public channels by diverse publics, not just media experts and hacks. Furthermore, it becomes difficult to discern where Raboy's recommendations can be directly applied to drama or the pooling of resources necessary for high quality drama. Thus, the method of attaining this knowledge should be our foremost concern.

What is certain, however, is that the intervention of the Canadian state into broadcasting has attempted to ensure the adherence to two principle goals: that there exists a separate Canadian broadcasting system which is owned and controlled by Canadians; and that Canadian broadcasters provide an adequate range of Canadian programs. And both broadcasting policy and Canadian programming are necessary to achieve this.

The CRTC itself acknowledges that while quantitative criteria alone are not sufficient to achieve the goals for Canadian programming, the use of the regulations is a central and essential ingredient in setting objectives for broadcasting, and in translating those objectives into specific requirements to which broadcasters must conform. They are essential to ensure that all television broadcasters provide a programming schedule that is sufficiently (if not predominantly) Canadian. Moreover, "regulation, though imperfect in its achievement of cultural goals, established profitable cable and broadcasting industries, retaining jobs and wealth in Canada that would otherwise have been decanted south of the border" (Collins 1990, 336). This is a weaker point, however, as it serves the monopoly.

Broadcast regulations can help redress the balance between foreign and indigenous programming on Canadian airwaves. But regulation, of and by itself, will not wholly suffice. Instead, policies must be combined with the process of democratization outlined by Raboy. Canada is racked with uncertainty about its constitutional and political future, and "the people of Canada must have a say in what kind of country will survive the present cultural, economic and constitutional crisis" (Harcourt 1991, 30). Canadians must ask themselves if they share a concern for a vital broadcasting system which feeds back a wide variety of symbolic mediations of Canadian experiences and perceptions of the world. It is through these steps that our

broadcasting system is to become more Canadian than American and the goals of the Broadcasting Act are to be met.

"Culture is more cogently conceived," Tony Bennett affirms, "when thought of as a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which the forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation" (1992, 26). Is this notion of culture as a form of government desirable in the Canadian context? Bennett recognizes, and here I acquiesce, that societies on the wrong end of colonial or imperialist relationships have more urgent needs for culture to be a sphere of policy than do dominant powers (1992, 36).

One Canadian citizen notes, "Canada, more now than ever, appears to be a nation without a clear sense of itself, a patchwork quilt of different religions and cultural and ethnic groups, groping for ties that can bind it together" (Diakiw 1991, 1). It is the problematic notion of the Canadian identity that we now turn to in the next chapter.

4

CULTURAL PRODUCTS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

> It is a peculiar anthropological puzzle that Canadian's
> don't know who they are, although they have been trying
> to find out, by introspection, almost from the beginning
> of their history. Not that they suffer from a lack of
> imagination. The search for Canadian identity, and for a
> definition of Canadian nationalism, has gone on for so
> long, and is so gloriously rich in idiosyncrasy, that it
> constitutes one of the wonders of the world
> (Hardin 1974, 2-3).

Canadian filmaker Atom Egoyan remarked that Canadians are often uncomfortable watching images of themselves. His films ask the viewers to take chances and to embrace the sense of discomfort they create, which he claims is a lofty demand for a culture that is still unsure of how to perceive itself.

> There is something very Canadian about my characters.
> It's difficult for me to articulate what it is. But I think
> it's that the characters are so tentative when it comes to
> their own personas, that there's something so self-
> conscious about them, that they don't assert themselves
> and never quite feel that they have a right to be where
> they are (qtd. in Harris 1991, 17).

Much has been written, and even more said, about what constitutes the quintessential Canadian. Canadians are constantly brooding over who they are and what makes them different from other human beings, other countries. "The Canadian identity - the phrase is both a chimera and an oxymoron - is full of odd conjunctions, split visions, and unresolved tensions" (Kilbourn 1988, 1). Artists to academics have grappled with this amorphous entity.

It would appear, just by virtue of being a nation, with our own citizenship, territory, government, flag, and other symbols such as the maple leaf, beaver, mountie and even CBC's Hockey Night in Canada, we unavoidably have some identity as

Canadians. Yet in Canada we do not take a strong sense of national identity for granted. Historically, Canadian identity was not forged in revolution and consequently has never been held as an overriding ideal (Elkin 1983, 147).

To experience the Canadian identity implies at least a concern with some things considered Canadian, and may imply complete absorption in Canadian institutions and Canadian problems. For most Canadians it might include a concern with federal government policies or leading political figures; an awareness of problems associated with Quebec and the native peoples; a familiarity with a unique history and geography; an enjoyment of the popular culture associated with Canadian entertainers, such as Anne Murray or Karen Kain; the celebration of distinctive holidays; or an interest in Canadian participation in international and professional sports such as hockey and baseball (Elkin 1983, 148). In spite of all the words expounded, th.s view seems merely conglomerative, somewhat oversimplified. One might ask: is there any unifying principle to the conventional list of Canadian attributes?

In this chapter, I will focus on previous attempts to analyze cultural products in terms of national identity. I will begin by defining the term national identity. In such a task, I am not trying to predict Canada's political future or the thrust broadcast policy should take. While views on the Canadian identity expressed by such eloquent authors as Margaret Atwood and Northrop Frye and academics ranging from postmodernist Linda Hutcheon to Cancon aficionado Michael Dorland all have a compelling truth to them, they are unduly difficult to translate into policy. Instead, television drama is addressed as one type of symbolic form of the Canadian experience. There are many different factors and forces in play, and mine is only an attempt to provide a space for this particular type of programming for which there is clearly a shortage.

DEFINING NATIONAL IDENTITY

Nationalism is commonly described as "(1) The feeling of belonging to a group united by common racial, linguistic and historical ties, and usually identified with a particular territory. (2) A corresponding ideology which exalts the nation state as the

ideal form of political organization with an overriding claim on the loyalty of its citizens" (Bullock and Stallybrass 1988, 559). This ideology assumes that individuals can protect their interests and feel at home only through (relatively) autonomous, economically self-sufficient and culturally homogenous political units (Collins 1990, 11).

Nationalism is under pressure as the world economy becomes more integrated and interdependent and the economic self-sufficiency of nation-states is less and less easy to sustain and cultural identities become more transnational (Collins 1990, 107). As a land of two languages, pluralized politics, and ethnic multiplicity, Canada is still contained within one distinctive frame as a nation-state. Yet to the extent that Canada has no language, ethnicity, or history shared by all its citizens, it does not meet the conventional requirements of a nation-state. Moreover, separatist feelings have emerged in part because every part of Canada is separated geographically: B.C. from the Prairies by the Rockies, the Prairies from the Canadas by the immense hinterland of northern Ontario, Quebec from the Maritimes by the upward thrust of Maine, the Maritimes from Newfoundland by the sea, and finally the silent north, full of vast rivers, lakes and islands that very few Canadians have seen (Frye qtd. in Webster 1977, 1). In this sense, the contemporary Canadian identity is not a national development, but a series of regional ones; what is happening in British Columbia is very different from what is happening in New Brunswick or Ontario.

For some then, Canada's official identity of multiculturalism and bilingualism mark it as abhorrent in nationalist terms (Collins 1990, 19-20). According to Collins, nationalism, and thus the national interest, are based on a centralized vision of Canada, a federal strategy for maintaining Canada as a political entity distinct from the U.S., and internally unified against the centrifugal pull of the regions, specifically Quebec.

In her classic manifesto Who's Afraid of Canadian Culture (1973), Susan Crean views our regionalized national identity as something positive:

Canada must resist European and American concepts of
national culture being a single, unified entity, because it
obviously does not fit our heterogeneous and highly
regionalized "national" culture. All too often, those who
have set out in search of the Canadian identity have been
looking for something that does not exist: Canadian
culture as it would be if Canada were the centre of an
empire. We have, as Canadians and as a culture, a
sensitivity to differences and regions that few other
societies have. Far from being a defect or a constraint,
this is a civilized cultural habit and an asset that could
become a great liberating force (277-78).

What is more, Goldman and Emke (1991) relate the recognition of the

significance of regional divisiveness to the accommodating and compromising nature

of the Canadian national character (135).

Ramsay Cook once said: "perhaps instead of constantly deploring our lack of

identity we should attempt to understand and explain the regional, ethnic and class

identities that we do have. It might just be that it is in these limited identities that

"Canadianism" is found" (qtd. in Careless 1967, 1).

Following Cook, J.M. Careless talks about the Canadian tendency to treat

people as groups and communities rather than as individuals and citizens.

Urbanization, twentieth century immigration and the recent development of the ethnic

mosaic have all lead towards a strong identification with regions or provinces

delineated by geography, economics, and history (Careless 1967, 4-6). One can

identify the west coast culture of Vancouver, for example, far more explicitly than the

traits of national culture; just as one can more easily depict an Albertan or a Maritime

than a Canadian (Careless 1967, 9). Careless contends that the distinctive nature of

much of Canadian experience has produced a continent-wide entity identifiable in its

very pluralism, constraints and compromises. And the result may be that each of

them, in whatever varying degree, could exhibit something common, to be called

Canadianism, as they viewed the whole country from their own regional, ethnic or

class position, seeing it largely in their own perspective but accepting its limitations

and need of continual adjustment, while also feeding the shared benefits it provided

(Careless 1967, 9-10).

Indeed, "endless words have been spent on the 'problem' - the correct term should be 'asset' - of regionalism in this country. When regionalism at its most xenophobic is not tearing at the national fabric, it is one of the major strengths of a nation not yet fully mature in a cultural sense" (Miller 1988, 325). To validate her argument, Mary Jane Miller chronicles the dramatic televisual successes in various regions of Canada, such as Anne of Green Gables and its predecessor Road to Avonlea set on Price Edward Island.

It would therefore make the most sense to define the Canadian identity as a plural phenomenon contained within a broad, abstract political-national container.

In his article "What Does Canada Want? Or L'histoire Sans Leçon'," Jean-Pierre Desaulniers astutely observed that: "in terms of nationality a person is either Canadian or not, but culturally one may be Canadian in varying degrees" (1987, 151). Desaulniers makes the important distinction between national identity and national *cultural* identity, "the hazy, ambiguous, portmanteau concept, which depending on the context, may denote a specific lifestyle, characteristic forms of artistic expression or a sort of national collective personality" (1987, 151). The cultural identity of a group then, becomes a highly chaotic mixture of similarities and contrasts, impossible to synthesize in a single expression. In these terms, culture is "a concept which is almost as difficult to grasp as the Freudian unconscious. And it is a real pitfall for those who want to use it for political ends, for those who want to flourish it as a national banner. This notion will always be as elusive as sand trickling through one's fingers" (Desaulniers 1987, 152). How Canadians have learnt to deal with their multiple identities will be discussed later on in this chapter through the postmodern works of Linda Hutcheon.

LITERATURE

Northrop Frye's The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (1971), is a retrospective collection of his writings on Canadian culture, dealing mainly with poetry. Despite diversity of tone, mood, attitude, technique and setting found in modern Canadian poems or stories, Frye found a certain unity of impression: "an

impression of gentleness and reasonableness, seldom difficult or greatly daring in its imaginative flightiness, the passion, whether of love or anger, held in check by something meditative" (1971, 247). Frye is best known, however, for his identification of the "garrison mentality" as distinctive to the Canadian identity.

A garrison is a closed, beleaguered society, and to have such a mentality is to possess a paradoxical curiosity about and defensiveness towards the menacing, formidable outside world, as well as an enduring preoccupation with the question "Where is here?" Frye is speaking of Canada as an unknown territory for the people who live in it; about Canada as a state of mind, as the space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head. It is that kind of space in which we find ourselves lost. There is no "Canadian way of life," no "hundred percent Canadian;" as a result Canadians lack a certain self-confidence. This lack of self-confidence is central to the formulation of the garrison mentality.

Commenting on Frye, Jamie Dopp discloses how definitions of culture always take place within a context of struggle. Certain interests, therefore, are inevitably served by particular cultural definitions or by particular interpretations or definitions. From one point of view the "garrison mentality" is a natural consequence of the harsh environment faced by early Canadian settlers; from another it is a way of rationalizing acts of imperial aggression committed by the European powers (1992, 39).

Like Frye, Margaret Atwood has argued that geography affects culture and culture forms our national consciousness. In her thematic guide to Canadian literature, titled Survival, Atwood begins by asking: "What have been the central preoccupations of our poetry and fiction?" Her answer is twofold: "survival and victims."

For early explorers and settlers, survival meant bare survival in the face of inhospitable elements and/or natives. The word survival can also suggest survival of a crisis or disaster, like a hurricane or a wreck. For French Canada, after the English took over, it became cultural survival, hanging on as a people, retaining a religion and a language under an alien government. And in English Canada, under the domination of the Americans, survival is acquiring a similar meaning (Atwood 1972, 32). But the main idea surveyed throughout Atwood' book is the first one, staying alive: "our stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back,

from the awful experience - the North, the snowstorm, the sinking ship - that killed everyone else. The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his survival; he has little after his ordeal that he did not have before, except gratitude for having escaped with his life" (Atwood 1972, 33). This she acquiesces, generates intolerable anxiety.

Atwood admits that it is a fairly tough tradition to be saddled with, to have to come to terms with. At the same time, she sees in the tradition ways of divergence, room for growth, change and alteration, transcending the negativity. In her study she found books that explore the tradition further, unearth all its implications and play variations on it and even departures from it, "which will gain their impact from their measurement against the basic ground of the main tradition" (Atwood 1972, 241-42).

In The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Langscape (1985), Gaile McGregor documents a definition of Canadian culture advanced earlier by Frye and Atwood: a sense of nature as obstacle.[15] For McGregor, the Canadian consciousness equals Canadian landscape. The Canadian landscape is alien, unpenetrable and overwhelming, emitting a sense of isolation, vulnerability and entrapment.[16] It represents a world which denies us entry or which we chose to exclude ourselves. Moreover, McGregor recognises the Canadian symbolic ego as feminine in temperament and function: emotional, passive, vulnerable and inward-looking.

These authors have argued, through an historical reading of Canadian literature, that Canada has a distinctive common culture. For them the Canadian experience is one of the unyielding harshness of nature, and the standard response is to turn inwards, back to the garrison.

Collins problematizes such assumptions by explaining that McGregor does not attempt to show how her examples embody a culture, are transmitted and appropriated by the Canadian public (1990, 257). Collins questions, "how far the historical experience of adversity - intimidating space, poor land, and brutal climate - is present and a dominant element in the lives of highly urbanized and prosperous twentieth-century Canadians. Surely the successful passage of Canada into modernity has marginalized these factors in the lives of the majority of Canadian citizens?" (1990,

258). But, as Atwood points out, external obstacles such as the land, the climate and so forth were dealt with largely by earlier writers in that in later writers the obstacles tend to become both harder to identify and more internal: "they are no longer obstacles to physical survival but obstacles to what we may call spiritual survival, to life as anything more than a minimally human being" (1972, 33).

FILM

Seth Feldman's argument in "The Silent Subject in English Canadian Film" is similar to that of Atwood and McGregor but for film. For Feldman, because English Canada is a nation (and a bilingual and multicultural nation is a contradiction in terms) it must have a distinctive language and culture. The core of Feldman's argument is that English Canada lacks a cinematic (and cultural) language in which to express and rework its experience, because its language of thought is borrowed from the dominant metropoles of London and New York (Collins 1990, 288). The problem for Feldman is that Canada lacks the core distinguishing characteristic of a nation - its own language. Accordingly, Feldman argues that silence and incoherence are the only authentically Canadian voices, for to speak is to use the tongue of foreigners (qtd. in Collins 1990, 289). Consequently, the garrison mentality, silence, the victim and the tendency to represent reality as "grey" and problematic is manifested in numerous Canadian cultural productions.

TECHNOLOGY

Perhaps it is better to understand the Canadian national identity as neither the American way nor the European way, as does Feldman and others, but as an oppositional culture enmeshed between economy and history:

> This is to say that the Canadian mind is that
> in-between: a restless oscillation between the pragmatic
> will to live at all costs of the Americans and a searing
> lament for that which has been suppressed by the
> modern, technical order. The essence of the Canadian
> intellectual condition is this: it is our fate by virtue of
> historical circumstance and geographical accident to be
> forever marginal to the "present-mindedness" of
> American culture ... and to be incapable of being more
> than ambivalent on the cultural legacy of our European
> past (Kroker 1984, 7-8).

In his text Technology and the Canadian Mind (1984), Arthur Kroker identifies

the interaction of technology in the Canadian identity through Canadian artisans such

as songwriter Bruce Cockburn, the paintings of Alex Colville, and architecture such as

the CN Tower in Toronto. For Kroker, these works reveal the nihilism, anxiety,

seductiveness and ambivalence of life in the "technological sensorium" (1984, 10).

But whether viewed from the side of domination or seduction, the lesson is the same:

the Canadian identity is, and always has been, fully integral to the question of

technology.

Canadian author B.W. Powe agrees with Kroker, claiming that Canada is the

world's first "post-national" state, a country held together by the power of

communication (1993, B1). In fact, the only way we can live in this country is

through advanced technologies of communication. The communication fact makes our

country a place of multiple voices, not one voice. Moreover, attempting to define as

disparate a country as Canada, across five and a half time zones and enormous land

space, has made us experts in the art and technology of communication, and the

obvious model for an increasingly wired world (Powe, 1993, B1). However it is

precisely this restless communication field, argues Powe, which makes Canada

difficult to define. The paradox is that these technologies do not formulate a singular

identity for any one person. "It may be that we know that the anonymous Canadian,

who lives in a place where communication links are a matter of air and vibrations and

crossed wires, has no need for a static identity" (Powe 1993, B7).

TELEVISION

Television drama, although widely regarded as a crucial element in the formation and maintenance of a Canadian identity, is a particularly problematic type of television programming to Canadianize. "A Canadian national culture and the representation of Canadian experience require more than for cultural products to be labelled 'Fait du Canada' (Made in Canada)" (Collins 1990, 255).

In his study on CBC television drama, Paul Rutherford argues that the anglophone CBC did in fact fashion a particular brand of popular drama, quite unlike the Hollywood genres, because it was based upon a documentary tradition that went back to John Grierson and the early days of the National Film Board (1990, 383). It was a focus on "real-life situations," a tradition of "telling it like it is" outlined by Morris Wolfe in Jolts which lies at the core of made-in-Canada productions, both for cinema and television.

Drama historian Mary Jane Miller has cited a number of attributes of CBC drama that grew out of the techniques of making documentaries: the anthology imprint, a taste for irony, open narratives or unresolved emotional conflicts, lots of subtext, literate dialogue, allusions to the actual society, and a kind of gritty realism. For television critic Rick Salutin, this documentary style is "the curse of Canadian culture" (qtd. in Miller 1987, 375). He concludes that:

> We are already detached from our own experience. Far from being
> over-involved and over-identified, we hardly see enough of our own
> experience to recognize it. And what we do get is very often in the
> detached documentary way. In this situation, not more but less
> detachment may be called for. A kind of anti-alienation effect may be
> on the agenda for Canadian culture at this point (qtd. in Miller 1987,
> 376).

But there are problems with this thesis, as it is hard to make a strong case for a distinctive tradition of drama when there are so few examples to fit the mould. A documentary thrust may seem typical simply because so little of other kinds, notably the more emotion-laden action/adventure or social melodrama, was produced by the CBC (Rutherford 1990, 383-84). It is also possible to find American series and

British productions that might also be counted as instances of a documentary drama which include continuing conflict, irony or satire, a social conscience, even ambiguity and incongruity (Miller 1987, 376).

While human misery, defeat and victimization are an important and long-lived tradition in Canadian representation, historical analyses such as those done by Feldman and Atwood are insufficient to characterize the range and diversity of expression in Canadian TV drama. What is more, "they produce normative definitions of English-Canadian culture as distinguished by silence, absence, victimization or femininity, definitions that do not deliver the goods desired by cultural nationalists whose project requires a robust and positive national self-image" (Collins 1990, 224). Fortunately, the documentary mode, the absent centre, the motifs of survival, the humiliated hero and the victim, "do not exhaust the Canadian representational lexicon" (Collins 1990, 325).

A host of exceptions can be found to definitions designating the Canadian style as documentary and Canadian content as misérabilists. Discovering "Where is here?" is not the only task for Canadian TV drama and a misérabilist representation is not the only response to the question (Collins 1990, 295). Film and television critics Piers Handling, Peter Harcourt, Bruce Elder and Michael Dorland are among those who have been working to promote the creation of images of Canadian experience in which a positive identity can be found.

Richard Collins outlines a number of Canadian cinema and television dramas, which both support and challenge notions such as the "garrison mentality." For example, CBC's single-drama Chautauqua Girl (1984).

> *Chautauqua Girl* constructs an arcadian myth of the
> Canadian rural community and of the community's ability
> to take command of its own destiny and achieve an
> individual and collective fulfilment commensurate with
> the potentiality signified by marvellous landscapes of
> golden summer barley stretching across a gentle
> landscape to the Rockies (Collins 1990, 285).

The drama also fosters an interpretation of history and the national experience that is uncontradictory, untroubled by adversity, nostalgic and affirmative (Collins 1990, 287).

In Turn Up The Contrast: CBC Television Drama Since 1952 (1987), Mary Jane Miller demonstrates that Canadians may find their identity not in facts, but in fiction. She further recognizes that identity can be both plural and contradictory and that television drama in Canada can be distinctive and not merely imitative. Miller argues that despite the bombardment from the American networks, distinctive Canadian television has broken through. Answering Northrop Frye's "Where is Here?", Miller says that television drama, from its beginnings, "has been one of the few elements in Canadian life that marked our southern border, distinguishing "here" from "there" (1988, 3). Although she professes that the Canadian identity is not to be found in definitions or generalizations, she nonetheless is guilty of making some of her own through her many observations of CBC television drama. A sampling of the themes that she has found to reappear are: (1) the difference as well as the dignity of being Indian, or Métis; (2) a sense of the separate identities that divide us into urban and rural, East and West, Maritime and inlander; (3) apolitical in the formal or self-conscious sense; (4) populist, nationalist, with a thrust for social change; (5) to emphasize that, as a culture, we make it by persistence or luck rather than vision; (6) ambivalence about authority and authority figures yet we acquiesce to them (1988, 377-78). Others themes discovered by Miller will be discussed in relation to E.N.G. in chapter five.

Paul Rutherford's When Television Was Young: Primetime Canada 1952-1967, is another study which examines CBC television drama, focusing on the so-called golden age of TV, the era before the arrival of colour and cable. While the focus of Rutherford's study is not on the distinctive characteristics of Canadian television programming, his discussion of individual programs does just that, as in the popular comedy series Wayne and Schuster:

> It's tempting to find something very Canadian about the
> comedy of Wayne and Schuster. Their satire was good-
> natured ... because a sunny disposition seemed to suit a
> land like Canada where the problems were more
> mundane, the social climate more calm. The particular
> targets Wayne and Schuster selected were all products of
> imported culture, whether from the High Arts or
> Hollywood - was that an expression of the hidden
> resentments of a rather satisfied colony? The underlying
> theme, the mockery of pretension, suited one perception
> of the national character that portrayed Canadians as a
> retiring, practical, unassuming people whom geography
> had forced to live next to the arrogant Americans (1990,
> 226).

Despite the over-generalization and overly self-critical nature of Rutherford's

review of Wayne and Schuster, the theme of the Canadian character as unassuming

and self-effacing is well known.

CANADIAN *RESSENTIMENT*

The theme of *ressentiment* touched upon by Rutherford's analysis of Wayne

and Schuster is examined more fully by Michael Dorland, in an article titled: "A

Thoroughly Hidden Country: *Ressentiment*, Canadian Nationalism, Canadian

Culture".[17] Dorland discusses how the theme of *ressentiment* has been neglected

in the critical literature on Canadian culture (1988, 130). This *ressentiment*, the

inability to change the past, and now the present, and the future under

Americanization, constitutes a dominant theme in Canadian political and cultural

practices. Whether it is found in official (government and press) intellectual

(academic) or cultural (literary and artistic) realms, its precondition is silence and

denial (Dorland 1988, 134). For Dorland, the cultural implications of *ressentiment*

in Canadian discourse are the result of the absence, in Canadian experience, of any

kind of revolutionary (or merely combinatory) disruption (of isolation) resulting in a

culture that is either under the control of the state, marginalized, fragmentary, non-

existent, or imported (1988, 138).

This *ressentiment* (or resentment) can also be linked to Canadians historically being defined by others. Pierre Berton's Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization of our National Image, examines the plots of close to six hundred Hollywood movies made between 1907 and 1975 about Canada. If Canadians (and consequently foreigners) have no sense of their own identity, Berton maintains, it is partly because American moviemakers have distorted and blurred that identity. In these films, Canada is routinely portrayed "as a land of snowswept forests and mountains, devoid of large cities and peopled by happy-go-lucky French-Canadians, wicked half-breeds, wild trappers and loggers, savage Indians and, above all, grim-jawed Mounties" (1975 front flap).

Similarly, in her review of international literature on Canada, Margaret Atwood found Canada to be presented as "a place you escape to from 'civilization,' an unspoiled, uncorrupted place imagined as empty or thought of as populated by happy archaic peasants or YMCA instructors, quaint or dull or both" (1972, 16).

CANADA AS A POSTMODERN ENTITY

Leading Canadian postmodern theorist Linda Hutcheon combines her work on contemporary Canadian literature and art with the notion of identity as a plural phenomenon, creating a model example of the Canadian identity. The premise of her work in Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Culture (1991) is as follows:

> Instead of lamenting our state and status as Canadians in
> search of an identity, instead of bewailing our fate in the
> name of some sort of a collective cultural inferiority
> complex, what if we made a virtue out of our fence-
> sitting, bet-hedging sense of the difficult doubleness of
> being Canadian yet North American, of being Canadian
> yet part of a multinational, global political economy?
> That virtue's name may well be irony (vii).

Postmodern irony, contends Hutcheon, has been one of the ways English Canadians have chosen to articulate their problematic identities, to negotiate the many dualities and multiplicities that have come to define this nation (1991, 39).[18] "Irony is the great escape hatch of Canadian culture;" posits Rick Salutin, "we use it to avoid

looking foolish, feeling disappointed, or being embarrassed" (1993, D1). The focus of Hutcheon's work is on how and why that ironic sense shows up in contemporary Canadian literature and art.[19] All communicational codes, asserts Hutcheon, especially language, are ambiguous, doubled, even duplicitous (1991, 10). Irony - even in the simplest sense of saying one thing and meaning another - becomes a mode of speech (in any medium) that allows speakers to address and at the same time slyly to confront an "official" discourse: that is, to work *within* a dominant tradition but also to challenge it - without being utterly co-opted by it. As English Canada's dominant culture is still perceived as Euro- and Amero-centric, male, white, heterosexual, capitalist, and centrist (geographically and politically), irony has become one way of working within such prevailing discourses, while still finding a way to articulate doubts, insecurities, questionings, and perhaps even alternatives (Hutcheon 1991, 15). Accordingly, marginality tends to be "imaged" in terms of doubleness: centre/margin; voice/silence; visibility/invisibility; centre/region; majority/minority (female, ethnic, native, gay, disabled, etc.). In this sense, irony becomes an attractive way to turn doubleness in on itself to reveal hidden hierarchies and polarizations. Through irony, proclaims Hutcheon, we have learned to "speak" that contradictory, ambiguous "Canadian" (1991, 31).

The emphasis placed on the juxtaposition of oppositional discourses has become a distinguishing feature of postmodernism (Collins 1989, 137). Following the logic laid out by Jim Collins in his book Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-modernism, postmodernism is seen as a construct of the post-industrial, technologized society that recognizes the tensions resulting from a culture that has become "a multiplicity of competing signs" (Collins 1989, 22). According to Collins, culture is no longer unitary and fixed, but decentered and fragmentary, a reflection of conflicting voices. Many postmodern theorists argue that the combination of oppositional representations reflect an approach to organizing one's life experiences in an increasingly de centered culture and society. The ensuing competition among discourses is to clear and maintain a space for themselves within a competitive environment; to promote itself as a privileged mode of representing experience (Collins 1989, 36).

In Canada, avows Hutcheon, there is little that is not inherently doubled and therefore at least structurally ripe for ironizing. Its history offers many binary oppositions: native/colonial, federal/provincial, not to mention English/French (linguistic and cultural doubling). But the opposites, as Hutcheon points out, are more than historical. The geography of the country sets up others: east/west, empty northern tundra/dense southern urbanization. And the climate sets up still more: balmy British Columbian and frigid Newfoundland winters. And finally politics: federal/provincial, House/Senate (Hutcheon 1991, 15-16). The postmodern tries to rethink these binary opposition completely in terms of the multiple, the plural, and the heterogeneous: "and/also" thinking replaces "either/or" (Hutcheon 1991, 15-16).

Other examples of inherent doubleness in Canada would be its identity as a bilingual yet *multi*cultural nation. As a multicultural nation, there is yet another set of oppositions. Because Canada is a country of immigration, at least for a time, all the non-native inhabitants have felt dual allegiances. Yet perhaps the greatest doubleness is the fact that English Canada shares a language with many other nations, two of which are particularly problematic: Britain, as a past political force, and the United States, as a current economic and cultural power. Where is the "Canadian" in this "English" asks Hutcheon? (1991, 16). Clearly then, "Canada's national reputation is one of negotiation and compromise: that doubleness able to see both sides at once" (Hutcheon 1991, 17).

In her chapter titled "The Canadian Mosaic: A Melting Pot on Ice: The Ironies of Ethnicity and Race," Hutcheon says the following:

> Multiculturalism maps differences - and legitimizes them
> through government support for things like academic
> literary and historical research and also the various ethic
> festivals and events held across the nation. But mapping
> differences can be a positive as well as negative thing; it
> can be a way both of celebrating those differences (while
> still remaining within Canadian culture) and of resisting
> assimilation. And I think that irony is one of the
> discursive strategies used by such marginalized and
> "minoritarian" artists to signal that resistance - perhaps
> even that celebration (1991, 48).

Is this then, multiculturalism, or cultural separatism? At this juncture, we might want to ask ourselves how far do we go as a country in encouraging and promoting cultural diversity? How far is far enough, how far is too far? Is there a point at which diversity begins to threaten social cohesion? Neil Bissoondath speaks of the diminishing value of Canadian citizen hip - "the creation of the hyphenated Canadian with divided loyalties, the perception that immigration policy now allows the rich to buy their way into the country and the ideas that citizenship is a natural right not an earned privilege all contribute to a lack of committal to Canada" (1993, A17).

Is full cultural sovereignty a meaningful project for a "postmodern" country like Canada? To what extent is it still going to be possible even in Europe, twenty years from now? In the end we are ` ft with a particularly postmodern dilemma: there are no complete answers, no universal solutions.

5

E.N.G. AND CANADIAN TELEVISION AUDIENCES

> The Canadian identity is not to be found in definitions or
> generalizations ... The Canadian identity is to be found in
> creating art, entertainment, popular culture, among many
> other activities, in Canada and for Canadians. It is also
> to be found in the responses of viewers to what they see
> and hear. Television, for good or ill, is the mass medium
> of this age. Like all cultures, we find our sense of self,
> not in facts, but in fiction, in the songs, plays and drama
> that express our view of the world (Miller 1987, 18).

A recurring dilemma in Canadian broadcasting is determining what is Canadian about a program in the first place. The CRTC has defined a Canadian television program according to a weighted statistical point system with many special provisions whereby points are allotted for key creative positions that are filled by Canadians.[20] This official version of what constitutes a Canadian television program is for television broadcast Canadian content regulations, as well as for taxation purposes and for production loans.[21]

While such a system addresses quantity, it does not directly address the question of quality; the result is that a great amount of programming qualifies technically as Canadian without there being much distinctively Canadian about it. The current definition is a purely technical one, and as Mary Vipond points out: "a program produced following these guidelines need not necessarily have any identifiably Canadian references or characteristics at all" (1989, 171).

Consequently, it has been argued that the Canadian government's interest in increasing the volume of television drama is misguided. As this is a quantitative interest, it denies attention to programs as specific cultural practices (Collins 1990, 210). To exacerbate this quandary, there have been few attempts at (qualitative) textual analyses. An overview of existing analyses (Dorland 1983, 1984a; Wolfe

1985; Miller 1987; Collins 1990; Rutherford 1990) reveals an overwhelming focus on CBC produced dramas. While "the absence of such studies may certainly call into question the nationalist policies based upon them (since they possess no empirical foundation)," it does not rule out the possibility of explicitly Canadian subjects or styles of representation (Attallah 1992, 226).[22]

This chapter will explore distinctively Canadian characteristics through an examination of indigenous television drama and touch upon how these characteristics are perceived by audiences. To accomplish this, I will examine the weekly, hour-long Canadian dramatic serial E.N.G.

E.N.G. - which stands for Electronic News Gathering, the technology of gathering TV news on videotape rather than on film - aired its two-hour pilot episode on October 26, 1989 on the Canadian Television Network (CTV). E.N.G. chronicles the personal and professional lives of the crew at a fictitious local TV newsroom.

The show is set in the newsroom of Channel 10, which is a major, independent station located in downtown Toronto. It is an ensemble series with multiple characters and plots. An assortment of personalities complete the cast: an obstinate news director, a dedicated executive producer, ambitious reporters who vie to get their stories on the air, editors, camera persons and egotistical anchors. E.N.G. is about the relationships between the characters as much as it is about the pressures of getting the news and getting the news to air.

Despite some initial trepidation, E.N.G. has won the praise of critics and audiences alike, both in Canada and internationally.[23] Completing its fourth season in the spring of 1993, E.N.G. has been lauded as one of the most successful shows in Canadian television history.[24] To date, the show has been sold to almost sixty countries, including England, Australia, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Singapore (Globe and Mail 1990, C1).[25] Its success is particularly noteworthy given that in its first season E.N.G. was up against L.A. Law (10-11 p.m.) and in subsequent seasons competed against Cheers (9-10 p.m.), two top-rated shows in the U.S.

"In most cases," notes CBC historian Mary Jane Miller on dramatic programming, "factors common to the marked successes are completely predictable: they start with superior scripts and have good production values, sensitive directors

and art directors, creative camera work and sound technicians, imaginative producers and writers, and rounded characters played by actors who find ways to display subtext, context, and nuance for the camera" (1987, 183). E.N.G. displays such qualities, confirmed by the numerous Gemini Awards bestowed upon the series, including best dramatic series for three consecutive years.[26] High production values are crucial as the disparity in production budgets between American and Canadian programming is customarily perceived as the main factor disposing Canadians to watch American television and Americans to decline to watch Canadian television (Collins 1990, 248).

But quality drama means healthy investment, not always readily available for Canadian product.[27] E.N.G. is produced by the independent production company Alliance Communications Corporation, in association with CTV, Glen-Warren Entertainment (a wholly owned subsidiary of Baton Broadcasting Incorporated) and Citadel Entertainment, and with financial assistance from Telefilm Canada, the Ontario Film Investment Program and the Maclean Hunter Television Fund. The involvement of so many is evidence of the continuing inability of producers to recoup the cost of production in Canada's small domestic market. "The series cannot possibly pay for itself by airing on CTV alone" remarked Drew Williams, Director of Marketing, CTV Entertainment Group (1993).[28] To accommodate this reality, the Canadian television industry has become increasingly reliant upon foreign partners. By co-producing with foreign companies and pre-selling them to foreign networks, the considerable cost of such productions can be alleviated. Unfortunately, pre-sales to a U.S. broadcaster (or cable network) often result in compromises in themes and settings. By attempting to imitate the American model, many Canadian programmers are trying to cash in on the success and popularity of American prime-time dramas, at the expense of cultivating their own identity. Consequently, many series produced in Canada for export in the United States have more American references than Canadian, taking a generic approach concerning location or flagrantly showing American mailboxes, licence plates, currency and flags.

Unlike its predecessor Night Heat - which was created by Alliance for CBS and carefully produced to look like an American cop show in a U.S. city - E.N.G. is full of Toronto sights and Canadian references. This is so partly because Alliance has

no American or other international partner to help pay the costs (approximately $1 million for every episode).[29] Because E.N.G. is completely independent of foreign financial support, it is therefore free to be "unapologetically Canadian" in setting, references, cast and crew (Hastlett Cuff 1990b, C1).[30] If the plot deals with the legal system, it is the Canadian legal system. Nationalism is not just a facade, with shots of Queen's Park and Toronto streetcars or tongue-in-cheek references to CTV, CBC and CRTC regulations. For instance, one episode centres on a doctor's undue haste to deliver a baby before legislation lowering provincial health care goes into effect. What makes something Canadian is shared perceptions.

Furthermore, as former E.N.G. producer Jeff King notes, "the whole notion that U.S. audiences won't watch Canadian programs is nonsense. The problem has more to do with ceding control" (qtd. in Hastlett Cuff 1991, C1). Here King is referring to the centralization of U.S. production in California. Despite concerns about the recession and shrinking network revenues, King believes that Canadians have the knowledge, the expertise, the writers and the access to buyers needed to do more work here: "as an industry, we have evolved to the point that Canada no longer has to be the junior partner on international co-productions - we can do it our way" (qtd. in Hastlett Cuff 1991, C1).

E.N.G. has been referred to as the most Canadian of large-scale TV drama series ever mounted by private TV. It is of great significance that the series is produced for the commercial network CTV. One Toronto publication commented that the show "is one of the first signs in years that CTV is capable of doing anything more creative than simulcasting The Cosby Show." (Knelman 1990, 23). For the public broadcaster, the CBC, the first priority has been to promote Canadian culture, while CTV's priority is making a profit. In the case of E.N.G. at least, it appears that the two goals are beginning to converge. Goaded by their federal regulator, the CRTC, prodded by increasingly demanding federal content regulation, and piqued by an expanding international market for TV, private broadcasters have begun to look to more ambitious drama. This was not always the case.

Since its formation in 1961, the CTV television network has been criticized as an effective and powerful catalyst in the Americanization of Canadian popular culture,

due to the preponderance of American programming on its prime-time schedule. On numerous occasions beginning in 1973 when the CRTC renewed its licence, the CTV network has been urged to develop more dramatic programming with Canadian themes, concerns and locales. In 1981 CTV lost an embittered appeal to the Supreme Court against a CRTC ruling which stated that its next licence renewal would depend in part upon an increase in Canadian drama and children's programming. However, this reproach "did not dim their resistance to produce Canadian TV drama" (Miller 1987, 12).

Williams blames Canadian content quotas for the creation of cheap Canadian programming which has given the industry a bad reputation. Even with conditions (upon license renewals) requiring broadcasters to spend money on "high quality" Canadian drama, there are no guarantees. For many years, CTV's sole contribution to Canadian drama was The Littlest Hobo (a clone of the earlier American show Lassie) featuring a German shepherd named Hobo. "Hobo is clearly the most intelligent being on the show," quips Morris Wolfe, "and he specializes in rescuing incredibly dumb humans (usually guest Americans) from one catastrophe after another" (1985, 65). The unfortunate outcome of this kind of programming, combined with the allocation of inadequate resources, has contributed to the low esteem enjoyed by Canadian programs (Meisel 1986, 257).

As Terence H. Qualter suggests in his article "Propaganda in Canadian Society" (1983), if the Canadian origin of a shoddy or unpopular program is emphasized, it will be counter-productive for other efforts of Canadian programmers, and may drive more viewers to watching American channels (184). "If a Canadian program is to succeed as Canadian," asserts Qualter, "it must first succeed simply as good television" (1983, 184).

Quebec cultural critic Jean-Pierre Desaulniers remarks that the true compromising of culture through commercialization does not come as much from the Americans as from native Canadians and others who systematically copy American products, "just adding a little local colour, but otherwise modifying them as little as possible" (1987, 155). The argument is that it is not the origin that is the problem, but the "tendency found everywhere to copy and to plagiarize, producing pallid, washed

out products which are valueless and completely devoid of all creativity" (Desaulniers 1987, 155-56).

This is a commonly held viewpoint, arguing that the effort to increase ratings and advertising sales has resulted in an "omnipresent American style of programming [that] has led to an almost complete homogenization of Canadian fictional production," "formulaic mediocrities" and "unimaginative sludge" (Hastlett Cuff 1990a, C1&3).

In marked contrast to this viewpoint, Mary Jane Miller testifies that the CBC's refusal to adopt "American" methods has lead to detrimental effects: "its appeal to popular taste was weakened, and the gap between Canadian television's Canadian output and the Canadian audiences' consumption of American programming widened" (qtd. in Collins 1990, 212).[31] E.N.G. successfully employs the American dramatic serial genre. While adopting an American genre format, the show manages to maintain a distinctive Canadian sensibility, thus contributing to the formation and maintenance of the Canadian identity. As I will show later in this chapter, too many have wrongly argued that trying to put Canadian content into American packaging is self-defeating. With high production values, E.N.G. is both stylish and entertaining while remaining Canadian.

TV newsrooms have been the settings of two exalted situation comedies, The Mary Tyler Moore Show (1970-77) and Murphy Brown (1988-) and two successful feature films, Network (1976) and Broadcast News (1987), all U.S. productions. In the fall of 1990, an American ensemble series serial about a local TV newsroom, titled WIOU was introduced to North American audiences. The CBS series was sensational, sarcastic and misanthropic. Cancelled after its first season, it was criticized as an inferior American clone of E.N.G., an uplifting role reversal for Canadian television broadcasters.

Television's fascination with the private lives of urban professionals did not begin with Hill Street Blues and L.A. Law, or the CBC's Street Legal, all of which explore relationships formed and pressures felt in a stress-filled professional environment.

In TV: The Most Popular Art (1974), Horace Newcomb identifies a popular subgenre derived from the television of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s called the

"The Professionals." A "professionals" television drama centred on the lives of doctors, lawyers, social workers, teachers, editors or reporters. In The Producer's Medium (1983), together with Robert S. Alley, Newcomb interviewed David Victor, an American television producer of Dr. Kildare (1961-66), Marcus Welby, M.D. (1968-76), Owen Marshall, Counselor at Law (1971-74), and Lucus Tanner (1974-75), all of them series Newcomb would categorize as "professionals."

Unrestricted by the rigidly defined codes of action-adventure formulas, in professionals series there is a feeling that problems will be resolved with emotional responses as much as with physical action (Newcomb and Alley 1983, 78). A contemporary setting which focuses on tense, life-crisis moments is employed. Dealing with a range of topical issues, the shows often act as lessons, inserting factual material. Societal problems are tackled and questions of responsibility raised.

Appropriately, E.N.G. has dealt with issues ranging from AIDS, teen gangs and toxic waste scandals, to sexual relations between developmentally challenged adults. In "Malicious Intent" (9/13/90), a truckers' strike tying up a major highway proved prescient when the following summer irate truckers blocked Highway 401 outside Toronto. In its fourth season, recessionary themes mirroring our present economic hardships resonated throughout the show. For example, in "Waves" (24/9/92) the news station itself feels the pinch of the recession when its owner contemplates selling the station. "Heart of the Matter" (12/11/92) concerns a woman who abandons her autistic child when the government program that helps support her is cut back while "The Big Squeeze" (19/11/92) is about an unsympathetic bank which calls in its line of credit on a struggling store owner.

Miller criticizes the conventions of the American professionals genre as "self-important, closeup-ridden, sentimentalized 'topical' television that offers condensed and oversimplified versions of life-and-death issues" (1987, 160). Victor admits to glorifying and idealizing the medical and legal professions, maintaining that the audience wants such assurance (Newcomb and Alley 1983, 79).

Miller found a collection of CBC series in the early 1970s to bear superficial resemblance to this genre: Wojeck (1966-68), Quentin Durgens, M.P. (1966-69), McQueen (1969-70), Corwin (1969-71) and The Manipulators (1970-71). Miller

discovered that good, usually successful Canadian versions of formula television, cop shows, sitcoms, family adventure series, or series about doctors and lawyers and parole officers are distinctively inflected (1987, 24). For instance, unlike its American counterparts, argues Miller, Canadian series challenge implicitly or explicitly deeper forms of society, irony replaces moral certitude, and open narratives, unresolved emotional conflicts or downbeat endings replace happy or poetically just endings (1987, 386).

For example, E.N.G.'s episode "All in the Blood" (1/2/1991), features Curtis, a young gay activist dying of AIDS. Curtis has set up a hospice for people with AIDS, only to see it vandalized. Executive producer Ann Hindlebrandt and news director Mike Fennel must decide whether to use Curtis in a nightly news feature. The research for the show was done at Casey House (a Toronto AIDS hospice) and the episode was deemed medically precise. Macho camera operator, Jake Antonelli, becomes the focal point of the story. When he is assigned to videotape Curtis there is animosity between the two men. Jake Antonelli's initial unease is gradually replaced with a growing sense of respect and affection for Curtis. His association with Curtis also exposes him to many of the prejudices people with AIDS are subject to. Antonelli empathizes with Curtis' ostracism as his own family and friends react with fear towards him because he has been in contact with the dying man. Curtis never asks for our sympathy; instead we feel anger and sorrow for the circumstances forced upon him. It is a courageous show, giving the viewer a bold, informative and compassionate story of people traumatized and dying of AIDS.

E.N.G.'s show on gun control, "Ripples In A Pond" (11/8/90) exposed negligent gun regulations and what Miller refers to as "an emphasis on the individual caught in social structures that, without particular malevolence, injure private rights" (1987, 377). A gun which had been illegally purchased by Ann Hindlebrandt was stolen from the newsroom and used in a shooting. Ann was arrested for illegally purchasing fire arms. She appeared in court and eloquently defended the right of journalists to point out the weaknesses in the system, the laws and their enforcement and was prepared to go to jail for her actions.

In "After the Fire" (10/09/92), troublesome questions are raised about the extent of institutionalized racism in Canadian society. In this episode, Jake Antonelli and reporter Dan Watson go on the beat with two local police officers. Antonelli and his camera follow one of the cops down an alley after a robbery suspect believed to be armed. The officer shoots the young black man to death. It turns out that the man was unarmed and the resultant news footage becomes part of a public-relations war between the police department and an outraged black community wondering if this incident would have occurred had the suspect been white. This episode plays on the fact that at one time Canadians could dismiss police brutality as a U.S. phenomenon - that is, until police officers started shooting unarmed blacks in Toronto and Montreal.

The show about AIDS pointed to the cruelty and insensitivity that AIDS victims must continually live with. The gun control episode made it clear that gun control regulations in Canada are inadequate. And the episode about racist police officers left no doubt that racial minorities in Canada have been badly treated by society and its law enforcement. With typical Canadian mannerisms, these shows question the underlying structure of our country through the use of down-beat endings and unresolved conflicts.

On many issues, E.N.G. takes a liberal, reforming stand, showing how large structural problems impinge on personal troubles. At the end of the show the personal issue involving a regular on the show will usually be resolved but the larger problem dealing with society is left unresolved. For instance, Ann Hindlebrandt was acquitted from her sentence for illegally purchasing a gun but the shooting victim is now paraplegic and gun regulations remain the same. Jake Antonelli visits the dying AIDS victim in the hospital, certain that this is the last time he will see the young man alive. Meanwhile, Channel 10 station owner Kyle Copeland and Mike Fennell overrule Hindlebrandt's decision to air the remaining footage on the story due to its controversial nature. In the American format viewers remain secure in their knowledge that, before the hour is up, justice will prevail (Miller 1987, 162). In the Canadian version emphasis remains on the difficult decisions people have to make for themselves, rather than the quick fix that so often characterizes the professionals genre (Miller 1987, 164).

Ethical dilemmas concerning journalism are central to each episode. Focusing on two "heavier" stories each episode allows for plotlines to evolve slowly over the course of the show, allowing a deeper insight into the story and the characters. While the show often takes on some tough ethical questions, it manages to mix such subjects with humour and romance.

In "Traitors All" (9/27/90), reporter Terry Morgan and camera operator Bobby Katz cover an emotional story of a graffiti covered synagogue. Throughout this sensitive portrayal of prejudice, Bobby discovers her roots as a jew. The curiosity, the questioning, the self-scrutiny of its characters, and their struggling over issues is very Canadian. Such explorations of multicultural roots and the cultural clashes between generations or between old and new immigrants are, of course, familiar Canadian themes.

In an episode titled "Line of Fire" (3/14/91) stubborn news director Mike Fennell fell under the wrath of employees and audiences when he decided to air footage of a suicide on the supper time news. Despite the condemnation, Mike stood by his decision while the employees at Channel 10 signed a petition. Jake Antonelli, angry that the footage was aired against his protests, temporarily quit his job. He felt that it was he who had incited the gunman to shoot another man before turning the gun on himself.

Canadian cultural analyst Gaile McGregor outlines how Canadians are extremely uncomfortable with acts of hubris, such as the one displayed by Jake Antonelli sneaking into a building where employees are held hostage by a crazed gunman who turns the gun upon himself (1991). Canadians do not like heroes due to the sceptical and ironic Canadian spirit (although they do not seem to mind importing them). While Americans want dramatic, macho, active heroes, Canadians look for grace under pressure and perseverance (Taylor 1993, C1). But because Jake Antonelli is punished by his guilt and Mike Fennel by his peers Canadians remain protected and distanced from the violence of the "outside" world.

Referring to Terry Fox, a high-school questionnaire once asked: "does it disturb you that the only truly national hero Canada has produced was maimed and dying?" Yet Jake Antonelli goes far beyond the classic Canadian feat: survival in spite of

adversity. Despite the reluctance to embrace Canadian-made heroes, the continuous antics of Jake Antonelli and his popularity amongst audiences may prove that what Miller refers to as "a heroic hunk of manhood" is at last developing on Canadian television (1987, 385).

E.N.G. attempts to keep the mechanics and ethical issues of news gathering integral to each episode. This focus on ethical dilemmas is one of the uniquely Canadian traits outlined by Miller. However, the essence of drama is conflict, and Canadians - historically and by temperament - tend to avoid conflict (McGregor 1991; Knelman 1987). It would seem then, that the issues being dealt with on the show challenge this convention.

Framing, however, is a common tool used on E.N.G. to combat our uneasiness toward aggression. This method strives to give the viewer the impression that what they are being told is the truth. It is most frequently used by showing the viewer the story through the lens of the TV camera. In distancing us from an often harsh and hostile reality, framing becomes a source of protection and empowerment for Canadian viewers. This technique is accomplished by journalists who are non-combatant, mediating figures. They mediate reality by recording events and attempting to remain objective observers. The opening sequence for the series - the contrast between still photos and video - is symbolic of objectivity (still photo) and subjectivity (video). In fact, the whole program revolves around framing and the interface between fact and fiction. It expresses well our anxiety about life and the management-strategies Canadians have designed to deal with it.

For example, in "Your Place or Mine" (11/9/89) shots of a toxic chemical spill are seen strictly through the camera lens, reassuring us subliminally that dangerous persons and events are contained. The use of innerfictions (a TV show within a TV show) evokes a positive implication of containment for Canadians, which explains why framing techniques are frequent.

Another distinctly Canadian trait outlined by Miller is how Canadian programs show us, "far more unsparingly and consistently than American television does, our sins of commission and even of omission" (1987, 378). It is not merely Canadians actors, the locale, and themes that express Canadianness, but the way that the

Canadian experience is structured and presented. An intangible and subtle Canadianness remains inherent in our dramas because unconsciously and unplanned, our sense of self in the world, of being Canadian, is expressed.

Another reappearing theme is ambivalent moral stances. In "A Tangled Web" (12/12/89), staunch reporter Dan Watson is covering a demonstration at an abortion clinic with Jake Antonelli. Jake Antonelli is devastated when he sees his ex-wife Martha entering the clinic. The intense feelings of both pro- and anti-abortion groups are brought to the forefront in this episode. In "Get A Life" (06/12/92) Mike Fennel's terminally ill best friend kills himself. In these episodes, there is no heavy-handed moralizing and the audiences are encouraged to make their own conclusions on the difficult issues presented. In a well-established Canadian manner, the story and the issue, rather than the star, are in the foreground (Miller 1987, 162).

Miller noted a positive trait in her research - an exceptional number of remarkably strong women (1987, 377). Likewise, the female characters portrayed on E.N.G. are strong, independent, articulate, and ambitious. Furthermore, they are consistently shown supporting each other. There is also a deemphasis on matrimonial solutions; the women are shown as reasonably happy and successful outside of marriage, depicting the wider range of possibilities offered to women today. For instance, both weather person turned news anchor Jane Oliver and editor Marge Atherton are depicted as dedicated and efficient single parents.

As executive producer of Channel 10, Ann Hindlebrandt is shrewd, controlled, guarded and tough while remaining glamorous. And she is the dominant figure in the series. She confidently relays orders, opinions and criticisms to the staff at Channel 10, who greatly admire and respect her. Ann is Jane Oliver's partner in prenatal lamaze classes. And it is Ann who fights hard to hire a female camera operator, a typically male domain, and supports Marge Atherton's fight for pay equity. Miller also recognizes that Canadian dramas tend to depict its protagonists "in several shades of irony and deprecation instead of the brilliant colours of crusaders, omniscient wise [wo]men, and flamboyant villains" (1987, 387). Ann Hindlebrandt is no exception, and not beyond reproach, as when she falsely accuses her then love interest of child abuse in "Pandora's Box" (14/1/93). Afraid to commit, Ann is largely dysfunctional

in her relationships with men, which began with a secret love affair with the younger camera operator, Jake Antonelli. She is continuously protecting herself, full of secrets and pain. In "The Best Defence" (12/2/92), we see both personal and professional stress finally take their toll on Ann as she begins therapy.

At the core of the professionals series is the interplay and emotional responses of believable central characters that the viewers can learn to care about. "It is not merely that we care about what happens to these characters," expounds Victor, "but that we care about their reactions as well. We are concerned with *their* interpretations, *their* responses, with the ways in which they put their emotional as well as well as their social, economic, political, or physical lives back together" (Newcomb and Alley 1983, 76).

The characters on E.N.G. are true individuals and their personalities are allowed time to develop. They are likeable and believable, developing in insight and sophistication. Importantly, the characters portrayed are complex, vulnerable and free to anguish over and learn from their mistakes. Problems are typically resolved in a characteristically Canadian manner; centred on cooperation, compromise, personal responsibility and humility. What is more, there is an emphasis on social harmony between people. Even the pushy, story grabbing reporter Terry Morgan and the witless anchor Seth Miller are fondly tolerated. This is what Miller refers to as the "pervasiveness of values of hard work" and "tolerances for differences among us" (1987, 377). Value is placed on communal, cooperative and collective activities and attitudes versus the value placed by Americans on heroism, isolated individuality and free-will. Priority is given to consensus and individuals are part of an extended network whereby it is their relationships with each other which demand our attention, not the individual actors. And although people have a responsibility to one another they are still allowed to be individuals, learning their limitations and when to accept help from others - very un-American (McGregor 1990).

The show offers viewers the type of clearly defined characters an audience can learn to care about. In addition to rounded characters and precisely detailed development of familiar characters, notes Miller, Canadian productions, as does E.N.G., tend to focus on secondary characters in addition to the principal ones.

Ann Hindlebrandt, Mike Fennel and Jake Antonelli are the main characters but plotlines frequently focus on the other members of Channel 10, especially news reporters Dan Watson and Terry Morgan (replaced in the fourth season by Kelly Longstreet) who vie for the choice stories. In "Crossroads" (3/21/91) news editor Marge Atherton has to make a decision about her future when she is offered a chance to take her singing career on the road. And over the course of the show viewers have watched producer Eric McFarlane's difficulty in going public with his homosexuality and craggy assignment editor J.C. Callahan's devastating struggle with alcoholism. In "Honour or Wealth" (8/4/93) news anchor Seth Miller struggles to organize a telethon for a local children's hospital. When the volunteers and entertainers fail to arrive due to a terrible snow storm, Seth gets the entire staff and crew of Channel 10 to help out, exemplifying as Miller states "individuals who rally a group into collective action" and "the efficacy of collective good will" (1987, 377-78).

In a performance assessment of English TV networks undertaken in 1991, for the advocacy group Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, panel members were agreed that the perennial Canadian identity crisis was a well-entrenched part of Canadian TV drama. In "True Patriot Love" (3/26/92), Channel 10 covered public hearings on Canada's national unity crisis, reminiscent of Keith Spicer's Citizens Forum on a new constitution in 1991. Jake Antonelli likened Canada's identity complex to "a teenager worrying about zits." The cast and crew of channel 10 show concern and responsibility in their questioning of Canada's future. A female Québéçois freelance camera operator was incorporated into the episode for good measure, replete with usage of the French language (without subtitles). Overcoming the language barrier and any perceived cultural differences, a playful comraderie developed between the camera operator and news reporter Dan Watson. This episode represents a lingering preoccupation with the question "Where is here?" (Northrop Frye 1971) but in a forthright manner which challenges our fate, not one that is self-defeating and passive.

In an unusual effort to research the cultural content of Canadian programming, a study entitled <u>Performance Programming in the Canadian-TV Broadcasting System</u> was prepared for the 1986 Task Force on Broadcasting Policy. The purpose of the study was to provide a profile of the Canadian performance programming available on

public and private television networks.[32] In an effort to grasp the specificity and individual character of each program, its artistic composition, cultural texture, and idiom, the authors developed a special cultural markers coding system which resulted in program profiles. From the total of 365 programs, an exemplary sample of 45 was selected. Unfortunately the authors admit at the onset that the scope and validity of the data are suspect. due to time constraints. When examining the individual programs for cultural markers, the researchers looked for specific Canadian events: appearances of a variety of Canadian celebrities and/or political figures; specific Canadian settings (geographical and socio-historical markers); and references to specific Canadian geographical, socio-historical, or linguistic/ethnic features.

Obviously, putting dozens of symbols and features into a composite definition of "distinctively Canadian" is a very complicated, often subjective task. These markers, moreover, may simply augment existing stereotypes and clichés about Canada. What is more, it is difficult to prove the cultural value of such markers (Bruck et al. 1986, 9).

The demand for cultural markers within Canadian programming, however, is based on the following assumptions:

- that such markers will make Canadians accept their situation as a viable background for programs, and therefore, in the long run, and indirectly, contribute to creating an audience for Canadian programs,

- that these markers present Canadians with their own realities and lead or encourage them to understand these realities in a more direct and immediate way,

- that these markers correlate directly to some definable Canadian identity which is distinct from an American identity in terms of values, social norms and behaviour, and

- that the existence of these markers is thus linked to the survival of a distinct Canadian culture (Bruck et al. 1986, 8).

Unfortunately, for reasons unbeknownst to myself or various reference librarians, the concluding chapter was omitted. Despite this hindrance, the study found that Canadian programming can be shown to have a distinctive face, although this fluctuates considerably by network (Bruck et al. 1986, 13). Regardless, in an informal

interview, Will Straw, one of the authors, told me that the study was done to show that one could not regulate cultural markers.

The success and complete self-confidence of <u>E.N.G.</u> challenges the assumption that "the Canadian psyche seems better suited to information than to drama partly because of the documentary tradition established in this country" (Knelman 1987, 103).

CANADIAN AUDIENCES

National content is no guarantee of success with audiences, however. A viable linkage between consumption of television drama and the political actions and self-identifications of audiences has not been conclusively demonstrated (Collins 1990, 343). Exactly how Canadian characteristics are perceived by audiences is not known, due to the neglect of audience preference studies in Canada. There is scant information available on the behaviour and attitude of the television audience in Canada. Those that do exist (Caplan/Sauvageau Report 1986; Goldfarb Consultants 1983; Harrison, Young, Pesonen, and Newell (HYPN) 1986; Decima Research 1987) tend to concentrate on consumption behaviour (ratings studies) rather than on audience attitudes and responses. This emphasis on ratings studies, argues Collins, maximizes consumption in order to serve the needs of advertisers rather than the satisfaction of viewers (1990, 230). The attitude surveys reviewed by Collins concluded that Canadian television is boring but that Canadians support nationalist broadcasting policies and practices (1990, 238).

The 1986 Task Force Report on Broadcasting Policy (referred to as the Caplan/Sauvageau Report) found that "Canadians watch performance programming in proportion to its availability" (1986, 128) while HYPN (1986) found that anglophone audiences avoided Canadian programming. Yet a 1990 CBC research report shows that Canadian consumption of indigenous drama has increased in recent years and the Decima study claims that the level of demand for more Canadian programmes (77%) is higher than for American programmes (69%) (CBC 1990, 50-1).

The Goldfarb Study, completed for the Department of Communications in 1983, "reveals broad support in Canada for the present broadcasting regime of tolerance of imported signals, subsidy for public-sector television, and a nationalist mandate for the CBC. Insofar as the study reveals demand for change, it shows a substantial minority demand for more Canadian content in programming and performers accompanied by uncertainty about the nature of Canadian culture and identity" (Collins 1990, 245). The Goldfarb Report suggests Canadian audiences express contradictory preferences.

In a report titled Attitudes Toward The Canadian Broadcasting System - A National Survey for the Department of Communications (1987), Decima Research found that regulation is seen to be less important than direct financial incentives. At the same time, the majority (76%) agreed with the view that "regulation which addresses the quantity of Canadian programmes is not working. What is needed is an approach which will promote better quality Canadian productions, even if quantity is somewhat reduced" (Decima Research 1987, 1). Despite this finding, just ten per cent of Canadians would eliminate the Canadian content quota entirely while 56 per cent think the quota should remain the same (Decima Research 1987, 2). The partial and contradictory findings indicate that more research on Canadian audiences needs to be undertaken. Until then, the assumptions of nationalists that there is an unsatisfied desire among Canadian viewers for more Canadian programming, that consumption and supply are directly linked, and that Canadian viewers are satisfied with Canadian programs will remain just assumptions (Collins 1990, 243-44).

Generalizations about the possible effects on Canadians consistently choosing to consume non-Canadian television are equally speculative, but because Canadians are avid TV watchers, we must ask ourselves just what are we absorbing.

The classic nationalist argument is that what we are absorbing is the culture, standards, values and way of life of another country, specifically the United States. It is also argued t at we need drama that reflects the thoughts, aspirations and realities of all Canadians and that this is integral to our cultural sovereignty, identity and self-esteem. How does a country define itself, how do its people come to know

themselves and each other if what they see on their television set is irrelevant to their own history, their own landscapes and their own lives?

In 1987, Flora MacDonald, then minister of communications, said the following to the Parliamentary Committee on Communications and Culture: "[A] nation's fictional repertoire is the lifeblood of its culture. We should never underestimate the impact of dramatic television programming for, contained in it, we find the surest expression of our cultural values as well as our collective memory" (qtd. in Miller 1987, 379). Even Collins acquiesces that drama mediates our social problems and reflects the changing character of our society - racial issues, social issues, economic issues (1990, 226).

There is one lesson to be gleaned from the experience of Quebec in regard to such matters:

> Radio-Canada offered to the Québéçois a concrete, visible
> expression of their own unique places, past and present,
> and ways ... The enormously popular téléromans sent
> images of life into homes every week that gave substance
> to the new nationalism that swept through the
> francophone community during the 1950s and 1960s.
> This drama didn't so much create as perpetuate and
> update a cluster of symbols that gave definition and
> meaning to the community. That's why one can
> sympathize with the nationalist purpose that has informed
> the CRTC's insistence in the past decade or so that
> Anglo-Canadian television ... carry prime-time drama that
> reflects the life, the people, 'the soul' of the country
> (Rutherford 1990, 491-92).

While this is true, French-Canadians typically have an enmeshed family unit, tight community structure, church and tradition. Does Anglo-Canadian culture have that kind of relation to itself? It is unlikely. Hence, Rutherford strongly doubts that successful English drama would promote a similar popular nationalism, never mind an upheaval in philosophies and actions analogous to the Quiet Revolution (1990, 491-92).

CBC executive producer Marc Starowicz asserts that "the races, ethic groupings, language blocs and generations of Canada cannot communicate their

interests through <u>L.A. Law</u> or <u>Knots Landing</u>" (1989, 14). Supporting this statement, Starowicz gives the following example:

> When Canadian TV sets are dealing with race, it is
> almost always on American programs like *Hill Street*
> *Blues*, or *Cosby*, or *Miami Vice*. But the 300,000
> blacks in Toronto are from Caribbean cultures, and have
> little in common with American blacks; and Canada does
> not have the inner city core black concentration of the
> US. The Canadian dynamics, in fact the entire
> *dramatis personae* are different. We do have racism -
> the great stress between the police and the black
> community is but one example (1989, 5).

While there are distinct differences between Canada and the United States such as racial, linguistic and ethnic divisions that run deep into our social fabric and political culture, who decides whether or not fictional drama should reflect, with statistical accuracy, the actual social conditions of Burnaby, B.C. or Lethbridge, Alberta?

For Gaile McGregor it is not as simple as Canadians becoming Americanized:

> I think the differences in our psychologies are ingrained
> enough that we remain very Canadian. But what happens
> is that we become and feel more threatened, more
> beleaguered. So being bombarded with U.S. TV fare will
> not change that sense of ourselves, according to these
> critics, but it will make us feel bad about ourselves
> (1991).

The Canadian sense of self is so different from the way we view ourselves as "watered-down Americans" furthers McGregor. Canadian drama, therefore, by valorizing a certain world view or certain relationships between the individual and society, should help Canadians feel good about themselves. Furthermore, maintains McGregor, although Canadians have their own culture, history, and versions of reality, we have been conditioned to view ourselves by American standards and thus become uneasy when presented with images of ourselves in fiction. Perhaps, the appropriation of an American genre into Canadian fare, represented by <u>E.N.G.</u>, works to overcome this unease.

Economics aside, McGregor argues that American cultural products are consumed world-wide because they are very mythic and ambiguous and can therefore be read differently by various people and cultures. Canadian culture does not translate well into myth and fiction, but as history and fact. Rooted in our own experiences, our fictions are more particularized, less simplistic and require more engagement from the viewer. Perhaps this is why Canadians often appear to be apathetic towards indigenous drama. Consequently, claims McGregor, Canadian dramas are typically not as accessible or popular as their American counterparts. Yet the growing popularity of Canadian dramatic programming, at home and abroad, directly challenges, if not negates, this notion.

Many current theorists have attempted to rethink television audiences. Some media scholars insist that the meaning of media texts cannot be found in the texts themselves but in audience interpretations of them (Wolfe 1992, 262). Arnold Wolfe maintains that while all meaning does not inhere in texts, much culturally significant meaning does. Following other theorists, Wolfe argues that the meaning of media texts is not determined by individual audience members interpreting media texts in wholly personal or uniquely, idiosyncratically, individual ways. Citing numerous sources, Wolfe comes to the conclusion that "neither texts nor audiences hold a monopoly on the meaning of media texts ... The meaning of a media text is enabled and constrained by the culture of its origination and completed, even if not created, by its audience" (1992, 273).

Martin Allor evaluates various methods of audience analysis drawn from political economy, post-structuralism, feminist reader-response criticism, cultural studies, and postmodernism. His own view of the audience is one of an ever-changing, fluid concept, not the objective, tangible composite that traditional media effects models have presumed. "The audience exists nowhere, it inhabits no real space, only positions within analytic discourse" (Allor 1988, 228). Instead, elaborates S. Elizabeth Bird, "we must try to see how media use fits into the entire complex web of culture, understanding how it articulates with such factors as class, gender, race, leisure and work habits, and countless other variables" (1992, 251). "If the individual reader is positioned in a mesh of interacting experiences that all affect his or her

experience with media, how can we study such a fluid, ever-shifting concept, taking into account the infinite range of experiences of this non-existent audience? Allor leaves this question unanswered" (Bird 1992, 251).

In Television Culture (1987), Fiske too draws attention to the diversity of meanings created by the television audience. The television text is a potential of meanings, activated by different readers in different social settings. Thus reading and viewing TV becomes a process of negotiation between the viewer and the text - this implies that the reader is an active maker of meanings not a passive recipient. In fact, argues Fiske, TV programmes encourage diverse readings in order to appeal to a broad, heterogeneous audience and thus be commercially viable. If, as postmodernists surmise, TV programs are open-ended texts, inviting as many constructed readings as there are viewers, what type of conclusions can be made about effects?

Building upon ideas formulated by Fiske, Joseph D. Straubhaar proposes that audiences make an active choice to view international or regional or national television programs, a choice that favours the latter two when they are available, based on a search for cultural relevance or proximity (1991, 39). In this view, the concern over Canadian content in an "American" format is misguided. "American" packaging is better understood as a television genre or form of popular culture. It is the Canadian reading not the Canadian packaging that is important. What does becomes clear is that our understanding of the audience and television's effects upon them is far from being resolved.

What is certain is that E.N.G. is indicative of a "new wave" of television, a type of programming with its own charm and unique appeal that is not afraid to be Canadian, and is not merely a carbon copy of American programming. In its unabashedly smart, sexy and stylish manner, E.N.G. challenges the Canadian fate of humiliation and victimization (framing is one method used to combat this fate) (Atwood 1972; McGregor 1985). E.N.G. contests a culture of doubt, self-consciousness and resignation - definitions which have often differentiated the Canadian from the popular, divided the taste of the Canadian masses from what is deemed to be distinctively Canadian. It does so by taking elements of familiar formula and inverting them and by adding new conventions.

Contrary to the views held by Richard Collins and others, E.N.G. proves that "the project of creating a national television drama that engages with Canadian life and experience, and proceeds from a Canadian agenda and set of national priorities," *does not* "conflict with creating an economically viable Canadian television-drama industry" (Collins 1990, 12). As such, the show would exemplify what Collins refers to as "amphibious" Canadian TV drama - having both commercial and cultural validity (1990, 13).

6

CONCLUSION

> Have we survived?
> If so, what happens *after* Survival?
> (Atwood 1972, 246)

Is it necessary to understand what people learn when they watch TV? Yes, especially as the inescapable advent of new technologies drastically changes everything we know about the medium. Innovative technologies promise to transform the medium and turn consumers into discriminating, active programmers, all by the end of the decade.

It is also important to understand how people watch TV. In No Sense of Place (1985) Joshua Meyrowitz examines the impact of electronic media, especially television, on social behaviour. In describing how television affects social behaviour, Meyrowitz argues that it is not through the power of the medium's messages, but by reorganizing the social settings in which people interact and by weakening the once strong relationship between physical place and social "place". Meyrowitz claims that by bringing many different types of people to the same "place", electronic media may have much more to do with recent social trends than is generally thought, such as the blurring of many formerly distinct roles (1985, ix).

As a result, "we must expect a fundamental shift in our perceptions of our society and ourselves" (Meyrowitz 1985, viii). This shift becomes evident through the merging of male and female social roles, which Meyrowitz examines as a case study in changing group identities. The blurring of age and the lowering of political heroes to the level of average citizens are two other cases surveyed by Meyrowitz. This type of examination is especially important at a time when "the combined situations of electronic media are relatively lasting and inescapable, and they therefore have a much greater effect on social behaviour" (Meyrowitz 1985, 5).

After a month-long hearing on the future of television in March of 1993, the CRTC announced a package of regulatory reforms designed to give Canadians more choice and greater control over what they watch on television. The regulatory changes follow two years of discussions and testimony from hundreds of witnesses and intervenors representing broadcasting companies, public groups, industry lobby groups, unions and governments, both U.S. and Canadian.

As Chair of the Commission, Keith Spicer envisions in the future a low-cost basic cable service of perhaps a dozen channels (all Canadian channels such as CBC, CTV and Global, plus the "Big Three" U.S. Networks and PBS) and a multitude of discretionary services (such as The Family Channel, CNN, TSN, MuchMusic, and movies) available to viewers on a pick-and-pay basis.[33] It is a universe of almost limitless channel choices achieved through digital video compression, which multiplies the number of channels a cable system can carry, and universal addressability, which makes television interactive. Whatever channels cable subscribers choose, all of them will come through a digital decoder ("black box") which will allow subscribers to customize the service they want.

One of the principle objectives of the reforms is to direct money into "more and better" Canadian programming. In exchange for charging subscribers for the building of the necessary cable infrastructure, the cable companies are required to contribute to a Canadian programming production fund. The CRTC expects that its strategy will generate up to $300-million over five years.[34] Another important change requires that cable systems match every foreign satellite channel with a Canadian speciality service. Previously, one Canadian service was linked to two foreign services.

All this will help cable companies remain competitive in the advent of the so-called "deathstars" - direct broadcast satellite services (DBS) from the U.S.[35] More powerful and sophisticated than earlier generations of communications satellites, DBS will allow consumers as early as spring 1994 to pay about $1000 for a pizza-sized dish to capture hundreds of unregulated channels.[36]

In this new environment "viewers will have to approach television in much the same way as they do a library - going in to request a particular work or works on a

particular subject, rather than looking through the entire collection or being offered a limited set of choices at certain times" (Gooderham 1993, C1). In this scenario, television would evolve into a video library with the intelligence to identify and collect programs of interest to a particular viewer.

How much new and original programming there will be remains "the Great Unknown." In addition to the commercial networks, there will be more of the niche programming (also known as narrowcasting or microcasting) now offered on cable, with expansion into areas only limited by one's imagination. Television of the future will mean more duplication and unusual niche programming. For instance, it is likely that the same episode of a sitcom might play on ten different channels, with starting times staggered by ten minutes. Movie fanatics will be able to order the latest hit films at ten minute intervals throughout the day. Critics predict channels devoted to health care, astronomy, Madonna, westerns, woodworking, soap operas, continuing education, news magazines, golf, gourmet cooking, situation comedies, even commercials and infomercials. In addition to all of this there will be non-programming services that allow viewers to interact with their television sets, such as banking, shopping, telephone services, and information on matters as diverse as airline schedules and weather reports. The television will become more like a personal computer. Despite the multiplicity of choices, the continuance of mass produced short series, dramas, documentaries and special events is predicted (although their audiences and profits will continue to erode).

No longer mirroring the broader society as a force for national integration, television will become a medium of segmentation, reflecting hundreds of minority, regional and other special interests (Valpy 1993, A1). Mark Starowicz believes that this marks "the disappearance of public space" - the replacement of public broadcasting space with transnational space in private hands and outside the control of the nation state (qtd. in Valpy 1993, A1). Furthermore, argues Starowicz, special interests and regional concerns will predominate at the expense of national consensus.

This new broadcasting space, however, can provide opportunities for the type of democratization desired by Marc Raboy. The technology-driven explosion in the number of television channels is creating an insatiable demand for programs that offer

minority, regional and special interests a space where they can speak from their positions all at once, through easy and inexpensive access. Liss Jeffrey comments: "in the broad terms set by Raboy, one could imagine this project of reseaming the received narrative about Canada, about political decisions made, and cultural opportunities missed, told from the perspective of feminists, of first nations, visible minorities, allophones, multicultural communities, in short, any one of the many communities self-identified as outside the dominant central-Canadian nation" (1992, 577). Thus, the different social needs of particular communities, such as the satellite distribution in Northern Canada, as well as the general interest can be met. In Raboy's utopia this should result in the restructuring of our broadcasting system to better fulfil its public service function; the enhancement of the democratic quality of public life; programming designed to meet these objectives; and a more democratic process of decision making regarding programming (1990, 356-7).

For Raboy, the mastery of the Canadian broadcasting system lies in the guarantee of public control. The ways and means of achieving this should be our foremost consideration. The only way to assure this is through more public participation and controls. The public must be guaranteed freedom of choice and expression, meaning concrete democratic rights beyond elections. The state may mediate the broadcasting industry but not control it. The decisions surrounding policy and programming must be thought of in terms of an active public responsibility, not framed in terms of consumption as Richard Collins sees it.

The new 1990 <u>Broadcasting Act</u> supports Raboy's objectives by calling for a system that:

> 3.(d)(iii) through its programming and the employment opportunities
> arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests, and reflect
> the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and
> children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural
> and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of
> aboriginal peoples within that society.

Both academics and industry critics continue to find this mandate hypocritical and contradictory since the act affirms simultaneously the aims of a "single system" which ensures national identity while promising to cater to a varied multiplicity of tastes. I

ascertain we can ensure our national identity precisely by catering to a multiplicity of tastes and citizens. This is arguably the essence of our identity: the attempt to provide a broadcasting system which seeks to balance nation-binding centralism with respect for variations of localism. Choosing this alternative may best maximize audience satisfaction.

It will become a system comfortably able to combine public-service programming that addresses a variety of publics with mass-audience programming (widely acceptable, non-exclusive programming that is not tailored for a specific public). Furthermore, this will enable the CBC to fulfil its mandate to reflect Canada and its regions to both national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions (Broadcasting Act 1991, 121). In doing so, the increasing pressures of public-sector broadcasters in Canada to abandon their mass audience and nationalist aspirations and offer a "PBS North" public-service alternative to American program schedules would ideally be abandoned. A national service, it is argued, must achieve a mass audience in order to knit the nation together into its imagined community.

The assumption has been that it is not economically viable in Canada (economies of scale, size of population, etc.) to produce mass appeal programming, and that Canada cannot and should not compete with the U.S. on this level. However, this argument is invalidated with the advent of new technologies and the spiralling increase in co-productions. E.N.G. is an example of this mainstream, mass audience appeal programming that competes both domestically and internationally. It reflects the Canadian experience while, at the same time, speaks to universal themes. If one accepts Collins' framing of the question of mass culture, then the struggle is between foreign versus Canadian mass culture and Canada will be at a heavy disadvantage. But if one accepts Raboy's framing of the question in terms of the problem of constituting or sustaining Canadian publics then there is no longer a struggle over mass cultures, Canadian or American. This transforms the political issues somewhat. We are left with a series of intriguing questions: is Raboy practical? Is it really true that cohesive and viable publics, or communities, can be formed around such a constellation of media? Or is this a naive enlightenment dream? And would the emergence of such publics constitute a threat to the legitimacy of the nation state? Or,

on the contrary, is Raboy's program likely to become a political diversion, an appealing disguise for state regulation and control policy?

Moreover, it is crucial to understand, as John Fiske points out, that "the inevitable (because profitable) homogenization of programming, which means that one financial commodity is sold to as many different audiences as possible, may not be such an agent of cultural domination as many fear. Indeed, I would argue the opposite. Diversity of readings is not the same as diversity of programs, and a diversity of readings and the consequent diversity of subcultural identities is crucial if the popular is to be seen as a force for social change" (1987, 325). This argument transcends the traditional debate, as does E.N.G., where Canadian inflection into an American genre offers enough understatements and gaps to allow the viewers to use their own intentions.

In an epilogue titled "the eclipse of culture" Arthur Kroker expounds that: "under the pressure of rapid technological change ... everything now lies in the balance between catastrophe or creation as possible human destinies" (1984, 125). Here Kroker is hinting at the threat of cultural obliteration posed by new communication technologies. In response to such a threat, Québec film-maker, Jean-Claude Labrecque, once said: "it's [technology] like snow: it keeps falling and all you can do is go on shovelling." Thus, if we wish to survive cultural extermination, then our main chance is just what Labrecque says: "we must be original or disappear" (qtd. in Dorland 1984b, 9).

Marike Finlay demonstrates at length in her 1991 text The Social Discourses of Law and Policy on Communication, that new communications technology is itself a social discourse where the struggle for domination in this technology is a struggle for control and management at the socio-political levels, both nationally and internationally (112). This factor outlined by Finlay intensifies the need for Canadian programming. Yet can uniquely Canadian programming survive in an overwhelmingly imported multi-channel environment?

The opportunity to compete in this multi-channel environment will come as the CRTC beckons for applications for new Canadian speciality, pay-tv, and pay-per-view services that cable companies and DBS can carry. It is believed that in a globalizing

environment all Canadian broadcasters must become distinctive to survive. Canadian programs will be the one thing that no foreign competitor can offer. According to this view, Canadian content will be the safest niche for Canadian broadcasters. Thus, it is in the economic interests of TV broadcasters to enlarge the proportion of Canadian programming in their schedules and to differentiate their programming to compete successfully in the international marketplace.

The new international market looking for entertainment material offers tremendous opportunities because of its sheer size. Canadian programming will address a huge increase in competition for audiences and advertising in the U.S. from new cable networks and hundreds of new independent stations resulting in the search for more, and less expensive programming.

At this point, we may ask ourselves what will happen to Canadian content regulations. Some industry analysts believe that the success of E.N.G. might inspire other Canadian producers to take similar creative risks and thereby eliminate the American competition and the need for "Canadian content" regulations. This view is overly optimistic.

True, E.N.G. is an example of a Canadian dramatic idiom that is both popular and authentically Canadian. Rather than hide its regionalism in its a presentation of Canadian content, E.N.G. builds upon it to obtain an entirely fresh national perspective. Although E.N.G. is an important consideration, it is not the answer to the Canadian identity crisis. Although it is impossible to isolate, thus regulate, certain attributes of a Canadian identity into programming policy, the dearth of audience studies in Canada "does not authorize the wholesale rejection of any links whatsoever between cultural identity and political sovereignty" (Attallah 1992, 226).

Through my examination of E.N.G. I have explored how programming can be distinctive and unique, but in a way which still maintains an audience loyalty and a relevance to the Canadian way of life. My examination of E.N.G proves that Canadian content is representative of Canadian tastes and that Canadian productions do not lack international appeal. Canadian broadcasters along with the support of the Canadian people must realize that Canadian drama can be an effective means of creating and communicating a sense of Canada and of the Canadian identity.

What Peter Harcourt said in 1977 is still true today: "Canada will never be allowed to express itself in the sphere of TV without some kind of protective legislation, without some federal determination to utilize the popularity of the American product to help finance our own" (33). Albeit official policy recommendations have always stressed the need for an independent Canadian broadcasting system, it is paradoxical that this broadcasting system cannot maintain itself without the aid of American broadcasting products.

Canadians have choices, whether to create a Canadian industry or be assimilated further into foreign markets, beginning with the U.S. Another choice could be, as Robert Fulford once stated, "is not to shut out another culture, nor is it to deprive the Canadian population of what it clearly wants. The main purpose of policies regarding broadcasting is to provide the people of Canada with a cultural choice, in which one of the choices is cultural products made in their own part of the world, which reflect their own reality" (qtd. in Webster 1977, 6).

In an article titled "Broadcasting Regulation: is it Obsolete?" Keith Spicer defends the necessity of Canadian content regulations. Spicer informs us that foreign satellite programming may seep into a small niche of the Canadian market over the next two or three years, but the main technology, that of countless interactive cable channels, will enter most living rooms only in four to seven years. For 25 years, argues Spicer, Canadian content rules worked as classic infant-industry nurturing. He does allow that these infant industries are becoming mature, increasingly able to survive, indeed thrive, on their own, translating their national successes into international ones. As a result, the CP.TC has lightened regulation. They no longer concentrate on walling off Canada from U.S. shows, instead they focus on aggressively promoting Canadian programming here and abroad. Spicer views new technologies, fierce competition in programming and distribution, and consumer sovereignty giving Canadian consumers unprecedented control of programming that is a deeply democratic evolution. "As for future regulation," admits Spicer, "nobody knows what lies beyond the year 2000" (1993, A21).

Perhaps the time has come for the prime-time quantitative quota to be replaced for the private sector by minimum, flexible guidelines and fiscal incentives for

production. The most likely change, however, will see consumers "regulating" the
market far more than today. During the transition to a consumer-driven system, the
Commission will continue on its deregulatory path. The standard: only regulate where
the market cannot guarantee the objectives of the Broadcasting Act. This translates
into the persistence of Canadian-content rules, until the CRTC is certain the market
alone can offer Canadians a wide range of Canadian programming. Already the
commercial success of better Canadian programs is eclipsing the old Canadian content
obsession (Spicer 1993, A21).

Yet no regulatory approach or broadcast strategy is going to guarantee high-
quality, distinctive Canadian programs. As former CBC President A.W. Johnson once
said: "distinctiveness is not a product of mechanisms but of professional talent in our
broadcast industry - of its creative soul, if you will. It is what sets our programs apart
from any others and it is not easy to define or articulate, even though we all know it
when we see it on the screen. It is that characteristic that we need to nurture and
protect" (1981, 8).

It is the search for new sources of funding for Canadian programming that is
the crucial issue, especially as government agencies that have funded Canadian
production for decades are facing drastic budget cuts and as resources to produce
programs are divided by microcasting. In addition to money, it is going to take a lot
of change, commitment, and creative genius to bring about a meaningful increase in
the number of high-quality, distinctive, Canadian programs. In doing so, keeping in
mind the fluid nature of the link between polity and culture, broadcasting policies
which can begin to connect a Canadian audience with a "Canadian" viewing pattern
will hopefully result.

For all that, the problem goes beyond the fear of being swallowed up by the
U.S. It is a resentment that access by Canadians to Canadian voices is made difficult
or impossible.

There is a cultural, ethnic, linguistic and regional diversity in Canada. If
Canadian programming responds to this range of cultural identities found in Canada
then we will not be dependent upon a unitary conception of Canada culture, but a
postmodern one. The question of diversity may be defined as a question of inputs into

production by representatives of various cultural entities, bringing instances of cultural diversity to a general audience (Bruck, et al. 1986, 10-11).

Indeed, all notions of the Canadian identity equally vague and challengeable. The view of Canada as a postmodernist puzzle of interests holds a certain degree of charm and validity. We must pride ourselves on being what Collins calls a "new society," multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural (1990, xii-xiii). This entails embracing our fluid identity.

In The Malaise of Modernity, Charles Taylor explains that the rise of individualism and respect for differences while maintaining a connection, is not the disillusion of cultural forms into chaos. Individualism, for Taylor, does not necessarily imply isolation from the rest of society and the dissolving of the collective culture or community. On the contrary. Inherent in the individual is a responsible connection to the community, actually strengthening cultural forms. Individualism then, becomes an important social value leading towards a greater understanding and the inclusion of differences. We can have diversity within a unified country. Or as Richard Collins comments: "national identity is but one of a series of identities held simultaneously by citizens and viewers" (1990, 331). Yet to what extent to we trade off democracy for national identity? The current media agenda does not address the issue of who the public is and what their interests and demands are, and yet it is the media that holds the potential to enhance direct participation and democratizai.).

We will not know what the Canadian identity is until we have had a longer history and, thus, more of a chance to express ourselves. We need to discover and promote ways in which Canadians can produce their own culture - not one that is vaguely definable, amorphous and palatable to everyone, as in U.S. television - but one that reflects our diverse nation. We need more of a grass roots approach. We cannot assume Canada is an homogenous mass which needs homogenous programming. We need policies to create and define publics and the emergence of a growing identity - bottom up instead of top down.

Surely, much of the debate revolves around the expectation that some sort of indigenous culture should emerge, or create itself, in the process of getting expressed by "real" Canadians. But who are these people, and how do we supply them not only

with resources and equipment, but with a _motive_ to produce?[37]   What can be done to create conditions in which Canadians can make genuine choices between foreign and domestic productions? Is it possible to create a demand for Canadian content, and will that in turn create a culture or an identity? We can only hope.

NOTES

1.   To guide policy decisions numerous Royal Commissions, Parliamentary Committees and Task Forces have been undertaken. The following is a list of Federal Government Reports dealing with television:
a) Royal Commission on the National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, (Massey Commission), 1951.
b) Royal Commission on Broadcasting, (Fowler Commission), 1957.
c) Report of the Committee on Broadcasting, (Fowler Committee), 1965.
d) Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, (Davey Committee), 1970.
e) Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, (Applebaum/Hébert), 1982.
f) Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy (Caplan/Sauvageau Committee), 1986.

2.   As outlined by the CRTC television program categories, Canadian drama programs consist of ongoing dramatic series including sitcoms and action-adventures; ongoing comedy series; specials, mini-series and made-for-TV feature films; and other drama presentations of CBC, CTV, Global and other English stations (CRTC 1987, Appendix A, ii).
        The situation of French-language broadcasting in Canada is markedly different than the English-language sector. For instance, francophone viewers watch more Canadian programs than do anglophones, and television theory and criticism is superior in French Canada as compared to English Canada. Moreover, a distinct language, legal system and religion have contributed to a shared francophone culture. Consequently, television has had a very different impact on French and English Canada. French-language broadcasting, therefore, will not be considered in any depth within this limited study (Collins 1990, 190-94).

3.   It is of interest to note that E.N.G. is not seen in the U.S. The first two seasons of the show were sold to the U.S. on Lifetime Television, a cable network based in New York, but were not shown in their entirety. Although the reasons for this are unclear, it is speculated that the show differed too much from the standard American style, that it was "too Canadian" (Lafferty 1993).

4.   At the time of its publication in 1985, Jolts was the only full-length study on English television programming in Canada.

5.   CanCon regulations were recently brought to the forefront when rock star Bryan Adams said they were responsible for "breeding mediocrity." Other established singers and industry officials angrily reacted to Adams' comment by citing Canadian content regulations as responsible for the vibrancy and success of the Canadian music industry.

6.   It has not always been apparent, argue Caplan and Sauvageau, how the protection and incentives given to broadcasters could have been motivated by the objectives of the Broadcasting Act. For example, the CRTC will hear no rival bids for licences when they

come up for renewal. If a broadcaster wishes to sell a licence, the Commission will accept applications only from the party specified by the seller. The CRTC has also protected private broadcasters against potential competition by limiting the number of network and station licences (although this is likely to change with the advent of the "500" channel universe). Furthermore, the CRTC regulations on simultaneous program substitution reward Canadian broadcasters greatly while contributing to the proclivity to schedule American shows during peak viewing time. Private broadcasters are frequently chastised for taking this economic protection for granted (Caplan and Sauvageau 1986, 459-60).

7.   Americans have had the experience, facilities, and financing in place in order to produce top quality drama (radio then television) for over six decades. From the inception of television in 1952, the majority of Canadians have had access to American drama. This has directly influenced the expectations of Canadian audiences, who have grown accustomed to very high production values and well-established, deep rooted genres. What is more, unlike the U.S., Canada did not have a distinctive, mature tradition of theatre and film on which to draw when radio and then television drama developed.

8.   Telefilm Canada is a federal government agency devoted to assisting the development, production and distribution of Canadian films and television programs. The Telefilm Broadcast Fund was established in 1983 to encourage the production of "high quality Canadian television programs that are attractive to Canadian audiences during peak viewing periods of the broadcast schedule," particularly in drama programming (Telefilm 1991-92, 23). The critical suppositions made when the Broadcast Fund was established were that the CBC's schedules would become more Canadian, based on private sector production, and that the CRTC would increase its demands on private broadcasters to purchase and exhibit Canadian programs in prime-time (Caplan and Sauvageau 1986, 365). This was done also in an effort to draw upon a wider range of talent as well as to achieve a greater balance between independent productions and in-house productions, which some feel lack creativity due to the bureaucratization of their work environment. According to an outside study commissioned by the agency and published in its 1991-1992 Action Plan, the viewing of Canadian programs funded by Telefilm, including drama, has increased significantly over the last five years (Telefilm 1991-92, 6). Despite such success there are reasons for concern, as the CBC, a major participant in the Fund, is continually facing budget restrictions. At least half of the Broadcast Fund's expenditure has gone to productions for the CBC. In this sense, Telefilm becomes a means of subsidizing the CBC. However, due to sweeping budget cuts in the past several years, the CBC has, on several occasions, been forced to freeze its involvement with the Broadcast Fund.

9.   The term independent production identifies production companies not linked by ownership or affiliation to broadcasters. Strict definitions of "Canadian" are dictated as are also strict regulations requiring advance distribution contracts.

10.   Some Canadians might have wondered why Canadian singer Anne Murray filmed her 1990 Christmas special at the Disneyland theme park. One can assume that this

decision involves the U.S. Disney Channel, a major partner in several CBC productions, including Road to Avonlea. Some critics in the broadcast industry speculate that this partnership has resulted in more action-oriented episodes and the guest appearances of well-known American stars.

11.   The Mexicans share many of the same anxieties Canadians have about the potentially harmful consequences of free trade on their ability to maintain a distinct, thriving cultural sector.

12.   Bill C-58 disallows tax breaks for Canadian advertisers using U.S. airwaves. The Capital Cost Allowance (CCA) provided a 100 per cent tax deduction for private investors in certified Canadian productions, but was reduced to only 30 per cent in 1988. Cable substitution requires cable operators in Canada to substitute signals from U.S. stations with their own when both are showing the same shows at the same time. U.S. advertising, as a result, is substituted with Canadian commercials.

13.   The following summary of CBC cutbacks appeared in the Toronto weekly entertainment magazine Eye (10 June 1993, 15):
    • 1984-5: Tories cut $85 million from the CBC budget.
    • 1987: Cut to CBC operating grant, $797 million to $786 million, causes loss of 387 jobs.
    • 1989: Finance Minister Michael Wilson cuts CBC funding by $20 million for fiscal year '90/'91, with cuts of $10 million for each of three following years - apparently forgetting earlier promise of an extra $35 million in funding to strengthen CanCon regulations. Government funding for the CBC now 13.6 per cent lower than when the Conservative government took over. Staff cut 15 per cent.
    • 1990: CBC cuts 1,110 jobs, shuts down 11 local stations and limits regional services in coming fiscal year to save $108 million on operating budget. 370 hours of Canadian drama and 17,230 hours of foreign programming.
    • 1993: Finance Minister Don Mazankowski's budget called for a $50 million cut to the CBC in 1995-96.
    In Bush Garden, Northrop Frye stated that when the CBC was instructed by Parliament to promote both Canadian unity and identity they had not realized that they were two different, and contradictory things. Identity, describes Frye, "is local and regional, rooted in the imagination and in works of culture; unity is national in reference, international in perspective, and rooted in a political feeling" (1971, ii).

14.   The concept of the public sphere originated with Jurgen Habermas in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1962, translated into English in 1989). The bourgeois public sphere in its classical form is the central focus of the text. It is an effort to derive the ideal type of the bourgeois public sphere from the historically specific context of British, French and German developments in the 18th and early 19th centuries, alongside the rise and formation of the modern state.

15.   McGregor goes farther than Atwood and Frye by examining the causes and effects of these images of the Canadian landscape in Canadian literature as well as Canadian culture as a whole.

16.   Robertson Davies once said that the Canadian identity lies in understanding, not taming, the savage land, a metaphor for the spirit (qtd. in Webster 1977, 47).

17.   Dorland builds upon a notion of *ressentiment* first introduced into philosophy by German thinker Nietzsche.

18.   Postmodernism has been described as a style, a reflection of a cultural milieu, and a critical approach, both as an artistic movement and as a "condition" (Collins 1989, 112). It is a term that is increasingly defining the current trends and situations inherent in Western civilization. It is undefinable, ungroundable and is a constant point of contention amongst academics who present a plethora of philosophical theories to "fix it" and attempt to explain the world situation. Hutcheon herself has claimed that "few words are more used and abused in discussions of contemporary culture than the word 'postmodernism'" (1989, 1). She refers to Brian McHale who points out that every critic "constructs" postmodernism in his or her own way from different perspectives, none more right or wrong than the others. The point is that all are "finally fictions." (qtd. in Hutcheon 1989, 11).

19.   Hutcheon is not claiming that all Canadian visual art and literature today is ironic or even postmodern. Nor is she is saying that *only* Canadian literature uses irony. She is merely suggesting that irony is *one* mode of self-defining discourse used by English-speaking Canadians (1991, 3). In her later work, Double-Talking (1992), Hutcheon broadens her scope to include the role of irony in theatre, music, television and video.

   Frye, Atwood and McGregor have also dealt with the concept of irony in their works, but not with the same intensity as Hutcheon. Rob Kroetsch and Frank Davey are two other theoreticians who consider irony in Canadian culture.

20.   In defining a Canadian program, the CRTC uses a point system and cost criteria currently employed by the Canadian Film and Videotape Certification Office of the Department of Communications (CFVCO) for feature productions. A Canadian program, therefore, is defined as one in which the producer is Canadian. A minimum of six points must be earned on the basis of two points for a Canadian director, two points for a Canadian writer and one point each if the following are Canadians: leading performer, second leading performer, head of art department, director of photography, music composer and editor. Regardless of the number of points garnered, either the director or the writer and at least one of the leading performers must be a Canadian. However, either one of these last stipulations can be disclaimed granted that all other key creative positions are filled by Canadians. Finally, at least 75 per cent of all payments to individuals, other than the producer and key creative personnel listed above, must be Canadians, as must 75 per cent of the cost of processing and post-production services.

Productions which qualify under Canada's official co-production treaties with other countries are included in this definition (CRTC 1983, 2-5).

21.   Three government bodies provide certification for Canadian programs: the department of Communications (DoC), in order for investment to qualify for special capital cost allowance; the CRTC, for Canadian content to be broadcast on television; and Telefilm Canada, for government funding of productions.

22.   Michael Dorland found the CBC mini-series Empire Inc. (1982) and the short-lived weekly series Vanderberg (1983, CBC) to be uniquely Canadian, the former exploring Montreal Anglo wealth, Quebec wartime fascism and the rise of central State power, and the latter probing the struggles surrounding Calgary oil fields. On Empire Inc., Dorland comments that "there is more to this than quirks of cultural self-indulgence ... it is part of an attempt to rescue the collective memory from the amnesia of the continental environment" (1983, 36). Similarly, he found Vanderberg reminiscent of "an ecstatic plunge into the Canadian *mythos*, the transcendent revelation of contemporary Canadianity" (1984a, 15). "For the first time," asserts Dorland, "that anguishing, internal refusal-to-be that is so central to the Canadian self has been overcome ... Vanderberg managed to go about its business without once betraying the slightest awareness of any sort of preoccupation with the existence of the creature to the south" (1984a, 16).

23.   Early criticism of E.N.G. came from the press, who scoffed at the show's lack of authenticity, claiming the series was not a realistic depiction of TV. The concern fell mainly upon camera operator Jake Antonelli and his Indiana-Jones-type heroics (entering a flaming building or stumbling onto a robbery in progress and taken hostage). As defenders of the show have suggested, perhaps these critics are confusing the dramatic necessity of a TV show with a real newsroom.

24.   Drew Williams, Director of Marketing, CTV Entertainment Group, affirms that E.N.G. is one of the most successful Canadian series ever on Canadian television in terms of audience ratings, averaging 940,000 viewers per episode, often breaking the illustrious one million barrier (1993).

25.   Alliance Communications Corporation has the international distribution rights to E.N.G.

26.   Sponsored by the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television, the Gemini Awards are presented annually to Canadian-made television programs. To date, the series has won nine awards: (1) 1990 - best dramatic series, best performance by an actor in a continuing leading dramatic role (Art Hindle), best writing in a dramatic series; (2) 1991 - best dramatic series, best guest performance (Michelle St.John), best writing in a dramatic series (Wayne Grigsby); (3) 1992 - best dramatic series, best performance by an actress in a continuing leading dramatic role (Sara Botsford), best supporting actor (Jonathan Welsh). The show was also a finalist in the 1991 New York International Film/Television Festival and won a silver medal in the same festival the following year.

27.   The small size of the Canadian market does not permit the same investment in Canadian programming as is possible in the U.S.

28.   To break even in terms of cost for an indigenous dramatic program in Canada is a major accomplishment.   For profit to accrue, international sales are imperative (Williams 1993).

29.   Alliance has been the largest producer of private Canadian TV drama in recent years, with projects including Top Cops, Bordertown, CTV's Night Heat and Global's Adderly and Diamonds.

30.   Due to technical problems with liability insurance, no one actually uses the word Toronto (it is referred to as Metro).   This is in order to show public officials such as politicians and police officers while avoiding potential libel suits.   It is not, as some have suggested, for the fear of alienating viewers in the rest of Canada who bear an historic grudge against the country's largest metropolis nor is it to boost the saleability of the show to the U.S.

31.   Collins speaks of the shortage of cultural critics who share popular tastes.   He contends that their insistence on cultural production that exhibits no "American" characteristics and their scorn of popular taste for "American" programming hinders television producers in Canada seeking to develop drama that is both Canadian and popular.   What results is the suppression of an informed audience and an educated public taste as well as feedback for TV producers in terms other than those of ratings (Collins 1990, xvi).
        Miller too argues for the creation of an informed group of TV critics in English Canada that is necessary for the building of support for new programming. A further hinderance in the development of dramatic series, notes Miller, is the CBC's reluctance to develop star personae and the fiscal difficulty of producing and testing competing pilots for series programming slots (1987).   In Why We Act Like Canadians, Pierre Berton attributes the CBC's refusal to build stars on the Canadian belief that institutions are more important than individuals (1984).   An article by Kate Taylor in the Globe and Mail examines the entire Canadian entertainment industry "where many complain that their compatriots are slow to applaud talent and suspicious of success" (1993, C1).   Many agree that this is due to a healthy scepticism (of both marketing and publicity as well as institutions) and reluctance to idolize public figures integral to the English Canadian psyche.

32.   For the purposes of the study, performance programming is defined as drama, variety, arts and documentary programming.

33.   Critics of this new system fear Canadians could end up spending much more than they pay now.   It all depends on what individual viewers buy and how cable operators package and price as many as 300 new services.   They argue that instead of looking out for the consumer, the CRTC ruling did nothing to break up the cable monopolies and little to curtail their power.   Cable companies are fearsome of the genuine competition

offered by the direct broadcast satellites and from telephone companies who want to compete with them through fibre optics.

34.   Taking Toronto for example, starting in 1996 the decoder will cost the average cable subscriber $75 over five years. Cable companies are allowed to keep half the funds taken from subscribers to build the cable infrastructure, provided that they can contribute the other half to a Canadian programming production fund. This scheme is somewhat undermined, however, by the fact that cable companies have the option of paying rebates to customers rather than contributing to the fund.

35.   Consumers will be charged monthly fees to descramble the DBS signals. The CBC has already agreed to supply two channels to the initial U.S. DBS service, DirecTv. As well, there are plans to launch an analogous Canadian-made DBS. There are those who continue to believe that DBS could pose the largest threat to Canada's cultural sovereignty since U.S. broadcast signals started crossing our borders 70 years ago. However, with cable already installed in 70 percent of Canadian households (90 percent in major centres) it is argued that U.S. satellite services will be much less attractive here than in the American market (where cable penetration vacillates around 60 per cent) (Borkowski 1993, 6).

36.   Initially, approximately 150 channels will be offered on direct broadcast satellites.

37.   We must recognise, reminds former CRTC Chair John Meisel, that the affinity for our neighbour's culture is not shared equally among all groups of Canadians (1986, 25). A mass-élite dichotomy is evident, with the better educated, higher-income groups being more sensitive to Canadian-American cultural differences and more interested in indigenous cultural products (Meisel 1986, 25).

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