L A U R A   M O S S

Song and Dance No More:
Tracking Canadian Multiculturalism Over Forty Years

Zusammenfassung

Seit Multikulturalität vor vierzig Jahren als politischer Grundsatz von der kanadischen Regierung eingeführt wurde, hat sie signifikante Erscheinungsveränderungen und Richtungswechsel erfahren. Seit ihrer Einführung hat die Regierung jährlich einen Bericht über die Umsetzung dieses politischen Konzepts veröffentlicht. Diese Berichte liefern eine praktisch ungenutzte Fülle von Informationen, die es uns erlauben, die verschiedenen Versionen der Multikulturalität zurück zu verfolgen (vom passiven Idealismus zum aktiven Pragmatismus). Sie helfen, die öffentlichen Stimmen der staatlichen Programme zu kontextualisieren. Wie enträtseln wir das Verhältnis zwischen sich verändernden Identitätswahrnehmungen, sich entwickelnden demographischen Realitäten und den wechselnden Mandaten der gesetzlichen Multikulturalität? Eine zentrale, unzureichend erforschte Veränderung in der gesetzlichen Multikulturalität betrifft die Rolle, die Kultur, besonders die kreativen Künste, nach allgemeiner Auffassung dabei spielt, das vom Staat angestrebte Ziel zu erreichen, kulturellen Pluralismus zu bewahren, auszubauen und sogar zu bewältigen. Im multikulturellen Gefüge ist Kultur nebensächlich geworden. Ich argumentiere, dass die wiederholte Kritik an der angeblich oberflächlichen „Gesang und Tanz"-Multikulturalität fehlgeschlagen ist, da der kreativen Kunst (Lieder-Gedichte-Geschichten und Tänze-Aufführungen-Drama) nun immer mehr die Fähigkeit abgesprochen wird, Kritik zu üben. Kurz nach der Jahrhundertwende verschwand die kreative Kunst fast gänzlich aus dem Blickfeld der gesetzlichen Multikulturalität angesichts pragmatischerer Elemente von kulturellem Pluralismus und Integration. Dieser schlichte Umstand veranlasst mich zu fragen, welchen Weg Kunst in Diskussionen um Vielfalt, Immigration, Zugehörigkeit und Staatsangehörigkeit genommen hat und mit welchen Auswirkungen?

Résumé

Depuis que le multiculturalisme a été instauré par le gouvernement canadien il y a quarante ans, il a connu des changements de forme et de direction significatifs. Depuis l'instauration de ce concept politique, le gouvernement a publié un rapport annuel sur la mise en pratique de celui-ci. Ces rapports offrent une abondance d'informations pratiquement négligées qui nous permettent de retracer les différentes versions du multiculturalisme (de l'idéalisme passif au pragmatisme actif), nous aidant ainsi à contex-

tualiser les voix publiques des mesures officielles. Comment démêle-t-on la relation entre les perceptions d'identité changeantes, les réalités démographiques émergentes et les mandats variables du multiculturalisme officiel ? Un changement central du multi-culturalisme officiel, insuffisamment examiné jusqu'à présent, concerne le rôle que la culture, surtout les arts créatifs, joue dans l'atteinte du but que s'est fixé l'État de préser-ver, développer, voire maîtriser le pluralisme culturel. La culture a perdu de l'importance dans le cadre multiculturel. Je soutiens que la critique, maintes fois entendue, voulant que le multiculturalisme « de la chanson et de la danse » soit superficiel s'est pris un retour de manivelle, car on conteste de plus en plus la capacité de l'art créatif (chanson-poème-histoires et danses-représentations-drame) à exercer la critique.. Peu après le tournant du siècle, l'art créatif a pratiquement disparu de la sphère du multiculturalisme officiel face aux éléments plus pragmatiques du pluralisme culturel et de l'intégration. Ce simple fait m'amène à demander quel chemin l'art a pris dans les discussions sur la diversité, l'immigration, l'appartenance et la nationalité et avec quelles conséquences ?

Forty years after the introduction of the federal multiculturalism policy in Canada, it is useful to pause and take stock of the evolution of the policy and its effects on Canadian culture. I recently taught a graduate course entitled "Mainstreaming Multiculturalism: Public Policy and Canadian Literature" at the University of British Columbia that did just that. Over the course of the term, an interesting paradox arose. The students accepted the notion that Canada has changed dramatically since the early 1970s (in terms of demographic composition – with more ethnic and racial diversity – and in terms of core values and shared beliefs – with more liberal views on sexuality, gender roles, and minority rights, with the legalization of gay marriage as a clear example). They also agreed that Canadian literature has flourished (through the nationalism of the 1970s to post-nationalism of the 1990s and the global recognition of today). However, when discussing multiculturalism, they kept coming back to a relatively static definition of the term. Over the course, I realized that while the students agreed with the notion of an organic national literature and flexible nationalism, they did not allow the same dynamism to multiculturalism. My students were not alone. Many of the critics we were reading did the same thing and referred to a decontextualized multiculturalism that crosses borders in time and space. I finally had to ask: Did 'Canadian' mean the same thing in 1971 as it does now? The answer was a resounding NO. So, I continued: Does multiculturalism? That my answer to this question is also a resounding NO forms the heart of this article.

If, as Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o says, "language in culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience of history" (wa Thiong'o 1986, 15), then it is useful to look closely at the language of the official documents reporting on the management of history in this framework: the *Annual Reports on the Operation of the Multiculturalism Act*. The Annual Reports of the various federal ministries responsible

for multiculturalism over the past forty years provide an almost untapped wealth of information from which we can track the shifting versions of multiculturalism in Canada during that time.[1] They contextualize the public voice of the official programs. By closely reading the government language on multiculturalism, I hope to explain the negative response to my own question.

From the opening celebration of multiculturalism that accompanied the introduction of the policy in 1971 to the "multicultural confidence" of 2002, and from the 2005 desire to "manage diversity" and work towards "leveraging the full benefits of diversity in Canada" (*Annual Report* 2004-5, 18) to the current call for "rapid integration," official multiculturalism has changed significantly over the years. The language of business management and emphasis on multiculturalism as an answer to fears of "extremism" so prominent in the recent reports highlights the sharp shift from multiculturalism at its official inception (with the ideal of cultural pluralism through 'integration'), through the middle period (with the preservation and enhancement of cultural pluralism enacted in law), and on to today (following an action plan for increased citizenship and against racism in a neoliberal framework). Over the years, multiculturalism has gone from relatively passive idealism to relatively active pragmatism.[2] It has also shifted from focusing on promoting "ethnocultural" activities to the more recent priorities: fostering cross-cultural understanding, combating racism and discrimination, promoting civic participation, and making Canadian institutions more reflective of Canadian diversity (2004-5, 18). The goal with which the policy began remains central: to recognize diversity as core to Canadian life. What this means, however, has changed dramatically. Further, the role of *culture*, specifically relating to the creative arts, has gone from being absolutely central to unequivocally peripheral in the multicultural framework. A large, and I argue under-examined, change in official multiculturalism concerns the specific role the arts are seen to play in achieving the public goal of preserving, enhancing, and even managing cultural pluralism in Canada.

In a report commissioned by the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration, political philosopher Will Kymlicka encapsulates decades of debate about the efficacy of government sponsored cultural pluralism succinctly:[3]

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1   The departments responsible for multiculturalism transitioned from the Department of the Secretary of State to the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship to the Department of Heritage.

2   As Michael Dewing and Marc Leman note, "[t]he concept of Canada as a 'multicultural society' can be interpreted in different ways: descriptively (as a sociological fact), prescriptively (as ideology), from a political perspective (as policy), or as a set of intergroup dynamics (as process)." (Dewing/Leman 2006, 1). In this paper, I wish to examine the intersections of these four concepts of multiculturalism.

3   As I often draw on Kymlicka's report in this article, it is useful to point out that while he was commissioned to write this report for the government, he is clearly an expert in the field of multiculturalism. Kymlicka holds the Canada Research Chair in Political Philosophy at Queen's University and is the author of *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995), *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocul-*

> Supporters argue that multiculturalism assists in the integration of im-
> migrants and minorities, removing barriers to their participation in Ca-
> nadian life and making them feel more welcome in Canadian society,
> leading to a stronger sense of belonging and pride in Canada. Critics ar-
> gue that multiculturalism promotes ghettoization and balkanization,
> encouraging members of ethnic groups to look inward, and emphasiz-
> ing the differences between groups rather than their shared rights or
> identities as Canadian citizens. This is a highly ritualized debate whose
> basic terms have barely changed in over 35 years. (Kymlicka 2010, 7)

Although Kymlicka persuasively argues that the basic terms of debate about mul-
ticulturalism do not seem to have changed substantially since the policy's inception,
I would add that the very meaning of the term *has* evolved. I am less interested in
evaluating the efficacy of official multiculturalism in Canada over time, either in
celebration or condemnation, or in deciding whether multiculturalism promotes
civic integration or ethnic isolation, to use Kymlicka's phrasing of the oppositions
that emerge from the debates, than I am in carefully considering the significant
shifts in government presentations of the Canadian vision of multiculturalism over
its almost forty-year history.

It is particularly important to recognize that in Canada multiculturalism is not (or
not solely) a smokescreen of multiplicity, a way to discuss issues of race, or a theory
of liberalism and the need for social tolerance (as has been argued in the American
context, for instance).[4] For forty years, multiculturalism has been a policy, for over a
quarter century it has been enshrined in the Constitution and in the 1984 *Canadian
Charter of Rights and Freedoms*,[5] and since the passing of the *Multiculturalism Act* in
1988, it has been a law. As the 2009-10 *Annual Report* notes, "The *Canadian Multicul-
turalism Act* provides a legal framework to guide federal responsibilities and activi-
ties with regard to multiculturalism in Canada" (2009-10, 1). However, even in its
institutionalized form, multiculturalism has not always guided the government to
follow the same values or practices. It is for this reason that it has to be taken partic-
ularly seriously within its own historical context. It does not mean the same thing

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tural Relations in Canada (1998), *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, Citizen-
ship* (2001), *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (2007).

4   In the US, multiculturalism has been linked to anti-racist projects and, conversely, it has also
     been viewed as camouflage for racism, as Gordon and Newfield (2008) argue. In *Multicultural-
     ism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media,* Ella Shohat and Robert Stam define the "multicul-
     turalist project" as a call for the "revisioning [of] world history and contemporary social life from
     a decolonizing and antiracist perspective" (7). Such critiques are most likely to occur in Canadi-
     an discourse under the umbrellas of diaspora studies, globalization studies, postcolonial stud-
     ies, and cultural studies, rather than multicultural studies.

5   Section 27 states "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation
     and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians" (n.p.).

today in Canada as it does in America or Australia or Holland, or indeed as it did in Canada two decades ago.

While multiculturalism has recently been challenged as a weakened and potentially unworkable concept in Australia and Europe,[6] in Canada it is still very much part of popular public self-definition, albeit with a substantial proportion of Canadians who feel the concept works better in theory than in practice or who continue to criticize it as carefully managed difference. The ordinariness of multiculturalism in Canada today (or what I think of as "everyday multiculturalism" and "mainstream multiculturalism") also comes out of a widespread acceptance of the ideals outlined in the original 1971 policy. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's philosophy in 1971 was that "we are all ethnic." This seems, at least on a popular level in 2011, to have trickled down.[7]

Such self-definition was not always the case. In 1984 one of the central mandates of the Canadian Multiculturalism Directorate was to "Change Canadians' perception of Canada to more accurately reflect the multicultural nature of their country" (1983-84, 36). The clear implication of such a statement is that even after thirteen years of the policy, Canadian perception was in need of transformation. Over the next few decades, such modification seems to have occurred. In a 1999 speech in Berlin, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien noted that "Canada has become a post-national, multicultural society. It contains the globe within its borders" (qtd. in 1999-2000, 3).

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6   See, for instance, Kymlicka's discussion of the Netherlands' turn away from multiculturalism amid the turns of other European states. He addresses what he sees as the predominant view in Europe: "Multiculturalism, it is said, has been tried and has failed, with serious social consequences. It is now repudiated, both by individual countries and by pan-European organizations. The only remedy now is to insist that newcomers give priority to their new national identity over their inherited ethnic or religious identities – they must agree to be 'Dutch first,' at least in relation to public life, and to renounce claims for the institutional accommodation or political expression of their ethnic identities. Ethnic identities, if they are to be preserved at all, must only be expressed in private life and not provide the basis for political claims to multiculturalism" (Kymlicka 2010, 17). Contrary to this understanding, he concludes that "it is clear that ethnic relations in Toronto are not like those in Paris, Amsterdam or Bradford" (ibid., 17) and draws on work by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) in its 2007 publication *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada* to support his claim that the Canadian model of multiculturalism differs from current European ones. According to the IRPP, "there is little evidence of the deep social segregation feared in parts of Europe [...]. Canada is not 'sleepwalking into segregation.' There is no justification for a U-turn in multiculturalism policies comparable to that underway in some European countries" (Banting/Courchene/Seidle 2007, 660, 681, qtd. in Kymlicka 2010, 17).

7   When asked to define 'Canadian,' my undergraduate Canadian Studies class answered as many would with 'multicultural.' When pressed for clarification, they responded that 'being multicultural' to them meant being of diverse ethnic backgrounds, but also being tolerant, respectful, and peaceful. Further, they self-critically acknowledged that this position came with a certain sense of smugness about the moral rectitude of the cultural pluralism contra a more purist notion of identity. My students seem to have accepted the idea that multiculturalism is what makes Canada Canada.

The tense of Chrétien's statement is of particular significance here. Multiculturalism has arrived within a global framework. For Chrétien the globe exists uncontested within the nation. A 2002 Environics survey points out that "support for multiculturalism among Canadians has increased over seven years: 85% of Canadians agreed that multiculturalism was important to Canadian identity in 2003, compared to 74% in 1997" (qtd. in Kymlicka 2010, 7). As Kymlicka notes, "74% of Canadians think that multiculturalism is a cornerstone of Canadian culture; 82% agree that multiculturalism is a source of pride for Canadians; and 83% agree that people from different racial and cultural groups are enriching the cultural life of Canada" (ibid., 8). According to the 2006 Census, "more than 200 different ethnic origins" were reported in Canada and an "estimated 5,068,100 individuals were members of the visible minority population" representing "16.2% of the total population in 2006, up from 13.4% in 2001" (Census 2006). Certainly racial and ethnic multiplicity is part of the reality of Canadian demographics: in the 2001 Census, almost half the population of Canada (47% or 14 million people) reported having origins other than British, French, or Canadian. As of the 2006 Census, nearly 42% of people in Vancouver, for instance, reported being a "visible minority" (875,295 out of 2,097,965 citizens); with the largest group being self-classified as Chinese (381,535) and next as South Asian (207,165) (Census 2006). And yet, as the *Annual Report* for 1999 recognizes, "most Canadians value ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity, but discrimination, racism, and hate crimes persist" (1999-2000, 5), with several key issues listed by the report as outstanding. These include disproportionate poverty, systemic discrimination, under-representation, and victimization as a result of racism and hate-motivated crime (with "60,000 hate and bias centred crimes committed in Canada's large urban centres annually, of which approximately 61% are directed against minorities") (1999-2000, 7). These are significant ongoing problems. How do we unravel the relationship between changing perceptions of identity, evolving demographic realities, and the shifting mandates of official multiculturalism? It is useful to look back at the original intentions of the policy to ground this question.

The multiculturalism policy of 1971

The multiculturalism policy was first introduced by Trudeau in parliament on October 8, 1971. The policy was intended to address what the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism called the "collective will to exist" of the "third order" of Canadians (ethnic groups such as Ukrainians who argued their own substantial impact on the settlement and development of the nation alongside the "founding communities" and the First Nations). The policy was implemented in recognition of

the country's history of multi-generational heterogeneity.[8] In his speech in parliament introducing multiculturalism, Trudeau outlines the policy succinctly, "[f]or although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly" (Trudeau 1971, 8545). Agreed upon by all political parties, the policy met with unanimous support in parliament (although there was some parliamentary discussion about how belated the policy was by the New Democratic Party and how to administer and financially support the ideals of the policy by the Conservatives). Outside government there were some criticisms, particularly by those in Quebec who considered the policy to be a back-handed attempt to deflate the power of Quebecois culture within the bilingual nation by downgrading French-Canadian culture to the position of *one of many* cultures within Canada.

The multiculturalism policy was said to promote a new approach to national identity through limited financial support of "ethnocultural programs" as a way to increase a sense of Canadian nationalism and sense of inclusion for Canadians of all backgrounds. Arguing the importance of "belonging" for a vibrant community, Trudeau maintained that "ethnic pluralism can help overcome and prevent the homogenization and depersonalization of mass society" (Trudeau 1971, 8545). Over a very few years in the 1960s, the government had shifted from pursuing nationalist policies around the assimilation of immigrants and First Nations peoples to advocating the state sponsorship of cultural pluralism through integration. At this stage, integration signified becoming a part of Canadian society without relinquishing one's original cultural heritage. This was distinct from the previous policies of assimilation where one's attachment to an original heritage was required to be relinquished in favour of becoming part of the majority in beliefs, customs, values, language, and traditions. By championing the value of multiple cultures within the larger polity, the multiculturalism policy also struck squarely in the face of former Canadian policies from the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries: the discriminatory head tax on Chinese immigrants (1885, 1900, and 1903), the internment of Canadians of Japanese heritage during World War II, and the "White Women's Labour Law" prohibiting white women from working for Asian business owners in Saskatchewan (enacted in

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8   Trudeau's speech contextualizes the multiculturalism policy within the history of government support of English, French, and Aboriginal Canadian cultures: "In the past, substantial public support has been given largely to the arts and cultural institutions of English-speaking Canada. More recently and largely with the help of the Royal Commission's earlier recommendations in Volumes I to III, there has been a conscious effort on the government's part to correct any bias against the French language and culture. In the last few months the government has taken steps to provide funds to support cultural educational centres for native [sic] people. The policy I am announcing today accepts the contention of the other cultural communities that they, too, are essential elements in Canada and deserve government assistance in order to contribute to regional and national life in ways that derive from their heritage yet are distinctively Canadian" (Trudeau 1971, 8545).

1912, qtd. in Backhouse 1999, 136), among others. Somewhat ironically, in light of the assimilation sought for over a century through the Indian Act of 1876 and other discriminatory legislation, the Liberal government went so far as to assert that "Canada would be the poorer if we adopted assimilation programs forcing our citizens to forsake and forget the cultures they have brought to us" (Trudeau 1971, 8545). Trudeau's policy is part of a national refashioning statement. The multiculturalism policy followed on the heels of a sea-change in immigration policies with a shift from a place-based system to a points-based system as a means for immigrant assessment. The new assessment was based on knowledge of one of the official languages, education, and prior vocational training. The result was the introduction into Canadian society of a broader range of immigrants from Asia, Africa, and South America than the earlier waves of immigration from Britain and Europe. The multicultural policy, in a sense, was a partner policy to such changes to the management of immigration. With this paradigm shift came a new idealistic equation: diversity = unity, or, national unity comes in the recognition of cultural diversity.

In the "Federal Response Appendix to *Hansard*, October 8, 1971," the details of the functioning of the policy are spelled out. Of particular significance is the way the Appendix addresses what is labeled as a 'misperception' that comes up when cultural diversity is discussed.

> The sense of identity developed by each citizen as a unique individual is distinct from his national allegiance. There is no reason to suppose that a citizen who identifies himself with pride as a Chinese-Canadian, who is deeply involved in the cultural activities of the Chinese community in Canada, will be less loyal or concerned with Canadian matters than a citizen of Scottish origin who takes part in a bagpipe band or highland dancing group. Cultural identity is not the same thing as allegiance to a country. Each of us is born into a particular family with a distinct heritage: that is, everyone – French, English, Italian and Slav included – has an 'ethnic' background. (Canada 1971, 554)

The uncoupling of national allegiance from ethnic identity is perhaps the most progressive element of the original policy. Indeed, saying everyone is ethnic also foreshadows some of the more interesting recent discussions in whiteness studies that deconstruct the myth that ethnicity only applies to those who are not of European descent or are not white. Still, the list of "everyone" is not exactly racially diverse and the magnanimity of its intent is limited. Cultural identity here is equated with the sounds of the Scottish bagpipe and the rhythm of a highland dance and is presented as non-threatening to national allegiance. Visible displays of community are seen as "heritage to treasure" but significant cultural distinctions are not acknowledged at the level of belief or value systems.

Practically speaking, the administration of multiculturalism was to promote changes to Canadian institutions to render them 'more reflective of the cultural and racial realities of Canadian society.' Trudeau outlined the four ways in which the government would provide support for ethnic pluralism and try to reach the objective of reflective representation. The government promised to 1) "assist all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada"; 2) "assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society"; 3) "promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity"; and finally, 4) "assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society" (Trudeau 1971, 8546). Although all four areas have been present since the introduction of the policy, over the years the emphasis has shifted away from the first and the third elements in favour of the second and the fourth. The early focus on developing spaces for "creative encounters" among ethnocultural groups has given way to a concentration on overcoming barriers to immigration and language training. In fact, shortly after the turn of the century, creative culture virtually disappeared from the purview of multiculturalism in the service of more pragmatic elements of cultural pluralism. This simple fact leads me to ask, where has art gone in discussions of diversity, immigration, belonging, and citizenship?

The Annual Reports

To understand the move away from the arts in official multiculturalism, I turn to the depictions of 'culture' in the Annual Reports. The rise and decline of the perceived role of creativity in multiculturalism parallels the evolution of ideas about multiculturalism in the nation itself. By concentrating on the representations of literature in the public discourse of the Annual Reports and following the shifting significations of culture within multiculturalism, I hope to show the distinct valuations of the arts in multiculturalism over time. In 1971, 'culture' is an undefined part of the ubiquitous term "ethnocultural" and is used in the service of "promoting the social and cultural integration of immigrants" (1971, 6). In 1975, 'culture' explicitly refers to folklore and craft (with books represented by the funding of the publication of Sandra Gotlieb's *The Ethnic Cookbook*, for instance, 1974-75, 56). This is hardly surprising given the emphasis in the "Report of the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism" on the success of Toronto's *Caravan* festival: "Dozens of ethnic communities displayed their arts and crafts, served their food and drinks, danced and sang in their national costumes. Toronto had never seen anything like it" (1974-5). This is, they argue, "multiculturalism in action." Multiculturalism continued in this vein with the support of ethnic festivals such as Winnipeg's *Folklorama* and Kingston's *Folklore*, for example, and celebrations of visible elements of culture such as

celebrations of food and performance rather than with more substantive engage-
ments with the problems and benefits a deeper sharing of cultural distinctions
might bring. In 1975, the emphasis on "inter-cultural sharing" and "awareness of
diversity" comes in the form of what has since been criticized as the superficial sup-
port of 'song and dance' multiculturalism, or what Stanley Fish has labeled "bou-
tique multiculturalism" (Fish 1997, 1). Suwanda Sugunasiri rhetorically asks "how can
we forget 'song and dance' multiculturalism, the earliest response of formative mul-
ticulturalism where White Canadians began by clapping to the rhythms?"
(Sugunasiri 2001, 124). In arguing the continued importance of ethnic stories in
cultural memory, Lisa Grekul links assimilation to a detrimental form of early multi-
culturalism as she argues the need to "draw ourselves out of the shadows of assimi-
lation and 'song and dance' multiculturalism" (Grekul 2005, xxiii). Rinaldo Walcott
disparages multiculturalism by arguing that it "reduces cultures to their basic de-
nomination, which turns them into folklore" (Walcott 2000, 43). In a 2010 speech,
the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, re-
minded his audience of the "song, sari, and samosa" multiculturalism of the 1970s
and voiced the current government's desire to distance itself from this history (Ken-
ney 2010, n.p.). Perhaps most famously, in *Selling Illusions,* Neil Bissoondath vilified
official multiculturalism as "ethnicity as public policy" and, as such, as a forum for
encouraging exoticism and fostering "social divisiveness" (Bissoondath 1994, 212).
These criticisms undoubtedly hold for the multiculturalism of the 1970s when mul-
ticulturalism went hand-in-hand with the exoticization of cultures through the per-
formance of difference (from British and French-based Canadian norms) in visibly
recognizable, and perceptibly non-threatening, formats. However, as I will discuss
later in this article, in an attempt to move past superficial celebrations of cultural
differences, contemporary critics and government officials have virtually emptied
multiculturalism of arts and culture.

In the 1981-2 *Annual Report*, the celebrations of cultural events are juxtaposed
with issues of race and anti-racism and social concerns begin to eclipse artistically
cultural issues.[9] The following year the first of several substantial reorientations of
the program occurred with a reorganization emphasizing social issues. In 1982, "race
relations" heads up the Multiculturalism Directorate *Annual Report*. It is also at this

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9   Several contemporary critics convincingly comment on multiculturalism as a form of institu-
    tionalized racialization. Himani Bannerji describes multiculturalism as "management through
    racialization" (Bannerji 1997, 9). Roy Miki writes that the "Canadian take on 'multiculturalism'
    needs to be read as a contradictory zone of vested interests, made more so by the engineering
    role played by the federal administration. While its more benign public face has supported cul-
    tural 'diversity' and 'pluralism,' the company it keeps with hierarchically structured relations of
    'difference' exposes a subtext of racialization. In other words, as a top down term 'multicultural-
    ism' has been deployed strategically by policy makers to project a political and cultural history
    built on 'tolerance' and 'inclusiveness'" (Miki 1997, 90). Still, it is useful to note that the term
    "race" does not enter the Annual Reports with emphasis until 1981 with the establishment of
    the "race relations unit."

time that a grant program entitled the Writing and Publications Program (WPP) was established to "provide grants for the research, writing, translation of a non-official language to an official language, and the publication of historical or literary works that reflect the cultural diversity of Canadian society" (1982-3, 17).[10] With a budget of $ 500,000, it is useful to pause and ask of the early WPP mandate what "reflect" meant in literary terms. Further, what happened to those authors who were unwilling to write as representative 'ethnic' voices of their communities? In other words, what versions of culture were being sought and subsequently rewarded by government support? One answer lies in the example of the funding of *Another Country: Writings By and About Henry Kreisel*, edited by Shirley Neuman. The book was credited as "a selection of writings that chronicle this author's transition to a life in Canada" (1985-86, 39). The biographical elements of the book outweigh, in this citation at least, a recognition of Kreisel's own significant contribution to Canadian letters in his novels *The Rich Man* (1947) and *The Betrayal* (1964) or in his role as a professor who helped inaugurate Canadian literature into university curricula in the 1960s in the department of English at the University of Alberta. A book about the successful process of immigration (from Austria) and integration into Canadian life was seen to reflect Canadian society and to substantiate a sense of belonging for non-English Canadians.

With the new Conservative government (under the leadership of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney) triumphantly exclaiming that "1984 was a landmark year: multiculturalism was enshrined in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Multiculturalism project expanded," the *Annual Report* for 1984-85 cites the need for the "promotion of changes in Canadian institutions to make them more reflective of the

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10   The efficacy and desirability of the multiculturalism policy has been well debated in the cultural framework in Canada. George Elliot Clarke, an "Africadian" poet, writer and critic, notes the critical argument that the policy reinforces "symbolic ethnicity which provides an appearance of democratic pluralism, but is, in reality, a racist policy of assimilation at best, exclusion at worst" (Clarke in Huggan/Siemerling 2000, 100). The criticisms focus on the macro – the faulty idealism of the government programs, the hidden agendas of racialization, the lack of follow-through on substantive issues, and what is viewed as too great an emphasis on superficial displays of cultural distinctions. Acknowledging such criticisms, Clarke argues that "I think that writers and artists in Canada have been able to take advantage of the policy, and to continue to promote it as a means of getting their works out to the public as well as a means of establishing their cultural presences within their work" (Clarke in Huggan/Siemerling 2000, 104). Those who support multiculturalism as an effective tool for minority groups focus on the micro – the programs themselves (pointing particularly to programs like the Writing and Publications Program and its successful subventions of a number of central contemporary writers and presses). The funding linked to the WPP has helped to develop the 'diverse' Canadian literature that is currently thriving on an international scale. Many individual writers and publishers have benefited from the WPP sub-section of the multiculturalism policy. Rohinton Mistry, MG. Vassanji, SKY Lee, Nino Ricci, and Alistair McLeod, among other prominent, now mainstream, writers, received support directly or through their publishers. Subventions also supported individual small presses and community organizations across the country.

cultural and racial realities of Canadian society" (1984-85, 34). With that, the WPP budget doubled and the range of projects supported grew. Some examples of projects that received funds include the targeted support of a public reading series by "ethnic Canadian authors at Harbourfront in Toronto" (1984-85, 35), "funding a national conference in May that brought together, for the first time, ethnic and mainstream writers, publishers, critics and literary journal representatives" and "a special issue of the *Toronto South Asian Review* on writings by Canadians of Sri Lankan origin" (1984-85, 38). The report notes the correlation between changing demographics and the support of cultural events: "during the year under review, multiculturalism as a national policy was increasingly accepted as Canada's ethnocultural communities grew to 31% of the country's total population" (1984-85, 36).[11] The mid-1980s saw an infusion of funding for creative endeavours promoting a multicultural sense of Canada and, I argue, a move toward more substantive support of cultural pluralism within an artistic framework.

In 1988, when the Multiculturalism Act was passed into law, culture through the arts sat front and center as part of the drive to recognize, preserve, and enhance diversity. A key area of support at this juncture was on translation and publication projects "which focus on unique aspects of the multicultural heritage in Canada, thus making these works more widely available to Canadians" (1988-89, 24). For instance, Jack Thiessen's *Das Elfte Jebot* (*The Eleventh Commandment and Other Stories*), translated from Low German to English, received funds and as a result "allow[ed] access to parts of the Mennonite heritage which have been inaccessible to other Canadians."[12] Further singled out for its relevance, Gloria Kupchinko Folick's *Chickenman* concerned "a prairie farmer who, close to death, looks back on his life, dreams and aspirations. It reveals to the larger Canadian community the history of an important prairie ethnocultural community, in a way which only imaginative and compelling works of fiction can" (1988-89, 24). Literature at this point is presented as vital to the recognition of communities' stories and histories in the wider polity. It helps bring acknowledgement of a diverse Canadian past as well as a heterogeneous present. Fiction in particular is seen to have a significant pedagogical role in the implementation of the values of cultural pluralism within the framework of multiculturalism. It is read for its use-value through a didactic lens to help inform and educate the wider community about the contributions of 'other' Canadians.

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11 Note that 'ethnocultural' here means non-British or non-French heritage and does not mean visible minority.

12 The irony here is that earlier in the century the government was responsible for the cancellation of education in Low German for Mennonites in favour of English language education in a bid for easier assimilation. See Amy Kroeker (2003) for a discussion of the history of assimilation policies and broken promises by the government about Mennonite education in Low German and its subsequent impact on Canadian literature.

The 1988-89 *Report* is remarkable for the sheer volume of information it provides about the funding of specific projects. Few authors are mentioned without ethnic affiliation also prominently displayed. For instance, it is noted that in Vancouver, Chinese writer Wen Jee's *Powder Blue Chevy* was produced, as was Japanese Canadian R.A. Shiomi's *Rosie's Café,* and Chinese Canadian Winston Kam's *Letters to Wu.* The cataloguing of support continues to highlight the perception that literature plays a central role in the dissemination of multicultural values: "a book of short stories by Rita Mathur gives a strong and vivid portrayal of issues touching upon and influencing the lives of immigrant women" and "Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, published by Douglas and McIntyre of Vancouver, explores the Chinese-Canadian experience. Books published by Cormorant Books include the critically acclaimed *The Lives of Saints*, by Nino Ricci, which provides insights into the experience of Italian Immigrants to Canada" (1988-89, 20). The support of literature at this stage goes beyond the cursory funding and paucity of recognition of literary works of the early years. There is a great distance in terms of literary merit and cultural significance between the *Ethnic Cookbook* and *The Lives of Saints*. Indeed, the novels of Ricci and Lee have gone on to become central to the Canadian literary canon, with *Disappearing Moon Cafe* becoming one of the most oft-taught texts in Canadian literature classrooms. The particularity of the *Report* is striking as each act of funding is named and catalogued to create a cumulative effect of support for the burgeoning artistic community. While on the one hand the *Report* homogenizes "the Chinese-Canadian experience" as though singular (1988-89, 20), on the other hand the next year's *Report* points to the fact that "among arts and cultural organizations, the program aims to open up opportunities for minority artists and, in turn, to encourage an arts community in Canada that represents the spectrum of artists working within Canada" (1990-91, 18). By 1991-92, the Creative and Cultural Expression component of official multiculturalism was charged with promoting "access to Canada's arts and cultural sectors by visible minority and ethnocultural minority artists" and enabling "artists representing ethnocultural minority communities to integrate into the larger Canadian cultural community and to promote their work without being labeled or 'ghettoized'" (1991-92, 9). The arts were supported to foster a sense of cultural multiplicity and artistic contributions were valued by the nation to help reorient heterogeneous cultural nationalism.

Following the passage of the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, further legislation was introduced to move multicultural affairs into its own Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship. Finally established in 1991, it was short-lived. In 1993, with the transition from a Conservative government to a Liberal one, the Department of Canadian Heritage replaced the Department of Multiculturalism. In addition to multicultural issues, Heritage took on responsibility for a spate of areas including "official languages, arts and culture, broadcasting, national parks and historic sites, voluntary action, human rights, amateur sports, state ceremonial affairs and the National Capital Commission" (Dewing/Leman 2006, 7) and citizenship joined immi-

gration in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Even with the change in leadership and the restructuring of the department, however, the government attitude to the arts remained relatively consistent in the early 1990s. Literature and the arts were supported because of their perceived significance as both reflective and didactic.

The reports of the 1990s enunciate the institutional obstacles faced by artists. For instance, the 1993-94 *Annual Report* recognizes the contribution of the arts to "our quality of life and to the cultural pluralism inherent in being Canadian" and goes on to note that in spite of their importance for the community "many Canadians face barriers to full participation in the arts" (1993-94, 13). Similarly, on one hand, the 1995 *Annual Report* reiterates that "The Cultural Development and Heritage sector assists in promoting Canadian art and artists of all backgrounds into the main-stream, ensuring that these are not marginalized because of lack of funds, or be-cause they are minority voices" (1994-95).[13] On the other hand, however, while stat-ing an understanding of barriers and a commitment to literature, the government also takes credit for the success of individual writers without a real recognition of the aesthetic value of the works or the writers' own roles in the creation of these sponsored texts. Indeed, the Department of Heritage rather egregiously claims responsibility for the prominence and success of the writers supported by the Writ-ing and Publications Program: "The sector's commitments in literature are a good measure of its success in promoting these voices, and providing them with space in Canada and abroad. Two results of these commitments to literature are: the 1994 Giller prize to Moyez Vassanji for *Book of Secrets* and the 1995 Giller prize to Rohinton Mistry for *A Fine Balance*" (1994-95). The labour, talent, and skill of Mistry and Vassanji go unnoted in this self-congratulatory statement cataloguing the ac-complishments of the Department of Heritage. There is a real sense here that the intersection of multiculturalism and culture is what will place Canada on a global

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13 Such statements have led to some promising results. There is no longer a mainstream of Cana-dian writing and a multicultural stream. Mainstream literature in Canada is multicultural. This does not mean that there is necessarily equal access to publishing and reviewing or an unprob-lematic acceptance of all voices, literatures, and traditions, but it does mean that there is no longer a clearly defined centre and margin of writers, and there are no longer those who are considered peripheral because of where they or their ancestors were born. 'Canadian literature' is written by those who are Canadian by birth or by choice. Think of the key Canadian writers today: Michael Ondaatje, Margaret Atwood, M. G. Vassanji, Alice Munro, Tomson Highway, Fred Wah, Thomas King, Nino Ricci, Dionne Brand, Don McKay, Joseph Boyden, and George Elliot Clarke, for example. They are from diverse backgrounds and have different relationships with Canada (and Canadian policies) but no one of them (or their work) is more illustrative of Cana-dian literature than the rest. Although I would not go so far as to attribute responsibility for changes in patterns of Canadian literary production exclusively to government policy, it is in-teresting to speculate on how much of an effect the projected values of the government in 1971 and the evolving values thereafter has had on the development of the arts and what the trickle-down effect was for the authors and the literature produced.

stage in spite of the obstacles to 'minority' writers. Culture is used in the service of multicultural value.

    With the termination of the Writing and Publishing Program in the late 1990s, the Department of Heritage became less active in arts initiatives. In fact, the arts were moved out of the auspices of the Multiculturalism branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage and entirely to the Canada Council in 2000. At this juncture the government proclaimed its own maturation as a more 'sophisticated' "nation in celebrating our multiculturalism" (1999-2000, 37). Part of this "sophistication" ostensibly came in the department's stated "increased emphasis on the policy goals of social justice, civic participation, and identity" and away from ethnographic research and, presumably although unstated, a movement away from taking responsibility for songs and dances (1999-2000, 23).

    Still, by 2002, according to the *Annual Report*, "the arts in Canada have entered maturity": culture in multiculturalism is at its zenith. The 2002 *Annual Report* states:

> If the arts represent a harbinger, we can expect to enter a new phase in the evolution of our collective Canadian identity. Diverse cultures will become the norm rather than the exception. Diverse cultures will be of interest to us all and will be celebrated appropriately. Efforts must continue in support of cultural diversity as Canada moves to adopt a new, multicultural confidence. (2001-2, 45)

    The implication is that with the arts as predictors of a new phase of "multicultural confidence," society is sure to follow. The uncritical representation of the arts as a place of 'appropriate' celebration of diversity in the *Annual Report* once again strips art of its aesthetic merit as well as its social function, and depoliticizes it in favour of its reflective and predictive utility. The resulting disservice to the arts potential cultural commentary has continued to today.

    By 2005, art and culture are no longer central to discussions of the operation of the Multiculturalism Act. The "multicultural confidence" of 2002 is absent in the 2005 report. Written in the opening months of the new Conservative government's mandate (written in 2006 after the election of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government), the shift is stark. Culture in multiculturalism no longer means supporting creative endeavours from members of diverse ethnographic communities, and the arts are left out of contemporary planning around cultural pluralism from this point on. The intervening years saw a deflation of the almost-euphoric attitude toward cultural pluralism of the 2001-2 *Annual Report*. A variety of factors contributing to this deflation might include the new government's anti-cultural ideology, the legacies of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the ongoing 'war on terror' in Afghanistan and at home with increased border security, the growth of the Muslim population and the thinly veiled fear of religious 'extremism' that surfaces in mid-decade government rhetoric, the exposure of racial profiling by police forces in

Toronto, and the spate of official recognition, apologies, and financial reparation for Chinese head tax payers and First Nations residential school survivors. Whatever the reason, the tonal shift is stark.

Further, there is some historical revisionism at work; we are all immigrants, including First Nations people, according to the 2005 *Annual Report*:

> Diversity is a fundamental and enduring characteristic of Canadian society. Tens of thousands of years ago, ancestors of Canada's Aboriginal people migrated to North America with a diversity of culture and languages. Beginning in the 16ᵗʰ century, several waves of immigration began to shape the face of Canada. (2004-5, 9)

The 2005 Report presents the central priorities of the program with a detailed action plan to "promote diversity, respect, and connections between Canadians and build social cohesion and shared citizenship." The report details the long-term strategic objective of having "Canadians living in an inclusive society built on intercultural understanding and citizen participation" (2004-5, 18). Having campaigned on a platform that emphasized public accountability for public funds, the Minister of Heritage at the time, Bev Oda, spells out the value of the program in no uncertain terms. "The Multiculturalism Program is an active player and a catalyst in advancing the agenda of inclusion, intercultural understanding, strong citizen participation, and Canadian cohesion" (2004-5, 18). The government has retained a sense of certainty about the value of the multicultural project of earlier years and, indeed, has accelerated it. It is now part of the moral imperative of the nation as a global citizen to model multiculturalism. This is not the early idealism of cultural pluralism at home. It is a global challenge in the face of the erosion of multicultural policies in other jurisdictions.

However, such self-congratulation is tempered by an awareness of the challenges of the day. The section of the 2005 *Report* entitled "The Way Forward for the Multiculturalism Program" acknowledges some of the challenges: "Canada's approach to managing diversity is cited as a model worldwide. However, our model is being tested and the realities of the 21ˢᵗ century require a renewed approach" (2004-5, 18). The program is now about management of diversity and "leveraging its full benefits" (2004-5, 18). If "leveraging" is defined by the *Webster's Dictionary* as the use of "borrowed capital for (an investment), expecting the profits made to be greater than the interest payable" then I wonder who benefits "to maximum advantage" from the borrowed capital of diversity. This is an action and solution based report: use diversity for profit. It is held to accountability and it is virtually indisputable in the values it espouses of fairness, justice, respect, and equality. Indeed, there is an aggressiveness in its insistence on these values as the correct values.

The Harper government signals yet another shift in the direction of multiculturalism in the opening pages of the 2009-10 *Annual Report*: "As the diversity of Canada

has changed, so has the implementation of Canada's Multiculturalism Policy, evolving to become more responsive to emerging needs and challenges" (2009-10, Part One). Those new challenges include the problems outlined in the opening section of the report on combating anti-Semitism, fighting religious intolerance, and stopping radicalism (religious issues have clearly emerged as central over the decade).[14] Further, the 2009-10 *Report* realigns policy objectives to now include "[b]uilding an integrated, socially cohesive society; [m]aking institutions more responsive to the needs of Canada's diverse population; and [e]ngaging in international discussions on multiculturalism and diversity" (2009-10, Part One). The return to the ideal of peaceful integration brings us back to the language of the early 1970s when multiculturalism was about fostering a smooth transition for immigrants to becoming good integrated citizens. The recent push toward integration is also stressed in a speech entitled "Good Citizenship: The Duty to Integrate" delivered by the current Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, who defines *The Multiculturalism Act* and program as "the contemporary institutional expression of Canada's long historical tradition of pluralism" (Kenney 2010, n. p.). He continues to contextualize his push for integration as a moral imperative by drawing on the quotidianness of contemporary multiculturalism:

> In the 1970s, many have argued that it became, as I said, a kind of celebration of the more superficial aspects of cultural diversity. I would argue that in Canada today we don't need the agency of the state to promote that kind of cultural diversity. It exists. It is a fact of life. It is deeply grounded in our society and I would further argue that our ethnocultural communities are sufficiently large and robust with their own resources that they don't need government contributions or subsidies in order to maintain diversity. It's there and we all enjoy it. But, what we need to focus on, I argue, in our Multiculturalism Program, are the concrete challenges of integration. [...] Now, that's exactly what we have done through the Multiculturalism Program. We've changed the priorities of the program to focus on rapid pathways to integration, building bridges between communities to avoid the isolation of particular ethnocultural communities, focusing on youth-at-risk and combating radicalization. (Kenney 2010, n.p.)

Kenney simultaneously, and somewhat contradictorily, articulates the success of multiculturalism, and thus the end of a need to "foster," "preserve," or "enhance" cultural distinctions (to use the central verbs of *The Multiculturalism Act*), and yet also

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14 In his 2010 report, Kymlicka notes that "the heated debates on religious family law arbitration and the funding of religious schools in Ontario, and the reasonable accommodation debate in Quebec" demonstrate "that religion is now the most controversial domain of multiculturalism" (Kymlicka 2010, 18).

considers the challenges of integration. Kenney's language is reminiscent of the language of 1971 when the original intention of the Ethnic Participation Division of the Secretary of State was to "assist organizations to help immigrants to participate in the social and cultural life of their communities thereby encouraging them to integrate fully into Canadian society" and when the key mandate of the policy was to engage in "promoting the social and cultural integration of immigrants" (1971, 6). In 1971, as Kenney argued in 2010, they were looking for bridges to rapidly integrate immigrants.[15] The difference is that now cultural pluralism is seen as a self-evident aspect of Canadian society. Because of this, the program of integration seems to me to be driven by outside imperatives. I suggest that given the language of the Report, a core imperative is now economic as the nation is managed and its new citizens are leveraged as a part of the immigration portfolio. The long history of cultural heterogeneity disappears here when multiculturalism is primarily linked to new citizens. Problematically, the important objectives of citizen participation and intercultural understanding have been put in the service of rapid integration and economic gain. And once again, the arts are not a part of this conversation.

I am reminded of the prescient argument made by Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel in their 2002 book *Selling Diversity* about the ways in which the Canadian government of the 1990s employed the neoliberal rhetoric of competition in a global economy and drew on the language of business (markets, efficiency, competitiveness, and individualism) as central to policy directions governing multiculturalism and immigration. They argue that the increasingly neoliberal Canadian policy makers of the day responded to the "exigencies of globalization" by using multiculturalism as a selling feature of Canada (Abu-Laban/Gabriel 2002, 12). Multiculturalism, they maintained, was not an ideal but a marketing tool for global trade and international big business. It was a means of "capturing global markets and enhancing Canada's global competitiveness" whereby the ethnic backgrounds of citizens were commodified, marketed, and billed as trade-enhancing (Abu-Laban/Gabriel 2002, 12). Abu-Laban and Gabriel argue that the rhetoric, assumptions, values, and changing conceptions of citizenship in the service of economic globalization have had an impact on Canadian immigration, employment, and multiculturalism policies. I take their argument into the realm of the arts and suggest that

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15 As Kymlika notes "'integration' is a broad term, encompassing many different dimensions. For example: economic integration into the labour market; political integration into the electoral process and other forms of political participation; social integration into the networks and spaces of civil society, from informal networks of friends and neighbours to membership in more formal organizations" (Kymlicka 2010, 7). He concludes "on all of these dimensions, there is growing evidence that immigrants to Canada and visible or religious minorities fare better than most, if not all, other Western democracies" (Kymlicka 2010, 7). The push for rapid integration is somewhat at odds with Kymlicka's findings.

the move towards 'managing diversity' has also had a dizzying effect on the position of culture in multiculturalism and in the wider public sphere.[16]

As part of a justification of withdrawing funds for culture and the arts from the auspices of multiculturalism, the government capitalized on the success of previous programs and the commercial success of some of the artists supported, (as past governments had done with Mistry and Vassanji). Following the logic of the open market, the message was that since a diverse range of Canadian writers were now internationally successful, creative culture no longer required the financial support it once did. Under official multicultural support of the arts, artists were consistently valued for who they were (members of an ethnic community) rather than what they created. Now that the artistic community somewhat mirrors the demographics of the nation and now that the arts have reached a state of supposed 'multicultural maturity' and confidence, the government no longer sees itself in the role of promoting and enhancing diversity in the arts. Further, the government no longer recognizes the possibility of institutional barriers for minority artists and writers. If the government considered the primary function of the arts to be to reflect a mainstream multicultural Canada, then they appear to view this task as complete. However, the work of social justice and civic participation continue to be priorities for the government because they continue to pose problems within the larger polity. The problem with this logic, as I see it, is that it is a narrow vision of the social and political possibilities of the arts and a limited version of how the government can engage with creative responses to cultural challenges.

Conclusion

What is missing in the language of management and trade is culture, as I have been arguing throughout this article. I ask again, where has art gone in discussions of diversity, immigration, belonging, identity, and citizenship? For over a decade art has been under the auspices of the Canada Council which hosts a number of exter-

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16 It is important to note that arts and culture represent a large economic interest in the nation with the arts being a multi-billion dollar industry. According to the Canada Council, "The direct impact of the arts and cultural sector in Canada – as measured by its contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) – was close to $40 billion in 2003-04, with total direct employment reaching an estimated 600,000 jobs (roughly the same as agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, oil & gas and utilities combined)" (Canada Council 2006, n.p.). Further, "employment growth in the arts and cultural sector outpaced the growth of Canada's workforce during the 1980s and 1990s" (Canada Council 2006, n.p.). More recently, the Conference Board of Canada "estimates that the economic footprint of Canada's culture sector was $84.6 billion in 2007, or 7.4 per cent of Canada's total real GDP, including direct, indirect, and induced contributions. Culture sector employment exceeded 1.1 million jobs in 2007" (Conference Board 2008, n.p.).

nal links (e.g. Canadian Arts and Heritage Sustainability Program) but few of these deal explicitly with cultural pluralism. There is no core mandate to promote diversity within the Canada Council. When the Department of Heritage does discuss culture, art, and diversity in the same sentence, it is to enhance discussions of culture as a series of goods and services to be recognized internationally.[17] There seem to be few, if any, programs that explicitly make the links between the multicultural priorities listed above (e.g. anti-racism, cultural citizenship) and the possibility of addressing them through creative exchange. While I support these vital priorities, the absence of culture in their direct purview is still worrisome. The problem is that when 'practical' concerns are considered in a separate section of the Department of Heritage from creative work, I worry that the significant contributions that artists and those working in the production and reception of the creative economy can make to the debates about racism and citizenship are overlooked. At the same time, the role of the arts as a potential space of engagement of tough social topics is devalued. While it is vital to think about issues of citizenship and belonging, it is also important to think about how such citizenship is articulated in cultural terms by individual artists. Literature, for instance, can provide a forum for engaging in the important debates around the precedence of group or individual rights, or debates about what constitutes imagined communities and flexible notions of citizenship.[18]

The reason I find the misperceptions about a static kind of multiculturalism troubling is that I see it as emblematic of a wider public dismissal of the arts as socially irrelevant. One of the most long-standing criticisms of multiculturalism has been that it has been superficial, overly celebratory, and impractically ideological. The recent reports speak back, scream even, at such criticisms. When critics argue about multiculturalism being about *just* "song and dance," it is clear that such forms of creative public expression are not as valued as other forms of social action. In a desperate bid to move beyond the perception that multiculturalism stops at restaurants and stages, the government has now neglected songs and dances (and music, stories, poems, paintings, and cultural performances). By calling some aspects of creative expression superficial, critics have effectively undermined creative expressions in general. The baby has been thrown out with the bathwater as the *anti-song*

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17 Canada signed the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (adopted in October 2005), "an international agreement that will recognize the unique character of cultural goods and services, and reaffirm the right of governments to enact policies in support of the diversity of cultural expression." (http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch/publctn/raconter-story/102-eng.cfm, accessed June 1, 2011).

18 Think of the complexity of engagement with individual and group rights in Miriam Toews' novel *A Complicated Kindness* where the main character Nomi is shunned by her Mennonite community for trying to be an individual at the expense of the group governed by the Anabaptist religion. Or, think of the depiction of internment of a family during the Second World War in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* where the liberty of individual Canadians of Japanese heritage was sacrificed for what was considered to be the safety of Canadians at large.

and dance stance has backfired. It has not made authorities take culture more seriously, it has made them abandon it altogether. The derision of songs/music and dance/theatre neglects to recognize that performances often tell stories frequently based on history, on religion, or on generational narratives. Such stories are often fundamental to communal and cultural memory.[19] The dismissal of 'songs, samosas, and saris' also underestimates what citizenship means in a more holistic sense where developing creative culture is a vital part of "belonging" to the nation (even as Trudeau put it, in an era of mass society) and the reimagining of community. I see this as a dangerous kind of curtailing of public acts of creative expression that could be offered by ethnic groups and individuals who might challenge the myth of maturely integrated cultural pluralism or undermine the assumption that 'ethnic subjects' share a bloc mentality. The replacement of arts in multicultural public discourse with action plans on 'useful' subjects like citizenship and anti-extremism is also a part of more insidious attack on the arts and humanities in a wider framework. It continues in the vein of the skepticism of funding research for less 'relevant' subjects like literature and film (research, we are reminded, that will not save lives). Countering this, I think it is vital that we take seriously the 'culture' in multiculturalism and think critically about the minutiae of public language and policy that has a clear impact on the national imaginary. It is necessary now to account for the role that culture plays in social cohesion and the establishment of a sustainable creative community. It is also important to take into account the ways in which the discussions of multiculturalism in a Canadian context are altered if one takes into account the shifting meanings of "multiculturalism" in public discourse. I return to the question I asked at the outset and I reiterate the resounding NO. Multiculturalism no longer means what it meant in 1971. We need to pay attention to the telling historical distinctions.

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19 When I consider the significance of dance, I am reminded of Wilson Harris's important discussion of the history of the limbo dance and the memory it carries of the holds of the slaveships on the Middle Passage. Harris argues that the limbo carries a syncretic memory of oppression and survival.

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