

This dissertation is about power, humour and various comic and ironic strategies contemporary Native writers and artists apply in their works to challenge the outdated Indian stereotypes and obsolete systems of cultural and aesthetic representation. The artists employ a combination of comedy and irony as favoured modes of expression in order to contest, subvert and critically deconstruct the oppressive hegemonic ideologies and power structures still present in Canada and the United States. Their novels, poetry, essays, films, documentaries, theatre performances, paintings and other works of art strive to emphasize the marginalization and rights of all Native people in North America who have suffered over the hundreds of years of colonization, acculturation and violent cultural appropriation. In the last decade, there have been growing calls from academia, Native communities as well as the government, to reconceptualise the bi-cultural politics between the First Nation peoples and the Canadian nation-state. A great amount of models for an inclusionary and multifaceted identity politics have been proposed by several Canadian cultural analysts and critics, including for example Diana Brydon, Smaro Kamboureli, and Lily Cho. However, before they can be successfully implemented, a creation of an alternative space that blurs the limitations of racial, social, and economic boundaries, (re)negotiates the historical injustices, and engenders new possibilities for better relationships is necessary.

In my dissertation I will explore the possibilities such a space provides for Native artists and writers. I will propose a theory that through the use of humour and irony this alternative space can become a place of mediation and dialogue between the inhabitants of the so-called center and periphery in the Canadian highly ethnicized society.