FRINGE FESTIVALS, CULTURAL POLITICS, AND THE NEGOTIATION OF SUBJECTIVITY

by

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Abstract

Social theory, influenced most recently by poststructuralism, has found renewed interest in questions concerning the subject, representation, ideology, and social formations. Rejecting earlier structuralist attempts to theorize the subject as ultimately tied to essentialist conceptualizations of society, it is suggested, rather, that individual subjects and social formations are constituted within a plurality of contesting discourses which form no totalizing logic, and in which no necessary relations can be defined.

Attention has thus shifted to culture - its products, practices and representations - as sites where subjectivity (including gender, race, and class identities) and social formations are constructed, challenged and transformed. Social formations are viewed as mutable, their elements always able to be articulated within alternate formations. It is at the level of representation and dissemination, then, that a "politics of culture" emerges.

This thesis examines Canada's Fringe Festivals as sites where subjectivity is negotiated and social formations constituted and transformed. These festivals are shown to provide possibilities for diversity and plurality - providing room for the production and consumption of cultural products which would otherwise remain invisible within the rationalized structures of Canadian society. This occurs through their accessibility (both to artists and patrons), their inversion of the wage relations of traditional theatre, their subversion of criticism (excellence and universality) and their transformation of rationalized urban spaces into spaces of "festivity." The festivals encourage interaction between patrons, artists and "representations" thereby moderating the influence of traditional evaluative media and positioning the negotiation of "meaning" in an intersubjective, "public" context.
While an emerging literature on festivals has emphasized their "liminality" - considering them spaces of pure possibility where the structures of everyday life are suspended and transformed - the present work argues that such events should be understood as "situated" - inseparable from the social relations of the city. Whether examining characteristics of the Fringe "public," the selective images used in promotional literature, the production of "taste" across social groups, or the instrumental rationality behind state support of the festivals, the Fringe Festivals, their products and participants, are found to be constituted within multiple (often contradictory) discourses which simultaneously subvert and reproduce existing social formations.
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Chapter 1:
Culture, politics and subjectivity

It is the possibility of indeterminacy that offers the best chance of popular resistance. (John Frow)¹

At first glance it would seem strange to claim a political moment at Canada's Fringe Festivals. The clowns and buskers at the square; people enjoying the warmth of a summer afternoon; the activity on the stages, on the sidewalks and within the crowd; the outdoor cafés; the galleries; all speak of pleasure, entertainment, even contentment - a far cry from the strident action of "political" engagement. But this is precisely what I intend to do throughout this text - claim that the festival, the activities of individuals at the festival, the spaces which the festival opens to "difference," its possibilities for production and interpretation, contain political moments - moments where the play of meaning escapes determination by certain socially produced limits and where individual subjects are confronted with a plurality of possibilities.

This thesis will examine two "alternative" theatre festivals in Winnipeg and Vancouver. These Fringe Festivals, as they and several others across Canada are called, are more than just recent interventions in the structures and possibilities of "Canadian theatre." Certainly they challenge the structures of Canadian theatre, providing space for voices rarely heard, and I will spend some time exploring this. But they are also festival, and as such they are significant public (even popular) events in which meaning is produced, identity negotiated and social discourses disseminated and contested, in a highly intersubjective manner. Their accessibility and intersubjectivity provides possibilities rarely found either in theatre or in social interaction.

Recent literature which examines cultural practices (as diverse as reading or shopping) and cultural events (world exhibitions, carnival, festival) has begun to focus on their role in the constitution of both subjectivity and the "social." It is suggested that meaning is negotiated, intersubjectively, within the signs and symbols, representations and interpretations that are present to participants or consumers. Within such events and practices, individuals are positioned in relation to social discourses and endowed with identity. Cultural activities and products are, therefore, by their nature "political" - part of the way that individual subjects are positioned within social discourses of "gender," "race," or "class." In turn, it is the agency of "situated" subjects that is constitutive of the societ(ies) in which they are energetically entangled - and it is here that the "politics" of culture - of representation and interpretation becomes readily apparent, and my interest in the Fringe Festivals emerges.

This leads to other questions. If cultural events are sites where subjectivity is negotiated, then we must ask how these events open or limit the play of possibilities. Who is included? What is disseminated? How are their "public spheres" defined? How are these events themselves positioned within rationalized systems of money and power? While the Fringes provide conditions for challenging dominant discourses, they cannot be understood simply as "oppositional" events, for they are constituted at the intersection of multiple (often contradictory) discourses and institutions. How are we to understand the sidewalk busker performing a political parody on a sidewalk in downtown Winnipeg, at an event essentially "funded" by the federal government? What about the audience which gathers at a show that is deeply critical of those institutions that give them power (after all, Fringe audiences, as we shall see, are dominated by young, urban professionals). What I hope to demonstrate throughout this work is that while the Fringes do provide real possibilities for
alternate expressions and marginalized groups, they are, like all cultural events, situated - placed within certain social and economic contexts, which work to limit their possibilities. They are sites, therefore, where the coherence of our social worlds are at one moment disrupted, yet where these worlds are, at another, (re)positioned within certain parameters.

This thesis is itself "situated." Informed by a growing recognition within the social sciences that "history," "humanity," the "public," the "self," the "public-private," are socially produced, I wish to explore both the processes by which certain histories are written and experienced while others are not, and the possibilities and strategies of introducing difference into our cultural discourses or inscribing our public spaces in different ways. Therefore, I will explore the potential of the Fringe Festivals, and also what limits these events - social discourses, cultural practices, "colonization" by systems of money and power. There is a constant tension that I hope to maintain throughout - exalting in the Fringe "imaginary" of "freedom of expression, conversation and pleasure" on the one hand, and confronting its impossibility in the ideological coding of these events and selectiveness of their participants on the other. Implicit is a questioning - perhaps government funding need not link the arts to international tourism, perhaps we can find a way of reducing the boundaries that we place around "excellence," "tradition" or the artistic canons which would open our culture to the experiences, participation, and canons of others. Perhaps we can create the conditions, however tentative and uncertain, for an extension of plurality in the face of the homogenizing tendencies of rationalized lifeworlds.

Since I use the contested terms society, culture, the individual, and the political, throughout this work, I need to say something about my understanding of each. If we are to speak of society as multiple systems or webs of institutions and structures, discourses and centers of power in which the individual is
positioned, then I argue that the "cultural" - the interpretation of this social, its signs and symbols, its modes of "being" and material practices - becomes a site within which the subjectivity of individuals and the social itself is constituted and negotiated. If we are to speak of individuals as active subjects, creators and interpreters of meaning, participating in the production and consumption of products, then we must ask at the same time in what manner they engage in these activities, how they have been constituted as individual subjects, positioned within differentiated social systems. And, if we are to speak of the "political" then it is to claim that all intervention into the cultural, is to intervene in its possibilities and limits, through which individuals are presented with new constellations of power and meaning amid shifts in the relative positions of the elements of this firmament.

The Winnipeg and Vancouver Fringe Festivals will remain the touchstones of discussions which will inquire into the concerns that I have outlined. In a sense what I intend to do is straightforward and can be previewed through an example of a show which played at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival. Woza Albert is a play centered on the activities of two South African blacks awaiting the arrival of the "Christ" within the oppressive system of apartheid. As a script this play is already a political representation - its "revealing" of apartheid is both comic and critical. As performance it is transformed into something new - our identification and interpretation unfolded in relation to the ability and interpretation of the actors, although occurring differently for each member of the audience. This is no great revelation - theatre historians and critics have argued text - performance, production - reception, for years. But all too often the discussion ends here. What is of interest to me is not simply that Woza Albert was written, or that Woza Albert could be performed, but that Woza Albert was performed - that the conditions for the possibility of its
performance existed. It became part of that cultural realm in which subjects are constituted. There is a further dimension - for not only the conditions for its performance existed, but also the conditions for its interpretation within a certain meaning-constitutive context. The story of this show is complicated by a number of subtexts and contexts which are worth relating. What makes this production notable was not just that it was performed in a non-traditional theatre space in Winnipeg, but that it was performed by actors who were using this stage on Princess Street to open performance space for themselves at home in Nigeria, to (and with) a crowd who were unique, and who were consuming and interpreting this play within certain cultural and spatial practices that were different than those usually associated with theatre, yet positioned within larger social and cultural trends, which were part of the conditions which made the event possible.

More generally, I wish to argue that while these Fringe Festivals are a site where identity and meaning are negotiated, their structure, their location, their transformation of urban space, their reliance on state support, all work to

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2They explained that their involvement with the Fringe circuit had three purposes: to bring a play by a black South African to a wider audience; to earn money to fund projects back in Nigeria; and to keep them out of jail. While the third reason is the most intriguing - they believed that contacts in North America would constitute a convenient and effective lobby group should they be jailed (again) for their "political" theatre in Nigeria - the first two reveal some of the "political moments" in the Fringes: they create space for a show which may not have otherwise been performed in Canada (by Canadians or foreign companies); and they provide artists with a way to sustain themselves and their work outside of the rationalized structures of funding and evaluation in Canada's mainstage theatres.

3Audience surveys at the Winnipeg and Vancouver Fringes found the audience to be constituted around certain class, racial and lifestyle characteristics.

4The nature of the events makes them accessible (the audience could "come alone," or "come as they were") and the location and structure of the event encourages significant interaction between audience and audience and between audience and artist. Those involved in Woza Albert were themselves as accessible as had been their show, and the locating of theatre within the structure of festival, and in transformed spaces of the city, rather than in the city's "flagship" cultural institutions provided the site and possibility for a widening of the events' "public sphere(s)."

5The "consumption" of "culture" has of course often been linked to "status" and "class" and is susceptible to the revaluation of products and practices within a continuously restructuring and adaptive global economy. The Winnipeg Fringe Festival cannot be discussed without acknowledging that its possibility, its place, and its participants are part of larger cultural changes which have revalued the "streets," "nostalgia," "classical architecture" and "conspicuous consumption" nor that these events have become subject to the instrumental rationality of state and corporate entities upon which the funding of these events depends.
determine their possibilities and their limits. To argue this I will at times wander far from the theatre around which these events are organized, asking questions of global economies and local strategies, inquiring of consumption practices, social status and the "distinction" of participation, concerning myself with institutions of criticism, funding, theatre history and the relations of power within them, asking why the streets and the crowd remain (or are now again) such a powerful attraction to us. But I will always return to these events - to the comments of producers and artists, and to the responses to questionnaires by over 1500 patrons - to ask questions of the education, income, or lifestyles of participants - to inquire of motivation and desire, pleasure and practice. I am not a theatre critic nor a theatre historian - I will leave discussion of the products of these festivals, the shows and performances, to those whose knowledge of these matters far exceeds mine. My objectives are different - to explore the negotiation of subjectivity in cultural events and in so doing, impress upon the social sciences the textuality of society, and the importance of the cultural in society's constitution; and to impress upon the arts the materiality of culture, the impossibility of autonomy and the "situatedness" of cultural events and artistic production within cultural practices, social discourses, even global movements of information and capital. If I am to stress the role of these Fringe in the negotiation of subjectivity, and emphasize their ability to widen participation in the "public sphere," it may be of value to examine in more detail the constitution of subjectivity and current debates concerning the "public sphere."

6Erika Patterson, at the University of Victoria, has initiated an extensive study of the Fringes in relation to Canadian theatre history.
Discerning the subject: ideology, interpellation, subjectivity

Unmediated expression is a philosophical impossibility (Paul de Man)\(^7\)

No discursive formation is a sutured totality and the transformation of the elements into moments is never complete. (Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe)\(^8\)

What is the relationship between the subject, agency, structure and ideology? By now there is a certain "genealogy" of attempts to understand the individual as subject within rationalized modern societies. Structuralists, for instance, problematized the individual subject in order to clarify understandings of human agency, social structure and the reproduction of social formations. Voluntaristic notions of human agency were decried as the dream of humanists and idealists who refused to recognize the structuring of society by the institutions of economy and state. This critique was undoubtedly a step forward in understanding subjectivity and agency (writers such as Althusser are still influential), yet in the heyday of structuralism the subject often became lost within the play of determination and interpellation. More recently, post-structuralists have questioned the determinism of structuralist accounts, but, refusing to return to a conception of unmediated agency, have situated the negotiation of subjectivity in the interstices of an overdetermined, non-sutured society. While I wish to explore processes by which the subject is constituted as an active participant in society (what one theorist has described as the "performative subject"), I have no desire to affirm the idealism of humanist theorists. The individual is always subject to, always already placed within language, placed within a material world where possibilities are limited (the "pedagogical" subject).\(^9\) My work is underlined by a concern with \textit{plurality}


\(^9\)The "performative" and "pedagogical" are terms coined by Homi Bhabha in his analysis of the ambiguity of nationalism as a negotiated yet structuring discourse. Homi Bhabha,
rather than pluralism, with those conditions which encourage the possibility
diversity and autonomy, and those which preclude the same. It is with this
interest that I document the revival of "festival," examine "theatre" and
"representation" and explore the return to the "streets."

This theoretical approach can be made more clear through the Lacanian
reading of Althusser which is developed in Paul Smith's Discerning the subject. Smith develops two central points - first, that the subject is "positioned" within
ideological processes that constitute the "social," and second - that the
"positioning" of the subject is continuously destabilized within and between these
ideological processes. Smith's argument is worth briefly summarizing for it enables an understanding of the subject and the society which suggests neither is fixed, and further, suggests that what is of interest to the researcher and cultural critic with an "emancipatory" interest are those sites, processes or strategies through which current social formations or dominant discourses are rendered arbitrary and unstable.

Smith, similar to other post-Marxists (such as Laclau and Mouffe), is intent on moving beyond "historical inevitability." Some earlier Marxist theorists had emphasized a dichotomy between the "lived experience" of "real men" within an illusory "ideology" and the plenitudinous individuals of the future who would arise following the recognition of the currently opaque "real" (revealed through a Marxist "science" of history). In other words, they awaited the day that subjects moved from a "false consciousness" to a "class consciousness," and capitalist social formations would be transcended in a moment of revolution. Smith rejects this historical/teleological assumption and

10Paul Smith, Discerning the subject (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
points to the reality that this class consciousness has not been, and appears unlikely to ever be, recognized. However, society has changed in the interim, and Smith suggests that what are needed are theories which account for changes in social formations without reference to "historical inevitability."\textsuperscript{12}

The work of Louis Althusser provides Smith with a starting point. While Althusser never succeeded in escaping the Marxist dyad ideology-real (he still maintained a conception of true-false which would be revealed through "science"), his discussions of ideology and interpellation remain important.\textsuperscript{13} Althusser rejected the notion that ideologies could ever disappear, suggesting instead that, rather than viewing ideologies as distorting the real, they should be understood as systems of representation which constituted the real. Ideologies, therefore, have material existences specific to given social practices. Althusser makes an important distinction between ideology-in-general (hence Ideology) and specific ideologies. Ideology is what "holds society together" but consists of a multitude of ideologies, which operate in specific historical forms. This provides the context for Althusser's discussion of the interpellated individual/subject.

Althusser claimed that the subject was "positioned" through the interpellation of ideologies. Interpellation was "the process through which the human being is constituted as a subject through its relation to the ideological practices of society."\textsuperscript{14} Subjects "filled" the positions of capitalist society because they identified their self-experience with them. Althusser, however, gave his discussion a functionalist twist. This interpellation incited people "to identify their self-experience with the image of that experience that comes for them in the discourses emanating from the ideological state apparatuses" (italics

\textsuperscript{12}Smith, Discerning the Subject, 5.

\textsuperscript{13}Smith's is a selective reading of Althusser, stripping from his conceptions of ideology, interpellation and the subject any hints of determinism ("in the last instance") or distinctions between ideology and the real. For other readings of Althusser see T. Benton, The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism (London: MacMillan, 1984) and G. Elliot, Althusser: The Detour of Theory (London: Verso, 1987).

\textsuperscript{14}John Mowitt, "Forward: the resistance to theory," in Paul Smith, Discerning the subject, xiii.
Althusser's is ultimately a homogenized interpellation, one which "in the last instance" places the subject in proper relation to the state-economic apparatuses, the many ideologies forming a unified Ideology.

While Smith contends that "the concept of interpellation . . . is an indispensable tool for describing the way in which the subject is brought into place by specific ideological and discursive formations," he argues that Althusser's formulation leaves little room for an account of agency. Smith wishes to resituate the concept of "interpellation." He argues that ideological discourses emanate from a multiplicity of sites and cannot be reduced to one apparatus:

> It is by no means obvious that the welter of ideological interpellations that might arise from a variety of sources - state apparatuses, texts, history, whatever, - do in fact form any unified social ideology - let alone one bound to class or economic categories.

The subject is overdetermined within many ideological processes, and has access to no positions "outside" of ideology. This is a similar argument to that of Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and socialist strategy*. Laclau and Mouffe argue that once the "essentialist" assumptions of Althusser are abandoned, the "real" no longer has to be located outside of the articulated elements which constitute societies. Conceiving societies as overdetermined realms of multiple discourses, in which elements are articulated as moments interior to discursive formations, Laclau and Mouffe claim that no formation can completely exhaust the possibilities of any element of a society - any element can always already be articulated as a moment within another formation. Laclau and Mouffe summarize this overdetermination as follows:

> The incomplete character of every totality necessarily leads us to abandon, as a terrain of analysis, the premise of 'society' as a sutured and self-defined totality. . . . There is no single underlying principle fixing - and hence constituting - the whole field of differences. The irresoluble interiority/exteriority tension is the

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15Ibid., xiv. This summary of Smith's reading of Althusser and Lacan is indebted to the concise reading by Mowitt in his introduction to Smith's book.
16Smith, *Discerning the Subject*, 21.
17Ibid., 18.
condition of any social practice: necessity only exists as a partial limitation of the field of contingency. It is in this terrain, that the social is constituted. For the same reason that the social cannot be reduced to the interiority of a fixed system of differences, pure exteriority is also impossible. In order to be totally external to each other, the entities would have to be totally internal with regard to themselves: that is, to have a fully constituted identity which is not subverted by any exterior. But this is precisely what we have just rejected. This field of identities which never manage to be fully fixed, is the field of overdetermination. . . . Thus, neither absolute fixity nor absolute non-fixity is possible.18

There is a precarious and relational character to both society and the subject - "there is no social identity fully protected from a discursive exterior that deforms it and prevents it becoming fully sutured."19 Hegemony, therefore, is not an imposed relation, or one constituted through a unified Ideology, but rather a set of relations (necessarily indeterminate) that holds sway at any given moment. The elements of these hegemonic relations are, by definition, overdetermined, and it is precisely within this ideological overdetermination that exists an irrepressible moment of resistance. The political suggestiveness of this formulation is readily apparent and Laclau and Mouffe devote their last chapter to a discussion of its potential for a specifically socialist strategy. I will not discuss this here, except to acknowledge that this account provides the motivation for the present work - an attempt to understand the process by which what Laclau and Mouffe would describe as the "democratic imaginary" (equality and liberty) is extended to additional areas of the social/cultural realm, for it proceeds not through the actions of a privileged group (working class) but through and in the everyday practices of individuals. What Smith, and the writers of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, provide, is a new understanding of the subject; its "positioning" and "agency." Mowitt's summary emphasizes the resulting "politics" of culture - which, so I will show, resonates in the Fringes:

all subjects arise at a temporally shifting intersection of multiple interpellation. In effect, one is the subject of race, gender, and class discourses as they are disproportionately activated by different cultural media.20

18Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony, 111.
19Ibid.
20Mowitt, "Forward," xiv.
The subject is situated in what Mowitt describes as a "conflict of interpellations." De Certeau argues that the individual is "a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of such relational determinations interact."21 Within this conflict the subject (and the social) is constituted and reconstituted.

We have determined, then, that subjectivity is constituted within a multitude of ideological discourses (and that the dissemination of these discourses is political). It is perhaps not difficult to understand, at this point, why I wish to argue that cultural events are significant sites simply because here the subject is confronted with plurality. But why should the subject change, rather than remain the same? To what extent does this result from the actions of a conscious, knowledgeable subject? Smith’s reading of Althusser is not sufficient to explain why change occurs, why resistance happens, nor, what direction(s) it might take. In order to address these questions, Smith submits Althusser to a Lacanian reading. Smith focuses on Lacan’s description of the subject’s entry into the symbolic order of language, and proposes that the "conflict of interpellations" occurs intersubjectively - that agency arises in the destabilization of identity that occurs in this realm, activated through desire. Mowitt summarizes the three "moments" which Smith appropriates from Lacan’s work:

1) "Reality" is mediated by language within a differential system (A is A because it is not B, not because there is a direct correspondence between the signifier A and that which it purports to signify). The subject is constituted in language and structured through the differential logic of the linguistic signifying chain (the subject - "I" - is given meaning or identity in relation to other elements of the signifying chain). Lacan emphasizes the indeterminate relation between sign and signifier to stress that no closure around the "self" is possible,

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that any "I" is always contingent. For Smith, the important aspect of this point is that the subject is divided, rather than unified, by this differential logic - divided, as it were, by precisely that (language) which enables it to articulate its experience as its own.

(2) This divided subject is predisposed towards its "others" - the unconscious and the social domain of others. The "I" occurs in the process of recognizing the "self" in the field of the "Other" (Lacan's "mirror-stage"). The subject, therefore, simply in the process of defining itself (in establishing a presumed coherent "I" in discourse), becomes, as Mowitt suggests "energetically entangled in the social construction of reality" or more in Lacan's language, constituted in the dialectic between the "subject" and "language."

(3) Desire destabilizes the subject within this intersubjective realm. "Lack" arises in the recognition of "difference" and is filled through constructing a sense of "plenitude" around images of the "other." While this allows the subject to construe itself as a coherent subject, it is simple enough to note that this subject is marked by instability, always already destabilized in every entry into the symbolic realm. Desire therefore attaches the (never complete) structuring of the subject to an always present lived inadequacy of social reality.22

Summarizing Smith's Lacanian reading of Althusser, I will suggest that two moments - the "calling" of multiple ideological interpellations and the inevitability of the subject experiencing the inadequacy of all in its intersubjectively constituted "reality," - result in a precarious identity which is continually destabilized and fixed around other signs and symbols. Yet, while the subject is constituted within this symbolic realm, it is necessary to emphasize

22This is developed on pages xiv-xv of Mowitt's "Forward," and more fully in Smith's chapter on the unconscious - Discerning the Subject, 70-82.
that not all possibilities are open to the subject at any time and place. The subject is constituted and active within certain ideological interpellations. On the other hand, the overdetermined nature and indeterminacy of meaning also allows us to free our understanding of culture from Horkheimer's and Adorno's reluctant conclusions on mass culture or Marcuse's "one-dimensionality." The argument that meaning is produced by an undifferentiated culture industry where the individual subject is left a dupe of T.V. administrators, Hollywood, or the producers of "spectacle," does not recognize the overdetermination of meaning, multiple sites of power, or the alternate "uses" which subjects make of cultural products. While usefully interrogating the mechanisms of "meaning-production," these theorists withdraw any position which the subject can occupy from which different, contrasting, or oppositional interpretations of cultural products might be produced. In such theory, "mass" culture, even theatre - except that by those privileged few (avant-garde) who could "transcend" mass culture and produce authentic "art" - served to place its audience contentedly (consentingly) within their social setting.

An important aspect of Smith's work, and one which I hope surfaces within this discussion is that there are moments of resistance within the present "reality." The pessimism of the previously mentioned mass-culture theorists emerged out of Germany's encounter with fascism and the inapplicability of Marxist "revolution" in mid-century Western capitalism - the moment of revolution would not be found in the eventual emergence of "class consciousness" in the proletariat, nor in the zero-sum game of "revolution" where the existing order would be transcended. Recent "post-Marxists" have instead located the "political" and "socialist strategy" in the extension of the "democratic imaginary" to further social groups through ideological struggle within

23Nor is the subject completely "knowledgeable" - the subject is inevitably mediated by the unconscious.
overdetermined societies (in a sense, political struggle at the level of the "signifier"). This is especially true within democratic nations where the coercive force of the state is rarely used to impose consent. It is the impossibility of a "suture" of the social around one set of social relations, rather than a "totalizing" critique or "class consciousness" which provides the best chance for "resistance." Cultural events such as the Fringe Festivals are therefore much more than "pleasure" and "entertainment" (although they are this too!). They are sites where multiple discourses are disseminated, negotiated, even resisted, and where subjects are interpellated within an ideological cultural realm.

There are, of course, multiple sites at which subjectivity is negotiated - work, home, school, cultural events, etc., and it is necessary to note this to locate the "reading" of the following text. It would be ridiculous to grant too much importance to events such as the emerging Fringe Festivals in Western Canada, yet it would also hinder our understanding of society to ignore the importance of these events. I wish to make no extravagant claims for these festivals - rather I wish to use these festivals as a window onto social processes and through which to ask questions of the subject, culture and society. At times this work will take on a celebratory tone - for these events truly do open up a realm of possibilities which do not arise elsewhere. An examination of who participates, what is produced, and the possibilities inherent in these events suggests that they may open, at least partially and momentarily, a "public sphere" that too often is narrowly defined. In so doing the "democratic imaginary" of liberty and equality may be extended to additional regions of society - sexuality, racial distinction, the colonized, even to the non-human world through an emerging "eco-theatre." It is this possible widening of the public sphere which interests me - for it allows "art" to recognize its public/political role which philosophers, social theorists and cultural critics have often stressed - as a site of resistance, as that site at which
"lack," "absence," and "difference" are highlighted (Derrida), as the site for challenging identity (Brecht), as the "clearing" in which entities (social, physical) can be present to us in new ways (Heidegger), as "world disclosing" (Habermas). I refuse to place this sphere in any autonomous space, however, and will continually step back to suggest that this aesthetic sphere and the production and consumption of its products, remains always already within wider social relations and economic forces - that art is itself an expression of social relations. At times I will be critical - for these festivals (and art and theatre generally), are often caught within logics which reverse all that their organizers are consciously or unconsciously working to achieve - through the rationalization of funding around goals of global competitiveness, the placing of the event within consumption practices which exclude certain groups, the assumptions of theatre which canonize and universalize a certain tradition and conceptions of "good" theatre and the disciplinary nature of the activity of subjects within the event.

**Defining the "public sphere"**

It is not difficult to see where a connection might be made between literature on "subjectivity" and that on the "public sphere," especially if subjectivity is argued to be constituted in every entry into the symbolic realm. A central point of the present work is that the Fringes widen the public sphere, resulting in increased possibilities for participation in and interaction around the production of meaning. Yet this term is increasingly problematic. Habermas' conception of the public sphere as the site of discursive interaction which permits "citizens' rational discussion of problems of public welfare in an atmosphere free from restrictions," remains a valuable ideal for a "civil society" in which is made possible both a collective and individual ability to organize social experience.24

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24P. Hohendahl, "Jürgen Habermas 'The Public Sphere,'" *New German Critique* 3 (1974): 47.
However, recent critiques have challenged both Habermas’ historiography and his utopian desire for a unified public sphere. Habermas’ early work claimed that this sphere emerged in the institutions of “civil society” (newspapers, coffee houses, assemblies) during the 17th and 18th century, through which early bourgeois society resisted the absolutist state. This sphere, Habermas maintains, was subsequently lost through the increasing interconnection of state and society (culminating in the welfare state) and the colonization of the public sphere by systems of money and power - the commodification of culture, mass media, and its manipulation by interests. Commodification, for instance, transformed culture from "objects of discussion" which prepare the way for human self-determination and political emancipation to objects for consumption no longer amenable to "rational discussion."

Habermas presents a "disintegration" thesis. While he has been careful to acknowledge an exclusionary aspect to every public sphere (gendered in Greece, bourgeois in modern societies) he fails to adequately grasp the diversity of positions within the public sphere, or indeed the multiplicity of (competing) public spheres. His disintegration thesis therefore permits an assumption that a once unified, inclusive, and free public sphere has been lost. Critics question whether such a unified and inclusive public sphere has ever existed, or ever can exist, and whether Habermas’ desire to recover this lost realm of public interaction is misplaced. Instead, they suggest that public spheres are always socially produced, exclusionary and constituted by conflict.

26 See the recent selection of articles in the double issue of Social Text 8,3 - 9,1 including: Bruce Robbins, "Introduction," pp. 3-7; Paolo Carignano, et al., "Chatter in the age of electronic reproduction," pp. 33-55; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the public sphere," pp. 56-80; and Dana Polan, "Review of Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere," pp. 260-267. Translated selections from Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur Organisationsanalyse von Burgerlicher und Proletischer Öffentlichkeit (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972) in the same issue, include a humorous example of the exclusionary nature of the "public sphere" revealed in the activities of children as they transgress the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and expression in spaces which are not their own (pp. 24-32).
that Habermas' desire to re-constitute a unified public sphere refuses to recognize cultural diversity and the simultaneous existence of many (often subaltern) public spheres. It too easily defines the "common interest" as the interest of one particular group. Fraser uses the emerging women's public sphere to highlight the exclusionary nature of bourgeois civil society, and emphasize the parallel existence of multiple public spheres (she notes the development of women's language, media, literature, even publishers). Fraser's caution is valuable and the following point must be stressed: any attempt to define a "public" will always be exclusionary, and any cultural event or practice has a select "public."

However, if Habermas' appeal to an "ideal-type" is replaced with more fragmentary, but no less political, public spheres, in which opinion is formed and identity constituted, his conception of a "public sphere" remains valuable for two significant reasons - (1) it stands as a goal for a participatory communicative ethics through which access is continuously widened, and (2) it remains a valuable critique of systematic distortions, including the limitations imposed by mass media and the commodification of culture, which can mitigate against rational discussion. Nancy Fraser's recent definition of the public sphere as "a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk" (including the institutions of civil society, the press, media and culture), allows Fraser to strive towards the creation of a "democratic

27 Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the public sphere," Social Text 8,3 - 9,1 (1991): 56-80.
28 Much recent work has stressed that the products of "mass media" are always open to a variety of uses and interpretations (De Certeau (1984), Ley and Olds (1988), Fiske (1989), Collins (1989), Carpiignano et al (1991) are good examples) and are therefore not simply a means of instrumental manipulation of "consciousness." However, "mass media," "spectacle," etc. contain their own limits - the economics of production and consumption (produced by large, rationalized institutions), the individual and non-responsive nature of consumption (people tend to watch TV by themselves, the medium allows few means of feedback, and "spectacle" often emphasizes the visual to the exclusion of the intersubjective), and the technical knowledge required (limiting production and often consumption to "experts") - which significantly limit the inclusivity and parity of participation in such a "public sphere." See also J. Thompson, Ideology and Modern Culture (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), especially pages 109-121 for a discussion of Habermas, the public sphere and mass communication.
public sphere” - one which allows a plurality of publics and parity of participation. Emphasis is placed on the ways that needs become publicly recognized as part of the "common good," through the intersubjective communication of individuals. Her central metaphor, or course, cannot escape our notice and informs the present work - what becomes of interest (at the Fringes and in society more generally) are those strategies and sites at which dominant channels of communication and mechanisms of decision making can be bypassed or subverted while others are opened.

A profitable discussion is emerging in attempts (such as Fraser's) to link public spheres with "identity." By arguing that the Fringe Festivals open space for both diversity and intersubjectivity I am suggesting that these events are not simply sites where opinions are formed or exchanged but where identities are negotiated among a plurality of possibilities. Indeed, in a footnote to her article, Fraser argues for precisely such a function, suggesting a political moment in discursive interaction.

It seems to me that public discursive arenas are among the most important and under-recognized sites in which social identities are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed. My view stands in contrast to various psychoanalytic accounts of identity formation, which neglect the formative importance of post-Oedipal discursive interaction outside the nuclear family and which therefore cannot explain identity shifts over time. It strikes me as unfortunate that so much of contemporary feminist theory has taken its understanding of social identity from psychoanalytic models, while neglecting to study identity construction in relation to public spheres. The revisionist historiography of the public sphere . . . can help redress the balance by identifying public spheres as loci of identity reconstruction.

It strikes me that this is precisely the value of the Fringe Festivals, and the focus of this current study.

29 Fraser, "Rethinking," 57.
30 Ibid., 79.
For the reader who wishes a clear conception of where this work will "move," allow me to sketch the following discussion in brief - and provide a reading strategy which you may or may not wish to accept. In Chapter 2, I will provide a brief sketch of where theatre "is at" in Canada, presenting a conception of theatre considered "particularist" and then examining the possibilities of such a theatre within current theatre structures - funding, criticism, even nationalism. The movement of this chapter should be clear - from possibilities to the current limits to plurality which result in the marginalization of certain groups and in which the conditions for the possibility of other forms or articulations cannot be found.

In a sense this sets up Chapter 3 too neatly: here I wish to explore how the Fringe Festivals place theatre in a different set of cultural, social, spatial, and economic relations - relations which alter considerably the possibilities of participation (accessibility) and the conditions for the production and interpretation of meaning. I will argue that this repositioning of actors (in the social sense) occurs in relation to art, capital, criticism, and significantly - each other. The transformation of rationalized urban space into a public space of festival and interaction extends the public sphere, and is perhaps the most significant aspect of these festivals. This introduces to "art" and "theatre" an intersubjectivity that simply is not possible in the constraints of regional theatres. If, as I noted earlier, subjectivity is constituted relationally, this is significant. Further, unless their spaces are adequately transformed into "festival space," (encouraging intersubjectivity), the Fringes cannot truly become a "public space," and the full potential of the events is not met. Within this chapter, however, I wish to also capture a central ambiguity within the Fringes -
for while they subvert traditional meaning-constituting discourses, they are no realm of "pure possibility." Participants are constituted as subjects at other sites in the social, and the interaction of the Fringes may also lead to the reproduction of dominant discourses and social distinctions. The Fringes do not escape the "naturalization" of criticism, artist-patron distinctions or the effects of the media.

Chapter 4 will examine the Fringe "public," its characteristics and how it is constituted. I will suggest that these events attract selective audiences, which in turn, has significant effects on the "field or possibles" in which subjectivity is negotiated. The events' intersubjective aspects are unique, but who participates in this? Any "public" is exclusionary, and all cultural events have "already constituted" audiences. The Fringes are no different - their promotional strategies, their location, their commodification as "events," leads to the participation of certain social groups and the exclusion of others.

Chapter 5 will look more closely at the economics of the festivals - examining state funding, its rationality and its impact on the Fringes. The current vogue to link cultural events with tourism and urban revitalization may indeed place these festivals in awkward positions, structuring them in ways which place limits on their possibilities, and thereby limiting the possible subject positions that can be occupied by participants.

However, I will counter the tendency to "write-off" these events as determined in the last instance by the disciplinary nature of social interaction, the class-specific nature of "taste" or the rationality of state-economic objectives by reminding the reader that these events, their products and the participation of individuals, whether artists or audience, are always overdetermined, and simply in this alone, escape into a certain ambiguity and indeterminacy. This is simple enough to discern. Government programs do not work in concert. While
these events are *structured* at one level by the federal government's desire for "world-class" cultural events, linked to global economic transitions, they are at the same time *enabled* to resist this rationalization by different levels of government or by cultural funding agencies who see their role as encouraging plurality (funding fledgling "native" performing arts groups, for instance). In a final chapter (Chapter 6) I will return to the question of cultural events and the negotiation of subjectivity, incorporating the discussions of the previous chapters into a brief discussion of the role of the Fringes as sites where subjectivity is negotiated, emphasizing the "situatedness" of artistic production and interpretation.

A final clarification should be made. While throughout the following discussion I will refer to two festivals in two different locations, and at times draw comparisons or point out contrasts, this is for the purpose of examining process or elucidating discussions of certain concepts in a discussion of Fringe Festivals and cultural events as a whole, and is not intended as a comparison of two different events. My discussion of the "positioning" of the events in each urban community is meant to be part of a discussion of the importance of place (and spatial relations) in the constitution of these festivals, their intersubjectivity and the negotiation of subjectivity.
Chapter 2:
Exploring (re)production: theatre in Canada

What any society calls universal 'truth' is really ... socially, culturally and historically particular. (Linda Hutcheon The Canadian Postmodern)¹

In my introductory pages I suggested that subjectivity is uneasy, contingent, and fleeting. It should be seen as negotiated, precarious and relational - constituted within certain social, cultural and political discourses through which fields of knowledge and modes of being have been constructed. Once these discourses are perceived as historically particular ("naturalized" but not by "necessity"), the subject is vulnerable, confronted by a multiplicity of positions and potentialities. This, indeed, was the aim of Brecht's dis-identificatory practices in his theatre. I earlier argued that cultural events are important sites where individuals are confronted with, and inserted into, a symbolic realm within which subjectivity is constituted. The Fringe Festivals, in turn, with their widened accessibility and heightened intersubjectivity, provide a potential mixing of diverse realms of experience - people and products from different positions within current social formations.

Yet, the emphasis on the mutability of the subject that appears so ubiquitous in recent social theory is in many ways itself a political response to the recognition that at any moment the subject is "fixed," interpellated within certain hegemonic, ideological practices - in education, religion, home, the market. These are realms of discourse and power, where the "universal," the "essential," or "being human," is defined around certain images which provide only certain possibilities for the subject, many which seem oppressive from the viewpoint of present democratic or emancipatory movements. Cultural traditions and cultural institutions often work to reproduce these discourses.

While it is the movement between the destabilization and fixing of identity which marks my interest in the Fringes, the present chapter examines the limitations placed on production and interpretation of artistic products within Canadian theatre practice - limitations which allow the negotiation of subjectivity to occur around only certain products, texts, performances, and within certain social groups, but not others. Through a discussion of those discourses which provide conditions for certain possibilities within Canadian theatre, the unique (and subversive) character of the Fringe Festivals, if not the "politics" of culture more generally, may become more readily apparent.

"Art," no less than school, the workplace or home, is a realm implicated in what Griselda Pollock describes as the "manufacture and repetition of positions." Pollock's work is a useful place to begin. In _Vision and Difference_ she reveals the complicity of art history and criticism in social reproduction. Her work deals specifically with the production and reproduction of "images of Woman" and "Woman as "image" in the "great tradition" of Art. By revealing those "spaces" which women could occupy within a patriarchal modernity, Pollock argues that limits were drawn around possible representations of women (through, for instance, how women were positioned within the gendering of private-public distinctions or how women were represented within these spaces by male artists) and around possibilities of women's representations (that which was open to be represented by women). An artistic "canon" defined as "great art" was assumed to reflect an essential human experience -yet this experience was essentially "male." Thus this "canon," and its reproduction through art history, has worked to naturalize the patriarchal social formation from which it emerged.

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Pollock's point is simple yet significant. All representations are political - they emerge out of particular social contexts, are produced by individuals positioned (uniquely) within them, and actively destabilize or fix identity around certain images. If art, in part, produces that symbolic realm within which the subject is inserted/negotiated, then its limits, its gendering, its distinctions between the public and the private are all significant to the constitution of the "social" and the subject.

The same critique has been made of theatre history - the canonization of certain plays has naturalized certain positions - not least, a privileged position for men. Dolan has perhaps stressed this point most strenuously, noting "representation" in the theatre has "an active role in preserving social arrangements." Certainly this is true of much theatre history and criticism. However, with Pollock, I wish to maintain that representation may also be a site of resistance. Pollock, although primarily a (visual) art historian, closes Vision and Difference with an examination of possible alternative strategies for art in the disruptions of the dramatist Bertolt Brecht. Pollock summarizes Brecht's "dis-identificatory" practices as:

the strategies for displacing the spectator from identifying with the illusory fictional worlds offered in art, literature and film, disrupting the "dance of ideology" which engages us on behalf of oppressive regimes of class, sexist, heterosexist and racist classifications and placements.

The lesson that is learned from Brecht, Heath suggests, is that,

the struggle is, as it were, on the very ground of representation - on the very ground of the interpellations of the subject in reality by ideology; art as displacement in so far as it holds representation at a distance, the distance, precisely, of politics.

It is possible, therefore, to speak of a "cultural politics" as a series of practices, contesting representations, multiple interpellations, etc. At times such "politics"

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5Pollock, Vision and Difference, 158.
may be more overt - deliberate and purposive attempts to reveal the arbitrary nature of the social, to make visible the impossibility of closure around any point from which the self is centered and conversely without which the self is challenged by the other-than-itself.

Dolan herself maintains that a feminist postmodern theatre (and theory) "intervenes in representation to encourage spectators to think differently about their positions in their cultures . . . identity becomes a site of struggle, at which the subject organizes and reorganizes competing discourses as they fight for supremacy." While Dolan casts her argument in overly voluntaristic language, her discussion raises important questions regarding theatre practice. In her materialist critique, control over theatre and the reproduction of its institutions and forms becomes control over part of the way identity is constituted in our culture.

Similar questions concerning ideology, representation, the structures of theatre and the decisions of the public arbiters of "art" - critics, funding agencies, boards of directors - has increasingly occupied the pages of the Canadian Theatre Review over the past half decade. One theme has emerged: theatre (what is produced), and the consumption and interpretation of theatre (the audience's experience of theatre), is always already subject to cultural practices and institutions which create, at any given moment, conditions for the reproduction, challenge or negotiation of subject positions. In this chapter I wish to examine those "conditions" of Canadian theatre practice which cast theatre, and theatre-going, within a certain frame. In the following chapter I will examine whether the Fringe Festivals place the production and receptions of cultural products within different cultural "logics" - logics which contains more possibilities for plurality and difference.

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7Dolan, "In defence of the discourse," 60.
A particularist theatre: producing marginality

Concerns over the negotiation of identity have become incorporated within a certain stream of theatre history and criticism which promotes a conception of theatre referred to as "particularist." To speak of theatre (or theatre festivals) as a site of cultural politics - dissemination, interpretation, legitimation - is to immediately have a particular view of the theatre, a view which admits the ideological nature of all representation. But by a particularist theatre, these theorists claim more - that the theatre can provide (and encourage) the possibility of difference and the articulation of particular discourses that otherwise would not find space. Critic and producer Richard Schechner has defined "particularism" in the theatre as,

the way specific associations of people form and express their collective experiences and opinion... groups are formed according to gender or race or social class or disability or ideology or age. They are gay, lesbian, black, Chicano, deaf, poor, Marxist, Jewish, AIDS, Asian, native American, anti-nuclear... and so on... Points of view that would otherwise get lost in the dominant discourse find visibility. (italics added)

Particularism attempts to make visible that which is often invisible - those structures or discourses around which the self is constituted, and, at the same time, those subject positions which are not usually readily present. The structures of theatre are challenged in order to allow groups to represent their own experience or, like Brecht, to show things in a new and unfamiliar manner so the audience can critically consider something previously taken as "natural."

Although a multiplicity of subject positions exist within "society," social groups have unequal access to institutions, mechanisms of control, sites of power and possibilities of autonomy. The same is true of theatre. A company

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9Schechner, "Race free...casting," 5.
composed of only black performers, for instance, is unlikely to run a commercial success unless its show is assumed to be appropriate for black performers. White, male performers benefit from the dominant aesthetic - realism - which naturalizes the understanding that a "white-male" must play a "white-male" character. If as Pollock maintains in her discussion of Art History, the "great tradition" is the work of white male writers representing white male experience - few possibilities for "non-white" performers exist. The "great tradition" not only denies "women" or "blacks" or "natives" employment, but denies them a chance to legitimate and express their experience. As Dolan notes, the "proscenium arch" of the theatre often belies a "lie of universality."\textsuperscript{10} Canons invariably naturalize certain subject positions. To speak of the theatre, then, may naturalize its hidden differences and power relations. To speak of a particular theatre is to highlight difference and power.

Theatre critic Robert Wallace is perhaps the strongest advocate of "particularism" within Canadian theatre. His recent book \emph{Producing Marginality} issues a challenge to the assumptions of theatre criticism, funding agencies, theatre institutions, even language, that reproduce certain notions of the theatre and work to determine not only what material can be brought to the stage (this would simply reduce theatre to text) but \textit{how, by who, and where it can be performed}.\textsuperscript{11}

Marginality, to Wallace, is both a result and a strategy. Its "production" is the result of dominant structures (that create the possibility of something being "marginal") while also a deliberate, instrumental strategy of producers and artists - what Hutcheon has termed an "ex-centric aesthetic" - by which to

\textsuperscript{10}Jill Dolan, "Feminists, lesbians and other women in theatre," \textit{Themes in Drama: Women in theatre} 11 (1989): 202. The dominant aesthetic, of course, cannot be separated from social, cultural, and economic structures with which it is entangled. Realism, for instance, remains constitutive of, and constituted by corporate funding decision, audience expectations, etc.

\textsuperscript{11}The obvious question needing to be posed here is: to whom is theatre performed? Not posing it may accept uncritically theatre's "already constituted" audiences, or alternately to assume that the theatre is accessible to many and not itself positioned within wider social relations.
rearticulate the center. Wallace's concern with "producing marginality" is not simply a challenge to what is articulated in the theatre but to those structures or "common-sense" assumptions of the theatre which exclude certain possibilities.

Reproducing homogeneity - the structures of theatre in Canada

Wallace identifies three structures in Canadian theatre which work to define certain possibilities while marginalizing other groups, ideas, forms or "canons." These are: funding, theatre criticism and nationalism. While I agree with Wallace that these institutions fix and exclude, and will spend some time explaining their impact, I wish to argue that they do not exhaust the possibilities of expression. Each of these three realms has its own sets of ideological practices, but they do not work to form any "unified" determining logic. What is produced in Canadian profession theatre is by no means endlessly the same! Theatre production is always an overdetermined process. Yet, in some ways Wallace does not extend his examination of the limits to particularism far enough. I wish to suggest that there are other structures which Wallace does not examine, not the least being the set of cultural practices in which theatre is often "consumed" and which works to limit those social groups which participate. Further, the commodification of art in Western Culture places art and cultural events subject to certain rationalized systems or money and power which in turn limit possibilities. I will discuss these later in relation to the Fringe Festivals. Wallace's arguments, however, are valuable - for they question those structures which define not only what is possible in the

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12 Hutcheon, Canadian Postmodern, 3. It should be noted that theorizing marginality as a permanent position is neither Schechner's nor Wallace's intention. Marginality is an "intervention." "Particularist" groups have every interest in gaining acceptance and becoming integrated in, while transformative of, common theatre practice. Schechner notes (albeit uncritically - he fails to recognize the appropriation or fetishization of particularity by other movements and groups) "often enough today's particularist opinion becomes tomorrow's mainstream." Schechner, "Race free...casting," 5.
theatre, but certain ways in which the "subject" can be "interpellated" within our culture's symbolic realm.

**Funding theatre - "arms-length" from what?**

Theatre funding in Canada occurs in three ways: state support, corporate sponsorship and box-office receipts. In European nations, Canada, and Australia, state patronage of the arts has a lengthy history. However, the 1980's saw large cut-backs in state support of cultural institutions and a new rhetoric of "partnership in the arts" between state and business. This has significantly altered the funding of Canadian theatre and increasingly ties state support to an art establishment's ability to attract certain levels of "private sector" support.

Theatre in Canada, however, still remains highly subsidized. Over 30% of all theatre revenues come from public funds - with the largest portion coming from The Canada Council. Private donations contribute around 10%, with the remaining earned through box office or other promotional activities.\(^\text{13}\) Public support varies greatly between small and large theatre companies. While smaller theatre companies tend to be more dependent upon public support (over 50% of revenues) and less able to attract private sponsorship or fund their activities through box office receipts (35%), large theatres receive the vast majority of government funding.\(^\text{14}\) In 1983, the largest 12 (of 142) theatre companies received an average of $615,566 in public support. The smallest 99 (of 142) received on average, only $64,684.\(^\text{15}\) This has important consequences. Most theatre critics agree that it is the smaller companies whose structures and

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\(^{14}\)Ibid.  
\(^{15}\)Ibid. See also Wallace's chapter "Getting tough" in *Producing Marginality* for the effects of diminishing funds available for "small theatres."
mandates permit more frequent innovative productions while the larger "regional theatres" are criticized for producing the "tried and true" (with all its unacknowledged social baggage).

Regardless of size, the overriding reality for theatre in Canada is that it cannot survive without government funding. This dependence upon state support raises important question about how state funding decisions are made. Criticism of Canada's arts funding organizations (The Canada Council, provincial arts councils) is by now almost as established as the funding system itself. Critics have focussed on several concerns: who makes the decisions and the bias inherent in the make-up of funding bodies; a more radical critique of the assumptions about theatre that shape decisions on funding; and the effects that the shift to "public-private partnership" in the arts is having on production and administration.

a) peer juries, excellence and universality

In order to maintain funding at "arms length" from the political activities of Ottawa, The Canada Council appoints "peer juries" to adjudicate applications. In 1970 The Canada Council outlined the rationale behind this process:

> We believe that any judgement brought to bear on a work of art in our interest will be a subjective judgement and that any person we consult can only give us a subjective opinion, however stern his (sic) own inner disciplines may be. Therefore what we are seeking as criteria is in fact a consensus of subjective judgements from people who, through long commitment to the arts, have developed a controlled sensitivity to the means of expression and a profound understanding of the content. Where this consensus can be accumulated a kind of objectivity results.\(^ {16} \)

Not only does the non-inclusive language of this passage (not surprising for 1970) reveal a gendering of "peer" but the writer argues that "a consensus of subjective judgements" results in a "kind of objectivity." Yet, only recognized members of the theatre community are asked to sit on these "objective" juries. "Recognized" in the arts community may mean those that have been successful,

or, as successful becomes defined in Canadian theatre - mainstream. In addition, as Wallace contends, members of the jury are often part of the "literary" establishment - a product of university Theatre History and Drama departments that teach drama as "literary studies." This works to institutionalize literary criticism as a form of evaluation, hurting companies working with more "imagistic performance" - that in which movement, lighting, music - the "non-verbal" - is essential, or those groups which downplay the "script" emphasizing an interactive approach to theatre.

While one might expect a jury of peers to create conditions for the possibility of alternate forms and ideas, Wallace contends that the definition of "peer" and the naturalization of their conceptions of "excellence" (excellent from what position?) and "universality" (universal to whom?) results in decisions made in line with dominant discourses in theatre history and theory. This is a frequent critique. The Canada Council is often claimed to avoid those companies which stray too far from conventional norms, and is criticized as supporting only a closed circle of "safe" artists. One Fringe Festival producer referred to The Canada Council derisively as the "old boys club." The result, in terms of the art "produced," is more of the same.

But it is the assumptions about theatre shaping state funding decisions that are increasingly contentious. Decisions on funding are often based on standards of "universality" and "excellence," or, in Canada, on "Canadianness" - standards which exclude that which lies outside their boundaries and through which the forms, content, performance groups and places of "good" theatre are defined. Wilson has argued that funding based on these criteria is by its nature "sexist" and reproduces patriarchy.\textsuperscript{17} The dominant discourse has and continues to be defined by (white) men, or through conceptions of excellence and

universality that have historically been grouped around their concerns and representations - a point similar to Griselda Pollock's critique of the visual arts in *Vision and Difference*. An appeal to theatre "classics" (especially *fidelity* to the classics) is immediately an appeal to the world of (white) men - women and minorities were not at that time placed socially (or economically) in a position where they could produce "good" art. Those that could were limited in what they could represent (for women - the private rather than public sphere). Wilson writes:

> such a position [excellence and universality] does not take into account the determination of social, historical and political forces . . . and, perhaps most importantly, such a position refuses to address the issue that historically, "human" is equated with "man."  

This is not a call to "abandon" the classics - many are profound reflections on the culture of their time - but rather an attempt to recognize that theatre history and criticism have been constituted within certain social formations. The use of their categories can reproduce certain assumptions. The dependence of theatre companies on such funding structures places them subject to these assumptions.

b) **corporate support of the arts**

Not all are as critical as Wallace and Wilson. Other models of state funding (American, Dutch, Soviet) are argued to have more significant difficulties. Canada's state funding of the "arts" is also viewed by many as protecting the nation's distinct identity separate from that of the United States. Others argue that insulating the "arts" at least partially from the economic logic of private support (be it box-office or patronage) allows both the continual survival of

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18 Ibid., 6.
Canada's multiculturalism and the possibility of a critical art "one-step removed" from the contradictions of commodification.

This may soon be a moot point. As both federal and provincial budgets are trimmed, theatre companies are asked to find sources of funding from the private sector (increasingly state support is dependent upon it). This introduces a second structuring force, one which has many critics supporting previous state-funding methods simply because they provided more possibilities. While many applaud voluntary "private sector" support others find significant problems - corporations often fund conservative, non-innovative "art," are concerned foremost about corporate image and occasionally try to dictate the "production" of art. As corporate support becomes necessary, art becomes subject to corporate objectives - a link which business appears increasingly less concerned to hide. Comments made by The Council for Business and the Arts in Canada (CBAC) in 1981 and 1986 are notable. While a 1981 document (directed towards those in arts organizations) argued that businesses sponsor the arts simply because "arts organizations contribute to the quality of life in a community" and denied that businesses are concerned primarily about either publicity or tax exemptions, a 1986 document directed to corporations opens with the opposite argument:

business is learning that arts sponsorship can be a powerful marketing tool . . . thoughtfully developed, a year's sponsorship programme can cost less than one 30- second advertisement on nation-wide television while returning ten times the investment in publicity.

Selling corporate "image" rather than "commodities" has become more important to appeal to consumers concerned with "lifestyle."

20"Peer juries" at least judge through artistic rather than economic criteria, even if determined within a complex of ideological theatre discourses.
23The Council for Business and the Arts in Canada, Business Sponsorship of the Arts (Ottawa, 1986).
The move to a "partnership in the arts" leaves arts organizations in a
difficult position. While they must find money wherever possible simply to
survive, not all funding is the same. The CBAC suggests that its members
"manage" their sponsorships by making sure that arts organizations know what
the sponsor's "needs" are, and concludes that "the most successful sponsorship .
. is one that is as closely identified in the public mind with the sponsor as it is
with the organizing body."24 To this end, fully 80% of corporate sponsors hire
consultants to manage their sponsorships.25 Schuster sums up the problems of
corporate arts funding:

Each funding source comes with a variety of constraints, both spoken and
unspoken. Each funding source has its own expectations of control, its own
tastes, its own limits for what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and its
own expectations concerning level of accountability; and the art we are
ultimately able to enjoy is affected in important, though subtle, ways by these
constraints.26

Schuster quotes a remarkably candid remark from George Weismann (former
chair of the board at Philip Morris) which explicitly recognizes the particular
interests of corporate art "interest."

Our fundamental interest in the arts is self-interest. There are
immediate and pragmatic benefits to be derived as business
entities, and long range benefits as responsible corporate citizens
of our communities and country . . . The fundamental decision to
support the arts was not determined by the need or the state of
the arts. We were out to beat the competitions.27

Market competition occurs through the sponsorship of high-profile arts
organizations (symphony, opera, regional theatre) or through highly visible
capital projects - the "edifice" complex. "Culture" becomes a vehicle of
legitimation as corporate and state images are enhanced through the support of
(safe) cultural or entertainment events. Significantly, since corporate image
must be enhanced, what is sponsored must be uncontroversial and often already

24CBAC, Business Sponsorship, 19.
25Ibid., 15.
26Shuster, "Art's funding," 23.
27These remarks were published in a 1980 Philip Morris brochure and quoted in Shuster, "Art's
funding." 8.
institutionally recognized. Shows must be viable as a profitmaking product - both for the theatre company and its private sponsors who wish to benefit from their "support."

c) **funding, administration and production**

The need for state and corporate support has radically altered theatre administration and its effects have been felt in season programming. Arts organizations have been required to adopt a corporate model. Fund raising efforts are now coordinated through the activities of a "board-of-directors" and any company serious about its survival appoints directors that have close links with the city's cultural, economic and political "elite" - one lawyer, one doctor, one businessperson, etc. Government granting agencies often demand that a company have such a board before they can become eligible for funding. Although this is claimed to be due to the dangers of funding "unstable" companies (the same reason that "collective" groups are poorly funded), it serves to bring all companies that require funding under the corporate model.

With reductions in state support, or links between corporate and state support, theatres are less able to take chances. Choices are dictated by economic concerns and towards attracting large audiences and wealthy corporate sponsors. Choices about production and performance become "commercial choices" and "career choices." Seasons must attract corporate sponsors, and adequate audiences.28 Often producers rely on work that has "proven" potential - what

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28 The role of the "audience" in production is difficult to determine. In many ways theatre audiences are "already constituted" through cultural practices, "taste," the promotional strategies of theatres, etc. (see Chapter 4). Further, audience expectations are to some degree determined by criticism. Audience "expectations" must therefore be taken into consideration by producers, but perhaps in different ways than one might imagine. While theatres in a sense have "already constituted" audiences, these audiences often do not allow the theatre to stray far from the type of performances previously staged. For instance, when Winnipeg's Prairie Theatre Exchange attempted to introduce more "post-modern" programming rather than it's standard "realist" prairie fare, audiences felt betrayed. (See Douglas Arrell, "Paradigm shifts at the box office," *Canadian Theatre Review* 66 (1991): 20-24). Further, the importance of box-office receipts is difficult to determine. Due to the high level of state support and, occasionally, considerable corporate support, variability in attendance between popular and unpopular shows
Wallace claims leads to the mounting of "predictable" plays, and conformity to what is considered the prevailing tastes of the audience. Newman suggests that the consequences of this struggle for financial survival translates into theatres deciding to continue what has been most financially and critically rewarding:

As a result of these factors, plays are now mass produced, rehearsed in four weeks or less, and marketed to consumer/subscribers. Artistic directors are so busy trying to satisfy these market demands that they no longer have time to be open to new ideas. Much of their time is spent either trying to reduce their workloads, or trying to maintain their positions.29

Newman argues that this perpetuates a situation where over 90% of all professional theatre produced in the United States is staged with all-Caucasian casts. Even David Peacock, who served as The Canada Council's Theatre Officer from 1972-1978, suggested in 1982 that as state funding is restricted,

the survivors will be those who succeed in supplementing from other sources the funds which they would normally have hoped to receive from Council. The tendency the further away from Council funding you get is for the people to look for security of structure, institution and formalization, so the taking of creative risks will need to be minimized for the sake of financial survival.30

Both Newman and Dolan have noted the "formulaic" reproduction of successful shows. After a show becomes successful it is the same "version" that is invariably re-mounted throughout the continent. Published scripts of the "successful" version often include suggestions for set design, costume plot, etc, which allow other theatre companies to reproduce the "original" in its "successful" format. This "original," however, may have been produced in response to external structuring forces. Newman notes instances where playwrights have written shows for "multi-ethnic" companies but have seen them premiered by safer "all-white," casts, and if well received, subsequent performances have tended to repeat the premiere!31

may not account for economic constraints any greater than the loss of a major corporate sponsor.
30David Peacock made this comment as part of a panel discussion of the history and role of The Canada Council in Canadian theatre. This discussion was transcribed in the fall 1982 issue of *Theatre History in Canada* 3,2 (1982): 165-192.
Finally, this shift from state to private corporate funding (under the rhetoric of "partnership in the arts") may further consolidate the position of the nation's regional theatres. Czernecki suggests that government and corporate funding is increasingly directed towards the largest institutions, the most conservative programs and "spectacles." He argues that these institutions limit creativity and have few motives to encourage risk-taking or the development of new plays, resulting in the typical theatre season consisting of the "three C's": contemporary, classic, and Canadian. The contemporary show is inevitably from the established "canon" of foreign plays, while the Canadian is usually a remount of a tried and true show. Little room for innovation or recent indigenous shows remains. Even Allan Gotlieb, current chair of The Canada Council, argues that the "so-called renaissance" in the arts is consisting of a further dominance of fewer and fewer products.

Gotlieb's concerns point to larger questions concerning the commodification of art. Foster contends that art is increasingly given over to capital and the state. Rather than art fulfilling its role as a mediator between the public and private, he argues that its role in consumption and control has increased and that this has resulted in a move to an appreciation of art mostly as entertainment and spectacle. Art, in Foster's formulation of "late capitalist" culture, is simply a sign of power, prestige and publicity - the "plaything" of monied classes, rapidly losing its critical functions. Dolan's "materialist-feminist" critique of the theatre is perhaps less directly functionalist - arguing that it is the ideology governing traditional theatre forms that has promulgated "dangerous" assumptions about social relations: "The theatre, as a cultural

32Mark Czernecki, "The regional theatre system," Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions, ed. Anton Wagner (Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1985), 46. Take, for example, the huge budgets and costly performances of recently touring shows such as Les Miserables, or Phantom of the Opera.
forum, has been used to promote the dominant culture's economic and political ends. The materialist method is to refurbish the theatre's forms and context by changing the ideology that guides them." While Foster's arguments perhaps too quickly preclude the possibility of "art" having some value in contemporary culture (he appears to assume some pre-capitalist art which truly mediated the public-private, ideology-real), his comments point to an issue which will occupy chapters 4 and 5 - the structuring of cultural events (specifically the Fringe Festivals) through their commodification as "status" and through the objectives of government funding which occurs within global economic logics.

Criticism and Canadian theatre

Criticism is constituted within a complex social formation so that, while critics teach their students to appreciate the value of art, they also enact a reciprocal gesture which enshrines these works as things to be valued and appreciated. . . . What is created is a self-contained, self-perpetuating, and circular system which supports the notion of "high" culture. Ann Wilson

While I placed considerable emphasis on the importance of criticism in my discussion of funding, some additional comments need to be made, for the power of criticism lies not simply in its ability to influence funding, or to influence the attendance of a theatre going public, but in its ability to fix certain interpretations and judgements, and thereby to influence not only the reception but the production of art. Edward Said argues that criticism constitutes its subject as "art" ("literature," "drama") enshrining certain "texts" as valuable. The assumed evaluative function of criticism allows certain art to be defined as "authentic" and separated or defended from "non-art" or an "onslaught" of "mass culture." This dualism emphasizes culture as a cohesive "whole" with

35Jill Dolan, "Feminists, lesbians . . .," 204.
36These concerns have increasingly occupied the work of David Harvey. See his The Urban Experience (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
38Said, The World...and the Critic. See also Jim Collins, Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism (New York: Routledge, 1989), for an excellent critique of the "high art" -
appropriate or inappropriate representations. What is important to note is that criticism positions the "work" within a tradition, regardless of the intentionality of the artist/producer.

Recent examinations of drama criticism by Wilson and Leonard in the pages of the Canadian Theatre Review have emphasized the ideological nature of all criticism, and its "naturalized" discourses. Leonard claims that the two major critical trends in Canada obscure their own ideological (liberal-humanist) foundations. Romantic critics argue that the work of art is best understood as an expression of the artist's consciousness, thereby privileging the author as the source of all meaning and value. This "intentional fallacy" fails to recognize the positioning of the cultural producer within a certain social formation - thereby interpreting the cultural product as an intentional expression of some transcendent "human nature." New Critics move away from "intentionality" to the text itself, assuming that a "work" is an "organic unit" which has a certain unity and closure and that one can approach it "objectively" - although only the trained critic can really reveal the true meaning of a text. The results, Wilson claims, is criticism,

which focuses on art as a universal and so ignores the determination of the particular moment of history [and] does not acknowledge its own politics because its premise is that art, beyond considerations of race, class and gender, expresses what is essentially human."

As Wolff and Pollock have convincingly argued, "universalizing" modernity's art is to legitimate only certain positions.

While wrangling over the ideological nature of criticism may seem an obscure privilege of academics, Wilson (echoing Said) argues that the stakes are in fact quite high:

"popular culture" dichotomy. It should be noted that Wallace's early reviews of the Fringe Festivals were at best ambivalent - what most concerned him was the apparent proliferation of "lower genre" shows at these events! Robert Wallace, "Edmonton: Fringe binge," Canadian Theatre Review 49 (1986): 117-120.

Wilson, "Deadpan," 14.

criticism exists within a complex social context. The function of criticism
is not simply to provide commentaries on art but, as criticism has been
practiced for most of this century, to reinforce and perpetuate notions of high
culture (synonymous with the art of Western civilization - invariably the work
of white men) as representing the apex of human achievement.41

The hegemony of a social formation can be reinforced when criticism denies its
own ideological construction. Dolan cites as an example a review in the *New
Republic* which worked to de-value the feminist contributions of a certain show
through its use of "universals" - in a sense "stealing" the voice of the playwright
and performers. The reviewer wrote:

> Nothing reinforces one's faith in the power and importance of the theatre
> more than the emergence of an authentic, universal, playwright - not a
> woman playwright, mind you, not a regional playwright, not an ethnic
> playwright, but one who speaks to the concerns and experiences of all
> humankind.42

In light of a review like this, Wallace's call for a "particularist" theatre obtains
greater currency and the Fringes provide an alluring event in which to locate the
disruption of those critical discourses which structure production and reception.

Wallace suggests that criticism found in the daily presses is perhaps most
influential. The effect of such criticism is pervasive. The assumption of
universal truths and values (which the critic reveals) assumes a common subject-
position between critic and audience - the critic is an "intelligent theatregoer"
who expresses the desires of all (or what they should be). Comments concerning
any performance are cast through a *particular* subject position which is taken to
be the position of all and which obscures its own historical conditions. Said,
again:

> Critics are not merely the alchemical translators of text into circumstantial
> reality or worldliness; for they too are subject to and producers of
circumstances which are felt regardless of whatever objectivity the critic's
> methods possess.43

41Wilson, "Deadpan," 14. Wilson tends to overstate her case, using words such as *invariably,*
*always,* etc.
42R. Barnstein, quoted in Jill Dolan, "Bending gender to fit the canon: the politics of
1989), 318-344.
43Said, *The World...and the Critic,* 35.
The legitimation of criticism's "authority" therefore legitimates certain approaches to the theatre, and certain "works" as worthy of the canonizing label "good" art. But the effects of criticism can be more subtle. While those critical of criticism's structuring effects often focus on the immediacy of criticism, what is less noted is that the legitimation of criticism and its concepts can serve to naturalize certain assumptions about the theatre and a "work" that may be projected upon the work by producer and audience alike, even if no critic would bother to write about the show! Blacks can play themselves, not others; shows should not exceed two hours; the verbal is more important than the visual; the universal not the particular is where "essence" lies; fidelity to the text or "intentions" of playwrights captures the "true" meaning.

The "shaping" of both reception and production by criticism is perhaps best explored through the continued performance of Shakespeare, whose works continue to fascinate both traditional and "avant-garde" theatres and their audiences. In their article "Notes on playing Shakespeare," Wilson and Bush write bluntly - "textual fidelity . . . is an ideological gesture." Fidelity to an "authentic" Shakespeare, for instance, is fidelity to a certain "reading" of Shakespeare - one which obscures both the social formation out of which this reading arose and the social formations within which Shakespeare's works were positioned. As playwright Lee Breuer suggests:

There is no Hamlet. Hamlet is the sum of the known meaningful interpretations of the role in the context of their time, place, politics and aesthetics.

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44 While criticism provides certain "positions," subjects do not necessarily identify with them. The "value" of cultural products is determined at multiple sites. Spectacles such as Les Misérables, or movies such as Rambo, although panned by critics, draw large audiences.


46 Lee Breuer, "How tall was Cariclanus?" American Theatre 5,2 (1988): 22
Criticism of shows which "deviate" from the "original intentions" therefore reproduce a certain ideological formation. Wilson and Bush refuse to reject Shakespeare, but rather claim that:

Shakespeare is not simply the name of a playwright but names a complex manifestation of ideology. "Shakespeare" has been used to justify and to perpetuate the values of dominant white-Anglo-masculinist culture. This sense of Shakespeare lends itself to elitism which manifests itself in productions which are "true" to Shakespeare.

In a sense any Shakespeare is ideologically constructed. Performed in one manner it reproduces a certain social formation. Performed in another, it challenges "naturalized" positions. Criticism can work to either re-assert or destabilize these "readings."

Canadian critic Paul Leonard has brought the issue of criticism "home" to Canada's apparent multicultural and pluralist society. Leonard, like Wallace, suggests that criticism inevitably marginalizes certain social groups, while naturalizing the experience of others.

As Canada becomes more genuinely multicultural, and as the social critiques of feminists, people of colour, the disabled, and the oppressed gain greater currency, it becomes difficult to maintain the illusion of homogeneity that is required to sustain confidence in meta-narratives - a homogeneity that is implied by my use [as a critic] of "we" and "our." In effect, the idea of a "mainstream," although still, current, becomes less tenable as individual members of society feel increasingly marginalized.

What Wallace, Leonard and Wilson fail to adequately emphasize, however, is that criticism can also work to destabilize certain norms - reviewers and critics can provide "alternate" readings of a performance. Foster, for instance, argues that in "late capitalism" where art is commodified and rationalized within realms of entertainment and spectacle, it becomes the purpose of criticism to be "out of place," to "dislocate the sign." Foster's destabilizing criticism, however, can also become an obscured "fixing." All criticism, even that which destabilizes certain images ("dislocating the sign") is itself a "fixing" of meaning.

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47 Bush and Wilson, "Playing Shakespeare," 5
49 Foster, Recodings, 1-10.
What is essential to note, and I suspect Foster would agree, is that criticism can provide alternate "readings." Criticism therefore is always a site of ideological intervention. Wallace, Leonard and Wilson argue against an approach to criticism which obscures its function as a site where meaning is produced, both in the academy and in the popular press.

**Paranoia: nationalism and Canadian theatre**

Cultural identity [is] defined, not by its positive content, but always by its relation, and differentiation from, other cultural identities. . . . Identity is as much about exclusion as inclusion. (Morley and Robins)

Nationalism is the third structuring discourse which Wallace locates in Canadian theatre. Funding decisions and criticism are often articulated within concerns that a "Canadian" culture or "Canadian" identity be produced. Wallace argues that such nationalist rhetoric works to exclude certain voices. While I agree that such rhetoric does indeed limit possibilities, it may be useful to further nuance a discussion of nationalism and theatre - for the idea of "nation" is perhaps not as homogeneous as Wallace maintains - its "identity" always in flux, produced in part through the activity of its "people." Further, as Canadians are well aware, nationalism can be a useful strategy against other colonizing forces. Two moments of nationalism appear central to this discussion. First, "nationalism" and "regionalism" are always constituted around certain identities, and in relation to others. And second, particular combinations of social, economic, cultural and political discourses create regions distinct from others, in which identity and political activity revolve around certain concerns. Discussions on nationalism, therefore, may be more complex than Wallace recognizes.

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Homi Bhabha writes that the "nation" is always "ambivalent." This is not to suggest that there is no national identity, nor institutional structures, around which the nation is defined. Nor does Bhabha argue that the nation can be transcended or that this is even desirable. Rather, in his insistence on the nation as "narration" Bhabha wishes to highlight two processes by which the nation is constituted (and reconstituted) as Nation, or by which people are constituted (and reconstituted) as the People. Bhabha suggests that there is an ambivalent tension between the definition of People as a historical object through a "nationalist pedagogy" (the search for and validation of a historical origin or event) and the people as performative subjects engaged in a process of signification through which the scraps, patches and rags of daily life are turned into signs of national culture. The "nation" emerges at the tension between the pedagogical and the performative.

There are two important implications in Bhabha's post-structuralist account of the "nation." Any national culture or national identity or a concept of people is immediately a closure -claiming one as representative for the whole. This is Wallace's concern and occurs around certain understandings of Tradition, People, High Culture, etc., which serve to "fix" a national identity. Because the "common" is defined through negation (what is not common) it serves to exclude the "other." However, Bhabha also argues that any "national" culture is always already displaced by alternative constituencies through the performativity of language. No national closure can be complete, the nation is always a contested idea and there are always counter-narratives of the nation. Starting with Lefort's contention that all ideological discourse is "rendered vulnerable" by its

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inability to define its possibility without letting its contingency appear, Bhabha argues that the nation is,

> a space that is internally marked by cultural difference . . . counter-narratives of the nation . . . continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries, both actual and conceptual - (and) disturb these ideological manoeuvres through which "imagined communities" are given essentialist identities.\(^{52}\)

The nation is not simply an ideological apparatus of state power. Rather it is constituted through the "politics" of nation - the performative activity of social groups. Bhabha does not wish to imply, however, that the "nation" is simply some expression of "national-popular" sentiment. He is suggesting, instead, that the national "idea" is ideological, arises within certain social-historical conditions, and serves to legitimate certain social and economic groups (as the People). Yet Bhabha emphasizes that it is also subject to the active intervention of those marginalized and thrown into crisis by this "representative" claim.

While Wallace makes no reference to Bhabha, it is something of this idea that he attempts to articulate in his examination of nationalism as a discourse structuring Canadian theatre. Wallace argues that nationalism can be one of the greatest threats to particularism in the theatre in Canada, perhaps to particularism in Canadian society generally, and hints that his concern for particularism is a desire to intervene in who defines national identity, and around which 'scraps, patches and rags of daily life.'

The development of a Canadian theatre is not so much different than the struggle to define a Canadian identity. The policies of the Canadian government have consistently used art and theatre to promote a Canadian culture, distinct from any other, and distinct especially from the United States.\(^{53}\) Nationalist policy has often determined Canadian state arts funding.


\(^{53}\)Canada's "instrumental" appropriation of art and media to define its national space is so pervasive that the phrase "Canadianization of the media" has already become current in discussions of recent suggestions that "art" and the "media" be used to form a cohesive "whole" in 1992 Europe! Morley and Robins, "Spaces of identity," 11.
Wallace notes that The Canada Council, from the date of its inception "was to do more than support (Canadian) art and artists, it was to play a strategic role in the state apparatus that constructs and preserves national unity and identity."\(^{54}\) In a November 8, 1990, speech Canada Council chair Allan Gotlieb reiterated this nationalist stance, claiming that the council is,

\[\text{a pan-Canadian institution with a national mandate... [the Council] steadfastly works toward the goal of a vital national cultural life. We have never lost this pan-Canadian vision nor shall we... much of the glue that has helped fasten Canada together came out of a bottle marked Canada Council.}\(^{55}\)

As trade barriers between Canada and the United States are erased, arguments that Canadian culture must be maintained through a strong "arts" community remain strong. Wallace quotes (with some dismay) a recent Ontario Art Council statement;

\[\text{This manifestation of political will has been consistent with a recognition world-wide that indigenous artistic activity is crucial to nationhood, and therefore in the best interests of the state. The concern for cultural sovereignty is perhaps a reaction to the absurdity of defending nationality by military force alone, or to the inadequacy of basing nationhood only on language or frontiers. Perhaps it is a way of balancing the destructive threat of a nuclear age. Or perhaps it represents a new consciousness of what it means to be civilized.}\(^{56}\)

While the apparent "progressiveness" of such an appeal to culture rather than the madness of militarism is on the surface attractive, such as appeal to a "national culture" excludes the particular, projecting a part for the whole. Likewise, theatre historian Anton Wagner’s statement that we need a "unifying historical-mythic background" despite its juxtaposition against European and American tradition, suggests some "common" Canadian-ness to which theatre and the nation's citizens could remain "true."\(^{57}\) To argue for a Canadian theatre, rather than theatre in Canada, is therefore to argue for a theatre that

\(^{54}\)Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, 125.

\(^{55}\)Allan Gotlieb, speech delivered Nov. 8, 1990.

\(^{56}\)Quoted in Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, 125.

represents the essence of the nation, and provides the nation with the works and symbols by which both the Canadian and the "other" is to be defined.

Bhabha suggests that the ambivalence of the "nation" has one striking result - that the nation becomes pre-occupied with its "boundaries" (narrative as much as geographical). National identity is always defined in relation to other cultural identities. That the particular runs the risk of becoming an other in a culture striving for "national homogeneity" is self-evident. Nationalism can both obscure and foreground racial, class and gender differences: obscuring real differences through subsuming them as the same (we are all one) or foregrounding difference when it appears to contaminate or threaten (they are not "us").

Ironically, these same/different distinctions have been played out dramatically within Canada as I have written this thesis. During the initial stages of writing, Mohawks were hunted down by the Canadian army in the aftermath of a land dispute. The army allowed food past its barricades - but only to those who were non-native. As the thesis progressed through the winter the same army became part of a multinational force in the Persian Gulf, directing its lethal mixture of weaponry and national identity against Iraq, and more subtly against a Muslim people that the "West" has historically constructed as something "other" in discourses of "Orientalism" and within this nation's own borders. In early March, only days after the British Columbia supreme court had denied the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en legal claim to land, the federal government appropriated the symbols and history of its native "subjects" to sell tourism in the New York Times. To speak of Canadian culture, or Canadian theatre, remaining "true to itself" is on the one hand to exclude that

58 The ad campaign spoke of "our homage in the totem poles" and used native symbols (the Raven) to legitimate the current social formation - "and from high overhead the Raven smiles." Canadian Government advertisement in New York Times, March 2, 1991.
which is assumed not Canadian, while on the other hand to appropriate and erase significant "differences."

Surprisingly, constraints imposed by nationalist rhetoric may be most evident in Canada's regional theatres. While at first glance "regional theatres" would appear to stand against a nationalist perspective in the theatre (they are *regional* after all) Wallace contends that this is not the case. Regional theatres reproduce the national discourse in two ways. First, through assuming a homogeneous geographical region, they exclude in the "region" what is excluded in the "nation." Focussing on "regional" or "local" artists does not in itself allow for plurality - certain groups have more access to the traditions and resources of "good" art. The reproduction of cultural hegemony is subtle. The intentions of the Manitoba Association of Playwrights development program, for example, are commendable - providing the resources and space for the workshopping of works in process. Plays are submitted to the program, critiqued and frequently rewritten. Four annual winners are chosen to have their work workshopped and given public staged readings. Many are later produced at local theatres. While this should provide opportunities for an array of cultural expressions and paid employment for writers from a plurality of groups, only *four* of the nineteen plays workshopped between 1982-1987 were written by women, and fewer yet emerged from Winnipeg's non-European ethnic communities.\(^59\) To suggest that "Manitoban theatre" presents universal or common characteristics of "Manitobans" is simply misleading - it invariably reflects that which is privileged by the dominant aesthetic and structures of the theatre.

Regional theatres reproduce the national discourse in another manner. The problems of funding, and their corollary - a focus on the tried and true -

results in a great degree of similarity between these regional theatres, to the extent that performances tend to play across the country or are co-produced. Regional theatres usually produce plays that were produced elsewhere first.

Regional theatres . . . command a major portion of The Canada Council’s theatre budget and adhere, at least on paper, to its demand that they serve and develop the regions’ audiences and artist. In reality, however, these theatres do little to maintain or promote Canada’s regional identities; their combined image is of cultural homogeneity rather than diversity - an image that the economic efficacy of co-productions between them increasingly perpetuates.

The Manitoba Theatre Center’s 1989-1990 season, for example, produced no non-anglophone plays, and three were former Broadway successes.

Wallace’s argument for particularity and against nationalist rhetoric, however, runs into certain difficulties. His critique of nationalism and regionalism can lead to a conception of culture which fails to consider the ways that identity is constituted around regional differences. In Canada this remains important. While an argument for particularity is necessary, and counteracts a definition of ”nation” around a certain set of assumptions and exclusions, it can lead to a conflation of the nation’s theatre to the experience of one or two places where the ”particularist impulse” (as defined by Wallace) is most noticeable. Wallace for instance, writes ”while a discussion of Canadian theatre since 1970 can be approached from a variety of perspectives, inevitably it must address the situation of theatre in Montreal and Toronto to become truly relevant” (italics added) Wallace does disservice to groups in regions where identity is constituted within particular combinations of economic, social, and political forces that are distinctly different than those in Toronto and Montreal. After a passionate polemic against the reductionist impulse in Canadian theatre, his reduction of theatre in Canada to the activities of Montreal and Toronto seems incredible, for he fails to translate his earlier question ”whose universalism” to

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60 Wallace, Producing Marginality, 143
61 Ibid., 37.
"whose particularism?" As much as Wallace wants to transcend a parochial regionalism and place "regionalism" within a particularist description of cultural groups he fails to recognize the materiality of identity, language and theatre. The experience of women in rural Manitoba may be much different than the experience of women in Toronto. Producing marginality may also mean producing that which in Canada has been perceived as spatially or regionally marginal!

While I agree with Wallace's concerns that both nationalism and regionalism act as a threat to plurality, the idea of the "nation" is perhaps more complex than Wallace seems to recognize. There are other sides to the question of Canadian culture which Wallace fails to adequately deal with in his attempts to create space for difference. First, and this simply shows how complex the idea of the nation-state really is, Canada shares with the popular nationalism of post-colonial peoples a desire to distinguish itself - to separate itself from other powers - in this case the United States, whose presence all but defines the Canadian nation. In an age of global economics, nationalism is also a strategy of maintaining degrees of particularity in the face of colonization by rationalized systems. Why must we look to New York or London? Some have suggested that nationalism can in fact be a positive force when arrayed against a negative outside force, and it is this which underlies state support of the arts.62 The Canada Council director Joyce Zemans notes the "crucial role governments play in sustaining and enhancing strong national cultures in this age of global economics."63 Ironically, the same tension exists within the nation - in Quebec, but also in the Maritimes or the West - where the establishment of an identity separate from the perceived places of power (Ottawa and Toronto) is struggled

for. In a similar manner "national identity" works as a political strategy for the many native groups struggling against the legacy (and current reality) or colonialism.

Nationalism is more complex than Wallace's argument suggests - just as funding and criticism are two-sided, providing opportunities while erecting limits. What emerges clearly from Wallace's discussion of nationalism in Canadian theatre, however, is that it is a discourse which (along with criticism and theatre funding practices) works to limit possibilities in the theatres - what is produced, where it is produced, how it is received, by whom, in what contexts. Any argument that subjectivity is negotiated in the subject's entry into the "symbolic realm of language" must recognize that the "symbolic realm" provides only certain possibilities for individuals positioned differentially within social formations. With this in mind, I will turn to a discussion of the Fringe Festivals and the possibilities for plurality which they may provide.
Chapter 3:

Subversion!? Fringe Festivals and the production of meaning

Yvette Nolan’s *Blade* was staged on a series of hot Winnipeg evenings at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival’s Son of Warehouse Theatre. It attracted full houses, all 100 or so seats in a back room of a former warehouse filled mostly by young and middle-aged women and men. This was a district of town into which most had rarely ventured, under the belching smokestacks of the coal burning Winnipeg Hydro Company, only blocks away from the Disreali Freeway, and beyond it North Main, which area all knew to avoid. The heart of the festival, in the more attractive region of the Exchange District - Market square - with its crowds, crafts tables, clowns and jugglers was several blocks away in the other direction, hidden by the district’s warehouses, cafés and performance spaces.

This was Nolan’s first play. The show was based on the recent events surrounding a serial killer who assaulted and murdered ”prostitutes” - or at least the newspapers had labelled the victims as such. They had been picked up around Winnipeg’s red light district, or around or under the Disreali Freeway where the ”native prostitutes” worked. Nolan worked nearby. As an employee of the Manitoba Theatre Center, she daily walked the sidewalk beside the elevated freeway, over the grey remains of the Point Douglas Community and the sludge of the Red River to her home in Elmwood, where an older working class neighborhood provided a sense of continuity and security. At the time of the serial killings a car occupied by a lone male driver had stopped to ask Yvette if she wanted a ride. Shaken by the thought of who that may have been, Yvette had the motivation to write her first play.

The main character in the play accepts the ride, is assaulted, struggles, and is murdered - but this is really only a pretext for another, more captivating, story. The remainder of the performance takes an uncomfortable look at images
of women, prostitution, "slashers," masculinity, and the inner-city. A provocative double casting has the same man playing both the slasher and the victim's (innocent?) boyfriend. The slasher's story is not one of an obvious "deviant" but has characteristics common to many men, blurring the distinction between "normal" and "abnormal," "slasher" and "boyfriend." The assumptions made from the simple fact that the victim was picked up in the North Main district is thrown back at the audience - what are our images of this place? The social construction of "Woman" and "prostitute" is revealed as the victim becomes transformed from student to prostitute not only in the press and the assumptions of police but in the minds of fellow students, the public, and finally, the audience - as the play progresses the voiceless victim stands in the shadows slowly transforming herself, within the field of vision, with the signs of prostitution.

In a 40-minute production Nolan's audience had effectively been challenged to re-think the production of images, identity and difference in their city, its press, institutions and communities. Blade was undoubtedly one of the "better" plays of the 1990 Winnipeg festival (it was re-mounted as part of the "best of the Fringe" the following week), but it allows us a point of departure for a discussion of these events. The previous chapters have made two claims: first, that cultural events are sites where subjectivity (and by extension - the social) is negotiated - that the production and interpretation of texts, performances, and signs are both an intervention in, and an incorporation within, the "symbolic realm"; and, second, that not all possibilities are possible - that the conditions of Canadian theatre allow only certain possibilities while excluding others.

Nolan's Blade suggests alternate possibilities. It is notable in two manners - first, in its "denaturalizing" of culturally constructed identities, and second, in its actual performance. It is a show that would likely not find its way
onto the city’s professional stages - its content is disturbing, its length short, its set minimal and its writer unknown. That the playwright is Metis is also, I believe, not insignificant. Few native or Metis artists find their way into the nation’s performance halls.

In this chapter I will argue that the Fringe Festivals provide possibilities for playwrighting, production, performance and interpretation which traditional theatre practice cannot - not a realm of pure possibility, but one in which possibilities of both representation and the discussion of such representations are placed within a widened "public sphere." The Fringes, I suggest, radically subvert traditional theatre practices in Canada, by altering economic relations in the theatre, increasing accessibility for artists, re-positioning the decision-making of production, and challenging the role and authority of criticism. I will further argue that these festivals provide possibilities for interpretation or reception that are not otherwise readily available. This occurs through changing the physical setting of "theatre" - moving it into old warehouses, parking garages and community halls, increasing accessibility and erasing some of the distinctions between "high" and "popular" culture. The Fringes are very "public" - they contain an intersubjective element rarely found in the production and consumption of the performing arts, attained not only through the event’s accessibility, but through its transformation of urban space into spaces of interaction and its re-positioning of the spectator in relation to the performance, to the performer, and to other patrons. The "publicness" of the Fringes has significant effects, not the least being a re-claiming of "art" from the grasp of media/academic criticism - the "good" and the "bad" defined instead in the interactions of participants.
Festival, liminality and transgression

In some ways the arguments in this chapter are similar to those found in a growing literature on festivals which has emphasized, if not celebrated, their liminality - moments of discontinuity in the social, transgression of social codes, inversion of the "high" and the "low."¹ This literature has a certain appeal. Turner has described the "liminal" as people "playing" with elements of the familiar and defamiliarizing them, or as those times and places where "the analysis of culture into factors, and their free or 'ludic' recombination in any and every possible pattern" is made possible.² The focus has been on individual and collective transgression, inversion, play, by which the quotidian is first suspended, then transformed.³ Undoubtedly this occurs at the Fringes, both in the theatres and on the streets. Yet, within the celebratory nature of this chapter I wish to weave a second story - one which tempers the current enthrallment with "liminal spaces." For while we can locate liminality at the Fringes, we can also locate the reproduction of social and cultural discourses. The recent work of Rosalyn Deutsche, for instance, has stressed the situatedness of artistic production, representation and display.⁴ "Art" is inseparable from the social and spatial relations of the city - in which the identity of texts, subjects, and spaces are constituted. Cultural events are marked by ambiguity. This is not to suggest that different events do not provide different opportunities.

³A major difficulty with this literature is its inability to theorize the "situatedness" of subjects. An emphasis on the "set apart" nature of the "liminal" assumes an ability to occupy a position outside of a culture’s meaning-fixing discourses.
Rather, I am stressing that festivity and intersubjectivity do not necessarily equal inversion or subversion - they can also reproduce the "same." Cultural events and social interactions are always contextual, influenced by those discursive relations (social, political, economic) in which such interaction is "imbedded." The dualisms liminal-everyday, structure-antistructure, art-society, do not adequately capture the intertwining of often-contradictory discourses in the activity of subjects, who, while unique "users" of the materials of everyday life are always already within certain socio-linguistic structures.

Certainly individual subjects (and social groups) "use" whatever is at hand in non-determinate manners. In many ways the Fringe Festivals - the activity of artists, patrons and volunteers, the temporality and the spatiality of the event, are a bricolage of what materials are at hand within the institutional structures of rationalized societies, through which a temporary transformation of urban space and "everyday life" occurs (with lasting effects). Elements of urban space, architecture, movements of capital, government funding, artistic production, and the work schedules of individuals (patrons and volunteers) are combined, in a different way each year, to create a temporary event in which alternate meanings can be articulated. De Certeau speaks of such activity as "tactics" which are,

... the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of "discipline." Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of consumers compose the network of an antidiscipline.5

The Fringes establish a temporary, localized "festival-space" which leaves no physical traces, yet reappears each year with a new set of possibilities, through which subjectivity and the "social" are reconstituted.

The literature that has developed on "festival," while rarely focussing on "arts" festivals and often advancing tenuous arguments that festivals are either

a return to "pre-modern" or "enchanted" societies, or are realms of "play" and "pure possibility" within present societies, has not been without value. This literature has emphasized "festival" positively, as a moment of stepping out from modernity's rationalities, and opening societ(ies) to interaction within and between public spheres. Almost all writers mention, and often in relation, two related "moments" - the transformation of the street (modernity's sign of rationalized exchange, commodification, and the compression of time and space) into spaces that escape the disciplinary function of social and cultural codes, and the inversion, negotiation, and indeterminacy of identity, within these new realms of interaction.

Yet, while subjectivity is negotiated within a differentiated symbolic realm, produced, in part, through these festivals, these events and their products emerge from practices situated within those discursive fields which define the "possible." This chapter will therefore explore both the expanded possibilities and limits for plurality and diversity at the Fringes. Following chapters will attempt to further situate these events, discussing the Fringe "public" (its characteristics and significance) and the effects of state-economic rationality.

**Challenging the conditions:**

**playwrighting, performance and production at the Fringe**

There aren't a lot of great Canadian plays coming out of the Fringe, though many have gone on to other production. But what we have done is given people confidence to do the work they want to do by themselves. (Brian Paisley)\(^6\)

Canada's Fringe Festivals emerged in the 1980's as a unique response to theatre practice in the nation's institutional theatres - attempting to alter the conditions of artistic production and provide opportunities for playwrights, actors and directors. The Edmonton Fringe began in 1981 and by the end of the decade five others, most situated in Western Canada, had been modelled on the

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Edmonton event (Vancouver, 1985; Victoria, 1987; Winnipeg, 1988; Toronto, 1989; and Saskatoon, 1990). While these began as artist-oriented events, they quickly became popular, "public" festivals, several drawing large crowds and becoming significant annual cultural events in their cities (especially Edmonton and Winnipeg). This was neither planned, nor expected - it simply happened. The events contained a certain appeal beyond traditional theatre audiences, centered, it appears, mostly on its "festival" character and milling crowds. This makes the Fringes distinct from many performing arts festivals - expanding artistic production (and the "politics" of representation) to wider realms of the public sphere. This aspect of the Fringes will receive more attention shortly. First, however, I wish to examine how these festivals challenge the conditions of artistic production in Canada.

Canada's Fringe Festivals place the artist within a set of relations significantly different from traditional theatre practices. At the Fringes, shows are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, and artists retain 100% of box-office receipts. This is radically different from other "popular" arts festivals - Vancouver's Folk and Film festivals, for instance, invite artists and pay them different wages. Shows at the Fringe Festival are not vetted. Instead, as Winnipeg Fringe organizer Desrochers notes, the Fringes, provide an avenue for artists to put whatever they want on stage without going before intermediary bodies, who choose what will be on stage and therefore put their point of view onto the community.

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7Montreal artists staged their first Fringe in Spring, 1991. While some have compared these events to the renowned Edinburgh Fringe, these events are uniquely Canadian, in response to local conditions.

8This should be qualified in several ways. There are inequalities of access at the Fringes. Groups have to be well organized and privy to the dissemination of necessary information in order to apply in time to be placed in the festival; several of the festivals admit to reserving spaces for foreign shows or shows of "excellence;" and several of the festivals have "quotas" - Saskatoon, for instance reserves 1/3 of the spaces for local groups, 1/3 other Canadian and 1/3 foreign, with "first-come, first-served" within these categories. However, these distinctions appear relatively inconsequential when placed beside the significant differences between the conditions of production at the Fringes and regional or subscription theatres.

Providing that the registration arrives before the festival is completely booked, for a fee of $200 at both the Vancouver and Winnipeg Fringes (1990), anyone from anywhere can stage a show. For this fee, the artist is provided with a "theatre-space" (often converted space); technical support (lighting, sound, etc.); a technician; front-of-house staff; ushers; and, finally, a central administration which creates the "event" - organizing accommodations (many are billeted); acting as a medium for the dissemination of information about the shows to the local media; preparing a program for the festival which introduces each production; and most importantly, publicizing and structuring the event to create crowds and provide a "ready-made" audience. Joanna Maratta, producer of the Vancouver Fringe, states clearly, "we strive . . . to provide artists with an administrative, technical and promotional structure that allows them to produce their work in a fairly low-risk environment." With the exception of the limits established through the reproduction, at least in part, of distinctions such as "excellence" and "universality" by both artist and patron, and the physical limitations encountered in the venues (as diverse as warehouses, parking garages or martial arts studios) few limitations exist. Groups establish time constraints for themselves in their application, and must keep sets simple enough to set-up and dismantle in relatively little time and inexpensive enough to have expenses covered by box office receipts.

This format has two significant effects: production decisions are removed from the restraints of institutional theatres; and, risk-taking is encouraged through the inversion of the wage-relation of theatre and artist. Put simply, the Fringes allow writers, producers and performers greater degrees of autonomy. Constraints to plurality found within tradition theatre practices (the economics of production which limit what can be produced; the rationalized systems of

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10Quoted in Gloria Davies, "Thanks for playing," Vancouver Boulevard 1,2 (1990): 34.
government funding and "peer evaluation" which limit possibilities for writing and performance; the legitimating processes of criticism which provide certain conditions for the reception of shows; and the hierarchy and structure of employment within the theatre through which few have access to paid employment, and in which few can experiment with their abilities) are less evident here. Of course, providing conditions for alternatives may enable plurality but does not ensure that this will occur (or that the type of plurality that does occur will be from any one perspective "desirable"). Yet, that they provide this possibility, is, I believe, important, for they appear to be increasingly appropriated by individual groups, writers, producers and actors, for a variety of purposes and through which the expressions of women, racial minorities or other particular groups are becoming legitimate speech.

Regional theatres have little room for such risk-taking. Desrochers (who is, ironically, also an employee of the nation's oldest regional theatre - Manitoba Theatre Centre) states this unequivocally:

Because of the financial situations that regional theaters operate in they are forced to shy away from plays that won't have a broad audience appeal. I know from participating in the planning process that this is not the wish of the artistic staff, but that they are torn between doing something that has something important to say to the world in an entertaining way, and doing a play for the sake of box office to make sure that you make the budget balance.11

Regional theatres must also attract corporate support. Few corporate sponsors are willing to sponsor "risky" shows, from the perspective of both "quality" and "politics." At the Fringes, however, corporations are asked to support an "event" rather than individual shows or subscription seasons (and an "event" which attracts large numbers of potential customers). This permits a group such as Awasikan Theatre (a native troupe which would unlikely be found on any professional stage) to receive funding indirectly, and to find an audience among a segment of the population who are likely rarely confronted, with not simply

11Interview with Larry Desrochers.
representations of native cultures, but with native representations of native culture.

The Fringes also provide space for shows which thrive in the intimacy and intersubjectivity of the "event." Desrochers noted the increase in "serious" plays such as Shane McCabe's *No Place Like Home*, Nolan's *Blade*, and Drama Village Nigeria's *Woza Albert* which required an intimacy unattainable in larger venues. McCabe's show provides a good example. This production (which played the entire Fringe circuit), was a "journey through childhood" of such intense abuse that Robert Enright wrote in *Border Crossings*:

> the physical, psychological and emotional violence that McCabe suffers is so intense that his journey could more accurately be described as a horror story than a conventional autobiography. No one in the audience wants to believe that even a portion of what McCabe relates is true and because we're convinced by the end that every word is true, we find it an excruciatingly difficult play to watch. Short of walking out - for us, as it was for him - there is no escape... 12

Ray Conlogue (*Globe and Mail*) notes that "McCabe's show... is just too personal - and, indeed, harrowing - to be normally saleable in a theatre evening."13 In a regional theatre this would present a crisis - is the play too strong, too intimate? Does it alienate the audience, the sponsors?

The Fringes, in contrast, will not fall apart from either the lack of ability in some shows or the strong, violent or offensive imagery in others. What is notable about McCabe's show is that McCabe refuses to take responsibility for his "audience."14 Nor do the producers of the festival. This is not to say that McCabe does not interact with his audience - he does much more than most artists, directors, or producers of other shows. However, if they are disturbed by

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14In an interview with McCabe, University of Victoria researcher Erika Patterson returned several times to the question of McCabe's responsibility to his audience. While McCabe admits to recognizing the pain which it may bring audience members and also attempts to "personalize" the show - so far as being at the door to say goodbye to audience members as they leave, he refuses to see this as therapy, either for himself or his audience. This is purely art (a representation of his childhood) and dissemination (the hope that people will be prompted to think).
the violent images - many were - that is for them to deal with. Because these shows are produced in a very public manner, the "festival" aspect of the event - its street activity, beer gardens, and line-ups - results in an intersubjective element to the Fringe which mediates shows such as McCabe's. At all three festivals which I attended (Winnipeg, Vancouver, Victoria), McCabe's show was highly discussed - and sold-out! While reactions to many shows were strong, they were "worked out" on the streets, in the cafés or even with the artists themselves. Without endangering its own survival the festivals provide room for shows which would otherwise not find their way onto the stage.

The structure of the festival allows initiative to begin with artists (producers, actors, playwrights) rather than with an artistic director accountable to a board of directors. This allows the events to be "used" by those who find few possibilities at other sites. The popular production of Eleemosynary staged at the 1990 Vancouver Fringe Festival is a good example. Producer Carolyne Fenz chose to produce this show not because it was "avant-garde" or "fringy" but because she was looking for plays for women. She was motivated by her own unemployment as a female artist, within a tradition of "Art" which continues to provide more opportunities for men:

I went to look for plays for women not because I'm a feminist but because I am an out-of-work actress. There aren't enough parts for women. I am a feminist. There are a lot of women out there, myself included, who would like to work but cannot find parts.15

and, by her frustration with the development of female characters:

[one] play that I toyed with doing had parts for women but the central character was a guy, and he was also the most interesting, it wasn't so much that the central character was a man that bothered me but I felt that the women's characters were not well developed.16

16Ibid.
She further noted that no professional theatre would have an interest in this show simply because it is a 75 minute play which cannot easily be adapted to the requirements of a professional theatre. Other shows in the festival were not appropriate for regional or subscription theatres because they were "non-linear" or strayed far from the dominant "realist" aesthetic of North American theatre.\(^{17}\)

In an important sense the Fringes have also become a stage to be "captured" - spaces of dissemination. Brian Paisley, founder of the Edmonton Fringe, has noted that "more writers seem anxious to use the Fringe as a vehicle of saying something important."\(^{18}\) Many performers and playwrights produce shows for no other reason than experience and exposure (indeed, this in one of the purposes of the event), but others approach the festival as an opportunity to articulate a particular viewpoint. Ruckus Workshop Productions' *Ruckus in the Rainforest: an Ecological Hootenanny*, or S.H.E. Productions' *The Rules Nowadays* are cases in point. The former was a theatrical, although highly pedagogical, exploration of current environmental crises, the latter, performed by two Vancouver poets (Helen Potrebenko and Sandy Shreve) and the Euphoniously Feminist and Non-Performing Quintet, was a production advertised as a "blend of poetry and song with feminist perspectives on a world where love, friendship, childhood and aging are as much concern as war, violence, racism and pollution. A show of laughter and tears, rage and caring."\(^{19}\)

Sandy Shreve was clear about what motivated her group to become involved in the festival:

As we were doing the Women In View [Festival] we were thinking that we should develop some more shows like this, that we should broaden it a bit. We thought, why don't we do the Fringe Festival, its off the beaten track . . . [Our show] isn't

\(^{17}\)Larry Desrochers stresses this aspect of the festivals.


\(^{19}\)From the handbill for *The Rules Nowadays*, produced at the Vancouver Fringe Festival, 1990.
exactly right down the theatre alley but it's different - its not just poetry reading and its not just a music show. So we thought we'd try it. We had a very conscious objective - we wanted to get feminist cultural works out to a broader community. We thought that the combination of poetry and music was a good mechanism for doing that as well as being a good show. We wanted to . . . draw in all kinds of different issues . . . we were really pleased because we think that it does convey a feminist vision.20

The "ready-made" audience of the Fringe, produced through the promotion of the event and the spectacle of the "crowd," the "street," and the "square," presents wider audiences than either the "theatre-going" audience, or the "ghettoized" audiences of alternative or political arts groups and permits a wide range of performing groups to mount the stage. In Producing Marginality, Wallace has noted the increasing importance of the Fringes:

> the list of Canadian small theatres whose mandate can be summarized in a sentence and whose work reflects a distinct aesthetic grows as Fringe Festivals spread across Canada. These festivals have created an important network for new and unknown companies who would otherwise have little opportunity to create and perform work considered "inappropriate" by mainstream theatres.21

While Wallace's concern is theatre, these comments could be applied to the other performing arts that are finding their way into the Fringe Festivals. The Fringes are becoming sites for the performance of shows not usually grouped under "theatre." Dance, skit comedies, clowning, juggling, busking, minioperas, poetry readings, folk music, video, and of course cabarets have all found their way on stage, broadening, if not almost erasing, the boundaries and conventions of "good" theatre. Increasingly these festivals are being perceived as an opportunity to work and experiment by performers, directors, writers, composers and choreographers.

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The margins of production: the economics of the Fringe

Most artists, actors, and writers that I know squeeze in their art when the kids are sleeping or before they go waitressing or dealing with racism on the midnight taxi shift or cleaning the house or toiling at some grossly underpaid arts administration job. 22

Next to the Fringe's "first-come, first-served" format these events are celebrated for their "inversion" of the wage relations of the theatre. Artists receive 100% of the box office receipts and decide the cost of admission to their shows with Festival organizers setting a ceiling (around $7). 23 Many groups offered their shows for less, or gave discounts to the unemployed, handicapped, students, elderly, etc. 24 The retention of all proceeds by the artists is crucial, for it allows the possibility of a group breaking even without government or corporate sponsorship, and removes decisions from concerns of institutional stability. The Fringe Festivals place the artist in the role of "entrepreneur." It is the artist, the producer, or the collective, who makes decisions regarding what material is produced, who it is directed to, how it is performed and how it is promoted, rather than an artistic director, production manager, or marketing director responsible to a board of governors zealously watching the bottom line. Few Fringe shows have corporate sponsors, fewer still a board of governors to which they are accountable. This financial independence also allows autonomy from the expectations of "peer juries" in the nation's arts councils and from their predilection toward generating scripts and playwrights, which mitigates against

22 Chris Creighton-Kelly, "Talking culture," Vancouver Boulevard 1,1 (1990): 20. Creighton-Kelly is a Vancouver artist who has performed at the Fringe.
23 This was recently changed in Vancouver when operating expenses could not be met by government and corporate funding resulting in an unpopular surcharge of $1 per ticket. It's implementation was perceived by many as an "unimaginative solution" which compromised the nature of the event. More importantly, the surcharge revealed the difficulty of maintaining the festival's limited autonomy from the vagaries of state and corporate funding (see Chapter 5).
24 Perhaps the most ingenuous and insightful for those interested in the possibility of a particularist theatre was Fat Man's Lament, produced at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival, which gave a reduction to anyone weighing over 250 pounds!
indeterminate or flexible scripts and collective works.\textsuperscript{25} The Fringes, in contrast, have a considerable number of collective endeavors and many shows which change in each community in response both to the venue and audience reception. This widening of production to incorporate reception is significant - immediately challenging distinctions of "high" and "low" - especially as reception occurs within the widened intersubjective context of "festival" where traditional sources of evaluative knowledge are less available.

This inversion of wage-relations and the possibilities it provides, I should note, could not occur without the labour of volunteers (300+) who perform all festival tasks except high-level administration and specialized technical work. Without them the Fringes would be unable to transform their locales into "festival." At the Vancouver Fringe, volunteers contribute 16 hours of labour in exchange for free passage to a certain number of shows. The cost of employing them would likely exceed $100,000 and would make staging the event prohibitively expensive. Most volunteers are committed to the Fringe "concept" - contributing time outside of their paid employment, with some even coordinating holidays with the festival.

The inversion of the theatre's wage relations is also a golden opportunity for artist to gain exposure at little cost or risk - a failure, whether "artistic" or "financial," is not career threatening while a successful show may net the artists both financial and critical rewards. While the Fringes are no bonanza for most artists, few seem concerned. What appears more important to many is that they get the chance to work, and to work in an environment which allows them to take risks. No detailed attempt has been made to determine the "profitability" of Fringe productions (and few of the artists would appear to know - accurate book-keeping is not always considered the highest priority), but few artists

\textsuperscript{25}Some shows do seek money from provincial and national arts councils, but these are in a minority.
"strike it big." 26 In Vancouver, artists earned $130,000 (approx. $1,300 per production). 27 But costs are low enough that many are willing to bankroll the chance to write or perform, and certainly the "pay-off" can be significant. The producers of *Deadly Currents* suggested that:

> Because we got so much exposure in Vancouver (being a 'pick of the Fringe'), we can now make a proposal to a theatre, and say; "we are the people who did *Deadly Currents*," and they have heard of the name. We want to be able to ride the wave of having had some success by turning around and doing another show right away. 28

Some view the Fringe as providing a career step. David Chandler noted, "you have to be successful for two years, to a sold out house, then you graduate out of the circuit." 29 However, not all view this positively. One director noted that the Fringe had become too much of a "place to be seen" in order to "market yourself" rather than take risks. "It's like going to a gym - there is no one lifting weights, just people flexing muscles showing that they do!" 30 Certainly many artists use the event to enhance their careers elsewhere. Professional actors use the Fringe as credibility builders, through which audiences are built, funding agencies contacted, and abilities developed or honed. For some it provides the opportunity to expand the type of roles they play, moving from "comic" to "serious" roles, as did Jay Brazeau, in the 1987 production *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*.

Others, however, use the event to simply avoid the "professional" theatre altogether. While festival organizers speak of the event as "developmental," providing experience and visibility to artists attempting to "break into" mainstream theatre, some have no intention of entering into the rationalized

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26 Erika Patterson asked the producers of a number of Victoria Fringe shows to discuss their financial situation - but their knowledge was sketchy.
27 Edmonton's 1990 Fringe distributed over $400,000 to 170 groups, the average show grossing $2,600 over the week.
28 The comment was made in an interview with Erika Patterson, Sept. 1990.
29 David Chandler interview by Erika Patterson, Sept. 1990.
30 Gary Sutherland Pilch, Interview with author, Vancouver, Nov. 1990.
structures of Canadian theatre (maintained in part by union structure). The Fringes allow these groups to remain "outside" where they find more freedom, satisfaction, or are accessible to wider audiences. The festivals create a space for both the "one-time show" in which performers attempt to get a "break" and the on-going subversion of theatre structures by those who have no interest in working within them. With the Fringe circuit now stretching from Halifax to Victoria, and running through three months of traditional "down-time" in the theatre, artists - rather than working occasionally in the theatre and waiting tables - can support themselves working in the theatre during the summer months. The possibility for a "fringe" career may now exist! Indeed, some artists are becoming recognized fringe "stars" whose name already ensures crowded houses (English Suitcase Theatre, Ken Brown, Mump and Smoot, Anna Berry).

Limits to freedom: the ambiguity of inversion
The "entrepreneurial" spirit of the Fringes may result in more risk-taking but it also contains limits. Unless a show plays to packed houses, only shows whose production costs are minimal can turn a profit. Large productions with elaborate sets invariably lose money. Few such shows are mounted. The same economic relations which free Fringe productions work to limit their form and style. One-person acts are common, and the more people in the cast or technicians needed to run the show, the less likely the production will have any financial returns. Richard Lett noted that with 13 performers and another six in production his 1988 show Buried West: The Demented Stories of Richard Lett was "guaranteed not to make money." On the other hand, the minimalist

31Richard Lett's quote was from one of many retrospectives on the first five years of the Vancouver Fringe found in the Festivals self-congratulatory Five Years of the Fringe: A Retrospective, 23.
shows that are mounted at the Fringe would rarely find their way into larger, regional venues where set and "spectacle" come more into play. *Globe and Mail* critic Lian Lacey concludes that the Fringes have developed a unique and valuable form although she also suggests that there is an "essential" link between the structure of the event and its products (ironically, she also establishes the categories for a new "fringe canon"): "the techniques - black humour, absurd behaviour and tight writing - are classic elements of the best Fringe plays, a short-form way of saying a lot in a limited time, the *essential* art of the Fringe." (italics added)\(^1\)

The "entrepreneurial" aspect of the Fringes does not necessarily provide equal access to all, nor ensure representation of diverse social groups. Employment in a Fringe show is still in part dependent upon connections within the artistic community, the degree to which certain social and racial groups and their artistic forms have been integrated into "theatre" and the continued dominance of theatre by European-Canadians. Few shows are written or produced by members of racial minorities, and many others follow traditional casting.\(^2\) The complaints of two Indo-Canadian artists (both active in theatre within their own communities) at a recent artist's forum, holds true for much of the Fringe.\(^3\) One noted that although successful within his own community, his efforts to find parts in non-Indo-Canadian theatre over the past few years had resulted in one audition - as an Iranian terrorist. The other noted "we keep cleaning the floors and never get on the stage . . . the only role they have for me is a snake-charmer."\(^4\) Many shows consist of people that obtained their theatre

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\(^1\) Liam Lacey, *Globe and Mail*, 23 Aug. 1990, c4

\(^2\) There are exceptions - *Maharani and the Maple Leaf, Aweena Neena, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, Woza Albert* and a Japanese Dance Troupe - but they are few. This raises a significant question for government funding - is state funding of the "arts" and its distinction between the performing arts and folk art a reproduction of the dominance of certain traditions at the expense of others?

\(^3\) The forum was held at the Vancouver East Cultural Center - June 2, 1990.

\(^4\) Comments made during discussion at "Lies and Labels: A forum on Race, Ethnicity and the Performing Arts."
training together, went through "respectable" institutions or know people producing shows. Carolyne Fenz noted how this influenced her choice of one of the actors for Eleemosynary: "she is a graduate of the same theatre school as I am . . . so I knew the kind of acting training that she had. I knew what kind of rehearsal process she would be used to."  

While organizers, artists, producers and patrons alike recognize the "possibilities" of the festival, changing the structures of production and consumption of cultural products does not necessarily change what is produced and how it is received. The event provides writers, artists and consumers with new possibilities of writing, acting and interpreting - but cannot be claimed as a site of "pure possibility." The statement of one patron - that they attended the Fringe simply "to see what people want to be doing," while recognizing the Fringe as a site where many production determining conventions of theatre are eluded, can obscure the reality that what people want emerges from their constitution as subjects at other sites. The celebration of the "ex-centric" nature of the festival should not be read to imply a "free shaping of ideas through theatre" as one response suggested. Another patron, by contrast, expressed frustration that the options were limited for a "radical left lesbian feminist theatre." Innovation is directed in certain directions. While many productions experimented with both content and form, and amid the predictable reproduction of classics were alternate interpretations of canonized work (Bronte Brothers was a popular example), each production remains subject to the intentions of its producer(s). This is double-sided. These intentions are inevitably implicated in certain social formations - which may explain why producers at the event remain predominantly white, middle-class and male. However, within such a context, many productions become sites of resistance.

and re-articulation. Shows written or produced by women, for example, were often the best attended and most discussed (Nolan’s Blade and Ruby Slippers Production’s staging of Men Inside - a show written for men but performed provocatively by an all-female cast - are good examples).

Expectations and participation: ”protesting the moribund state of professional theatre”

I hope to see something funny, bizarre, out of the ordinary, interesting, insightful, not mainstream, thought provoking, erotic, stimulating, wistful, environmentally friendly or at least just entertaining. (response to patron survey)

Success at the Fringes does not depend upon high-budget promotion nor do shows need ”mass” appeal. Production costs and overhead are low, corporate sponsors unnecessary and a show can break even without a large audience. As such the Fringes take the artist and audiences out of the logic of ”spectacle.” Many audience members were attracted to the festivals for exactly this reason. Among the responses to the questions ”why did you come to the festival?” one of the most frequent was to see ”alternative” or ”non-commercial” theatre. Several contrasted the Fringe with high budget, commercial shows such as Les Miserables, which was touring in both cities. One commented that they came ”to see theatre that is different than all the stupid musical comedies at mainstream theatres.”

Festival-goers expressed frustration with the limitations in other theatre institutions. Responses such as ”to see plays that would otherwise not be done,” ”a chance to see theatre that would probably never make it to mainstream, or even not-so-mainstream theatres,” ”relief from boring ‘classical’ theatre,” or ”how else to protest the moribund state of professional theatre and its

37 If the cost of the production is $1,000, the show must attract 170 patrons at $6 each to cover expenses. Most shows are given between 5 and 9 show times in venues that ranged, in Winnipeg, from 100 to 300 seats.

38 This question was asked of in audience surveys at the Winnipeg and Vancouver Fringes (1500 responses). See appendices 1 and 2)
unimaginative, repetitive programming" were frequent. The response of festival-goers to the production of classics was mixed. While a significant number attended these shows, or came to the Fringe especially to see them (Sartre's *No Exit* was popular) a large number reacted negatively to their inclusion in the festival, protesting the production of "old war-horses such as *Macbeth, No Exit, Waiting for Godot.*"

Significantly, the Fringes are perceived to be sites of alternate cultural forms. Many patrons actively sought "alternative," "feminist" and "political" theatre, or "themes that are critical of our society." But "politics" here is not juxtaposed to entertainment, nor "art" to "popular culture" (the number of shows exploring images of Marilyn Monroe was astounding). One woman wrote three simple statements: "to see feminist theatre, to see political theatre, to be entertained," while another connected political theatre and the pleasure of the "crowd": "to see alternative theatre, especially feminist theatre . . . but another factor contributing to the allure of the Fringe is seeing interesting people and meeting friends." Many noted that the public nature of the Fringes sets it apart from other theatre productions.

**Interpretation and intersubjectivity: eluding criticism?**

Banners, outdoor cafes, the word going around about what's hot and what's not - there's carnival in the air, an energizing frisson (sic) of risk, and the feeling of being part of something nascent and unfettered.\(^{39}\)

The "publicness" of the Fringe Festivals is significant, for it permits the events to moderate the usually overpowering influence of institutionalized criticism. Earlier I emphasized the "naturalization" of criticism and its role in "managing" the production of meaning in Canadian theatre (Chapter 2). At the Fringes this institution loses much of its power.

\(^{39}\)Davies, "Thanks for playing," 34.
While the daily newspapers and local radio stations run reviews of Fringe shows - and artists are keenly aware that these reviews will affect a show's profitability - institutionalized criticism is only one site of evaluation. The nature of the event simply does not allow for critical reviews of all shows, or even comprehensive reviews of most - there are too many shows, and their runs are too brief (papers usually only run reviews of shows that will continue to play for several more days). While patrons may read reviews in the papers before heading to the festival, and shows will often post good reviews "front-of-house" to promote their productions, decisions about attending individual shows has more to do with word-of-mouth evaluation at the site of the festival. Because most patrons make an "event" out of the festival, they depend on "word of mouth" information. The average number of shows attended per patron was over 5 in Vancouver, and over 6 in Winnipeg, while in Vancouver 62.7% of patrons spent part of 3 or more days at the festival.

The "word of mouth" aspect of the festival has been emphasized by the Winnipeg Fringe producers since they began to promote the idea of a "Fringe" in 1988.

This [Fringe] format is designed to spark interaction between "fringegoers" as they criss-cross the site, encouraged by low ticket prices to take in several performances in one day or over several days. When waiting for their next choice to begin they enjoy the wares of food and craft vendors or relax with a beer and discuss the "hits" of the festival. This fringe festival atmosphere is certainly a departure from the traditional format of big-budget theatre.40

Once "on-site," the structure and spatiality of the event work to create alternate "geographies of knowledge" than those of the media. Patrons must purchase tickets at the venue where the show is playing, but tickets are sold only after the previous show has begun. Long queues form at popular shows long before tickets go on sale and patrons must queue again in order to get seating (seating

is general). A large amount of time is spent waiting. This challenges our conceptions of time and efficiency - the scheduling almost demands that attending these shows be placed within the larger context of the "event" rather than as a solitary "show." While festival producers hear many complaints about the queues and the difficulty of attaining tickets or scheduling shows without "down periods," many are attracted to the interaction with strangers. One 45 year old woman wrote "I like the line ups (seriously) and I like the density of people - we're all here for the same reason." Others commented "I like lining up for shows and chatting with people" while others mentioned the "people" "gathering" "social aspect", the "queues" and "clubs," or the opportunity for "chatting with strangers about the shows." Not all seek this experience - many wander the streets in anonymity, come and leave quickly or remain with groups of friends. But even the fluidity of these groups is notable - the multiple directions and sites of the festival disperse and reconstitute the groups but rarely in the same form - people leave and join, some see one show, some another. While you see groups of 3 to 5 people, few people, especially in Vancouver, indicated that they had come to the event in groups larger than two!41 The Fringe as an event simply encourages interaction, with strangers, with friends, or through the chance meeting of friends and acquaintances (and their friends and acquaintances!).

The significance of both the number of shows and the interaction around these shows should not be underestimated. As Douglas Arrell recently noted (although perhaps too enthusiastically - limits do remain):

if one views the Fringe, not as 75 different productions but as a singly, multi-faceted artwork . . . it comes as close as one can get to a truly post-modernist work of art. . . . there is no privileging of any artist or style at the Fringe; it is a form of theatre to

41In Vancouver the average group size was 2.46, in Winnipeg, 2.79. Within these numbers is another story. Men (in Vancouver where this information was gathered) more frequently came alone than women. This raises significant questions regarding whose space is "public" space, who feels at home "alone" on the streets, even if the streets are crowded with festival-goers.
which the marginal have full access, and from which no style or content is excluded. . . . [collectively] they subvert each other, so that after seeing five incredibly diverse shows . . . one tends to float free from any standards, artistic or social, and simply enjoy the "play of differences."  

Arrell might have further noted that the interaction of patrons disrupts the sovereignty of "the gaze." The myth of the individual perceiving subject is undermined and the dynamics of "seeing" transformed from private to public. In traditional theatres the viewing subject is "isolated." When Blau argues that,

[the audience] is a body of thought and desire . . . Gathered in the audience . . . are issues of representation, repression, otherness, the politics of the unconscious, ideology, and power. In the perceptual dynamics of the audience are questions of memory, mirroring, perspective, and the spatializing of thought itself, its siting in speculation.

his concern is that the observer is "inevitably self-obsessed" - seeing itself in its "own perspective" to the extent that Blau finds it necessary to question the project of "theatre" and the possibility of any common "meanings." The Fringe format demands that the solipsism and authority of the perceiving subject be challenged, re-situating "seeing" as a public, intersubjective activity.

Intersubjectivity and "festival space"

The Fringes temporarily transform functional urban spaces, characterized by efficiency and anonymity, into urban spaces of festivity and intersubjectivity, spaces in a sense "set apart" from the quotidien. The signs and symbols of the festival - banners, posters, signs, crowds, clothing (figures 3.1 and 3.2) - demarcate this space as "liminal" space where certain behaviour is acceptable that would otherwise not be (overtly political shows, public displays of sexuality, talking to strangers). I wish to make two points. First, that this transformation of urban space opens up new spaces to the creative "use" of consumers. And, second, that this apparently "liminal" space is, as Deutsche consistently stresses,
Figure 3.1: During the first week of September the Vancouver Fringe's cow theme appears throughout Mt. Pleasant.

Figure 3.2: Clothing distinguishes "fringers."
inseparable from the social relations of the city. Urban spaces are not simply "containers" or "sites" for artistic production and reception but part of what constitutes identity. In turn, "art" is inseparable from the production of space. I will explore these points further in my discussions of the Fringe "public," (Chapter 4) and the role of the Fringes in urban revitalization (Chapter 5).

At present, I wish to explore the possibilities presented through the transformation of rationalized, urban space into "festival space." This transformation, however provisional, however temporal, is suggestive of Michel de Certeau's "tactics" through which dominant institutions are subverted. The Fringes open up new spaces to the creative "use" of consumers. If, as de Certeau suggests, "consumption" is a form of "production" but that it only occurs within prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of space, etc), then changing the prescribed syntax provides new possibilities for consumption. This occurs at two levels. At one, the Fringes are themselves creative "uses" of functional space for alternate purposes - creating "festival" in the midst of the "functional." While the function of the city, with its rational articulation of space, is "to administer and to control the practices of everyday life," the Fringes value interaction over efficiency and control (several producers described the events as "controlled chaos"). At another level, the Fringe structure presents individuals with a new "system" (signs, symbols, forms) that they in turn "use" for their own purposes.

This transformation allows patrons to gain their information about shows, and debate their quality, meaning and significance from and with other Fringe-goers rather than derive this information from institutional criticism and mass

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44Deutsche, "Alternate spaces," 54.
45Consumption for de Certeau includes such diverse activity as reading and walking, in addition to its usual connotation of the consumption of produced commodities.
media. The significance of this for both patrons and artists must be underlined: *the structure and spatiality of the event provides conditions for the possibility of occupying positions outside of the meaning-fixing discourses of a naturalized criticism.* This provides a significant challenge to the norm of spectatorial passivity. In a culture where the quantity and speed of information flow is increasingly accelerated and centralized, where the consumer is limited in his or her ability to *respond,* this wrenching of evaluation from institutions colonized by power and capital (institutionalized press - papers, radio, TV) and positioning within the intersubjective experience of patrons should not be underestimated. It increases the possibilities of plurality (in both production and interpretation) and places the event, if only partially, under a different rationality. The creation of a "festival space" is important.

This process may best be illustrated through an examination of the Winnipeg festival site. Winnipeg’s Fringe Festival occurs within a unique urban landscape - the historic Exchange District just north of the city’s two major "intersections" - the (in)famous Portage and Main, and "the forks" (the confluence of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers - see figure 3.3). Both intersections are sites of exchange and transportation, and, not without significance, symbols of different moments in the region’s settlement and modernization. Early activity centered upon the rivers, but with the railway, industrialization and mass production, activity moved from the Forks to the Exchange District (1880’s) and then to Portage and Main (1900’s).\(^47\) However, an extended period of economic stagnation spared the district the fate of old warehouse districts in other North American cities - rather than being replaced by the new symbols of advanced capitalism the region remained generally intact, only a few turn-of-the-century warehouses, and bank and exchange buildings were destroyed in the

\(^{47}\) Between 1890 and 1910 the city boomed as a railway center dependent on the shipment of raw materials to the industrial heartland and goods to the west.
Figure 3.3: Winnipeg’s Exchange District
1960's to make room for civic administration buildings, and the city's "performance halls" and museum (figures 3.4 and 3.5). The region, today, is the site of a number of activities and social uses: it functions as a node for the exchange of commodities; administration and surveillance; the dissemination of official or "high" culture; is home to several residential hotels/bars; and includes an area of "trendy" nightclubs and restaurants. Throughout the region are large unused spaces, which, with imagination, are suitable as "theatre" space.

For ten days each July this region is transformed into public "spaces" of interaction - "used" in a manner much different than its usual functions (see figure 3.6). The region's Market Square, with its outdoor stage, buskers, beer tent, vendors, craftspeople, and crowds (as many as 1,000 at a time fill this space which is most often noted for its emptiness - figures 3.7 and 3.8), becomes the "center" of an event that spills out into neighboring streets and sidewalks. Other outdoor spaces are utilized as performance spaces, while a collection of old warehouses, bank buildings, and performance halls, all within 600m of the central square, are utilized as venues. Within this network of festival spaces are the region's restaurants and bars, and galleries, which by extension become other festival "sites." Festival takes priority over economic function. The activity on the sidewalks is directed towards the festival event, the movement of cars is interrupted by crowds, and local businesspeople and office workers are lured from their workplaces to participate. In a sense the organization of the Fringe establishes its own syntactical forms (and geographies of knowledge) which are creatively used by individual patrons who trace those "indeterminate trajectories" which de Certeau celebrates.48

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48The Winnipeg Fringe's outdoor stage is increasingly being used as an "outing" for nearby daycares, who's children love the jugglers and clowns but come up empty when it is time to "pass the hat."
Figure 3.4: Winnipeg Exchange District streetscape.
Figure 3.5: One of many turn-of-the-century buildings in the Exchange District, this one described by Heritage Winnipeg as "the finest Victorian Eclectic warehouse remaining in the district."
Figure 3.6: Creating "festival space" - Winnipeg Fringe site map
Figure 3.7: Market Square - weekday.

Figure 3.8: Market Square during one of several "events." (Winnipeg Core Area Initiative promotional literature).
The clustering of activity acts as a magnet - people are attracted by the crowds and activity - in turn, "festival" does not happen until the crowd forms. Theorists of crowds and crowd behaviour have maintained that the crowd must experience itself as crowd before it is constituted as such. But while the event creates "crowds" and in turn attracts people, the format and content of the event remains what demands that the crowds become a site of interaction and that the event becomes "festival." This point is important - the Chicago School sociologists had argued that density was the secret of a city's powers of stimulation - but failed to adequately recognize that such density still remained segregated and impersonal - allowing only the "consumption" of difference. The Fringe format demands interaction and confrontation with difference.

In many ways the Fringes are a return to early Elizabethan theatre, where theatre was a street event. Schechner has noted that the subsequent development of the Western Playhouse has repositioned an event that had previously been largely open, outdoors and public into one that is closed, indoor, private, and, it can be argued, the privilege of a small elite. The Fringes have returned theatre to the street, not only making it accessible, open to a variety of publics, but perhaps more significantly, repositioning "theatre" and "representation" within the more chaotic and indeterminate interactions of the street. The Winnipeg Fringe at its busiest moments is truly a whirlwind of activity, a flux and movement of people, a confrontation with difference and interaction with the "other-than-self". As such it is a site of both spectacle (people watching people and people watching performers) and what is often

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49This is one of the more useful points noted in Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1990).
50That it remains a site of consuming difference should not, however, be downplayed, for the promise of the crowd implies precisely this and is part of the way that the Fringe audience is constituted.
considered spectacle's opposite, a *communicative intersubjectivity* (people debating cultural representations). Not only inside but outside the venues individuals are confronted with an overdetermined social realm which is subsequently and continuously negotiated. As familiarity with the event - and its possibilities - grows, *individuals are seeking out this interaction*, and the festival's spaces are opening to broader "public spheres."

The Vancouver Fringe seems less able to create the intensity of interaction that makes the Winnipeg event attractive. This is in part due to different intentions of the producers - Winnipeg's Fringe actively encourages the outdoor, festival, even carnival aspect of its event, while Vancouver's producer is more reluctant, preferring to keep it predominantly a theatre event, and significantly, an event for the theatre *community.* Several of the Vancouver Fringe's difficulties, however, stem from its location. Although also located in a historic neighborhood - Mt. Pleasant - the site is less amenable to "festival." Unlike the other four Western Canadian Fringes, it has no outdoor "public space" around which activity can center, its venues are distributed linearly over 1.2 km, and its "Fringe Club" is hidden on the third floor of a local veteran's hall (see figure 3.9). The site is *overwhelmed* by traffic on three of the city's major transportation routes - Main Street, Kingsway, and Broadway Avenue (figure 3.10). Rather than a transformation of this space into something other than its functional use, the festival exists in spite of the functional use of these rationalized systems of transportation and exchange. As one journalist noted, "the venues are scattered throughout a landscape which seems determined to hide their existence." In Winnipeg patrons often disrupt traffic, in Vancouver the opposite occurs. This discourages on-site interaction and perhaps more importantly, appears to *limit who participates.* While in Winnipeg the work-a-

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53 See the discussion of the Fringe "public" in the following chapter.
Legend
- Festival venues
- Major transportation routes

Figure 3.9: Vancouver Fringe site map.
Figure 3.10: The corner of Broadway and Kingsway (Vancouver) *during* the Vancouver Fringe.
day world pauses to join, in Vancouver both occur simultaneously - oblivious that the other exists. "Festival" is foremost "visual." Attempts by Vancouver organizers to establish places where people congregate - such as outdoor cappucino stands - have been only partially successful. While the Winnipeg Fringe continues to grow at a phenomenal rate, attendance at the Vancouver Fringe remains relatively static.55

**Resistance or reproduction? The ambiguities of intersubjectivity and the return of criticism**

Criticism is recognized as an important element of the Fringe and one which has the potential to shape the festivals to a degree beyond that which organizers desire. Interaction, therefore, is consciously encouraged by festival organizers. The media invariably focuses on some shows and not others, or only on those activities of the festival which are considered "serious." Sandy Shreve, for example, noted that her show was completely ignored by the media because it "was not exactly one of the shows that they are going to come and review."56 Desrochers, at the Winnipeg Fringe, complained that "the Free Press doesn't consider the outdoor stage to be . . . equal in worth as the indoor stages."57

Organizer's concerns about criticism are well-founded. Critics have often decried the festivals as "unprofessional" or ambitious beyond the abilities of actors and directors. Yet, critics who have focussed on this aspect of the Fringes appear to miss the point of the festivals. The Fringes are not centered on conceptions of "professionalism" nor standards of "excellence," but instead upon

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55Annual attendance at the Winnipeg and Vancouver Fringe Festivals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Winnipeg</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
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opportunity and experimentation. Much critical evaluation of these festivals (both academic and in the daily presses) has remained tied to the categories used to evaluate professional theatre - completely ignoring "festival." Wallace, for instance, suggested that the Edmonton Fringe was:

a populist event that provides a real alternative to both the Citadel Theatre - Edmonton's regional bastion - and the small theatres that define themselves against it. . . . the event primarily serves other theatre artists who, in many cases, are not part of Edmonton's theatre season, and who, it appears, attract an audience much more broadly-based than Edmonton's winter theatre-goers.\(^{58}\)

Wallace appropriates "festival" through the discourses of "theatre" (yet, it is not so much the small theatres as the event which attracts the broadly-based audience, and it is the interactive aspect of the festivals as much as their productions which is exemplary). He then retreats to a privileged point (the avant-garde critic) to pronounce that in spite of the positive extension of theatre to a wider (obviously "naive"), audience,

what sells at the Fringe are the shows that least challenge the audience's expectations of theatre or themselves. Very little work is "fringe" in the sense of experimental, innovative or difficult - either aesthetically or politically.\(^{59}\)

Certainly the return of all box-office revenue to artists has made artists and producers keenly aware of what "sells". Several non-performing artists that I met at the Vancouver Fringe attended the event to find out what was being produced and how it was being received in order to make a strategic choice for the following year. The temptation to create a "sexy" show (or at least a "sexy" title) which generates large crowds and curiosity (until the word gets out) is undeniably strong, as is the appeal of producing a "classic" - often reproduced and occasionally well-attended.\(^{60}\) When the average full-time professional theatre artist earned only 77% of the poverty line in 1981 (and amateurs much

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\(^{59}\)Ibid.

\(^{60}\)Perhaps the most bizarre title was Then Jesus cut me up and put the pieces in the freezer by Winnipeg playwright Bruce McManus.
less), it should come as little surprise that "what sells" is often what is produced. But how would Wallace explain the crowds flocking to Blade, No Place Like Home, or Journey into Ecstasy, which were political or challenged conventional aesthetics? And might the popularity of "bad art" say something about what people find meaningful? As Fiske notes, "radical" or "oppositional" art can be inaccessible, often containing few "points of pertinence" to everyday life. "Fringers" may just as likely to "use" familiar forms to produce oppositional meanings - a practice Wallace either ignores or abhors!

Ray Conlogue, the Globe and Mail's theatre critic continually refers to the professionalism or lack of professionalism at the Fringe - "they're not all professional, heaven knows, and many a day can be lost (it is said) on a weary trudge from venue to venue looking for that Grail-like rarity - a Really Good Show." In one review Conlogue dismissively suggests of a certain show that "in more experienced hands the story could be a powerful stage event. But the young actors are flummoxed by the torments they must portray . . . the sort of thing that is irresistible to youthful imaginations and quite beyond youthful experience." His closing was (perhaps) more positive, although its double meaning is difficult to miss, "still, where would you ever see such a piece of literature attempted onstage?" The influence of critics such as Conlogue is not insignificant. The year after Conlogue (and others) wrote disparagingly of the proliferation of comedy shows at the Edmonton Fringe, the Fringe had a proliferation of "serious" shows.

Surprisingly, it is perhaps a political columnist (Mark Lisac of the Edmonton Journal) who has best captured the importance of the Fringe. Judging these events against the apparent centralization of culture, both locally

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61 The Canada Council, Selected Arts Research Statistics (Ottawa, 1986). There is little reason to believe that this has changed.
62 See John Fiske, Understanding Popular Culture (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
and globally, Lisac suggests that these festivals have an implicit political dimension. Claiming that the "global village" is rhetoric for cultural imperialism, he argues that "any expression of local culture and imagination amounts to a declaration of independence. . . what's happening at the Fringe is really what should be happening in the world. It's highly international but it's not the Global Village." The significance of the Fringe lies in its interaction of people and products at some distance from rationalized mediums of communication.

However, the "naturalization" of the authority and terminology of criticism has the effect of influencing reception even if no critic has written about the show. To simply state that "everyone's a critic" at the Fringe is to neglect that an individual's interpretations and evaluation is always already placed within a certain discursive field. The legitimation of certain critical discourses (Romanticism, New Criticism) allows certain "standards" of theatre to come in the back door through the expectation of audiences. One director cited the example of an individual who came to his show three times and remained to discuss it after each show. The reaction of this newcomer to theatre was initially emotive, but by the end of the run, the patron was using the language of criticism - form, style, etc - that had been picked up from others. This director retained a cynical view of the festival and its freedom of interpretation - suggesting that participants still conformed their views to the "dominant" by "leaning" the language of criticism. However, this is not the experience of all, nor does it imply a "co-opted" theatre - for, despite critical discourses, what sells at the Fringe rarely follows the expectations of either critics or festival organizers. Each year both are surprised by the number of people that are prepared to go to what they consider "bad" shows. Many Fringers have a

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different standard than traditionally defined "excellence," and Kate Zimmerman is probably closest to capturing the simple essence of these choices - "they like it!"66.

To counter the effects of criticism, Fringe organizers encourage patrons to seek out shows not covered by the press. The Vancouver Fringe's July newsletter, for instance, prepared its patrons for the 1990 festival by arguing,

One of the problems . . . is an overemphasis on "hits." The press, the word of mouth, and publicity of the theatre companies themselves all conspire to identify the "hits" early on - almost before the Fringe opens. Then, just as with non-fringe theatre, movies and TV, the critics focus their notoriously narrow attention on those shows and fans flock to them, to the exclusion of almost all else . . . but much of the fun of a Fringe takes the form of seeking, and sometimes finding, worthy productions that have been overlooked.67

The Vancouver Fringe last year distributed their own "review newspaper" which covered all the shows (and gave generally good reviews!). Such a review paper, however, underlines a recognition that criticism, and its categories, will always be present in some form, and reveals the predicament that these events will always remain subject to evaluation through local media. Attendance not only at individual shows but at the festival itself is greatly influenced by the media. The Vancouver Fringe Festival added one day to their event in 1990, in order to begin on a Thursday, thereby ensuring feature coverage in the papers prior to the first weekend of the event!

66Katie Zimmerman, "Fringe is art for the people," Calgary Herald, 20 Aug. 1988, c4. While I wish to stress that what makes these events unique is that individuals have more freedom to assert their tastes (both in their choice of shows and in interaction with other patrons) and that this freedom permits a certain play of non-formulaic possibilities, "taste" (what people like) is always socially constituted. Bourdieu reminds his reader that "through taste, an agent has what he (sic) likes because he likes what he has, the properties actually given to him in the distributions and legitimacy assigned to him." P. Bourdieu, Distinctions: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 175. See my discussion of Bourdieu in Chapter 4.
Beer-talk and the reproduction of cultural discourses

The "public" nature of the event is not necessarily subversive. A map of the Fringe sites which locates "sites of contact" where "information can be exchanged" could also be labelled as a map of the "sites of contact" where "assumptions about theatre (and gender, race, class) are reproduced or reaffirmed." What is subverted at one site at the Fringes is often reproduced at another. The distinction "artist-patron," for instance, is challenged by the form of the festival, yet in other ways, reproduced. In this respect the beer gardens at both events are worth noting. Both of these locations are open to the "public" (they are ostensibly there for artists and patrons to "mix"). They are perceived, however, as "artists" space and the public experiences a certain intimidation upon entering a realm, both physical and cultural, whose "autonomy" has traditionally been zealously guarded. Its members are in many ways initiated into certain language communities and the signs and symbols of "artist" - often to the exclusion of the "public." The attitude to the "public" in the "avant-garde" (exemplified by Jarry) has often been one of disregard if not disdain;

why should the public, which is illiterate by definition, attempt quotations and comparisons?  

and the public, in turn, compelled by the "aura" of the artist, and bewildered by the multiplicity of forms and objects, is intimidated, uncertain, as Blau notes, "nervous about its ability to understand at all."  

Certainly artist-patron and stage-audience distinctions are challenged at the festival - the performance spaces and seating arrangements simply do not allow the distinction to remain unaltered. Whether it be the Annex in Winnipeg or the Arcadian Hall or Heritage Hall in Vancouver - the fourth wall tends to

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69 Blau, The Audience, 22.
dissolve. Performers become part of the audience during the festival and the "mechanics" of their productions, the movement of performers or technicians offstage cannot be easily hidden. In many venues and especially in the outdoor stages, there literally is no "backstage" to which the performer can retreat. This is significant. Schechner notes that in Euro-American theatrical convention you don't go backstage unless you are part of the show.70 Yet, the beer gardens and Fringe Club in many ways reconstitute the privileged space of "backstage." This is reinforced in unintended ways. Vancouver's Fringe Club is located at the most unlikely of locations - on the top floor of a veteran's hall, above two floors of nightly bingo. Despite the banner on the site of the building and the attempt to advertise its existence the site remained unrecognized by many patrons, resulting mostly in those "in the know" making use of the area - producers, artists and staff. Climbing the stairway is for the uninitiated a climb into a foreign world where familiarity within the arts community excludes audience members. One director skeptically suggested that "non-artists" would not be "caught alive" in this club (the point is exaggerated - "non-artists" do come in, but not in proportion to their number on the street).

The Winnipeg situation is somewhat ironic. Here the beer tent is in full view, next to the outdoor stage around which the activity of the festival centers - yet the tent is almost always filled with artists or volunteers. Many assume that the outdoor stage is for the public and the beer tent is for artists - an unintended perception. Ironically, this assumption is heightened in several ways. First, by "guards" at the entrance to the tent - who, while there to keep "unwanted" guests out (the residents of local hotels and regulars at their pubs), act to demarcate a literal "in" and "out" boundary which few question.71

71That this guard is necessary point to one of the problems of the Winnipeg event - it brings a certain crowd to an area of the city that quite simply belongs to people who are part of other
Second, by the sense of familiarity which binds the arts community together (including "signs" of being an artist - clothing, etc), and finally, through the proliferation of "ID tags," inside the tent - staff, volunteers, press and artists - are easily identified as "belonging" to the event.

While the festivals subvert some of the institutions which determine and structure meaning, this subversion is often ambivalent - the interaction of the street may just as readily reconstitute the same as much as provide for the play of difference. If we suggest (with Foucault, Fraser) that discursivity is also a disciplining, and that identity is constituted within civil society's discursive interaction - what may at one moment be a space of "altereity" may at another be Lefebvre's "terror" of everyday life, by which subjects are "positioned." The Fringes are marked by ambiguity. While they open certain possibilities, others remain closed. This will become more evident in following chapters, and as I hope to demonstrate, much of this is beyond the control of the festival producers.

I have focussed extensively on the intersubjective nature of the Fringes - what I consider one of its most significant characteristics. But this directs us to another issue. If the interpretation and production of meaning at the Fringe is in part determined by the interaction of patrons - in the queues, in the streets, the clubs, cafés or in the market square - then we must also investigate the patrons. Whose event is this? What are the parameters of this widened "public sphere"? How does this contribute to the possibilies and limits of the event?
Chapter 4:  
Defining the Fringe "public"

[Discussions on art often assume] that images are directly absorbed by the viewers, that each image is immediately readable and meaningful in and of itself, regardless of its context or of the circumstances of its production, circulation and reception. Viewers, in turn, are presumed to be at once historically innocent and purely receptive, as if they too existed in the world immune from other social practices and discourses. (deLauretis)\(^1\)

Theatre is the privilege of an initiated minority. (Henry James)\(^2\)

75 performing arts companies are converging on the Old Market Square and all of Winnipeg will be there (italics added). (Winnipeg Fringe program, 1990)

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The recent focus, in postmodern art and poststructuralist theory, on the multivalence of language, the indeterminacy of meaning, the contingency of interpretation and the relativity of truth, has led to questions concerning the production of meaning(s), and a renewed emphasis on the "audience" or "reader." The production of meaning, it is argued, resides not simply in the intentions of the "author," or in the "text," but in the interpretation of "readers." This focus on people as producers of meaning(s) stands as a necessary rejoinder to the elitism of mass culture theorists, and the defenders of "high culture" and the "avant garde," for whom, more often than not, the public was an undifferentiated "mass" willingly duped by a culture industry. This countervailing view suggests that despite the intentions of the producers of culture, meaning is spirited away within the multiplicity of language and the play of difference.\(^3\) However, this focus, while certainly "freeing" meaning from a strict dominant-subordinate model and legitimating "other" readings (including


what has often been disparagingly called the "popular") may bring us only so far, if not at times actually obscuring the issue. For while the individual spectator may be the locus of interpretation, it does not necessarily follow that interpretation is produced by individual perceiving subjects. This, I believe, is an important distinction. The subject is him/herself a "product" - produced by the event, constituted within larger Texts (ideologies) and reproduced through the apparatus of representation - the cinema, the theatre. Blau notes:

> if the lore of theatre has it that upon the play the audience renders the final judgement, the argument of recent critical theory is that the judgement is but another illusion. For the authority of the audience comes . . . from somewhere outside itself, from the apparently declared (spoken) but actually concealed Text, with its ideological codings.\(^4\)

Meaning is negotiated by agents, yet this occurs within certain parameters. Even the Fringe Festivals - with their subversion of the meaning constitutive discourses of criticism, their distance from "shaping" by a consciousness industry, and their ability to decenter the constitutive privilege of the gaze through a continuous, intersubjective, confrontation of alternate discourses - cannot escape the selectiveness of its audience and the way that the event is "cast."

It is the Fringe "public" that is the focus of this chapter. Nancy Fraser’s contention that the "public sphere" is always exclusionary, and Rosalyn Deutsche’s consistent stress that public space and public art have "already constituted" (although not homogeneous) user groups raises questions concerning the Fringe "public" - for, especially with the intersubjective nature or these events, this shapes the construction of "meaning."\(^5\) Who "fringes?" is an important question for several reasons. First, the audience, especially at the Fringe, greatly affects what is produced. The word-of-mouth nature of the


event, the discriminating tastes of festival-goers, and the need to fill the theatres, demands that producers take into account the "Fringe" crowd, and market shows directed towards their tastes. This is a circular process - shows are both constitutive of and reflexively conditioned by the Fringe "public."

Second, if "interaction" is much of what sets this event apart from other theatre events, and public interaction is a process in which subjectivity is negotiated - where class, race, and gender identities are challenged and constructed - then who participates and how they are positioned within/between social discourses is important. What "public spheres" are present(ed) at the Fringes? What cultural discourses disseminated? What "fields of possibles" confronted by participants? Not all of Winnipeg is going to be at the Fringe - and these events are "cast" with certain ideological codings, which intersubjective interaction may indeed reproduce. Finally, the Fringe "public" is of interest to brokers of corporate identity and to state economic planners as nations and regions attempt to manage their economies within global movements of people and capital, and corporations peddle images and compete for consumer loyalty. The recent emphasis on the dispersion of meaning, it seems, has neglected an essential aspect of cultural events, that while difference is always already present (creating a plurality of "publics"), so also are structures which permit meaning to remain within certain preconstituted limits. The Fringes are no different in this regard - for their audiences are often distinguished not so much by diversity as by similarity (class, gender, race, lifestyle).

This exclusionary nature of the "public" is often overlooked in literature on cultural events, festival and spectacle. Theorists such as John MacAloon, who has done much to locate "liminal spaces" in our culture, fail to fully assess the significance of cultural events by neglecting to question who the "we" of culture excludes. MacAloon writes:
MacAloon is correct, I believe, to emphasize the intersubjective aspect of cultural events. Yet his inability to differentiate "publics" and recognize a diversity of myths and histories (often contradictory), allows him to celebrate the transformative aspect of cultural events without understanding their role in reproducing the same. MacAloon can therefore talk first about globalization, both economically and culturally, and then uncritically embrace "spectacle" as "society in action, groping on the level of culture, towards a new order in a changing world." Whose globalization? Whose "new order?" MacAloon points to the Olympic Games as an example of such a "spectacle-festival." But can the globalization which MacAloon celebrates in such a spectacle be separated from the global economic restructuring which underlies the great competition to stage, and sponsor, these events? And why, if these games are truly global, have most of the athletic events they contain originated or been popularized in Western Europe or North America? Why are audiences at these games, with the exception of the host country (when the games are held outside of the industrialized nations), dominated by wealthy members of "western democracies?"

The Fringe Festivals share certain similarities - "already constituted" audiences, the reproduction of certain "traditions" and the economic interest of state and capital. In this chapter I wish to explore the Fringe "public" - how it is constituted (around what practices and distinctions), who it includes, who it excludes and what this might say about the production of meaning and the

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negotiation of subjectivity at these events. This will presage a discussion in the following chapter of the effects of state-economic planning on the Fringes. The "already constituted" nature of Fringe audiences is in part a product of the commodification of art and its fetishization as signs of distinction and status, a point which I will discuss in greater depth shortly. Such commodification (and fetishization) places the Fringe Festivals vulnerable to colonization by systems of money and power, and to the instrumental rationality of state-economic planning.\(^8\) This results in temporary events such as the Fringes leaving "traces" - both cultural and physical. My earlier explanation of "festival" as a temporary transformation of urban space, while useful as an account of tactics within larger rationalized and functional urban space, must be tempered by also examining the Fringes as places where things are exchanged within systems (economies) of objects, signs and identities. The festival's "traces" may be as subtle as the signs of "belonging" (t-shirts), or as lasting as the process of gentrification which results in part from the power of festivals to both transform and fetishize images of "place."

These traces are significant. Due to the audiences they draw, artistic communities and cultural events have become attractive sites of government and corporate intervention.\(^9\) The instrumental use of the arts in gentrification has long been a focus of Deutsche's work, while Harvey has tried to identify links between cultural events, spectacle and the logic of flexible regimes of accumulation.\(^10\) These same issues resonate in the Fringe Festivals and will be taken up later.

\(^8\) Cértainly Jurgen. Habermas has developed this argument the furthest with his somewhat contentious distinction between "system" and "lifeworld." The extension of systems-imperatives into regions of the lifeworld (already governed by rationality) works to limit meaning-constitutive discourses. See Habermas' two volume *Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 1987).


Taste as a marker of difference

Pierre Bourdieu's monumental work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, provides a point of entry into a discussion of the Fringe "public." Bourdieu's central point is that "taste" is a marker of difference (most notably - class), and that while taste "distinguishes," it is itself constituted within the "field of possibles" open to individual agents, whose trajectories occur within certain social and geographical spheres:

. . . through the economic and social conditions which they predispose, the different ways of relating to realities and fictions, of believing in fictions and the realities they simulate, with more or less distance and detachment, are very closely linked to the different possible positions and, consequently, bound up with systems of dispositions (habitus) characteristic of different classes and class fractions. Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make . . . in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.11

Two moments in Bourdieu's work intersect with my discussion of the Fringe "public." First, aesthetic discourses are differentiated across social groups - cultural products (and events) tend to be consumed by individuals positioned only within certain social and cultural discourses. Audiences are selective, and in this matter the Fringes are no exception. Second, subjects are distinguished through consumption (consciously or unconsciously) - "cultural capital" is a means of obtaining position or "status," both within and between social groups. The Fringes, as much as their products and activities, are "commodities" that are consumed by certain social groups, and which signify "status."

Appropriating Bourdieu's schema, however, it not without difficulties. His conception of habitus and dispositions are amenable to deterministic readings. Bourdieu stresses that individuals live within a habitus, which results, Eagleton suggests, in "the inculcation in men and women of a set of durable dispositions

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which generate particular practices.”

This presents few problems if this inculcation is understood to occur through processes of social training and discipline within multiple, and often contradictory discourses of gender, race, sexuality, etc. It presents greater difficulty when coupled with a logic which locates the economic (and class distinctions) as that which determines the habitus (and taste). Bourdieu’s contention that taste is a marker of class is, I believe, decidedly different than an argument that suggests that relations of production are simply reproduced in consumption. Indeed, Bourdieu has, over the years, attempted to formulate a general theory of practice in which practice is held to emerge within structured but contested social spaces. His contention that social practice emerges within “fields” or that individual trajectories occur within the possibilities of the habitus is far from a reproductionist model: competing symbolic systems structure the social spaces in which people live. While “taste,” for Bourdieu, is a means of distinguishing (and reproducing) difference produced elsewhere (and he does consistently link capital and the naturalization of a “legitimate” culture), the habitus is, I believe, overdetermined. Taste may be a marker of “class” but it may also be a marker of “race” or “gender,” and it may be a marker of several types of identity in combination. Taste itself is highly negotiated, and follows no unified singular logic. Similarly, participation in cultural events (such as the Fringes) cannot be explained simply. It emerges within the complex social relations of the city. In Bourdieu schema, “cultural capital” - that which accords status - might be better...
rendered "cultural capitals." Certain cultural codes are legitimate within certain social groups. Bourdieu is correct, I believe, in asserting that certain tastes are naturalized through aesthetic discourses as the "universal," but it is questionable whether these aesthetic discourses are accepted or even have significant effects across society. Indeed, from Bourdieu's framework, it may be more useful to argue that multiple aesthetic discourses, and a multiplicity of tastes, are legitimated (and this includes the effects of advertising) within certain cultural discourses and social groups. The key point, it would seem, is that "taste" (consumption) is constituted within a differentiated social realm.

Bourdieu's work suggests certain concerns for a discussion of the Fringe "public." Participation in the Fringe is constituted around certain signs and symbols considered legitimate by certain social groups (produced within social discourses at other sites in the "social"). As such, Fringe audiences will always be constituted within certain parameters. This is worthy of some discussion. In the following pages I will argue that the commodification of festival, the means by which "fringe-goers" are distinguished, promotional strategies of the festivals, location, all contribute to the creation of the Fringe "public." Through survey data I will explore the characteristics of Fringe patrons. This discussion will, I believe, demonstrate that the diversity and plurality of the Fringes is not as evident as one might expect. To speak of these events as realms of "free play" or "pure possibility" is therefore misleading - certain possibilities are present and the Fringes play a particular role in (re)producing social relations. However, I do not want to simply reduce the Fringe "public" to certain class, racial, or gender groups, for, as Bourdieu has stressed and art critics such as Deutsche maintain, consumers or patrons may be "selective" but they are not homogeneous, either in politics or subjectivity. All agency arises within plural, contested spaces.
Commodifying festival

Bourdieu's argument that "taste" classifies is directly linked to the fetishization of commodities and the commodification of events. Tomlinson notes:

> the commodity has acquired, in late consumer capitalism, an aura beyond its function. The commodity now acts on the consumer, endows him/her with personal qualities which can be displayed in widening contexts.17

Tomlinson's analysis fails to adequately account for the fetishization of objects or events (what an object signifies is not simply determined by "marketing" or the producers of culture) but his linking of consumption and identity is apt. If, as Bourdieu asserts, identity is defined and asserted through difference, than it is what an object or activity signifies, within a differentiated system of objects and identities, that is important.

Art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously, and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social difference.18

The festishization not just of cultural products, but now cultural events, is significant. One is distinguished, not simply through consuming or acquiring products, but through consuming events, and providing symbols of having "been there." In their inaugural year, Winnipeg Fringe organizers marketed t-shirts and posters which quickly became collectors items and came to signify a certain lifestyle and social group (see figure 4.1 - a design similar to that used on programs and posters). The shirts and posters contained a collage of images - columns from Greek theatre; the architecture of the Exchange District - façades of its old "heritage buildings"; Charlie Chaplin; body parts (legs, eyes and a woman's face); an antique auto; and the ubiquitous clock of modernity - which combined to create a sense of inversion, incongruity, and perhaps more importantly to the people who quickly purchased the t-shirts - "uniqueness."

Through these products individuals could display their cultural awareness - they

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18 Bourdieu, Distinctions, 7.
Figure 4.1: Winnipeg Fringe Festival promotional poster, 1988.
were "funky" and "culturally astute" and of course, they were "there" before most people knew that "there" existed.19

This is similar to other festivals; in fact, Vancouver's arts festivals share audiences. A large number of Fringe patrons (62%) regularly attend other arts festivals in the region. It appears that these events are perceived both as "pleasurable" and as signs of distinction.20 These events are considered legitimate and the signs which signify them accorded status within a certain "public," which distinguishes itself from other social groups. For other segments of the population (from those that consume "high culture" to local "mall rats"), they offer little around which identity can be linked in any meaningful way. Cultural expressions legitimated within their lifeworlds are different, related to other specialized knowledges and cultural codes.21

**Constituting the audience: the importance of "distinction"**

Interpersonal relationships in big cities are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear. (Georg Simmel)22

What "distinguishes" the Fringe Festivals? Why might they attract only certain social groups? I previously noted reasons given by patrons for their attendance

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19These signs must also meet standards of "taste" determined elsewhere. Both festivals ran into marketing problems in 1990 when their products, in contrast to earlier merchandise, did not adequately signify "fringeness." Posters which promote individual shows are also popular "items." Ironically, those that are too successful lose their marketing ability - they simply disappear!

20 The percentage of 1990 Fringe patrons attending other local 1990 festivals was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childrens</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stein Valley*</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A music/cultural festival centered on environmental/native issues.

21 Bourdieu's work at times reads as an extension of Weber's discussion of "stylization of life" which suggested that status groups are founded upon common lifestyles, the characteristics of which become themselves significant determinants of life-chances. Micheal Jagr's work on gentrification discusses both writers. Micheal Jagr, "Class definition and the esthetics of gentrification: Victoriana in Melbourne," *Gentrification of the City*, eds. Neil Smith and Peter Williams (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 78-91.

at these events - to see "alternative theatre," "feminist theatre," "non-mainstream" etc. Concurrently the event is also a site of consumption - of objects and identities. A large number of patrons gave reasons (or listed elements of the event which they thought were attractive) which had much to do with the "pleasure" of the "event," and what "distinguishes" it. The following list includes some terms used to describe the attraction of the Fringes:

- different
- offbeat
- unusual
- weird and bizarre
- anarchy
- unpredictability
- risk
- experimental
- adventure, suspense
- seediness

- ambiance
- atmosphere
- exciting
- casual
- backalley, grassroots feel
- bohemian lifestyle
- cultish
- kookiness
- cool and happening

- women
- earthy women
- cute actors with tight bums

sitting in Old Market Square
an "event" in the streets
people in the streets at night
positive street scene
sense of life in the city
seeing downtown alive with people (Wpg)
enthusiasm
spectacle
idea of the "event"

- people
- interesting people
- cool people
- pleasant people
- my kind of people
- density of people
- crowds
- strangers
- interaction
- socialize
- intimacy

- neighborhood
- old venues
- funky venues
- nifty venues
- small venues
- nice walk between venues
- Heritage Hall
- design (signage, posters)
- kiosks

- espresso bar
- cappucino stand
- new restaurants in the exchange
- t-shirts

- diversity
- variety
- non-commercial
- non-mainstream
- innovative
- non-downtown (vanc.)
- entertainment - need to laugh
Certain themes are evident: difference, alternativeness, crowds, activity, ambiance, consumption, sex, heritage/aesthetics - but these themes are cast in a certain way - very visual, emphasizing difference. Many Fringe patrons viewed the events as "unique" and, in their comments, distanced themselves from that which they felt was "mainstream," "popular," "commercial," "mass culture" or in Vancouver - "downtown." The Fringe Festivals are events to be consumed and places "to be seen." Likewise, among certain sectors of each city's populations, The Exchange District in Winnipeg, and to a lesser extent Mt. Pleasant in Vancouver, are associated with the "unique" and "alternative" and are (especially during the festival) commodified as distinct "places" within the competing and differentiated images of each city's communities. The events occur here, not there. Notably, most patrons come from "elsewhere" - in Winnipeg from Wolseley or Fort Rouge/Osborne, or in Vancouver from the "West Side."

These perceptions of the festivals are encouraged through advertising, one method through which the events' "public" is constituted. Festival promotions play up the "wild side" of the events and their neighborhoods. The festivals market their events as "fringy," "adventurous," "offbeat." Winnipeg promoters put it all together - "it's back, it's hip, it's a walk on the wild side, it's the Fringe!" (Winnipeg Fringe, 1989). Vancouver's 1989 promotional poster and programs were exemplary (figure 4.2). This poster connects the wild and unexpected with the Fringe and its Mt. Pleasant neighbourhood. The poster is dominated by a brightly colored androgynous mask, capped with feathers and wearing dark sunglasses. Superimposed over darkened yet strangely luminous Mt. Pleasant street-scapes, the mask contains an almost threatening, yet in ways alluring "otherness" with a suggestion of play, masquerade and inversion. The street-scape, in turn, is suggestive of the unexpected and uncertain, almost
Figure 4.2: Vancouver Fringe Festival promotional poster, 1989
alienating to the "uninitiated." The icons of the patriarchal city - BC Place (sports and entertainment) and downtown office towers (commerce and bureaucracy) are placed in the background, diminished behind the looming presence of the masquerade, and the foregrounded streets of Mt. Pleasant. Clearly such a poster will appeal (a great deal) to only a select "public" - a "selectivity" which was for many years reinforced by the festival including its program in the local arts and entertainment weekly, the Georgia Straight.

Not only are the Fringes "places to be seen" they are "places to see" and this also contributes to the constitution of the Fringe audiences. Both festivals highlight difference (hence their "politics") but also commodify it - make it something that can be consumed by those whose "distinction" is derived from the consumption of the unique (and who have the leisure and resources to do so). Winnipeg's 1990 promotions played upon this theme, emphasizing the "crowd," the "event," and the "gaze." Perhaps aware that its presence at Old Market Square was attracting people just because of the visibility of its crowds to passing traffic and pedestrians, the Fringe extended this "appeal" of the crowd to its promotions. Its "what on earth is going on?" campaign featured a crowd watching - although the individuals are all hidden anonymously behind dark sunglasses (figure 4.3). The poster suggests spectacle and emphasizes the visual (significantly only the child is not entranced by the object of the adults' gaze). The Winnipeg Fringe, with its outdoor "festival" atmosphere is a place of watching - not just shows but people ("interesting people," "cool people," "cute actors") - what Baudelaire a century prior described as the "luminous explosion in space" of living beings. People find "sitting in Old Market Square" attractive because of the people, not the square (although the architecture of the surrounding buildings has its own appeal). On a non-event weekday when the square is deserted it holds no allure and is avoided.
From Selkirk to San Francisco,
From Birtle to Barcelona,
From Norfolk to Nigeria

What on earth is going on?

Figure 4.3: Winnipeg Fringe Festival advertisement, 1990.
The "crowd" and the possible anonymity of the "flâneur" encourages participation by certain people. The pleasure of viewing, what Berman appears to consider one of the significant moments of modernization, permits the appropriation of difference and allows subjects to "weave veils of fantasy around the multitude of passerbys."23 Here "desire" is allowed free-reign, and the street - Nevsky Prospect for Berman, Old Market Square for "fringers" - becomes a visual and sensual feast. What continues to make Baudelaire interesting, indeed, what continues as the appeal of the Chicago School of urban sociologists - are descriptions of difference (emphasizing the visual) - the flâneur "botanizing on the asphalt."24 One Fringe patron bluntly claimed to enjoy analyzing the people - an aestheticization of difference. A reviewer of the Fringes described them as "a crazy kaleidoscope of public exhibitionism."25 But can we say that this opportunity is open to all, or experienced by all in a similar manner? Certainly immigrant communities, women, the handicapped, are often threatened by such a gaze, rather than revelling in its possibilities.

The Winnipeg Fringe's attempt to create an intensity of activity within a prescribed region is part of its promotional strategy. But while it is a way of drawing people to the event - it helps create a selective audience. The "crowds" are alluring to many, but perhaps no more than to those who value the "crowd," for whom a crowded street signifies "urbanism," "street-life," "diversity" and "pleasure." For these the crowd is their playground, a place to consume and display difference - "la vie élégante" - the fashionable life. Constantine Guys long ago noted "anyone who is capable of being bored in a crowd is blockhead! I repeat: a blockhead and a contemptible one."26 The crowd allows new modes of freedom, new modes of "distinguishing" the self. Baudelaire's movements

23Marshall Berman, All that is solid melts into air (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 152.
26Quoted in Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, 37.
brusques - the sudden abrupt, jagged, twists and shifts - not only bodily, but with mind and sensibility as well, are not only necessary to negotiate the maelstrom of modernity (and the phantasmagoria of the postmodern) but useful to distinguish the self.  

Berman continues, arguing that one of the appealing aspects of the crowd (to both the viewer and viewee) is that it permits the display of what if often hidden - not simply clothing or fashion but sexuality, homosexuality, women asserting autonomy - and the challenging of public-private distinctions. Yet there is something troubling about such a celebration of the streets - for it fails to ask to whom the street belongs - who gazes, who is watched, who cannot watch, who can distinguish themselves. If these events are associated with crowds and "public" space, then it is those who feel comfortable in such a space (whose participation has become naturalized) who will participate and who will constitute the Fringe "public."

Constituting the audience: the importance of place

The Fringe Festivals all emphasize their location. Location significantly affects an event's "public" simply because participation is less appealing for people who live some distance away. But location has other means of creating distinctions. It is no coincidence that Canada's Fringe Festivals all occur in old or historic, "heritage" regions. Harvey notes that "under the social relations of capitalism . . . spatial relations become imbued with class meaning." Further, as Deutsche notes, the "symbolic, social and political meaning of the site as well as the historical circumstances within which artwork, spectator and place are situated"

27Berman celebrates modernity's maelstrom as that which forces individuals to develop a modern sensibility which includes a sense of freedom - now the urban masses can go anywhere and encounter a great wealth of experiences. However, Berman's celebratory writings often fail to note that space is still imbued with social relations - that the freedom of Haussman's boulevards was not extended into other spaces - spaces of power, wealth, etc, nor that these same boulevards are a part of a continuing rationalization which in many ways increasingly constrains the possibilities of numerous social groups.

28Harvey, Urban Experience, 264.
are significant aspects of the production of meaning. Spatial relations become imbued with much more than class meaning, of course, but the point to be made is that the social and spatial relations of a city result in sites which have distinctive characteristics, and important ideological codings.

Both Winnipeg’s Exchange District and Vancouver’s Mt. Pleasant are distinctive neighborhoods, and are popularly connected with certain lifestyles and social groups. In part these impressions are manufactured, playing on the “duplicity” of landscape images. Images of Winnipeg’s Exchange District produced by the city’s and province’s tourism offices, for instance, are often refined and discriminating - attempting to portray the area and its street-life as “European,” (perhaps *la vie Parisienne*) in attempts to attract reluctant suburbanites or travellers into the area. Increasingly, the Exchange is connected with consumption by the city’s young and affluent, and its landlords, businesses and arts groups have received significant government grants in order to transform the region for this purpose. Gordon Sinclair, a prominent Winnipeg columnist wrote as early as the summer of 1984:

```
something new and exciting is happening along the back streets of the old warehouse district of Portage and Main . . . a bevy of beautiful bars, lounges and dining rooms have opened, are about to open and will continue to open this summer . . . A consortium of businessmen is just a week away from inviting customers into Mama Lu’s Barbeque, with its upstairs lounge and downstairs restaurant specializing in original rock walls, freshly restored hardwood floors and, oh yes, ribs.
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Sinclair continued, noting the role of the Core Area Initiative program in the transformation of this region’s ”derelict warehouses” to places of consumption:

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29Deutsche, "Boy’s town,” 25.
31Consider the popularity of the word *promenade* in postmodern architecture - including behind Winnipeg’s Portage Place, where an attempt has been made to create a condensed, chaotic streetscape.
32Gordon Sinclair, ”Yes, things are lookin’ uptown” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 12 June 1984. A year later an editorial suggested that the oral histories of the pre-yuppie warehouse district be collected “before the denizens were scattered.” ”The yuppies are coming,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 21 July 1985.
Government efforts to transform the region into a "cultural center" have to some extent had the artist in mind, but more often have been concerned with the economic benefits and the transformation of social space that would occur with an influx of artists and their "publics." The recent Artspace development, while certainly a boon to Winnipeg’s arts community, has been a central part of the economic objective of the Historic Winnipeg Development Program - "to attract new private investment to the Historic Winnipeg Area by encouraging the expansion of commercial, cultural, tourist and institutional activities."³⁴ It was argued that Artspace (overlooking Market Square) would bring 150,000 visitors to the Exchange district annually creating economic benefits for local shops, restaurants and services.

For the Fringe to highlight its location in its advertising ("Market Square" and "in the Exchange") is to connect the "event" with the changing character of the region and to constitute its "public" around the consumption of "culture," "street-life," "architecture," "restaurants" and "galleries" - activities engaged in by select groups. An advertisements by an Exchange District Business - the Urban Outfitters Company - perhaps best captures the type of person who would be attracted to this region and the Fringe (figure 4.4). But this ad also reveals another side to consuming the Exchange District. Despite official attempts to displace certain activities and images, prostitution, homelessness, dilapidated buildings, and substance abuse can still be found, and engenders among some an almost voyeuristic interest in this "other" (in a sense commodified as a "culture" of poverty). It presents a "package" that appeals to those that revel in an "adventurous avant-garde setting," and for whom the

³³Sinclair, "Lookin' uptown."
³⁴Statement from Feasibility study: accommodations for arts groups in historic Winnipeg. Manuscript available at Winnipeg Core Area Initiative Offices.
AN URBAN SALUTE!

Wings Urban Outfitters Ltd. salutes the sponsors and participants of the 1987 Coors Cobblestone Classic. It's people like these who make the possibilities of our urban environment come alive.

Before, during or after the race stop by and see our complete selection of fabulous, timeless, relaxed clothing, footwear and accessories. Walking or cycling, properly outfitted, you too, can explore and exploit the best in your urban environment.

65 Albert Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba (204) 944-1366

Figure 4.4: Advertisement for Wings Urban Outfitters, 1987.
"consumption" of such signifies status or distinction.\textsuperscript{35} Such "consumption" of the Exchange is perhaps not unlike images produced by New York's Lower East Side promoters, such as one quoted in Deutsche and Ryan's article:

> a unique blend of poverty, punk rock, drugs, arson, Hell's angels, winos, prostitutes and dilapidated housing that adds up to an adventurous avant-garde setting of considerable cachet.\textsuperscript{36}

Any direct comparison would, of course, be strained, but Winnipeg's warehouse region is no longer an area simply avoided or neglected. "In the Exchange," especially in the evening, has considerably different connotations, inclusions and exclusions than it did five years age - combining "culture," "consumption," and a voyeuristic interest in the "other."

Mt. Pleasant in Vancouver is a more diverse neighborhood - although it contains certain relatively homogeneous regions. Main street divides the "gentrified" region to the west - where old turn-of-the-century houses are increasingly restored, apartment blocks renovated and housing co-ops established - from a less affluent, racially mixed (especially its merchants and restaurants) region of mixed housing to the east which includes three-story walk-ups, old (smaller) houses, "modern" apartments and more recent condominium developments. The north end of the neighborhood, toward False Creek, is dominated by small industry. Public perceptions of this neighborhood are varied - it is viewed as both an historic region (the region includes early government offices such as Heritage Hall), and as a troubled line which divides working-class East Vancouver from the West Side dominated by professionals. Recurring prostitution, traffic congestion, and main streets which contain furniture warehouses, pawn shops, and self-help stores between the more "attractive" aspects ("ethnic" restaurants, bakeries and antique shops) are significant

\textsuperscript{35}This voyeuristic interest in "seediness" as one Fringe patron put it, is effectively countered by Richard Sennett's phrase in his Conscience of the Eye, where he throws a veiled critique towards the Chicago School - "the small of urine is perfumed if only I keep walking" (p. 128).

\textsuperscript{36}Deutsche and Ryan, "The fine art of gentrification."
drawbacks to its appropriation as a neighborhood of "distinction" for Vancouver's professional classes.

The region, however, has become home to a number of arts groups (theatre, dance, galleries) including influential (and alternative) sites such as the Grunt Gallery and the Western Front. These institutions are in many ways defined against Vancouver's dominant "cultural neighborhoods" - Granville Island, Gastown, and downtown. Urban planners have considered the region as a potential "arts community" - mixing "art-space" with less expensive housing for the city's artists.37

In a more overt manner than the Winnipeg Fringe, The Vancouver Fringe has seized upon certain images of this region in its promotional material - focussing almost entirely upon the region's ethnic diversity (restaurants), history and nostalgia (antique shops, architecture), consumptive activities, and what strikes me as significant, that which can be presented as "exotic" - resulting in a sort of hybrid café culture/cross cultural experience.

Mount Pleasant isn't just the site of the Festival, it's an essential part of the Fringe experience. With the scenic North Shore mountains as a backdrop, the Main Street corridor . . . offers a stimulating mix of visual and mouth-watering delights.

Rising prominently above the streetscape at Main and 15th is Heritage hall, a grand French Renaissance building and former post office, now home . . . to two Fringe venues. At Main and 8th is the neo-classical Goh Ballet Academy building. The F.W. Woolworth Co. store across the street is a nostalgic 1950's shopping experience. The many Main Street antique stores add to the historic feel of the area. While strolling the residential streets between Main Street and City Hall you will find many beautifully restored turn-of-the-century houses. Mount Pleasant is a haven for heritage buffs.

Diverse culinary treats also await you discovery. Nibble on the fresh kalamarakia (calamari) at Joudy's Place Taverna [note that the Greek word is used to add an "exotic" appeal, immediately followed in brackets, by the word calamari as if to further highlight its difference]. Try the tangy hot-and-sour soup at Ho Tak Kee Won Ton House. Morgen's Delicatessen is home of the $1.20 zesty meat salad sandwich. The Chinese buns at Kam's Bakery are legendary. Stop off at Yen Do for the very strong, but very smooth Vietnamese coffee.38

38Vancouver Fringe program, 1990.
Both the Fringes constitute their audiences through selective descriptions of their location - often that which connects with the "urban lifestyles" of young professionals.

This appeal to certain consumption groups is perhaps not unexpected. Promotional strategies are directed towards areas of greatest impact - organizers are concerned foremost by (as one elegantly described it) "ass-is-seat." The Fringes must create "crowds" if they are to thrive - and the most efficient means is to attract those who have traditionally been found in the "theatre" - European, middle to upper class, educated. Home distribution of the Vancouver Fringe Festival program, for instance, occurred predominantly in affluent west-side neighborhoods (figure 4.5). Other groups see the theatre as "inaccessible" and may be more likely to attend a "spectacle" such as Les Miserables which, in spite of its price, is more accessible simply by its ability - as spectacle - to evade both regulation by the criticism and language of "high culture," and appropriation within the cultural codes or as "cultural capital" by segments of the professional classes. The consumer of such "spectacles" do not need to be initiated into the language and signs of "theatre" or "high culture." The Fringes, in contrast, appear to have little appeal among these consumer groups despite their accessibility and their ability to escape the structuring of criticism through a different means (their intersubjective nature). They are still perceived as "theatre" - the consumption of which belongs to certain groups.

Extending festival promotions to diverse social groups is of secondary importance and rarely occurs. Further, abandoning theatre's "natural" audiences could conceivably end an event which has always focussed foremost on creating opportunities for the city's artists, not on expanding theatre's audiences. Since much support for the event among state and corporate sponsors is linked to the consumption side of the festival (see chapter 5), festival organizers must
Figure 4.5: Home distribution of Vancouver Fringe Program, 1990.
ensure that this aspect of the event is maintained - a significant drop in overall attendance could prove fatal.

**More of the same? The characteristics of Fringe Festival patrons**

No monied elitism, but it is a bit of an egg head place, I'm afraid (55 year old mother of two performers).

Who "fringes?" I mentioned previously that at first glance we might expect the Fringe "public" to be inclusive. The Fringes are, after all, accessible. Costs are low, the festivals use "converted" space rather than traditional theatres and patrons are encouraged to "come as they are" from work, home, school, etc. The use of "converted space" breaks down barriers between "theatre" and "everyday life" and between the "artist" and the "audience," removing the "high" from theatre's "culture." Venues are located in sites where links to "everyday life" are always present, in the unfinished concrete columns, the visible plumbing, the traffic noise and the "unsuitableness" for theatre. They are less intimidating than the palaces, signs and "distinctions" (clothing, language, cultural practices) of high culture.39

While this breakdown of barriers is significant it does not necessarily result in the participation of a wide diversity of social groups. Any celebration of the "particularism" and politics of the Fringe Festivals must be tempered by the recognition that these events are "coded" in such a way that certain people are more likely to participate than others. Drawing upon data collected through audience surveys at the Winnipeg and Vancouver Fringes (with some reference to Edmonton), I will provide a brief sketch of the characteristics of Fringe participants.

39The Vancouver Fringe attempted to play off this "community" theme in its 1990 promotions, which highlighted stylized drawings of Mt. Pleasant buildings.
Employment and Education

Both the Vancouver and Winnipeg Fringe Festivals began as "artist events," and artists continue to account for a large number of participants. At the 1990 Vancouver Fringe Festival, for instance, 27.8% of all survey respondents considered themselves employed in the arts (table 4.1). The large number of artists at the Fringes is notable, but may be misleading in two ways. Because those who described themselves as artists tended to see a large number of shows they were more likely to be located by the patron survey. While artists were only 27.8% of the survey group, they accounted for 38% of the tickets purchased by respondents (table 4.1). The numbers of artists may be less than survey data suggests, yet their impact may be greater. This underlines earlier arguments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Fringe</th>
<th>Excl. artists</th>
<th>Vancouver CMA</th>
<th>Shows (%)</th>
<th>#/pers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial/administrative</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>(4.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/professional</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>(4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist/craftsperson</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>(7.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/sales/service</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction/manufacturing</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Canada Census, 1986.

40 Many who identified themselves as "artists" also indicated employment in other jobs. This raised problems of classification. Since these second jobs appeared to supplement income earned in the arts I have classified these respondents as "artists." No other double-employment groups were evident (i.e. professional/clerical). This also gives a more adequate account of the extent of the "in house" aspect of the festivals. Employment data was collected only at the Vancouver Fringe.

41 Survey methods differed at each event. The Winnipeg Fringe ran a short (2 page) survey, while in Vancouver, a longer (4 page) survey was distributed (see appendices 1 and 2). In Winnipeg, patrons could pick up surveys at each venue and return them when completed. In Vancouver, surveys were distributed to each patron at targeted shows (shows were selected to target a cross-section of the audience). In Winnipeg, only those predisposed to completing questionnaires did so, while the Vancouver survey return rate at each show neared 90%. Approximately 15% of all patrons at each festival completed surveys.
that the Fringes provide a "space" for artistic communities to gather - and to experiment with, display, or discuss current work.

But who else participates? As I noted in the previous chapter, the festivals have not remained exclusively artist events, although the extent that they have become "popular" has varied from center to center.\textsuperscript{42} Winnipeg's Fringe has grown the most rapidly: in its first year (1988) it had already attracted attention from non-artists and by its third year had reached an attendance of 33,000. Vancouver's Fringe, as noted earlier, has been less successful at attracting wider audiences. Yet, even at this event those who were not artists amounted to 72.2\% of patrons - a significant majority.\textsuperscript{43} Patrons were most likely to be administrators or managers, or involved in one of many professions. Excluding artists, these two employment groups accounted for 68.0\% of the audience, while service sector workers accounted for 24.0\%, and blue collar workers accounted for only 8.0\%. This contrasts significantly with the employment structure of the city, which is heavily dominated by the growing service sector (47.6\% - 1986) and in which administrators and managers accounted for 12.1\% of the labour force, professionals - 15.8\%, workers in primary industries, manufacturing and construction - 22.5\%, and artists - 2.0\%.

The predominance of white collar workers at the 1990 Vancouver Fringe was reflected in patrons' levels of education. A vast majority of patrons at the Vancouver Fringe had university degrees, and perhaps more significantly, tied status to education. Several respondents who had not yet completed a university degree felt compelled to write explanatory notes indicating that while they had

\textsuperscript{42} Edmonton's Fringe now sells some 75,000 tickets. The actual number of people attending the Edmonton Fringe, however, is closer to 15,000 (average 5 shows per person). The Edmonton event claims 300,000 patrons, by including outdoor shows - a number impossible to verify but used to appeal for corporate and state funds, attract shows, and maintain public interest. Winnipeg's totals of 33,000 tickets and 70,000 total attendance is the sum of about 5-6,000 people, while Vancouver's 28,000 ticket sales also translates into about 5-6,000 people.

\textsuperscript{43} A recent Edmonton Fringe survey found that about 90\% of its audience were not artists (1041 respondents).
only completed high school they were *presently* attending university. Fully 54.3% of Vancouver’s patrons had *at least* a bachelor’s degree, in contrast to 12.0% of the population of the Greater Vancouver district (Table 4.3). However, this may be in part due to the nature of the Vancouver event. At Edmonton’s festival (1988) only 42.0% of respondents were college or university graduates. While Winnipeg festival organizers collected no data on education or occupation (they were more interested in information that would strengthen their case for funding from Tourism agencies - i.e. dollars spent, origin of patrons, etc), it is possible that their audiences were also less homogeneous than Vancouver’s. The "outdoor" nature of much of the Winnipeg Fringe (similar to Edmonton) expands its accessibility, and the crowds that gather at Market Square, while not representative, appear to include a broader cross-section of the city’s population. For instance, 8.1% of Winnipeg patrons indicated that they had brought children - accounting for as many as 700 children - while almost no children could be found at the Vancouver site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>% Fringe</th>
<th>% Vancouver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some grade school</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School compl.</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech/comm. college or university dipl.</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44 Similar to Vancouver, 12.6% of Edmonton’s population has college or university degrees (1986 Census data).
45 Respondents claimed to have brought 124 children (about 2 per family). The Winnipeg survey was completed by approximately 15% of patrons.
Age

Most patrons are young (less than 40 years), with only one significant different between the two festivals. Vancouver's patrons were predominantly between the ages of 25-40 (57.4%), consistent with arguments that the Vancouver event is disproportionately attended by young professionals (see Table 4.3). In the Greater Vancouver region only 35.8% of the population aged 15 or older falls in this age range. In contrast, Winnipeg had a somewhat broader age representation. Only 44.9% of its patrons were aged between 25 and 40 years, and patrons over 40

Table 4.3: Age of patrons - Winnipeg and Vancouver Fringe Festivals (1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Winnipeg Fringe</th>
<th>CMA</th>
<th>Vancouver Fringe</th>
<th>CMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>24.5 (21.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.0 (19.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-40</td>
<td>44.9 (35.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>57.4 (35.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>16.2 (13.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.4 (14.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>9.2 (11.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.1 (12.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 60</td>
<td>5.0 (18.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1 (18.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ) - figure for metropolitan region (1986 Canada Census)

constituted 30.4% of Winnipeg's patrons in contrast to only 22.6% in Vancouver. Surprisingly, patrons between 51 and 60 accounted for almost 1 in 10 audience members, near the ratio in the Winnipeg population.

These contrasts in patron age may be attributed to several factors. The Winnipeg Fringe presents a more accessible format - its "festival" aspect and transformation of urban space allows it to become more "public" - while Vancouver's to a large extent remains hidden from the public - less accessible to those outside its more narrowly defined audience. Further, Vancouver has a larger number of "young urban professionals" whose inner-city residential location (part of the "urban lifestyle" which distinguished the group in the
1980's) corresponds with the event's "urban feel," and for whom consumption of the "arts" is a significant sign of "distinction." It is also to this group that the event appears to be marketed. Winnipeg's event is perceived as a "community event," open to many. Vancouver's remains an "arts event" open to few - even though many of the shows are the same at both!46

Other characteristics

Two other aspects of the Fringe audiences are notable: income and sex. The first presents few surprises. Few lower income Vancouver and Winnipeg residents participate in the festivals and those who do are generally young. Even with the rather large, young artist contingent, average household income at the Vancouver Fringe was $33,700, near the Greater Vancouver Regional District average (1986) of $36,086 (19.9% of patrons reported household incomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Vancouver Fringe (household)*</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Winnipeg Fringe (personal)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 10,000</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>&lt; 15,000</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19,999</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>15-24,999</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29,999</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>25-34,999</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39,999</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>35-49,999</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49,999</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>&gt; 50,000</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59,999</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-79,999</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-99,999</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 100,000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Questionnaires were devised to allow each festival to compare 1990 data with previous surveys. Thus, Vancouver sought information on household income, Winnipeg on personal.

46This may explain, in part, why 33% of Winnipeg's patrons came with another family member, while only 24% of Vancouver patrons did likewise.
over $50,000). The Winnipeg Fringe questionnaire asked for individual income (in five categories) and its data gives a less accurate impression of resources available to patrons.

Respondent’s sex was asked on only the Vancouver survey. The Vancouver Fringe Festival attracts considerably more women than men (for every man, 1.3 women attend). This corresponds with generally higher attendance of the performing arts by women. What is more intriguing, however, is how women participate in the event. I will explore this later, as one of the ways in which the Fringe "public" is differentiated. It is interesting to note, however, that the Vancouver Fringe Festival has in recent years increasingly attracted greater numbers of women. Among 1990 respondents, men more frequently than women indicated that they had attended the Fringe in its initial years (1985-1987), while women more frequently than men indicated that they had attended recent years (1988-1990). Although most shows are still produced by men, the Fringes are increasingly perceived as events where women can find space to write, direct and perform.

Spatial differentiation, class, and consumption

What becomes clear from survey data is that both Fringes attract patrons from only certain social sectors. This can perhaps be presented most graphically through mapping the residential location of patrons at both the Vancouver and Winnipeg and Vancouver. Such a mapping shows that patrons at both festivals come from only certain regions of the city and suggests that despite its

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47Survey respondents were asked to indicate their household income within certain ranges. Averages were calculated by assuming that the average income within a range corresponded with the mid-point of the range. Thus, respondents who indicated incomes between $25,000 and $29,999 were assumed to have an income of $27,250. Greater Vancouver figure obtained from Canada Census, 1986.

48Although men, once on site, tended to see more shows. Men accounted for only 43.8% of patrons, but accounted for 47.4% of the tickets purchased by respondents.
accessibility, participation at the festival occurs selectively along class, race and "lifestyle" distinctions.

This can be asserted only if a link can be made between residential location and social differentiation - that there is a "social landscape" where certain social groups occupy certain spaces. The significant literature that has examined the spatial distribution of different social groups and the production of spatial differentiation has been widely read, and I will not discuss it here. Carolyne Mill's study of Vancouver's Fairview Slopes, I believe, convincingly demonstrates this process within the Vancouver context. Here she explore the relation between economic restructuring, class, "identity," lifestyle, and the capitalist land market in the social construction of "place" - the fetishization of which allowed it to be appropriated by certain social groups. Spatial differentiation therefore becomes a sign of constructed difference.

The spatial differentiation of the Fringe patrons in both Vancouver and Winnipeg is striking, and suggests two important points. First, that the event is consumed by a selective group of people whose "taste" has been uniquely defined within the social relations of each city. And, second, that these events occur, in each city, at the boundaries between working class and professional class neighborhoods.

In Vancouver patrons come predominantly from four regions - Fairview Slopes and West Mt. Pleasant; the city's West Side (especially Kitsilano); the West End; and Commercial Drive (figure 4.6). Almost none come from South or East Vancouver, or from the other suburbs (with the exception of North

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49 Differentiation occurs in several interrelated ways: through the "forces emanating from the capitalist production process" (Harvey (1989)); through the social production of "difference" - class, race, gender, sexual preference (Jackson (1987), Pratt and Hanson (1988); and through the "fetishization" of commodities - architecture, location - and the social production of "value" (Jagr (1986), Mills (1988)). Residential "choice" therefore is determined within several dynamics which combine to produce communities with degrees of homogeneity.

Figure 4.6: Residential location of Vancouver Fringe Festival patrons
Vancouver). Most notable are the small number of patrons from the city's "ethnic" communities. This, however, should not be read to imply a completely homogeneous audience - only that certain social groups are more evident than others. Commercial Drive, for instance, is considered the site of "alternative" communities. The involvement of a large number of people from this region suggest some diversity or "mixing" of social groups at the Fringe. Some might argue, however, that these differences are insignificant - the eastward push of gentrification (and the city's professional classes) may have reached Commercial Drive as west-siders forced out by rising housing costs seek other "distinguishing" locations. Or, further, that the "oppositional" cultures centered in this region are constituted in direct relation to the "dominant" and share more similarities than differences (in contrast, say, to regions of "racial" minorities).

In Winnipeg the audience is drawn mostly from the southern half of the city and the city's West End - a region directly west of the city's downtown core (figure 4.7). Historically Winnipeg has been divided into three "wards": the North End - a region of "first arrival" for European immigrants, and more recently, Asian (Filipino), Latin American, and Portuguese immigrants and Natives fleeing the formal segregation and poverty of the reserve system; the West End - which included middle-class neighborhoods of north-European immigrants more recently divided into two distinct regions, a gentrified region south of Portage Avenue (an area of large old houses) and an older community of working poor north of the Avenue; and ward one to the south of the Assiniboine River - which was initially the home of the city's British population and business elite. A fourth region - St. Boniface, lay across the Red River from the rest of the city and was the home of a small but significant French community. With the exception of recent suburban development, the city has maintained its

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Figure 4.7: Residential location of Winnipeg Fringe patrons.
spatial differentiation. The city's young professionals have occupied many of the city's older communities in the West End along the Assiniboine River, or communities directly south of the river (ward one) - the same communities from which Fringe patrons are drawn.

These maps reveal a further characteristic of the Fringe audiences which will be explored in the next chapter. Neither event attracts a great number of patrons from their immediate vicinity. Patrons come to the festival from other places. What is remarkable is that both festivals occur along class boundary zones - contested regions within the social geography of the city. Mt. Pleasant in Vancouver stands as the boundary between the affluent (and politically dominant) west-siders and working-class or immigrant east-side communities. In Winnipeg the Exchange District stands between two stark contrasts - the business center and professional neighborhoods to the south and North Main directly adjacent to the north - a region which city administrators have long considered "blighted" and an affront to the decency of the city. The importance of "festival" in these "contested" places has not been lost on local governments and I shall investigate this, especially in the case of Winnipeg, in Chapter 5.

**Nuancing the "public sphere": exploring differentiation at the Fringe**

There are significant similarities in the Fringe audience. Mapping the residential location of Fringe patrons reveals the "already-constituted" nature of its audience, and suggests certain unities around class, race and lifestyle (identity). Patrons are predominantly young, well educated, professional and middle-class. They come predominantly from regions of the city dominated by the affluent. Few "ethnic" minorities are visible. However, within the festivals there also appears to be a certain diversity, both in the characteristics of patrons, and perhaps more significantly, in their "use" of the festival. Although
arts audiences are sociologically definable entities, they are not unified. Recent work drawing on psychoanalytic theory suggests that audience members are positioned differentially within an overdetermined social realm, and that despite the similarities of the audience, there are always already significant differences. No necessary relation exists between art, its audience or its reception.\textsuperscript{52}

At the Vancouver Fringe (where this data was collected) different shows attracted different groups and different groups participated in the event in different ways. While this may on the one hand suggest that individual shows have their own "pre-constituted" audiences, I wish to argue something quite different - that the Fringes become sites that are "used" in different ways by different groups, all participating (intersubjectively) in the politics of representation and interpretation. This is important to note, for participation in this event cannot simply be explained by reducing it to a middle-class recreation, nor by rendering it transparent through the logic of some regime of accumulation. Table 4.5 presents audience profiles of certain shows at the Vancouver Fringe, including female:male ratio; average age, percentage of patrons between the age of 25 and 40; the number of "professionals" attending; average income of audience members; number of patrons from Commercial Drive/Mt. Pleasant; and the number of other shows the average patron at each show attended.

A number of distinctions within the audience are notable. Not only did almost thirty percent more women than men attend the Vancouver Fringe, but the female/male ratio of particular shows indicates that men and women participate in substantially different ways. \textit{The Rules Nowadays} and \textit{Eleemosynary}, discussed earlier, attracted more women than men (81.0\% and 69.0\% respectively). \textit{No Place Like Home}, also attracted over twice as many

\textsuperscript{52}See Deutsche, "Alternate spaces," 53.
women as men (79.3% women) as did *Scientific Americans* (a show critical of science as an institution).

Other shows attracted considerably different age groups. *Beyond the Night Café* (25.6 years average age) and *No Exit* (42.0 years) were, as might be expected, the extremes. The first was produced by recent graduates of a local university drama department, the other was a remounting of a play that had been influential to an earlier generation. Some shows attracted predominantly 25-40 year old patrons (*Side Saddle* - 70.4%, *No Place Like Home* - 63.3%), others younger or older. Shows also attracted regionally distinct audiences. While as many as 50% of the audience for the feminist show *Rules Nowadays* came from the Mt. Pleasant - Commercial Drive region, only 3% of the *No Exit*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>f/m</th>
<th>prof. (%)</th>
<th>25-40 (%)</th>
<th>income ($)</th>
<th># of shows</th>
<th>Comm. Dr.(%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rules now-a-scientific</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>33,523</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>no place like</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>34,057</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>eleemosynary</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>35,872</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no exit</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>43,333</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>beyond the</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>15,156</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>side saddle</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>36,307</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>29.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>sizwe bansi</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>30,691</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
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<td>florentine</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>40,112</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>18.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>trolls</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>37,623</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sex maniac</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>45,943</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>freedom of</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>30,455</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>mump &amp; smooot</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>29,399</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>19.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>macbeth</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>31,107</td>
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<tr>
<td>deadly curr.</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>28,250</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>real horror.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>27,108</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

audience came from this region. Similarly, different shows attracted widely different income groups. The income levels of patrons at *Beyond the Night Café* ($15,156) reflected the status of its audience (young artists/students), while *Sex Maniacs*, a show staged by a Kitsilano theatre company appears to have
attracted its audience from Kitsilano. Its audience’s average income was high ($45,943) and only 10% of its patrons came from the Mt. Pleasant/Commercial Drive district.

The differentiation of involvement in the festival leads to several conclusions. In one sense the ghettoization of performing arts patrons continues at these festivals - people are attracted to the "same" - feminists go to feminist shows, artists support their peers, others go to "classics." But this is perhaps too simple an explanation. In a sense, the Fringes are events "used" tactically by individuals and groups. While some individuals and groups come simply for "theatre" or "entertainment" for other groups the Fringe is an opportunity to express solidarity within social groups - women came to women’s shows, environmentalists to other shows, artists to shows by peers, parents to shows by their children. The festival provides an opportunity for people to rally around certain representations or to support certain individuals working in this medium. Sandy Shreve noted that with one exception all of her feedback was positive - likely due as much to the politics of the performance and what the audience wanted to hear - as to the quality or creativity of the show. The one exception is significant - several patrons complained that a feminist show such as theirs should have dealt with lesbianism. The festivals allow distinct social, cultural, political groups to constitute themselves as a group, and to debate representations within these groups. Potrebenko and Shreve’s show became a place for certain women to reaffirm or debate certain gender and sexual politics. Similarly, No Place Like Home was well attended by workers in the social services.

Perhaps as significantly, while both ghettoization and solidarity occurs, interaction also takes place between the different social groups that participate - many shows had a wide cross-section of patrons (within the parameters
mentioned earlier) and artists and patrons were willing to "check out" shows that appeared quite different than their usual tastes - especially if cajoled by friends or new acquaintances. The average number of shows attended by patrons at *Side Saddle* (a feminist comedy), for example, was 4.6 - a number that would usually require at least 2 days at the festival. The structure of the event, as I earlier noted, encourages interaction, and it was not uncommon to witness conversations around the Fringe sites between people who would not readily be expected to interact.

**Conclusion**

I have attempted, in this chapter, to "locate" the Fringes. Like all cultural practices, they are situated within systems of social relations, occurring within, and at the intersection of, multiple discourses - class, race, gender, etc - through which the events are "cast" in a certain manner. The Fringes are selective, certain groups attend, certain products are produced and consumed, certain discourses disseminated. Through a discussion of the work of Bourdieu, an exploration of the processes by which Fringe audiences are constituted, and a discussion of the characteristics of Fringe patrons, I formulated an argument that the Fringe "public" is in many ways "already constituted" - through "consumption," "taste," the festivals' promotions, location, etc. The events, therefore, are bounded by limits - participants are drawn from certain neighborhoods and are dominated by, in addition to artists, the professional, administrative and managerial segments of the middle classes. This is important to note - for the literature on "festival" and state support for these events often assumes a broadly-based participation and fails to recognize how these events are "positioned." These, of course, are not the only limits which

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53 A number of survey respondents claimed that they had come because their girlfriend, spouse, etc. had said that it would be good for them and that they should widen their perspectives.
structure the Fringes. As I intend to demonstrate in the following chapter, the audience which the Fringes attract make the events attractive to state-economic planners, whose rationality appears imminently poised to "colonize" these events.

The danger of any "sociology" of the arts or cultural events, however, is that they "write-off" these events as either hopelessly "elitist," or mundanely "middle-class." Statistical profiles situate the audience within certain social sectors, often assuming homogeneity. Certainly parameters exist, and against assumptions that cultural events are equally accessibly to all, this must be stressed. But to me this seems all too simple an analysis. What is striking about the Fringes, and I believe that this occurs in other events, is that they are also internally differentiated to the extent that its intersubjective nature presents individuals with diversity, and results in the dissemination of multiple discourses, and the negotiation of subjectivity within a certain (limited) plurality. The limits of the event, and the degree to which certain social structures are reproduced within them must be recognized, but to simply write off these festivals as "middle-class" recreation is to postulate the "middle-class" as a homogeneous group within which no oppositional politics, culture or multiple "publics" exist. What in part makes these events intriguing is that while at one moment they are a critique of the establishment (not simply in the arts, but in society) they at the same time attract an audience which by day identifies with these social and cultural structures.

54 "Professionals" were more likely to attend explicitly "political" or "alternative" shows than any other occupational group.
Chapter 5
The state and the Fringe: colonizing "festival"

Vancouver cannot become a Pacific Rim center for advanced technology and international trade without developing the cultural amenities that attract skilled workers and managers. Moreover, its cultural facilities and programming, combined with its increasingly sophisticated urban ambiance, could easily become as important as its mountains and ocean in attracting tourists. (Department of Social Planning, Vancouver)\(^1\)

Despite some fuzziness about just what postmodernism is, it has surely deconstructed the grand master narratives, exposed the tyranny of high art forms and decentered the one authoritative voice . . . sadly even with the breakdown of forced consensus and much breathless talk of democracy, pluralism and personal "readings," the crumbling of the Berlin Wall still sells Pepsi. In this brave new world where any image can now mean many things, it mostly still means money. (Chris Creighton-Kelly)\(^2\)

Two Vancouver voices. The first, a municipal planner concerned with promoting and maintaining Vancouver's economic growth, the second, a local writer and former producer at the Fringe, worried that the potentially liberating aspects of the "postmodern" are increasingly appropriated by capital. Together they frame the contradictory nature of art and culture in capitalist economic formations - the celebrated explosion and diffusion of meaning still occurs within rationalized systems of exchange, technological innovation, international trade, and an increasing economic globalization that contains its own logic which cultural events seem unable to avoid. So far I have said little about the economics of the Fringes, choosing to examine first those aspects of the events which encourage diversity and subvert institutions that have dominated (and limited) Canadian culture(s). But for all their innovative aspects, the Fringes cannot escape processes of structuration emanating from their need for capital. Their return of box office receipts to artists is at one moment one of the Fringe's most significant interventions in the state of "Canadian theatre" today, but at another moment it is the event's Achilles heel - for it places these festivals at the mercy

of state and corporate sponsors. Such reliance on external funding places the Fringes squarely between the often contradictory objectives of different government departments and state agencies.

Several theorists have recently attempted to understand the relation between current cultural events - spectacle, festival, etc - and changes in state-economic planning, emphasizing that cultural events do not escape processes of economic determination. I wish to examine these arguments briefly before looking in more detail at existing funding arrangements at the Fringe Festivals in Winnipeg and Vancouver. A central question emerges from this literature and can be applied to my examination of the Fringes. To what extent are cultural events subject to a rationality which limits the possibilities inherent in the event? Is it possible to argue that there is a direct link between changes in economic structures and the appearance and promotion of festivals? Are these events simply determined by an economic base or should we seek a conceptualization of festival which sees them as at one moment colonized by money and power yet also made possible by these same processes?

David Harvey has recently presented an argument that the recent proliferation of cultural events, festivals and spectacles, indeed, the cultural phenomenon of "postmodernism" as a whole, is simply a cultural manifestation of transitions in western capitalist economies. Harvey assumes that the contradictions and crises inherent in the accumulation of capital necessitate periodic transformations in the organization of the accumulation process.³ He claims, then, that the post-WWII Fordist regime of accumulation, characterized by mass production and mass consumption, has been replaced, following a crisis in capitalist economies in the early 1970's, with a "post-Fordist" regime of

³See Rosalyn Deutsche, "Boy's town," Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 9,1 (1991):5-30, for a critique of Harvey's attempt to subsume "postmodernism" under a totalizing (and exclusionary) economic theory.
accumulation marked by two interrelated characteristics - (1) flexibility - with respect to labour processes, labor markets, products and patterns of consumption (in part due to the rise of new information technologies, and increasing time-space compression). Concurrent with this has been an increase in consumption by the class fragments which have emerged in the growing managerial/administrative and technical professions. And, (2) mobility - with respect to the movement of capital and patterning of uneven development (both in terms of economic sectors and geographical regions). These economic changes are argued to produce new spatiotemporal experiences in which new postmodern aesthetic movements "reflect" and "intervene." Harvey insists, therefore, that transformations in cultural and intellectual life parallel current economic restructuring and that recent cultural movements (postmodernism) are seeking "a creative and active rather than a passive role in the promotion of new cultural attitudes and practice consistent with flexible accumulation" (italics mine).

This "cultural logic of late capitalism" emerged in part, Harvey argues, out of urban processes, and as a response to competition between places. Flexibility of production, consumption, labour, and managerial functions led to an inter-urban competitiveness in which "ruling class alliances were willy-nilly forced to adapt a much more competitive posture" in competition for (1) position in the international division of labour, (2) place as a center of consumption, (3) control and command functions and (4) government redistributions. To compete, city governments (regions and nations) have been forced to shift from a "managerial" approach, to an "entrepreneurial" position (under the rhetoric

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5Harvey, *Urban Experience*, 258.
7Harvey, *Urban Experience*, 259.
private-public partnership) in order to promote development and employment growth. Harvey claims that cities have therefore changed their focus from providing services, facilities and benefits for their people, to creating a "favorable business climate," often through corporate subsidies and a reduction of collective consumption capacities (structures of social welfare).\(^8\) Perhaps more important to Harvey's he suggests that these cities have also had to become attractive as consumer and cultural centers through innovations in lifestyle, cultural forms, products, etc., in order to attract or retain certain businesses and sectors of the labour market.\(^9\)

such innovations and investments . . . have quickly been imitated elsewhere. Inter-urban competition has thus generated leap-frogging urban innovations in lifestyle, cultural forms, products and, and even political, and consumer based innovation, all of which has actively promoted the transition to flexible accumulation.\(^10\)

As such, cultural events (and whatever is produced within them) simply facilitate accumulation within this new "flexible" regime. Throughout Harvey's work the postmodern concern with image, representation and identity are subsumed under a "logic" of capital accumulation.

Harvey extends this argument to suggest that there is now a need for a reorganized urban space engendered by this new "flexible regime" and accomplished through a new "aestheticization" of urban life:

the pressure to reorganize the interior space of the city has been considerable under conditions of flexible accumulation. The vitality of the central city core has been re-emphasized, themes such as the quality of urban living (gentrification, consumption palaces, and sophisticated entertainment) . . . has been of widespread significance."\(^11\)

The creation of "symbolic capital" - goods attending the taste and distinction of the owner (which can be turned into money capital) - is emphasized and Harvey

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\(^8\)The shift from "managerial" to "entrepreneurial" urban governance is examined in Harvey, "From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism," Geografiska Annaler 71B,1 (1989): 3-18.

\(^9\)Harvey, Urban Experience, 260.

\(^10\)Ibid., 260-261

\(^11\)Ibid., 264-265.
argues that "ruling class alliances" have created events and public spaces to attract those whose "consumption potential" is high:

the display of the commodity became a central part of the spectacle, as crowds flock to gaze at these and at each other . . . downtowns no longer communicate exclusively a monumental sense of power, authority and corporate domination. They instead express the idea of spectacle and play.12

There is much of value in Harvey’s work, but while he has identified significant changes in urban life, spatial differentiation and cultural forms, his discussion fails to escape a functionalist logic: in order to break from the constraints of welfare state capitalism and Fordist production, capital needs new cultural forms which facilitate more flexible regimes of accumulation. His analysis of cultural events (spectacle, festival) ultimately amounts to little more than a reworked "bread and circuses" conspiracy. Such an argument is unable to adequately explain why individual events are initiated (many do not originate from the "ruling class alliance"), what is produced at these events (much postmodern visual art, theatre, dance, etc, is concerned with disrupting the coherence of naturalized social worlds), nor why and perhaps most significantly how people participate (certainly responses to patron surveys at the Fringe revealed a certain oppositional motivation, and a desire to use the festival concept as a means to articulate certain ends).

Harvey’s economism creates certain difficulties.13 There can be little doubt, I believe, that these events have a certain utility in processes of inter-urban competition, gentrification, etc, but this is much different than arguing that these events are determined by changes in an economic base. Festivals such as the Fringes are in many ways instrumentally appropriated to the economic rationality of state and corporate interests (or so I hope to

12Ibid., 271.
13In part because it fuels a desire for totalizing theory which ignores other sites of conflict, and socially produced meaning, identities, etc. See Deutsche, "Boys town," and D. Massey, "Flexible sexism," Environment and Planning D: Society and space 9.1 (19910: 31-58 for critiques of Harvey’s totalizations.
demonstrate) but this should not be understood to mean either that the events function entirely within the imperatives of such "logics," nor that this exhausts the possibilities of these events. The production of cultural products, their interpretation and the use that people make of these events fit no fixed pattern or pre-determined form. Any direct determination between changes toward more flexible economies and the proliferation of cultural events is tenuous, and its connection to the production of meaning is, I believe, less clear than Harvey might argue. Meaning is produced within social relations determined at a plurality of sites.

However, I do not want to abandon Harvey's ideas altogether. Economic pressures, of which increasing globalization is perhaps most significant, are important motivations to state-economic and corporate actions. Art, and cultural events, as commodified spheres within rationalized systems of exchange (including both money and symbolic capital), can be attractive sites for the instrumental rationality of state-economic interests, which, and this is the important point, may contain objectives little concerned with the cultural or social value of art. Not only does art embody and express social relations, and as Deutsche and others claim, through its discourses (universality and autonomy) serve as an alibi for all kinds of particular interests (colonial conquest, urban redevelopment projects) but the artistic event, through discourses of the "public" and "public space" can serve as alibis or instruments of other particular interests.¹⁴ Art and cultural events can become means to other ends. As such, events such as the Fringe Festivals, with their own artistic vision, objectives and cultural practices, are not so much determined by an economic base as potentially colonized by systems of money and power. This

colonization may at times limit the possibilities of the event, although not
exhausting the potential for difference nor, and this perhaps should be stressed,
precluding the tactical use of state-economic rationality for ends, other than, or
in addition to, those desired by state departments or granting agencies. The
instrumental rationality of state-economic planners, for instance, may create
conditions (often inadvertently) allowing for the widening of possibilities and
couragement of diversity just as it may create conditions which limit
possibilities or threaten the future of certain cultural events. Chapter 3 could be
read, for instance, as a discussion of how the subversion of cultural traditions
and social discourses was made possible by the exercise of state-economic
planning! However, while disavowing any reduction of culture to the economic, I
wish to stress that there are inherent dangers involved in linking culture and
artistic production to economic arguments as found increasingly in the planning
documents of state agencies - and this link and its potential danger to the Fringe
Festivals will remain the focus of this chapter.

Funding the Fringes
At both Winnipeg and Vancouver’s festivals revenues come from three major
sources: (1) that generated by the festivals through registration fees, sale of
merchandise, memberships, advertising space in programs and fund raising
events; (2) corporate sponsorships through donations or donations-in-kind; and
(3) government grants (see table 5.1). Festival generated revenues, as I noted,
are limited and the Fringes have had little success attracting major corporate
sponsors - they compete against high profile events such as the Molson Indy or
the Vancouver Jazz Festival. Even with significant corporate sponsorships the
festivals could not survive without state support and in 1990 over 50% of
revenues at both festivals were obtained from federal, provincial and municipal
governments or arms length funding bodies. Corporate sponsorship, however, is not unimportant. No festival (Fringe or otherwise) can survive without it - many government granting organizations require that festivals generate a certain amount of revenue from their own activities and a certain amount of private sector support before it will consider bestowing its own grants. Vancouver's financial statements, for instance, indicate considerable corporate donations, but the festival also spends a large amount of money chasing these donations. Obtaining these donations is as much strategic as financial.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 5.1: Fringe Festival Revenues</th>
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<td><strong>Vancouver Fringe Festival</strong> 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov't grants</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Application fees</td>
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<td>Bar operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandis./conc.</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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</table>

**Winnipeg Fringe Festival budget estimate, grant application, July, 1990

The need for corporate donations creates difficulties for the Fringes - the nature of Fringe shows ("alternative") and the nature of the events (not as spectacular as many) are not necessarily attractive to corporate sponsors. Indeed, while certain sponsors find the events' "publics" attractive target groups - advertising in the Fringe programs reveal an assumed "lifestyle" of "fringers" - the events can conflict with corporate agendas. A B.C. forestry company, for instance, would not support the Vancouver Fringe because it could not control the content of shows.\[^{15}\] As it turned out, two Fringe shows were critical of

\[^{15}\]Discussions with Fringe fundraiser, Vancouver, July 1991.
forestry practices. Yet government granting agencies, especially with the emerging rhetoric of state-corporate cooperation in supporting the arts ("partnership in the arts"), assume corporate support to be a measure of "community" support, making the festivals dependent upon attracting support from a narrowly circumscribed sector of the "community."

Despite the previous example, and to the disappointment of those who wish to find a direct determination between the state, capital and artistic production, it would be difficult to maintain an argument that there is a direct link between corporate (and state) support of the Fringes and what is produced at these festivals. The festivals insulate individual shows from corporate and state agendas.16 No shows have been pulled from the festivals or refused performance space because of objections from external funding sources. It would be equally mistaken to argue, however, that there are no links between state-economic interests or corporate "needs" and these events. The structuring of these events by external forces occurs in more subtle (yet pervasive - and potentially more harmful) ways - by placing the events, and their survival, under state and corporate agendas that have little or nothing to do with the arts and culture, and everything to do with economic development, regional boosterism and tourism. Many state sponsoring agencies care little about what is produced at the event, and much more about what other cultural activities occur around the event - consumption, attracting tourists into the city or drawing locals into certain communities. The festivals must be able to prove that this occurs, or structure (and promote) their events in such a manner that this will occur.

16There seems to be a desire among left-leaning, Marxist, and even some conservative academics to discover the direct intervention of capital and state in artistic production. At a recent conference (Queen's University) I received numerous queries as to how corporate and state sponsors intervened in artistic production in order to promote their own agendas.
This structuration is enforced through the requirements of state funding bodies. No one level of government or one government agency will foot the bill for the state portion of an event's support - the festivals must demonstrate that they will receive funding from all levels of government - municipal, provincial, and federal before any grants can be procured, and often from a variety of departments.  

This ultimately demands of the festivals that they attract support from departments as diverse as culture/heritage, communications, tourism, even urban renewal projects - departments that have little concern for the vision of festival producers. Failure to procure funds from any one may threaten the whole project, not only because the festivals maintain precarious margins, creating conditions where the loss of only one funding source may place the events into a potential debt crisis, but because the inability to procure funding from one agency threatens the whole funding base.  

If departments determine that their objectives are better served by spending their money on other projects, the funding arrangements that these festivals have established become threatened. The festivals, therefore, must provide justifications for continued support. But cultural funding linked to economic returns will always leave cultural producers uncertain about their future - funding may be diverted to the latest scheme or fashion. One need look no further than British Columbia to find evidence of this. As the province rolls out Music '91 - its major 1991 tourist attraction (dominated by U.S. artists) - other arts groups and the organizers of cultural events are complaining that the cupboards are empty when the time comes for their funding applications to be considered.

Such funding arrangements have certain effects which I wish to emphasize. Most significantly, festivals must appeal for funds from government

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18 The Winnipeg Fringe encountered significant difficulties when the Economic and Regional Development Agreement (ERDA) which had provided the event with large operating grants for three years, was disbanded.
departments whose concerns have little to do with widening cultural opportunities, encouraging diversity, or providing possibilities for artistic and cultural expression. Rather, these departments will only fund and encourage such events in so far as they can be rationalized within their own objectives and programs. This creates one of the ambivalences of state support. While state funds enable the festivals to exist (and enable them to retain many of the characteristics which make them unique - ie. their "first-come, first-served" approach along with the return of revenue directly to the artist), they also subsume these events within a logic which can act to determine their direction and possibilities. Ironically these events are not in danger of losing funding because they are "subversive" or because they "threaten" existing institutions, or even because they allow space for particular voices and social groups which would not otherwise be heard - women, ethnic minorities, gays/lesbians. Indeed, the allure of "difference" may in fact appeal to a certain investor who equates diversity with cosmopolitanism, the sign of a vibrant, exciting city and economic opportunity. Rather, events are in danger of not receiving adequate funding or losing existing funding because they cannot be justified through the rationalized objectives of funding agencies. Table 5.2 illustrates this dependence on funding from state agencies. Departments of tourism, urban renewal projects, and the federal Department of Communications (DOC) constitute a substantial segment of state support. Their funding is granted because it is believed that the Fringes can attract people to the city or community, enhance the image of a city, develop the tourist industry, and encourage investment. Even bureaucracies responsible for culture, regardless of the intentions of their administrators, are increasingly under the sway of economic arguments for support of the arts.
Table 5.2: Fringe Festivals - Government funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vancouver Fringe (1990)*</th>
<th>Winnipeg Fringe (1990 est.)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture/Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC Cultural Serv.</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Council</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept of Commun.</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept of Commun.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept of Commun.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada/MB Tourism</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Vancouver</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Immig.</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By level of government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
<th>Winnipeg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Winnipeg Fringe Festival budget estimate, grant application, July, 1990.

In the remainder of this chapter I will examine funding from several government departments, and discuss the objectives which underlie their interest in the Fringes. In brief there are three objectives which emerge from the agendas of these funding bodies:

1. audience development for existing institutions and art forms, the development of scripts, writers and actors, and an emphasis on "Canadian" culture and "excellence" (Canada Council, provincial arts councils, and Departments of Culture);

2. industrial development in tourism, promotion of the nation and the region on the world stage and encouragement of consumption (provincial/federal tourism and Department of Communications);

3. urban renewal, gentrification, and civic boosterism (Core Area Initiative, Manitoba Tourism, Department of Culture/Heritage).

What is the impact of these state objectives? How might they "structure" the festivals, or place them in precarious positions? The coupling of Art and Consumption has become an important objective of the state, and corporations have recognized the value of supporting "culture," and commodifying
"difference." But can we argue with theorists such as David Harvey that cultural events are in many ways "determined" by an economic logic? Or are these events able to maintain some autonomy and stand as sites of struggle which, while directly tied to state support, actively appropriate this support for their own purposes?

The Fringes and the Cultural Bureaucracy

Both the Winnipeg and Vancouver Fringe Festivals obtain grants from provincial Departments of Culture, and from other granting bodies concerned primarily with the "arts" - The Canada Council Touring Office (Vancouver Fringe) and the Manitoba Arts Gaming Fund (Winnipeg Fringe - this fund is an extension of the Manitoba Arts Council). In addition, some individual shows obtain funding from either the Canada Council, or in Manitoba from the Manitoba Arts Council (modelled after The Canada Council). While funds obtained from these sources are significant, at neither festival do they amount to over 50% of state support (even if grants from employment and immigration are excluded). Vancouver receives only 30.6% of its support from government agencies concerned with the "arts." Winnipeg receives 48.8%, although as I discuss the objectives of Manitoba Culture and Heritage funding, it may become evident that its primary concern appears to wander some distance from "culture."

The Manitoba Arts Council claims to follow the following principles in its funding decisions:

1) to support and promote the arts in Manitoba.

2) to reward and encourage artistic "excellence."

19 Some may contend that federal Department of Communication funding is primarily concerned with developing the "arts." However, I believe that my discussion of this department (pp. 159-164) reveals the degree to which political-economic concerns influence its festival funding and the extent to which it pushes the festivals to make themselves amenable to tourism.
3) to remain committed to the peer assessment process by involving the Manitoba arts community as well as Canadian art experts in determining excellence.

4) to encourage access and enjoyment by Manitoba audiences.\textsuperscript{20}

Funds from the council are received by the festival in two ways - indirectly through grants given directly to professional Manitoba theatre artists to produce shows at the festival, (in 1990, 8 groups received an average of $2500 each) and directly to the festival through money generated through the Manitoba Arts Gaming Fund (1989 Fringe - $35,000).

The Manitoba Arts Council has some impact on what is produced at the Winnipeg Fringe. Most simply, it enables a number of groups to finance the rehearsal and performance of their shows, making participation in the Fringe more attractive. In this manner, the Council actively supports the Fringe concept as a place of artistic opportunity and experimentation. However, the funding program for individual artists is limited to what the council defines as "professional Manitoba theatre artists" and exists to "encourage the creation and performance of theatrical productions by established Manitoba theatre artists and also to give opportunities to theatre artists in the early stages of their professional careers"\textsuperscript{21} The emphasis on "professionalism" has a subtle effect of "centralizing" artistic production and performance in Winnipeg - few opportunities for "professional" theatre exist in the province's rural areas. Further, it limits the field of possible producers, even though the Fringe format is open to all. Pat Carabré, chair of the Council, explained that funding from this organization depended considerably on the age and experience of the people involved - artists writing or producing their first play are not funded. If an artist has had a successful show in a previous festival, they are more likely to be funded.\textsuperscript{22} This has two results - the first (which is the intention of the Council)

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{22}Pat Carabré, interview with author, Winnipeg, July, 1990.
is that work that is likely to have some artistic merit is supported. The second is that people who have previously produced at the Fringe have a distinct advantage over those that have not.

The structure of the Council tends to reproduce those notions of "excellence" and "acceptability" in the arts with which Wallace has taken such issue in *Producing Marginality*. This occurs in a number of ways. First, the juries are "fashioned as much as possible to reflect the disciplines of applicants in each program area." Juries are chosen prior to reviewing applications, not after, and since they are chosen on the basis of how the discipline has previously been constituted, do not necessarily reflect current or alternative movements. Juries for the independent theatre productions, for example, are chosen from an "approved" list which contains names solicited by the council from "people who are funded on a regular basis" - in this case Pat Carabré asked for five names from each "operating" company - Manitoba Theatre Center, Prairie Theatre Exchange, Le Circle Molière, Actors Showcase, and the Manitoba Playwrighters Association. As such, the jury process will tend to reproduce what these groups consider "excellence" in theatre. This is not to suggest that within such a group a significant amount of diversity is not found, but that this diversity will occur within certain parameters, excluding certain performance groups and artistic forms.

While such funding arrangements create conditions enabling certain productions and not others, it should be noted that the same process also can create possibilities for groups not usually included in theatre funding. Occasionally the council or jury takes what Carabré calls a "long-term view" - funding a group for its potential to develop theatre productions within social or racial groups not usually able to participate in these events. The case of
Awasikan Theatre, an all-native company, is a good example. Despite what Carabré considered an incomplete proposal and some uncertainty about the "excellence" of the planned production, the jury "bought the Awasikan idea as a 'development process'." The group was provided with a grant, likely as much to include Manitoba's large First Nations population in the festival as for its artistic merit.

**Manitoba Department of Culture**

The Manitoba Department of Culture provides the Winnipeg Fringe Festival with approximately 8% of its budget (15.8% of government support). Its objectives are somewhat different than the Arts Council - and combine support for "culture" with a concern with its social and economic impact. Doreen Millin suggested that the department based funding decisions on how an event

1. builds audiences,
2. employs artists,
3. encourages tourism,
4. benefits business,
5. brings new material into the city,
6. encourages local and rural performers, and
7. encourages cross-cultural activities.25

Such priorities do not necessarily translate into support for the Fringe "concept." The Fringe is not funded for its unique cultural and social values (in fact this is basically not mentioned by Millin), but rather because it presents a method to encourage attendance at the province's flagship cultural enterprises - notably the Manitoba Theatre Center. Millin suggested that the Winnipeg Fringe is important because "it is developing new audiences for theatre at a time when subscription sales are going way down in theatres across the country." Millin noted that "the Fringe is for the younger people, [and] is a way of hooking them

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25Doreen Millin, interview with author, Winnipeg, July, 1990. All other references to Millin refer to this discussion.
in that the arts are fun” and claimed that the number of young people attending MTC’s Warehouse theatre has increased since the Fringe began.

Winnipeg’s Fringe is unique in this respect - it is produced by one of the regional theatres (MTC), and the Fringe was viewed (at least initially) as a means of increasing attendance during the subscription season at this theatre’s mainstages. Other Canadian Fringes are produced by small local companies whose major annual project is the Fringe. Vancouver’s Theatrespace, for instance, runs little more than the Vancouver Fringe Festival. In many ways Millin echoes some of the stated purposes of Winnipeg’s MTC organizers. Making theatre accessible is considered a means of selling the public on mainstream theatre. The connection is subtle yet underlies part of the reason that MTC holds the festival and holds it in the Exchange District. In the organizers’ summary of the 1989 festival they noted that “this year we truly reached a new audience. A great many people did not know the area (which is the recognized theatre district of Winnipeg), nor did they know where the MTC Warehouse is or what is was.”

However, while the Fringes were expected to return people to the theatre in all the cities in which they now are held, this has not occurred. The former producer of the Edmonton Fringe (Brian Paisley) and the producers of the Winnipeg Fringe (Larry Desrochers), and Victoria Fringe (Randy Smith) have all expressed doubts whether this will happen. Government funding directed towards an instrumental use of the festivals for strengthening local regional or professional theatres and increasing audiences at these sites may not have the desired result. Departments of Culture will be forced to reconsider their support of the Fringes in light of their institutional objectives.

26Fringe Festival summary submitted to Cultural Resources branch of the Manitoba Department of Culture.
A further rationalization can be detected within funding by the Department of Heritage/Culture which encourages the centralization of cultural activity in large organizations or institutions. Millin noted that the Winnipeg festival's MTC sponsorship makes it a "stable" festival and safe to fund - "my own preference for festivals is that they do have [institutional support] because you get the facility support, you get the administrative support, you can keep the continuity." Most government funding bodies acknowledged that they preferred to fund organizations or festivals which were "low risk" - those that had a stable organizational and financial base - a funding criteria that limits considerably those events that can hope to receive support.

In addition to the emphasis on propping up local regional theatres, the department also stresses the economic impact of these events. Millin claims that the event gives the city something to offer tourists and provides a high profile for the downtown region. She believes that "the businesses in that area certainly pick up a lot of money." This economic justification for funding is evident even in so-called "cultural" departments - a tendency which is likely to increase. During the 1990 Winnipeg Fringe Festival the province released its Manitoba Arts Policy Review Committee Report. The report, prepared by a committee whose mandate was "to recommend policies, principles and priorities to the Minister to maximize the effect of public and private expenditures on the arts in the next decade," linked the arts closely with the economic development and promotion of the province. The report's executive summary suggests two values of the arts:

The need for the arts in Manitoba is very real and strongly felt by a large cross-section of the population. The growth and development of the arts in Manitoba are a public good and worthy of increased public support. The arts also provide significant benefits to the economy in the form of employment expenditures,

27Millin, interview with author.
28Women's Arts Festivals, for example, have had difficulty maintaining government support.
taxes and tourism. The arts make Manitoba an attractive place for people to live and work and for businesses to operate.\textsuperscript{30}

This is spelled out in more detail later in the document, where the linking of the arts and the promotion of Winnipeg on the global market is explicit. This is worth quoting in some length, in part because this is a document which reviews the arts, not the state of the economy, and because this document is expected to guide government funding into the 21st century.

The arts represent an important opportunity for Winnipeg and Manitoba to differentiate themselves in a positive and productive way from other cities and regions in Canada. The quality of the cultural life of this province is regularly cited as a benefit of living and working here. Ensuring continued cultural development in the province and better communicating to the rest of Canada and the world the quality of arts and cultural activity in Manitoba will help attract and retain people, business and investment. The arts are essential to any long-term strategy to diversify and strengthen the economy of Manitoba.

The potential economic benefits of the arts will not automatically accrue to the province unless they are clearly identified and included in broad planning and funding priorities. The national and international profile of Winnipeg as a center for excellence in the arts is readily acknowledged and should occupy a central place in strategic planning by the Government of Manitoba and a number of communities including Winnipeg. Touring and exposure within and outside Manitoba should not be seen as a luxury but an important investment in the image and self-confidence of the province. (italics added)\textsuperscript{31}

The report’s discussion of festivals contains two recommendations - both aimed at developing festivals for their tourist potential.\textsuperscript{32} No mention is made of the cultural, social, even political value of art - it is subsumed completely under an economic rationalization. Assumed throughout the document is that the "arts" must be brought under the rationalized logic of state economic planning if Manitoba is to retain or advance its economic standing in relation to other provinces or competing regions in other parts of the world. Perhaps as disturbing, is that while such a rationale surely provides an argument for the

\textsuperscript{30}"Executive summary," \textit{MAPRC Report}, May, 1990; v. The constitution of the committee was itself a subject of controversy. The committee was chaired by prominent Winnipeg businessman Art DeFehr (president - Palliser Furniture), and included among its other seven members four who were connected with the provinces "big three" arts organizations.
\textsuperscript{31}MAPRC Report, 7.
\textsuperscript{32}The recommendations are as follows:
\begin{enumerate}
\item That the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, in consultation with other Government Departments and agencies, study coordination of existing festival and heritage activities to maximize participation and economic benefit to the province of Manitoba.
\item That the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation study the feasibility of a major summer arts festival which could enhance the economic benefit of the arts in Manitoba and increase employment opportunities for artists.
\end{enumerate}
continued support of the arts during a period of government retrenchment, and its economic emphasis is more understandable when Manitoba's stagnating economy is considered, it also provides a justification for a selective support of the arts, with money distributed to those events which have the greatest "economic impact" regardless of what is produced, who participates, and who benefits.

Such an overt link between support of the arts and their economic impact is somewhat unexpected from documents emerging from a Department of Culture. It is made even more explicitly in the objectives of other government departments - the federal Department of Communications, provincial tourism agencies and municipal governments.

Department of Communications

The federal Department of Communication (DOC) is self-admittedly the most "political" of the state funding bodies - its grants must be administered personally by the Minister (at point of writing, Perrin Beatty), and therefore can become attractive vehicles for both publicity and furthering regional political programs. Pat Carabré of the Manitoba Arts Council claims that these festivals are such "politically attractive animals" that the DOC resists any attempts by arms-length funding bodies such as The Canada Council to gain more control over their funding. Quite simply, the current set-up allows the Minister to hand over a cheque (often with media present).

The department's stated objectives appear benign. Festival funding is allocated from the DOC's "Cultural Initiatives Program" (CIP) which was

34 The Fringes have become quite aware of the political nature of DOC funding. When the Vancouver Fringe Festival became uncertain about whether its DOC funding would be received they publicly harassed the minister and demonstrated at the city's Jessie awards ceremony at which the Minister was present (most of those present were members of the city's "arts community" and supported the festivals cause). The festivals funding request received a quick and affirmative response.
initiated in 1980. This program has three components: management assistance; capital assistance; and festivals and special events. This third component has four stated objectives:

1. to support cultural events of national scope such as festivals, major exhibitions and conferences;
2. to assist in increasing audiences for cultural products;
3. to help increase employment opportunities for professional Canadian artists;
4. to give Canadians better access to cultural products.\textsuperscript{35}

Further, the focus is on events of national character, which is defined as including the participation of professional artists from at least three provinces (at least two provinces for predominantly Francophone events).

The CIP has had a fixed budget of $16 million since 1980 of which $4 million is distributed to 120 events. On average the CIP accounts for 7.9\% of these events’ budgets. The DOC’s objectives, however, are not necessarily a true reflection of how this funding is being used, nor what criteria are used to make funding decisions. Although not stated in the program’s details, funding of festivals is broken down into three categories: those events with international tourism potential; children’s festivals; and other performing arts.\textsuperscript{36} In a remarkable meeting with Fringe producers, Holgerson outlined the ”concerns” of the Minister.\textsuperscript{37} He stated clearly that the DOC (and especially the Minister) is most interested in the first of these categories - international festivals. To be considered such, a festival must prove its ”potential for industrial development in tourism” - in other words, it must prove that not only its performers, but its audience is international. The DOC therefore inverts the interest of the Arts Councils, and the festival organizers. While the latter are interested in

\textsuperscript{35}From application procedures for CIP Component III: Festivals and Special Events, distributed by Government of Canada, Department of Communications.
\textsuperscript{36}This was outlined by Ron Holgerson, November, 1990.
\textsuperscript{37}This meeting occurred in November 1990 with producers from all the Canadian Fringe Festivals present. All other references to Holgerson are taken from this meeting.
developing local artists and bringing in material from outside the province or country in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and art forms, the DOC is interested in bringing in consumers from outside the province or country, in order to strengthen regional and national economies.

This inversion of priorities puts certain pressures on the Fringe festivals. Holgerson explained that "the Minister" wants "festivals that people can look to Canada for" - festivals which project what is "Canadian" on the world stage. As such the department is more interested in funding "major" events, rather than "circuits" such as the Fringe circuit. Circuit events tend to be small and local, therefore less attractive to the international consumer and, in turn, state funding - yet the circuit is what makes several of the festivals possible (Saskatoon's, for instance, would not be feasible were it not placed time-sequentially and geographically between Winnipeg's and Edmonton's). The circuit also makes participation possible for those companies which do not have the resources to make a one-time only trip to a festival, allows artistic producers to elude much of what structures artistic production in traditional theatre, and provides space both for local groups and the performance of "new" work. By linking funding to "major" events, the DOC sets the events against each other in the struggle to attain "national" and "international" significance - a status which only one festival - Edmonton - is likely to achieve. Holgerson asks quite bluntly - "how many Fringes do we need?" While this is certainly a concern shared by festival organizers who fear the spread of Fringe Festivals to small communities which they feel would weaken or compromise the circuit, Holgerson's intentions are different - the only festivals that "the Minister" needs are those that can attain an international status.

Such pressures force the festivals to spend more time on activities other than running an accessible theatre festival. Holgerson suggested that the
festivals increase promotion and marketing to international audiences and distribute lifestyle and consumer surveys in order to target groups likely to "buy art" as part of their lifestyle. In turn, the need to attract "international tourists" may demand that the festivals attract artists which will have such an appeal - threatening the accessibility of the event to local (unknown) artists, and spend valuable resources producing audience analyses in order to convince the DOC and other bodies of their potential for the industrial development of tourism. Holgerson, for instance, suggested that the festivals develop "psychographics" of their audiences - by postalcode. In addition he suggested other methods by which these festivals could attain funding, such as promoting their festivals as part of the government's planned "1992 - year of the creator," and attempting to attract the "Asian tourism market" whose expenditures the government covets.

The structuring of the festivals by the DOC is significant, and at times explicit - almost demanding that the Fringes bring their events, and more specifically their "publics" in line with state economic objectives. The department's objectives, in fact, reveal a subtle structuring of cultural products and events by tourism. Urry has noted that the "tourist gaze," similar to the "medical gaze" analyzed by Foucault, constitutes its object through discourses and institutions external to that which is being constituted as object. As such, Urry finds tourist activity useful for reflection on the culture and society from which the tourist emerges. The activity of the DOC, however, is remarkable in other ways. Placed within a globalizing tourist industry and significant international competition for tourist dollars, DOC bureaucrats have decided (with the Minister) to actively promote and structure the nation's cultural events in a manner which caters to a "gaze" constituted elsewhere. Events that are

fundable are events that can attract certain social groups (middle and upper income local residents, international tourists, especially tourists from certain Asian countries - Japan, Hong Kong). Events that attract other social groups do so to their own peril. The economic rationality of DOC funding contains conditions which have the potential to limit the Fringe "public(s)" and in turn restrain the cultural and political potential of the events. At the end of the meeting Holgerson warned the Fringe Festival producers "I hope you will clue in to the things that I said today and include them in your submissions."39

That the government is coercing festivals to focus on management and marketing is increasingly evident and should come as little surprise as it turns its attention to attracting certain consumers whose "field of consumption" is increasingly global. The federal government has declared Arts Administrators a "national immigration need." A major conference on "Managing festivals and special events" was held in October, 1990 at Whistler, BC., sponsored by the Whistler Center for Business and the Arts, the federal-provincial Economic and Regional Development Agreement and the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training. For $570 (excluding accommodation and meals) participants could attend a four day conference, the first day devoted to exploring program design, and subsequent days focussing on marketing and tourism, finance, and site management.

It should be noted that workers within the DOC do not necessarily share Holgerson's approach. Belenah Degueffe, in the Winnipeg office, argues that some arts festivals will never be able to justify their existence by their ability to attract the tourist dollar (they simply don't attract them - see tables 5.3 and 5.4, p. 169), but realizes that governments will try to structure the events to meet

39Adding insult to injury, Holgerson intimated on several occasion that the Fringes were second rate cultural events - pointing at the wages being paid to the producers sitting around the table. The producers, of course, needed no reminders that they had sacrificed considerable career benefits not only to work in the arts but in struggling alternative arts festivals!
these ends - "as governments recognized the tremendous goldmine, they started trying to shape the festivals, you have to start doing this, you have to start doing that." An argument can be made, tenuous at best, that Holgerson's stern warnings to the Fringes was a desperate attempt to convince the Fringes to "play the game" or disappear altogether. That is, play lip-service to "consumption" and "tourism" in funding applications in order to obtain operating grants. Certainly organizers of the Fringes view these funding structures as manipulable and tailor funding applications to the expectations of departments. Yet, however the motivation behind Holgarson's imperatives is understood, a significant orientation of the state towards funding of the arts (and more explicitly - festivals) is revealed. Festivals are viewed foremost as economic tools to be deployed within strategies of economic development. Those which are not able to be appropriated for these purposes may find difficulties gaining continued state support.

Department of Communication funding appears increasingly linked to the scale and status of the event. Already funding to several Fringes stands far below others. The department has determined that it is unnecessary to fund more than one festival of each "type" (Fringe, Jazz, Folk) in each geographical region of the country (Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, B.C.) - labelling others of the same type "copycat" events. The Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Victoria Fringes are considered less important than those in Edmonton and Vancouver, which are the largest in each region. While 42.1% (41,500) of Vancouver's government funding came from the DOC, only 8.1% ($10,000) of Winnipeg's came from the same source.

Fringe Festivals and the rhetoric of tourism

Cultural attributes such as festivals and events need to be integrated with other tourism products as part of an "urban" experience. Festivals and events play an important role to increase Canada's tourism awareness abroad, animate our cities and regions, involve the community and illustrate our way of life. They generate economic and social benefits to all regions of Canada.

The rationality underlying DOC funding is more explicit in the case of provincial tourism - and, in Winnipeg, may soon present a graphic example of the dangers of funding "arts festivals" solely for their economic potential. Tourism Manitoba has been the largest contributor to the Winnipeg Fringe Festival, until this year responsible for almost 1/3 of its state support. This year (1990) funding was reduced from $50,000 annually to only $35,000 placing the festival in a serious deficit problem. With the end of the federal-provincial ERDA program (Economic and Regional Development Agreement) the festival was left scrambling for money for the 1991 event. While funds from the Western Diversification Fund are expected to replace ERDA - they may be used in significantly different ways. Monies from this agreement may be directed toward a "major event," rather than a multitude of smaller events. Cecil Semchyshyn (Tourism Manitoba) describes this proposed event as "an invitational world-class international festival." Where this would leave the Fringe is uncertain - but it would undoubtedly have significant effects - limiting its available funds, competing for "audiences" and, if the Fringe became subsumed into this larger event, compromising the intentions of Fringe producers.

Tourism agencies have remarkable definitions of "festival." In September, 1989 Tourism Canada released a position paper on festivals and events, in which major festivals and events were defined as:

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a major celebration or display of some theme, open to the public for a limited
time only which is capable of attracting international travellers or have the
potential to do so.\textsuperscript{43}

In an equally remarkable passage, this document implicitly devalues the
importance of festivals for locals and integrates local involvement into strategies
for attracting the international tourist. Local patrons become part of the
"package" marketed to the tourist!

\begin{quote}
incremental expenditures of local visitors attending a major festival are a small component of the total economic benefits \ldots \textit{the real contribution of local visitors is their participation, thereby creating animation and a crowd that will draw non-local visitors to become part of it} (italics added).\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

These events, further, must be geared to high-growth and high-yield markets for
Canada - for instance, Asian tourists, wealthy Americans, etc. Festivals
considered "worthy" of support by this document were:

1) those that could demonstrate that their product attributes will appeal
to the international tourism market.

2) those that show a potential to generate a measurable economic impact
at a regional level.

3) those that can be staged in proximity to tourism facilities and services
that can adequately meet the demand.

4) those that are located in a city or region that offers a significant
potential to attract international travellers.\textsuperscript{45}

Not only are festivals brought under the rhetoric of tourism, artistic, cultural
and social values are not considered. Further, "worthy" festivals are defined in
such a way to reinforce the centralizing tendencies in current global economies -
only those located in places with significant potential to attract "international"
travellers are worth consideration - \textit{leaving events in non-"world class" centers scrambling for the scraps left over}. Seventy percent of the festivals identified as
having "potential" were located in only nine centers - Halifax, Quebec City,
Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Tourism Canada, Festivals and Events}, 1.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid, 5.
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid, 4.
\textsuperscript{46}Ibid.
The rhetoric of tourism is a response to current or expected changes in the economy and employment structure of western industrialized nations. The same document that outlined the characteristics of "worthy" festivals forecasts that by the year 2000 the service sector in the United States will be 88% of the labour force, half of whom will be collecting, analyzing and structuring information and many working at home. It is assumed that these people will have flexible work schedules which will allow them to travel - and these are the tourists which Tourism Canada wishes to attract. While this projection itself appears unlikely (the shifting of production to third-world countries would have to accelerate considerably), what may be more significant in this document is that no mention is made of differentiation within this flexible "service sector." Flexible work schedules perhaps, but how many of these workers will earn wages that enable flexible "travel." Waiters, temporary office workers, data entry clerks, are unlikely to be globe-trotting to "exotic" places or "exotic" events. Emphasizing the tourist potential of festivals may contribute to creating events for a select "public."

Tourism Manitoba funded the Fringe Festival specifically for its tourism potential - part of its "go world class" promotion. Literature sent to festivals stated that organizers should apply for funding "if you feel that your project meets the basic program requirements and has the potential to stand unique as a major tourist attraction in Manitoba, in Canada and around the world." Further the program argued that,

Major investment by the private sector can, with government support . . . give us access to new markets throughout Canada and around the world. Major new attractions, events, and resort facilities building on Manitoba's natural resource, cultural, and historic heritage can become major tourism generators, reaching out to the international market.

Ibid, 14.

Manitoba Tourism, "Instructions to applicants requesting assistance under programs 2,3,5 or 6 for capital projects."

Evaluation criteria were:

1) that the event occur in one of the province's designated tourist destination regions;

2) or, alternately, that it develop one of several specialty areas (ie. sport fishing);

3) that it focus on products that demonstrate the potential to attract visitors from interprovincial and/or international markets.

4) that it focus on quality products that will be competitive on the international/inter-provincial markets;

5) that it express themes that complement Manitoba’s historical, cultural, and/or natural resource strengths.\(^{50}\)

To be submitted with the application was a brief history of the event, corporate structure, the management background and experience of the administrators, description of project, financial statements, marketing information and audience survey information which indicates the event's tourism and economic impact. The last, of course, looms large, and may present the most significant problem for the Fringes - they simply are not competitive on this point (see table 5.3).

Semchyshyn is aware of this problem. While he considers the Winnipeg Fringe a great festival he notes that it simply cannot justify itself economically:

Tickets are $5, or, alternately a good portion of it is free. What they sell on the streets is $2 hamburgers and $1.50 hot dogs. It's not big stuff. And the bulk of the people that come in to the Fringe from outside the province are either campers, or people in RV's and they're not going to pay $90 to stay in a hotel, unless it's ten guys who get together.\(^{51}\)

The Winnipeg and Vancouver Fringe Festivals fail to attract the international tourist which is to be the justification for their continued funding. Dependency on government programs designed to develop the tourist industry places the festivals in a precarious position. If they cannot prove their economic efficiency they lose their attractiveness and are threatened with extinction.\(^{52}\)

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\(^{50}\)Ibid.


\(^{52}\)This appears to be the main thrust behind a scathing critique of festival funding prepared for The Canada Council by Mark Hammond in 1990. Throughout the document Hammond notes with disapproval that festivals are always supported as a means to some other ends.
Table 5.3: Origin of non-local patrons
(1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vancouver Fringe Festival (n = 877)</th>
<th>Winnipeg Fringe Festival (n = 790)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Vancouver</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>Non-Winnipeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other BC</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>Other MB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairies</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>Prairies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritimes</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>Europe/Asia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4: Local versus tourist: BC festivals (1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local (%)</th>
<th>Other (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fringe (1990)</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fringe (1987)</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


"the performing arts festival is never treated as an entity in itself; rather, it is always supported as a vehicle for something else: extending employment for artists into the summer months; developing audiences; providing remote regions with artistic activity; providing touring opportunities; attracting tourists; injecting life into the local economy . . . the professional performing arts festival has a life beyond the philistine considerations of tourism and economic injections and a life beyond the policy concerns of arts councils (pp. 1-2)."

To Hammond’s list could be added: civic boosterism intended to attract investment; neighborhood revitalization; developing "Canadian" culture; and attracting "international" tourists.
The Fringe Festivals as instruments of "urban renewal"

Some of the connections [between the Winnipeg and Edmonton Fringes] are just coincidental. Both festivals take place in a heritage district that people are trying to preserve. Both are built around a downtown park with outdoor performances which serve as an advertisement for the work going on inside. (Larry Desrochers, Winnipeg Fringe Festival)

Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Ryan in "The fine art of gentrification" argue that arts districts are not necessarily the spontaneous "phenomena" that they appear to be - their "mystical vitality" socially produced for and by certain interests. Likewise, the "connections" between the locations of the Fringe Festivals not only in Winnipeg and Edmonton, but also Vancouver and Victoria may not be as "coincidental" as Larry Desrochers believes. The recognition by Tourism Canada that festivals create animation and that their crowds will draw non-local visitors, has been seized upon by local governments in attempts to revitalize areas of the city, or to create "cultural" regions. This final level of government funding, and its impact and purpose is perhaps articulated most clearly in Winnipeg.

Winnipeg's Core Area Initiative began in 1981 as a tripartite effort to bring life into Winnipeg's old core area neighborhoods and downtown, a region of about 10 square miles. Within this region, a 20 block region of old warehouses and more recent civic administration buildings had experienced considerable disinvestment, and an increasing number of buildings (many which were excellent examples of early Winnipeg architecture) stood empty, or had become dilapidated or derelict from neglect of landowners. Urban planners and real estate investors, however, recognized that the region had the potential to

55 The photographs of John Paskievich, A Place Not Our Own: North End Winnipeg (Winnipeg: Queenston House Publishing, 1978), although focussing on Winnipeg's North End, a region immediately north of the Exchange District, gives some indication of conditions in this region during the 1970's.
undergo the same changes that had occurred in other North American Warehouse districts - Soho in New York, Gastown in Vancouver. The region contained what has been described as "Canada's finest collection of turn-of-the century commercial buildings," which, by a quirk of economic history, had been built during Winnipeg's boom between 1890-1910 and never torn down or replaced by new office towers.\(^{56}\) Winnipeg's economy has stagnated or remained stable since 1913, leaving a collection of Edwardian and Victorian buildings that other cities had demolished long before they could become popular as "heritage" buildings, and exploited as a cultural and tourist resource. Approximately 105 of the region's 140 buildings have been designated heritage buildings.\(^{57}\)

A combination of: consumption activities (restaurants, bars, nightclubs); restoration of heritage buildings; relocation of municipal, provincial and federal offices into the region; and cultural and artistic "events" was expected to draw people back into the region. This would include residents for whom the "urban" lifestyle (loft living, etc) was appealing (a sign of distinction and taste) and tourists who would be drawn by the city's heritage and cultural resources and the Exchange District's "charm and character." While as early as 1981 the CAI was suggesting that "space for the arts, public amenities, commercial and cultural facilities be provided to stimulate tourist and local support for the area," it was not until 1985 that the region was launched as the "Exchange District."\(^{58}\)

The most important objective for planners was to change popular images of the region. The "arts" and cultural events were considered prime tools in such a renaissance vision, bringing in a certain "ambiance," and vibrancy while instilling a sense of safety without destroying the uniqueness of the region.

\(^{56}\)The region's greatest booster - CAI's Ken Kelly (formerly a planner in Saint John) makes these claims, which were repeated in 1985 press releases by The Exchange District Association. See also Larry Krotz, "No boom was a boom," Canadian Heritage (October-Nov. 1985): 22-26.


\(^{58}\)Winnipeg Core Area Initiative Selected Working Papers, June 15, 1981. The "launching" of the "Exchange District" was announced in a news release by the newly formed Exchange District Association, Nov. 18, 1985.
When the program began in 1981, the idea of subsidized studio space available to be sublet to artists for fixed terms (at reasonable rates) was considered essential - for one reason:

A longer term hoped-for benefit is that this action will focus attention of further development of the area surrounding the Centennial Concert Hall as an arts district . . . the preservation of core area landmarks and streetscapes which have outstanding heritage value is intrinsically beneficial to the downtown, for the urban center of Winnipeg must have a unique, attractive and identifiable character to remain socially and economically vital. The accommodation of arts-related facilities within the downtown . . . will provide an ambiance and vitality to the Core which at present is marginal at best.\(^5^9\)

$5.1 million was set aside for renewal of the Exchange District in 1981 and another $9.0 million in 1986. $3.58 million of the 1986 grant was designated to projects which would encourage people to come to the region, and counter popular (negative) images of the district. The same (1986) program budgeted almost $1/2 million for "programming and promotion" which was "to help create exciting and unique events to draw people to the Exchange District and to make the public more aware of the District's architectural/ historical significance."\(^6^0\)

Kelly explained that CAI support for festivals and special events was,

\textit{to ensure that this was an exciting destination for people to be, for people to enjoy. We were going to dispel all of the previous identities, that it was synonymous with hookers, dilapidated, run down buildings, and that it was a dangerous, unsavory, undesirable place to be. These sorts of events [festivals] are important in neutralizing that attitude.} \(^6^1\)

These events have over the years included "Christmas in the Exchange" - a program run together with the CBC, the now annual Cobblestone Classic held each Victoria Day, a short-lived street performance festival, another short-lived Women and the Arts Festival, and of course, the Fringe Festival, among others. The May long-weekend events (including the Cobblestone Classic) and the Fringe Festival have been the most successful at bringing crowds into the Exchange District.

\(^6^0\)CAI, \textit{Working Papers}.  
\(^6^1\)Ken Kelly, interview with author, Winnipeg, July, 1990.
The Fringe Festival is considered by CAI staff to be one of the single most important tools in renewing the Exchange District. CAI funding of the festival has been driven by this objective, clearly stated by Ken Kelly:

Some cities which have introduced festivals have not necessarily employed them as urban revitalization tools but we made a very conscious effort when the program began in 1983 . . . we laid it out as much as a renaissance tool as we could. . . . by drawing [people] down here they will be exposed to the rehabilitation, they'll be attracted to move their offices, move their businesses here . . . so we said, 'let's try to create three anchor events that will be annual events held in the district in the different seasons of the year.' . . . The Fringe has done more for the Exchange District than Christmas in the Exchange, Victoria Day, or anything, it is a tremendous people puller to the fully dispersed Exchange District. People are drawn to a number of venues throughout the district.62

It is too early to discern the effects of the Fringe in Winnipeg but certainly the effects of the Edmonton Fringe can be noted. Anne Northof, in a 1989 Canadian Theatre Review article noted:

The Fringe spills over into the neighborhood restaurants and cafés, where there are poetry readings, concerts, and yet more plays. In fact, the Fringe is credited with having revitalized a part of Edmonton that was aging ungracefully. Now Whyte Avenue is lined with boutiques and galleries, bookstores and bagel bars. The asphalt has been replaced by real cobblestone brick, an approximation of European cobblestone. Tiny trees are lined up along the median, and electrified gas lamps illuminate the restored facades of nineteenth century Strathcona . . . the Fringe is a New World attempt to approximate the inner-city café life of Europe.63

While CAI funding has enabled the event to occur, the CAI has little interest in the future of the Fringe beyond its ability to bring (the right) crowds to the region. Although the CAI has been pleased by the impact that the Fringe has had on the region, its funding of the event is not expected to be long term. Ken Kelly considers the Fringe funding "seed money" to encourage the region's revitalization, but insists that the festivals must be weaned off public support. Already in 1990 CAI funding of the Fringe was reduced, and with the end of the program nearing this source may disappear altogether, leaving the festival searching for another source.

Such an instrumental use of the arts may benefit only a select "public."

While benefits from the Core Area Initiative were argued to be many - private

62Ibid.
investment, tourism, employment, and somewhat naively, employment of the "disadvantaged," not all have been met. In the process of "renewal" Winnipeg's arts community gained a permanent site in which to center many of its activities (Artspace), and funding for events such as the Fringe has provided opportunity for new and innovative work. But the reaction of inner-city residents has not always been enthusiastic. At hearings held in 1990 and in editorials in The Inner City Voice individuals suggested that one "benefit" - employment of the "disadvantaged" - never did occur for local residents, and while most argued that inner-city renewal must be pursued, they contended that its emphasis must be changed from physical improvements - "bricks and mortar" - which provide little benefit to the "disadvantaged" inner-city residents, to community needs - employment training, daycare facilities, immigrant services, etc. The Winnipeg Fringe itself has little to offer these inner-city residents. As my analysis of residential location of "fringers" indicated, almost no local community residents participated in the event. Festivals as a renaissance tool result in two interrelated effects - first the imperatives of "renaissance" demand that the festivals attract suburban consumers rather than local residents, and second, that when constituted in such a manner they become more of an invasion of social space than social spaces of plurality. Because CAI funding is directly linked to drawing "consumers," any attempts by the Winnipeg Fringe to direct itself to inner-city residents would likely put this funding and support from the Exchange District Business Association at peril.

Similarities can be found in Vancouver, where the connections between cultural events and capital accumulation have been frequently noted. However, far less of an economic rationale is evident in the city's funding of the

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64 See the July 1990 issue of the Inner City Voice.
65 Not all wish to argue that this connection is significantly constitutive of these events. See Ley and Olds, "Landscape as spectacle: world's fairs and the culture of heroic consumption," Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 6 (1988):191-212.
Vancouver Fringe. Although the city's Department of Social Planning is keenly aware of the economic potential of festivals, its cultural planners seem less inclined to emphasize this aspect. Indeed, while the department suggested in 1987 that the arts are indispensable to promoting Vancouver on the world stage, particularly among Pacific Rim nations, the same document emphasizes that "the civic government should support the arts because the arts are valuable to city life" and, countering economic justifications for support of the arts, that what the arts contribute to the quality of urban life is more important than the revenues and employment they generate. To substitute the economic value of the arts for their aesthetic and social value is to deny the reason for their existence. But because the arts compete with other activities in the city for financial support, and because of growing economic pressures, it is important to note that the cultural industries benefit the economy and enhance rather than drain the economic and tax base of a city. 66

The department's economic arguments for support of the arts are in many ways a means of defending the arts from budget cutbacks at all levels of government. For instance, while cultural planner Lorenz Van Fusen notes that festivals are quickly replacing the symphony as symbols of liveability and progress, and that they have significant economic spin-offs, he contends that "the strongest rationale for doing a festival is not the economic rationale . . . the strongest argument is a value argument, why is this good? Why is it good for the public, for the citizen, for the audience?" 67

Social and cultural planners must, however, respond to political agendas. At a Vancouver council meeting on March 31, 1987, the council moved "that the director of social planning review all major festivals to determine the potential each has for the promotion of tourism and to determine if a more equitable

67 Von Fusen, interview with author, Vancouver, October, 1990. The city has recently established a cross-cultural initiatives program which "recognizes that the arts can play an important role in exploring similarities and bridging differences among the city's diverse cultural communities." Its goals are "to further a common understanding through the sharing of cultural experiences and to develop a broadly based artistic and cultural milieu which is accessible to all."
funding formula for civic support can be developed." With the success of Granville Island, "cultural districts" are viewed as useful for urban revitalization and similar approaches have been proposed for other areas of the city - South Granville in downtown, for instance. Recent community planning in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighborhood has also emphasized the region's potential to be an arts and cultural district. The Fringe Festival is considered a vital part of such a transformed image of the region. As Mount Pleasant community activist Anthony Norfork recently noted,

if the Fringe does well - we do well ... the whole Fringe concept and the spin-offs that take place during the year have been central to the rejuvenation that Mount Pleasant has gone through. The fact that it takes place and draws people in gives us a chance to show off the improvements that have taken place. It's an important factor in the strategy of recovery.

It is not difficult to read "property values" throughout this entire passage - and recent gentrifiers view the Fringe as an event which can improve both images of the district and home sales.

I began this thesis with a discussion of cultural events and the negotiation of subjectivity. I suggested that cultural events are a site where the subject is confronted by "difference" or the "field of the Other," within which the "self" is continually destabilized and fixed - a sort of dialectic of subjectivity. I further suggested that while the subject is negotiated within a multiplicity of "interpellations," not all possibilities are available - that structures (social discourses) limit the ways in which the "field" is opened to the subject. These limits are subtle, whether in the naturalization of conceptions of "excellence" in theatre, or in the expectations of state funding bodies. Urban renewal, civic boosterism, international tourism, support for flagship cultural institutions, the

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68 What equitable might mean here may be a matter of speculation. Quoted in report from Social Planning Council to City Manager for Finance and Priorities Committee, Feb 8, 1988.
70 Quoted in Alison Appelbe, "Fringe Festival playing big role in Mount Pleasant rebirth," The Vancouver Courier, 2 Sept. 1990.
development of new artists and new "works," are among the objectives enunciated by state agencies and government departments that support the Fringe Festivals. There is no coherent purpose to such funding - nor is there any direct determination between state-economic objectives and productions at the Fringe. Yet, it becomes clear that the Fringes are subject to agendas that emerge out of rationalized systems and have little concern for the content of the festivals themselves. While festival organizers certainly use government funds for their own purposes and resist explicit interference, any attempt to maintain or attract funding from these sources involves at least some subservience to their objectives, and this has subtle yet significant effects on the festivals. Increasingly these events are expected to contribute to the economic viability and competitiveness of their regions, and provide evidence that they indeed do so. The festivals, therefore, face pressures to alter format, change character, or selectively promote the event, in order to attract the "public" that state agencies wish to see attend. Such structuring, to the extent that it already does, or in the future may, occur, could result in a more narrowly defined Fringe "public." Alternately, the Fringes may simply disappear, unable to prove their "worth" during a period of state retrenchment. Any limits to the Fringe "public," or to its format, will significantly affect the production and interpretation of cultural products and the intersubjective nature of the events which makes them unique. Positions open to the subject become constrained, defined around only certain possibilities.
Chapter 6:

The individual and the Fringe: constituting subjectivity within "situated" events

I began this discussion by asking about the politics of culture and representation, the constitution of subjectivity, and the (re)production of social formations. Engaging the theoretical writings of Althusser and Lacan, I suggested that individual subjects are interpellated within (and between) ideological discourses, but that this occurred within an overdetermined symbolic realm resulting in the continual destabilization of subjectivity. Every entry into the symbolic realm becomes a process by which individuals are constituted as subjects, and through which the "social" is itself transformed, power relations altered, discourses disseminated, etc. This dynamic conceptualization of the subject within an overdetermined, mutable, "social" may allow us to move beyond the by now sterile structure-agency debate. Paul Smith, in Discerning the Subject, has focussed on the central ambiguity of this debate - that social structures are both produced and reproduced by the agency of situated individuals, that the "practices of everyday life" both affirm and alter the systems of relations in which individuals live.

Discussion has shifted (due, no doubt, to the prodding of critical theory) to the examination of possibilities for the subject, possibilities for the transformation of the "social," possibilities for an "emancipatory" politics which challenge the limitations produced within present social discourses - "race," "gender," class." Increasingly, culture, art, and "representation" are viewed as sites where subjectivity (and the "social") is negotiated, through the politics and power relations that traverse this terrain and are disseminated in its discourses.

It is these concerns which brought me to the Fringe Festivals (which have emerged as one of the most significant annual cultural events in a number of
Western Canadian cities, most notably, Edmonton and Winnipeg). The Fringes, as events that self-consciously alter the relations that work to determine the production of "meaning," not only in traditional theatre, but in "public life," appeared to provide an excellent window onto the relationships between culture, the subject and the social. What possibilities did these events present? If the production of "meaning" within present social formations and dominant cultural discourses occurs within certain parameters which define what is possible, how might these events alter these conditions? And what, in turn, structures these events, creating other parameters through which the "possible" is defined?

Throughout the subsequent discussion, I attempted to "situate" the Fringes, in relation to current theatre practices, by exploring who participates, how this activity is structured and how these events are positioned within rationalized social and economic systems. At times the discussion appeared to stray some distance from what began as a discussion of subjectivity, yet this was my intention, for I wished to stress that what appears to be "further" from these concerns is often what has become "invisible" in discussions about culture and art. Subjectivity is negotiated within the "fields of possibles" (to borrow a phrase from Bourdieu) that are open to individuals. The "naturalization" of certain critical traditions, the "already constituted" nature of Fringe audiences, or the "colonization" of these events by state-economic rationalities made possible by the commodification of both "art" and "identity" in capitalist cultures, creates the conditions by which these fields are constituted. The Fringes, I suggested, opened new possibilities for the production of meaning, yet despite the intentions of organizers (and despite the celebration of "festival" in current literature), they do not escape processes by which their practices and products are "situated" within certain parameters.
It may be useful to briefly summarize what has been presented in previous chapters, in order to these disparate concerns together. In Chapter 2, I examined current structures and practices in Canadian theatre in order to investigate how theatre’s discourses (institutionalized criticism, nationalism, funding structures) created certain conditions for the production and interpretation of cultural products. These discourses, I explained, worked to naturalize and reproduce certain power relations by which individuals are positioned within social discourses of "race," "gender," and "class." This works to marginalize certain social groups and limit possibilities for them to represent their experience.

Chapter 3 turned to the Fringes, in order to explore how they might present alternate possibilities. I suggested that the structure of these events, their lack of artistic judgement, their inversion of economic relations, and perhaps most significantly, their intersubjective and "festival" context resulted in an event in which former meaning-fixing discourses lost their constitutive power. "Meaning" was negotiated within the interaction of participants - and new possibilities were opened for other, previously unheard, voices. This was made possible, in large part, by the "tactical" use of rationalized structures and spaces (a *bricolage* of the materials of everyday life) - the transformation of urban space, the "use" of volunteer’s flexible employment hours, the festivals’ ability to obtain funds from state agencies, etc. This temporary construction of "festival" opened an intersubjective realm, within which individual subjects were confronted with "difference" and a multiplicity of representations, and through which "identity" was continually destabilized and fixed. The Fringes are, in a sense, "political" - opening representation and the interpretation of these representations to a wider "public sphere."
Yet these events are not sites of "pure possibility" and I attempted to maintain a sense of ambiguity throughout this chapter - what lurks beneath the surface of these events? How is it that these events and their participants are themselves situated within certain social and cultural discourses? As much as these events were unique, participants brought to them their constitution as subjects at other sites in the social, and intersubjectivity and "festival," I suggested, can also be a site where social formations are reproduced. The naturalization of criticism, the distinctions between artist and patron, assumptions about "race" or "gender" are often reproduced, and the influence of media (television, newspapers, etc.), although lessened, is still felt. "Festival" cannot occur in any autonomous space.

This issue was further investigated in the next two chapters. Like all cultural events, the Fringes have "already constituted" audiences - constituted through aesthetic discourses ("taste"), through the images presented in the festivals' promotional campaigns, or through the location of the events. Participation in the Fringes, I discovered appeals to, or is "natural" for, select social groups. Patrons were likely to be young, educated, professional, and middle-class, and came from only certain areas in each city that the festivals occurred. In events unique for their degree of interaction, this is significant, for this places interactions within certain parameters, and presents individual subjects with a limited plurality. Yet I asked the reader to treat this "sociology of the Fringes" with caution - for the "categories" by which the audience was defined, while revealing processes of inclusion and exclusion, may give an appearance of homogeneity which obscures existing differentiation. Although the Fringe audience is "already constituted" around certain sign and symbols, and therefore certain social groups, these social groups are internally differentiated. "Middle-class" has too often been used dismissively. Further,
individuals participated in unique ways and for diverse purposes. Interaction at the Fringe, therefore, occurred within a certain, albeit limited, plurality.

In a final chapter, I turned my focus to the economic conditions within which these festivals exist. Recognizing the dependency of these events on state funds, I examined the possibility that these events are presently or may become subject to state-economic planning which is rationalized within global economic structures. Funding for the Fringes, I discovered, has very little to do with "culture," or "art," and very much to do with consumption, tourism, boosterism, and urban revitalization. Since the funds upon which the festivals rely are distributed to events which can demonstrate an economic justification, the Fringes are increasingly forced to provide conditions amenable to the accumulation of capital. The future of these events, rests, in some measure, on providing such conditions, and may result in the compromise of organizers' intentions. The Fringes, therefore, are situated within a complex terrain of social discourses, institutional structures, individual intentions and instrumental rationalities. They are situated or "cast" is a certain manner providing certain possibilities and excluding others. If subjectivity is negotiated in the subject's incorporation into the symbolic realm, than it is limited by the possible incorporations that are available.

The movement of this thesis (structure-subversion-structure) has had two purposes. First, to investigate the role of cultural events in the constitution of subjectivity and in the production and reproduction of social formations; and second, to raise questions concerning the way that cultural events are framed by certain dominant discourses and within state-economic rationality. In a sense then, I am pointing to possible strategies of "resistance." Perhaps we should challenge the current vogue of subsuming cultural events under economic concerns which limits artistic production to that which can be profitable; perhaps
we should question nationalist rhetoric which defines "Canadian culture" around the experience of certain groups and not others; perhaps we should attempt to subvert institutionalized criticism which reproduces inequality and limits access for marginalized groups. Perhaps then, as Schechner or Wallace envision, we can provide spaces for voices not often heard.

This may all seem distant from that with which I began in my introductory pages. The frenzied activity around Winnipeg's Market Square, the crowds, the buskers, peddlers and clowns, the performances in local converted warehouses, consumption in local cafes, all seem to speak foremost of pleasure - and I have not been immune myself to the Fringe's appeal. I also, on more than a few occasions, have sprawled out on the grass near the outdoor stage, taking in the sights, sounds and smells, watching performers, talking with friends and strangers, discussing shows (or the weather, or politics . . .). Yet - and I believe this is similar to most participants - I was not completely unaware that I was here, and finding this pleasurable, because I had been brought to believe, at some other point in life, that such events were indeed so. Nor was I completely unaware that in my participation I was finding myself defined in relation to the products and people that I interacted with. I too, cried, watching Shane McCabe's performance in No Place Like Home, and I too was prompted to recognize my participation in the construction of "woman as image" in Nolan's Blade, and I too attended these shows (and confronted their "representations") because in interaction with others at the event I became convinced that they were worthwhile. Yet, I was at least somewhat aware (and have become more since) of the particular social groups which participated in this event (and to which I also belonged), and the exclusions and limits that could be found here. Pleasure in not wrong, of course. We academics too often, I believe, treat it
dismissively, but neither it is separable from our construction as subjects, or the politics of culture, or the social relations of the city.
Books and articles


*Feasibility study: accommodations for arts groups in historic Winnipeg*. Manuscript available at Winnipeg Core Area Initiative Offices.


Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the public sphere." *Social Text* 8,3 - 9,1: 56-80.


"From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism." 


### Newspaper and magazine articles


Davies, Gloria. "Thanks for playing." *Vancouver Boulevard* 1,2, 1990: 34.


Interviews conducted by author


Millin, Doreen - Department of Culture, Manitoba, interview with author, Winnipeg, July, 1990.


Von Fusen, Lorenz - Cultural Planner, City of Vancouver interview with author, Vancouver, October, 1990.

Other interviews


Chandler, David - artist, interview by Erika Patterson, Victoria, Sept. 1990.
Appendix

One: Winnipeg Fringe Festival Patron Survey - July, 1990

1. Are you from Winnipeg? Yes (skip to question 8)
   No (name city, province/state)
2. Where are you staying? (1) Hotel
   (2) Relatives/Friends
   (3) Other
3. A. If you planned to attend the Festival, did you . . .
   (1) come to Winnipeg specifically for the Festival?
   (2) come to Winnipeg for the Festival and other events/business?
   B. I just happened to be in Winnipeg when I found out about the Festival.
4. How did you get to Winnipeg?
   (1) Plane
   (2) Train
   (3) Bus
   (4) Car
   (5) Other
5. Approximately how much money do you think you will spend on the following and where will you spend it? (Vicinity of the Festival/Elsewhere in Winnipeg)
   (1) Food
   (2) Accomodations
   (3) Transportation
   (4) Clothing
   (5) Entertainment other than the Festival
   (6) Other
6. How long do you plan to stay in Winnipeg?
7. Has the Fringe Festival affected the length of your stay in Winnipeg?
8. If you are a resident of Winnipeg, how much do you think you will spend at the Fringe Festival?
   (1) Food?
   (2) Accomodations
   (3) Transportation
   (4) Clothing
   (5) Entertainment other than the Festival
   (6) Other
9. What is your postal code?
10. How frequently do you visit the Exchange District?
    (1) Rarely (<3 times annually)
    (2) 3-5 times annually
    (3) 6-10 times annually
    (4) 11-20 times annually
    (5) > 20 times annually
11. How many shows do you plan to see?
12. How did you hear about the Festival?
    (1) Friends/relatives
    (2) Radio Ads
    (3) Tourism Ads
13. Do you regularly attend some form of Theatre?
14. If so, do you subscribe to . . .
   (1) PTE
   (2) MTC Warehouse
   (3) Opera
   (4) Symphony
   (5) Ballet
   (6) Cercle Moliere
   (7) Other
15. Are you . . .
   (1) By yourself
   (2) With family
   (3) With friends
16. How many people are there in your party? # of Children?
17. How old are you?
   (1) under 25 years
   (2) 25 to 40 years
   (3) 41-50 years
   (4) 51-60 years
   (5) over 60 years
18. What is your income?
   (1) less than $15,000
   (2) $15,000 - 24,999
   (3) $25,000 - 34,999
   (4) $35,000 - 49,999
   (5) over $50,000
19. What aspects of the Fringe Festival are most attractive to you?
20. What aspects of the Fringe Festival re least attrative?
21. Do you have any further comments regarding the Fringe Festival?

1. Sex
   (1) Male
   (2) Female
2. In what year were you born?
3. What is your postal code?
4. If you are not from Vancouver, where are you from?
5. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
   (1) None
   (2) Grades 1-6
   (3) Grades 7-11
   (4) High School graduate
   (5) Non-university (vocation/technical college)
   (6) University - diploma
   (7) University - bachelor degree
   (8) University - master degree
   (9) University - doctorate, MD
6. What kind of work do or did you normally do?
   (1) Managerial/administrative
   (2) Teaching/medical/health/natural and social sciences/technological
   (3) Artist/craftsperson/related
   (4) Clerical/sales/service
   (5) Construction/manufacturing/processing
   (6) Other
7. Which number comes closest to your household income for the past year before deductions?
   (1) under $9999
   (2) 10,000 - 14,999
   (3) 15,000 - 19,999
   (4) 20,000 - 24,999
   (5) 25,000 - 29,999
   (6) 30,000 - 39,999
   (7) 40,000 - 49,999
   (8) 50,000 - 59,999
   (9) 60,000 - 79,999
   (10) 80,000 - 99,999
   (11) over 100,000
8. Did you purchase season tickets to live theatre in 1989-90?
9. Which of the following have you attended in the past year?
   (1) Professional sports event
   (2) Live theatre
   (3) Live music concert
   (4) Art gallery, museum
   (5) Other Vancouver festivals
      (6) Children's
      (7) Film
      (8) Folk
      (9) Jazz
      (10) Stein Valley
      (11) Other
10. How did you find out about the Fringe?
11. What other years have you attended the Vancouver Fringe Festival?
12. How many days do you intend to spend at the Fringe this year? How many shows do you intend to see?
13. How did you travel to the Fringe today?
   (1) public transportation
   (2) car
   (3) bicycle
   (4) walk
   (5) other
14. With whom did you come to the Fringe?
   (1) by self
   (2) with family
   (3) with friends
15. How many people are in your party?
16. How much do you expect to spend today at any of the following in order to attend the Fringe?
   (1) Restaurant
   (2) Street vendors, snacks
   (3) Gasoline
   (4) Clothes
17. Do you come to this area at any other time during the year?
18. Is Mt. Pleasant the best place to hold the festival? In not, where should it be held?

Out-of-towners only

19. Where are you staying?
   (1) Hotel
   (2) Friends/relatives
   (3) Other
20. What was your primary reason for coming to Vancouver?
   (1) For the Fringe Festival
   (2) To visit friends/relatives
   (3) Vacation
   (4) Business
21. How did you get to Vancouver?
22. Approximately how much money do you think you will spend on the following and where will you spend it? (Vicinity of festival/elsewhere in Vancouver).
   (1) Food
   (2) Accommodation
   (3) Clothing
   (4) Entertainment other than the festival
   (5) Other
23. How long do you plan to stay in Vancouver?
24. Has the Fringe affected the length of your stay in Vancouver?

All respondents

25. Why did you come to the Fringe Festival?
26. What aspects of the Festival are attractive or unattractive? Why?