INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

**BONNE ENTENTE
ELLIPTICAL ELISIONS
AND
CANADIAN NARRATIVE STRUCTURE**

By Barbara Rockburn. B.A.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts**

Department of Canadian Studies

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
12 August 1997**

© 1997, Barbara Rockburn

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-26941-8

**The undersigned recommend to the Faculty
Of Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis**

**“BONNE ENTENTE Elliptical Elisions and
Canadian Narrative Structure”**

submitted by Barbara Rockburn, Hons. B.A.

**in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

.....
Thesis Supervisor

.....
**Acting Director
School of Canadian Studies**

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

September 1997

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes and enumerates the qualities that denote an identifiably Canadian narrative film structure. Theories of nation and nationalism and those of narration are examined to determine how those theories may be applied to film narratives as products of Canadian ideologies. A new theory of Canadian narrative structure is proposed and developed, and this theory is subsequently tested through the analysis of Canadian film texts.

The films examined include some of those from the National Film Board documentary tradition, the canonical narrative texts of the sixties, and a sampling of documentary and narrative films from the sixties through to the nineties, including several by Denis Arcand and Atom Egoyan.

The thesis concludes that this new theory acknowledges the postmodern proliferation and lack of Canadian forms of knowledge and therefore provides a useful model through which Canadian narrative films may be analyzed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable advice and assistance of my thesis supervisor Laura U. Marks, as well as the helpful and encouraging comments of the members of my M.A. Thesis Examining Board.

I thank the Film Studies Association of Canada for their generous assistance through the Gerald Pratley Award, which has enabled me to travel to several conferences where I have met and exchanged ideas with other Canadian film scholars.

I also would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the influence and assistance of the faculty of the School for Studies in Art and Culture - Film Studies, and especially Professor Peter Harcourt (who would rather be cited than thanked). Peter has been my inspiration, my mentor, and my friend, and this thesis would never have been written if not for his kind (and persistent) encouragement.

And last, but forever first in my heart, I thank my husband, Al Spadaccini, whose love, support and faith in me has never waned.

Barbara Rockburn

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: THESIS STATEMENT.....	1
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	19
CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS OF THE FILMS.....	60
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION.....	130
WORKS CITED.....	150
FILMS CITED.....	156
APPENDIX.....	158

LIST OF APPENDICES

Canadian Narrative Structure.....	158
-----------------------------------	-----

Chapter I

Bonne Entente

The advantages of living with two cultures
 Strike one at every turn,
 Especially when one finds a notice in an office building:
 “This elevator will not run on Ascension Day”;
 Or reads in the *Montreal Star*:
 “Tomorrow being the Feast of the Immaculate Conception,
 There will be no collection of garbage in the city”;
 Or sees on the restaurant menu the bilingual dish:

DEEP APPLE PIE
 TARTE AUX POMMES PROFONDES

F. R. Scott

The structure of Canadian narrative film is more than simply a “bilingual dish.” Our narrative texts, the products of a nation whose ideologies are enriched and divided by the diversity of its population, represent the conflict and cohesion that result from our multicultural heritage. This heritage, with the “advantages” of living with many cultures, produces multilingual dishes more *profondes* than F. R. Scott might have imagined. But that heritage is not revealed by the text alone. The very structure of the Canadian narrative reflects both heritage and text in reproducing our ideological biases and concerns.

The project of this thesis is to discern if an identifiably Canadian narrative structure exists, and if so, to enumerate the qualities that denote it as uniquely or particularly Canadian, and to examine how our narrative films acknowledge and reflect

that structure. To do this requires, first, that our national ideological biases and concerns be addressed: it must be shown that Canada is, indeed, a nation, and, *ipso facto*, that its constituents share a communal identity and ideology. Similarly, to differentiate a Canadian narrative structure, the concepts of narrative and structure must be defined. And any examination of a Canadian national narrative structure, as exemplified by its films, is inextricably bound by two initial concerns: how does the structure recognize/reveal the implied authorship of its producing nation, and how does that structure declare its difference from the imposed Hollywood paradigm?

My project, then, is to examine Canadian cultural identity as practice, through the analysis of the Canadian narrative film tradition. And though I begin my analysis with, and form theoretical proposals from, the films from the era of “*The Beginning of a Beginning*” (Harcourt) of the Canadian narrative film tradition, what I want to address is the evidence of a *position* from which Canadian culture is enunciated, as suggested by the ongoing activities of filmmakers in Canada. To appropriate Stuart Hall’s observations on Caribbean identities:

We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about “one experience, one identity”, without acknowledging its other side - the differences and discontinuities which constitute . . . [Canada’s] “uniqueness”. Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”. . . . Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. . . . they are subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere “recovery” of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, *identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.* (70, emphasis mine)

In order to locate our (necessarily temporary and provisional) subjectivity as Canadians, therefore, I will begin by referring to the narratives of our past(s), and to the analysis of those narratives by my predecessors. This will be followed by an examination of Canadian filmic narratives, which, as ideological artifacts of our culture, are both the agents and the creations of the activities which constitute our identities. I will conclude by offering a model of Canadian narrative structure that recognizes the strictures and continuity - the “play” - of our “becoming.”

This project, then, will require an examination of the critical concepts of nation, as well as an analysis and critique of traditional and contemporary narrative theories. The principle texts to be examined will include some of those by Erich Auerbach, Benedict Anderson, Homi K. Bhabha, David Bordwell, R. Bruce Elder, and Peter Harcourt, among others. Happily, many of these texts intersect under the critical concept of nation-as-narrative, and so, as with many of our narrative films, the course of *this* narrative may be predicted to be non-linear, incomplete, and will

not depend on separating out one aspect of experience from all the others, nor on any pre- or post-conception. . . . It will present, simply and directly, the manifold of forces and relations that come into interplay in the coming-to-presence of an event. To achieve this, the form will have to allow for multiplicity and contradiction, since contraries are present in all experience. (Elder, “*The Cinema We Need*” 268)

The project will involve the examination of Canada’s national identity and/as ideology (if one is discerned), and thereby necessarily touch upon (but never thoroughly exhaust the potentials found in) issues of nation and identity, ideology and hegemony, language and communication, technology and culture, time and space, memory and

desire, performance and pedagogy, mimesis and imitation, hybridity and multiculturalism, imperialism and postcolonialism, subjectivity and spectatorship, narrativity and telos. Although these issues constitute a vast cultural and critical landscape, the focus of my project will be narrowed to the processes by and through which Canadian narrative films re-enact our ideological and cultural biases, and thereby the position(s) from which we continue to negotiate our identities.

Because narrative theories and concepts of nation often intersect under the critical concept of nation-as-narrative, the analysis of those literatures will reflect their syndetical relationship. All attempts at an empirical investigation of any of these theories and concepts as self-contained entities have proved fruitless and/or unintelligible. Theories of nation tend to depend on allusions to shared notions of community, notions which, in turn, are contingent on the community's social alignment through the communal partaking of a shared cultural mythology. National mythologies, the products and purveyors of national narratives, reify the community's (and its members') imagined relationships to their socio-economic systems, making the technologies and products of human endeavors appear to be the natural, and therefore unquestioned, state of things. Narratives, whether national or not, reflect and reproduce these sets of imagined relationships, structuring their stories through the re-presentation of ideological paradigms of those interpellated.

Thus the nature of the beast dictates the nature of the inquiry: the examination of critical concepts of nation and nationalisms will necessarily draw on the literatures of narration, and the analysis of traditional and contemporary narrative theories will be

informed by the assumptions inherent in the theories of nation. Both these threads will also be subject to the implicit biases of the writer, who brings to this project a developing interest in exploring epistemology and hermeneutics for the theoretical underpinnings of an understanding of both nation and narrative.

Bearing these caveats in mind, and with the realization that all of these notions are contingent on others, and that, therefore, one can only enter the discourse of nation and narration in *medias res*, it is still a condition of any examination that it begin somewhere. Thus I will begin with some rudimentary definitions of the terms in question.

In 1882 Ernest Renan asked “*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*”, and replied.

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Only two things, actually, constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other is in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of *remembrances*; the other is the actual consent, the *desire* to live together, the will to continue to value the heritage which all hold in common. . . . One loves in proportion to the sacrifices which one has approved and for which one has suffered. *One loves the house which he has built and which he has made over.* (9, emphasis mine)

What Renan names a “spiritual principle,” the combination of memory and desire, will be examined and extrapolated to be understood as the underlying mythology, or ideology, of a community which identifies itself as a nation. *Ideology*, in this thesis, will be understood to signify the “explicit or tacit sharing of certain attitudes, values, assumptions, and ideas,” although on occasion it will be used also in the Marxian sense of “a covert means of social oppression and exploitation because it offers ‘concepts and categories that distort the whole of reality in a direction useful to the prevailing power’” (Solecki 558). These two aspects of ideology - as shared ideals and as hegemonic tool -

seem to hold equal sway over the imaginations of a nation's constituents. On the one hand, nations come into being as the result of the realization of a shared ideology that differs from that of the empire to which they are subjects; on the other, subjects are constituted, and nations are reified and maintained, through the social, economic and political wielding of control through Ideological State Apparatuses, as theorized by Louis Althusser.

Although defining the exact components of a Canadian ideology is beyond the scope of this project, perhaps some generalizations on their biases is in order. For the purposes of this thesis, I am thinking of Canadian ideology in terms of the broad cultural mythologies with which we seem to enjoy associating ourselves, and of the "official" representations with which we are bombarded daily. Thus the ideology which I ascribe to Canada is one based in shared social values of tolerance (of internal differences of race, religion, gender, sexual preference, language, age, physical or mental ability, etc.), of communal caring (through social services and security, welfare, health care, CPP, UIC, etc.), of inclusion (*vis* "My Canada includes Québec!"), of respect (for the environment, our elders, of "foreign" ways, for each other, etc.), and especially of respect for our founding and first peoples (even while we acknowledge our differences), and the continued belief in the potentials of good government, as practiced through a democratically elected House of Commons. This is the same ideology which is promulgated by our public school systems, and reified there daily in darkened schoolrooms as children watch NFB documentaries; the same one that is recreated in publicly sponsored television ads for "ParticipAction," "Foodland Ontario" and in

“Canadian Heritage Moments,” and the same one that the Council of Canadians is trying to protect. This is the mythology which proudly presents its nation as a cultural mosaic, welcoming multiculturalism, as opposed to the American system, where immigration is tolerated on the condition that new-comers are assimilated into the melting pot. This is the mythology which insists on the continued availability of the CBC and Radio-Canada, and is proud to offer artists refuge in the NFB, and rewards through the Canada Council. This is the mythology that asserts we are “the *true* north, strong and free,” and, too, it is the mythology that Canadians are honest and polite. For these notions (and many others) I offer no empirically based evidence, they represent only the accumulated social values that I, as a Canadian, have come to associate with Canadian ideology. And it is on these “spiritual principles” that I base my arguments.

The following discussion of the concepts of nation and nationalism will draw upon the writings of modern theorists, to add academic authority to Renan’s spiritual ideals, and to further illustrate the importance of a shared ideology, by introducing a twentieth century perspective to the discourse.

In **Theories of Nationalism**, Anthony D. Smith eschews Renan’s spiritual approach in favour of a sociologically based definition. He defines a nation as:

a large, vertically integrated and territorially mobile group featuring common citizenship rights and collective sentiment together with one (or more) common characteristic(s) which differentiate its members from those of similar groups with whom they stand in relations of alliance or conflict. (175)

And it is the “collective sentiment” of this group which he typifies as nationalism:

an ideological movement, for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation' like others. (171)

Thus, though at odds in their approaches, Renan and Smith can agree that ideology, in its function as realization and control, whether referred to as memory and desire, or as “attainment and maintenance,” is essential to nationalism. This alternation of realization and control, practised as/through memory and desire, then (with the condition that Renan’s concept of the love for the house which one has rebuilt will be revisited later), will constitute the first element of my definition of nation. Determining how these practices came to connote nation-ness will be my next task.

Carlton J. H. Hayes examines nationality in **Nationalism: A Religion**, by first examining its apparently ironic etymological roots, noting that it “derives from the Latin *natio*, implying a common racial descent, but few, if any, modern nationalities consist of a distinctive ‘race’ in the biological sense” (371). Rather than fixed in biology, Hayes submits that “a nationality receives its impress, its character, its individuality . . . from cultural and historical forces,” and he therefore redefines nationality in terms of “a community of historical traditions (religious, territorial, political, military, economic, artistic, and intellectual)” (371). So although the word “nation” seems to imply a genetic coherence among its members, the living reality of nations is that their memberships are composed of a variety of ethnic and racial groups. How, then, does a diverse grouping of peoples come to share “a community of historical traditions,” the shared memory of a

communal past and the desire to continue as a community? The key to this irony, I will argue, is found in the exclusionary location of “nation” in the modern.

Ernest Gellner contends in **Thought and Change** that even though there is nothing “natural” about nations or nationalisms, there are “overwhelmingly powerful factors in the *contemporary and recent social conditions* which do make [them] . . . natural and probably irresistible” (151). He notes, in particular, that the modern phenomenon of industrially induced “social stratification” creates the revolutionary medium necessary to the incitement of the nationalist ideal: “nationalism is a phenomenon connected not so much with industrialisation or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion” (166). Thus, the “newness,” the very *modernity* of this uneven distribution of wealth that is the byproduct of industrialisation, enables what Smith refers to as the “collective sentiment” of the oppressed group, and generates the will to secede from the existing socio-economic structure in pursuit of their own nation. “Under these circumstances,” Gellner suggests, “nationalism does become a natural phenomenon, one flowing fairly inescapably from the general situation” (166).

The conditions for the rise of the revolutionary impulse were particularly ripe in the colonial Americas, in a way, and a time, that had not been seen in Europe. As Boyd C. Shafer notes in **Nationalism: Myth and Reality**, “Nation-states did not develop earlier because feudal, agricultural Europe did not need or foster them. . . . The local nature and the low level of industry, the trickle of trade and the bad roads did not demand or permit them” (9-10). Shafer, too, recognizes that shared memories and desires are inherently necessary to the “sentiment” of nationalism, which, he suggests, denotes the

“unifying [of] a group of people who have a real or imagined common historical experience and a common aspiration to live together as a separate group in the future” (10). And for those members whose late arrival might seem to negate their incorporation, he contends that “the common past must be created” (56).

Thus the nation, in the modern sense of the nation-state, came into being concurrently with the impetus to modernity, with its emphasis on industry and the concomitant need for improved communications and transportation between markets, and the resultant stratification of society. The will for modernity therefore includes the will to expand territory, locate sources of raw materials and cheap labour and transport these materials, people, and the goods they produce, between their originary locales and the destinations their markets determine. Modernity, then, as a function of industrialization, and thereby capitalism, is rooted in an economic expansionism that depends on the profitable division of labour. New technologies enabled the will to modernity by providing the machinery that hastened that division, and concomitantly assured that modern nations were dependent on it.

Ursula Franklin, in her 1989 Massey Lectures collected in **The Real World of Technology**, proposed that the cultural perception of reality is guided by the technological systems employed by that society. *Holistic technologies*, such as those enacted, as Shafer suggests, in agricultural European cultures, allow the individual producers control over all aspects of the creative and manufacturing stages of production; whereas under *prescriptive technologies*, which I argue are those enacted through the will to modernity, individuals must specialize their knowledge and expertise in only one stage

of production. Prescriptive technologies allow no room for creativity; the individual's task, as meted out through the division of labour, must be performed according to rules conceived, designed and monitored by others. Thus, she argues, "Prescriptive technologies constitute a major social invention. In political terms, prescriptive technologies are *designs for compliance*" (23). Since the system of technology employed has a direct relationship to a society's perception of reality, prescriptive technologies tend to flourish in cultures in which individuals are content to accept their subjugation to the system:

The acculturation to compliance and conformity has, in turn, accelerated the use of prescriptive technologies in administration, government, and social services. The same development has diminished resistance to the programming of people. (25)

This "programming" is further enabled by ways in which communications technologies reconstruct reality. Through books, magazines, television, videos and film, as well as advertising we are presented with images, "descriptions and interpretations of the situations that are considered archetypal rather than representative. These descriptions furnish us with patterns of behaviour" (37). Further, she writes that these images and patterns serve to create communities among those who have partaken (by proxy) of these "pseudo events," while simultaneously creating "others," of those who have not (46). Thus, since the technological systems employed by a community reflect and reproduce its cultural perception of reality, prescriptive technologies in particular re/produce ideological communities of compliance, with a concomitant impetus to reproduce themselves through colonization. It will be proposed that the artifacts produced by the

Hollywood system, as evidenced by the films of its Classical tradition, are the vehicles through which the “ideal” of compliance has been reproduced; and that the films of Canada’s narrative tradition reflect and re-enact a bias toward a more “Holistic” approach to the reproduction of our ideology.

The coming into being of modernity, then, coincided with the concurrent rise of colonialism, and its *raison d’être*, capitalism. The coming into being of *postmodernity*, I will argue, has coincided with the rise of the postcolonial impetus to cultural independence. Where modernity gave rise to the conditions for the “maximum opportunities and incentives for revolution” (Gellner 166) that resulted in the political independence of the United States of America, among others; the onset of the age of postmodernism (coinciding as it did with Canada’s Centennial), has seen the rise, if not the revolution, of the consciousness of the culturally colonised.

This thesis will examine the ways in which Canada came to recognize itself as colonized by both European and American cultures, and the position(s) from which it continues to negotiate its cultural independence. In particular, the ongoing activities of our filmmakers will demonstrate how, and when, Canadian narrative films recognized their colonized heritage, and how they negotiated that recognition into a self-reflexive narrative strategy. Canadian cultural critics have been involved in such a postcolonial discourse for many years, and as early as 1975 Peter Harcourt theorized in **Movies and Mythologies** that:

If we are Nationalists and believe in ourselves as Canadians, the American product really is the enemy - both in the cinemas and on television: not because it is bad in itself (which it obviously isn’t) but because *by*

monopolizing our screens it has colonized our imaginations, offering its product as if it were our own. (165, emphasis mine)

In his Introduction to **Movies and Mythologies**, Harcourt suggests that this colonization has been facilitated by the forced absence of a Canadian national mythology (3), some form of which he sees as necessary to the “feeling of a national identity” (2), since

It helps provide the images and stories that unite a variety of disparate individuals to make them feel some cohesion as a group. It helps provide *a mirror in which they can recognize themselves*, as it can provide patterns of behaviour upon which they can model themselves. (2, emphasis mine)

The problem is, of course, that the absence of an indigenous identity/mythology engenders the desire for one, regardless of its source:

Our dependence on Europe and our proximity to the United States have encouraged us *to see ourselves as if reflected in other people's mirrors*, in terms of alien mythologies. As Canadians, we tend to feel more at home with other people's cultures than our own. (5, emphasis mine)

And, of course, the culture with which we have come to feel most “at home” is not ours at all, but that of the United States. In **Survival**, Margaret Atwood addressed this essentially postcolonial problem of cultural schizophrenia:

A person who is “here” but would rather be somewhere else is an exile or a prisoner; a person who is “here” but *thinks* he is somewhere else is insane.

But when you are here and don't know where you are because you've misplaced your landmarks or bearings, then you need not be an exile or a madman: you are simply lost . . . (18)

We have come to think of ourselves as valid subjects for American interpellations, failing to recognize that a shared landmass does not necessitate a shared ideology. Of course, such a recognition would require that economic forces, forces perhaps beyond our

control, be adjusted to reflect this revolutionary act. In "*Decolonizing the Imagination: Cultural Expressions as Vehicle of Self-Discovery*," Mike Gasher wrote that English-Canadian feature films, in particular, must

struggle to gain access to an industrial infrastructure owned and operated by the same multinational corporations which own and operate the Hollywood studios that enjoy world primacy in the medium. If a Canadian feature film is to reach an audience, even in Canadian theatres, it must penetrate Hollywood's vertically-integrated production, distribution and exhibition network. (97)

Of course, filmmakers in Québec face similar, and additional struggles. In a 1975 CBC Radio interview with Peter Harcourt, filmmaker and critic Jean-Pierre Lefebvre recognized

that you cannot discuss film production except in terms of the entire economic and cultural situation, even within the province of Québec; 'It's not surprising if the Québécois public or the Canadian public have a lot of difficulty getting involved in Canadian films. We have all been educated (if we can say educated) by the American cinema. We have been brainwashed, it would be better to say, by the American cinema.'
(Harcourt, **Movies** 164)

These circumstances, Gasher asserts, result in the ironic marginalization of Canadian cinema *within Canada* (95), which prompts him to ask; "at what point does the colonization of the material means of cultural production, transmission and reception imply the *colonization of the imagination*?" (96, emphasis mine).

I will argue that, despite foreign economic controls on the "material means" of production, Canadian filmmakers and their audiences have been able to maintain a form of cultural independence, one that recognizes their colonized heritage even while continuing to resist it. In particular, I will argue that our documentary tradition has

provided both an inspiration and a model of imperial colonization from which our filmmakers have wrested control.

In **Image and Identity**, R. Bruce Elder examined the reasons for what he saw as the archetypically Canadian aesthetic choice by our artists of documentary realism for the representation of our national reality. He suggested that the use of realism was a powerful technique by which to cope with those elements of our environment over which we have no control. Landscape art, for example, in the tradition of the Group of Seven, and later taken up by contemporary artists such as Alex Colville, represents an attempt to manage and subdue our fears and anxieties by capturing and framing that which cannot be tamed in our geography or climate.

This approach both built on and inverted Northrop Frye's concept of Canadian identity as exemplified by the "garrison mentality" argued in **The Bush Garden**. But where Frye argued that Canadians see strength in unity against our terrifying landscape and climate, where enclosed groupings are preferable to individualism, Elder suggests that our art seeks to enclose the terrible *itself*, by capturing it - whether in painting, photography or film. By representing what is feared most, in the most realistic modes available, and then capturing it within a frame, we (think we) can control it.

Of course, this type of mastery is not unproblematic; some critics find the controls enacted through documentary realism result in obsession with facts at the expense of art. In "*Colossus from the North*," a contemporary critique of Pierre Berton's 1975 tome, **Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization of Our National Image**, Tom Hedley finds that the book and its author (and by extension, Canadians) are too bound up in the

documentary tradition: “Good in itself, but bad where there isn’t anything else, this accursed tradition has created a national crisis of creative standards” (207-208). In an argument which predates Elder’s against the Canadian cult of cinematic realism, which “relies on descriptions” (“*The Cinema We Need*” 264), Hedley asserts that “it is our obsession with facts - the dreaded documentary tradition - that keeps us in the ghetto of provincial life” (208). But unlike Elder’s argument, which eschews a socially conscious narrative cinema as “dangerous” (262, also see Harcourt, “*Reflections on the Real*,” 6-7), Hedley’s calls for an art which can mobilize our cultural identity through its mythologization; “A great country is one that transforms its living emotions into a psychological reality. Art creates such transformations and fictions survive where facts do not” (208). The problem, as Berton sees it, is that “. . . if Canadians continue to hold the belief that there is no such thing as a national identity - and who can deny that many hold it? - it is because the [Hollywood] movies have frequently blurred, distorted, and hidden that identity under a celluloid mountain of misconceptions” (qtd. in Hedley 211). To which Hedley counters; “As if the audiences themselves were blameless It is the audiences in the end who distort our national image . . .” (214). It is in this call to the audiences that Hedley suggests the complicity of Canadian spectators, and “within them . . . our own film artists” (214), in what he sees as the apparent dearth of an indigenous Canadian national mythology. Where Harcourt and Berton excuse Canadian viewers on the grounds that our imaginations have been colonized, Hedley sees us as obsessed with maintaining our positions “in the ghetto of provincial life.” But perhaps he is too eager to assign blame.

If, as Berton enumerates, “nearly all of the 600 films Hollywood has made about Canada [up to 1975] distort our image to the world” (qtd. in Hedley 211), and those 600 constitute only the tiniest fraction of Hollywood’s production over the course of its history, and taking into account the realities of the Canadian distribution systems which limit the screen time for the exhibition of Canadian films *in Canada* to less than 2% annually (Johnson 43), from what images can average Canadian movie-goers deduce their own culture and/or identity? And when we consider that the Famous Players’ Mississauga 10-plex Coliseum “was the # 1 grossing theatre in North America while showing **Jurassic Park: The Lost World** on the June 6th, 1997 weekend” (“*Big Screen*”), along with the fact that “Canada also has the unfortunate distinction of being the only country in the world that Hollywood treats as part of its domestic market” (Johnson 43-44), it becomes clear that our history, geography, and economic ties have ensured that the bulk of our mythologies have been imported from the United States.

But, as I alluded earlier, all is not lost. Claude Lévi-Strauss once observed that “When a mythical schema is transmitted from one population to another, and there exist differences of language, social organization or way of life which make the myth difficult to communicate, it begins to become impoverished and confused” (qtd. in Wollen 105). Thus, as (long as) we are Canadians (which, I will argue, connotes the active maintenance of our “differences”), and not Americans, we can be only the confused and imperfect subjects of their interpellations. The weak link in our mythological heritage has enabled the conditions for the colonization of our national imagination by American, or, more specifically, *corporate* American interests; but when interpellated as Americans,

Canadians are displaced and/or dissatisfied. We come to understand these “mirrors” are not our own, and in recognizing we are “lost,” we struggle to find our bearings, and search for our “misplaced” landmarks.

National spectatorship, whether of one’s own, or of foreign cultural products, is a function of a nation’s subject position and therefore of its underlying ideology. When ideology is understood as the shared cultural knowledge of a community, the logarithmic sum of its mythologies, memories and desires, Canadian ideology is exposed to be the schizophrenic result of generations of conflicting messages from our many and various founding peoples, and the tyranny of the hegemony of the cultural products we so willingly consume. Thus Canadian national spectatorship, and the Canadian films to which we subject it, are the byproducts of the differences that constitute our nation and the cultural insanities that are the result of the colonization of the Canadian national imaginary.

The following represents an attempt to expose a self-realized subjectivity, and thus an indigenous Canadian identity. I propose, by locating our lost landmarks, and through the guidance of concurrently found bearings, to determine “the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall 70), and thereby discern a Canadian cultural identity *as practice*, through the analysis of the Canadian narrative film tradition.¹

¹ Portions of this thesis have been previously published by the author as “*Cinéma Direct: History, Poetry and the Construction of Capture*,” and “*Maintaining Canadian AlieNation: National Spectatorship as Postmodern Cultural Strategy*.” See Works Cited

Chapter II

In this Chapter, through a review and analysis of the literatures of nation and narration, I will introduce and develop a thesis which will describe the Canadian narrative tradition as one based on the proliferation and lack of Canadian cultural knowledge. I will draw on the theories of Benedict Anderson and Homi K. Bhabha to augment the rudimentary definitions of nation and nationalism which were offered in Chapter I, and refer to the work of several cultural critics in their interpretation. Narrative theory will be examined through the writings of Erich Auerbach, Roland Barthes, and David Bordwell, and their theories, in turn, will be analyzed and critiqued with the aid of the work of R. Bruce Elder, Laura Marks and others. Through the following I will show that national narratives are structured by the ideologies which produce them, and that Canadian narratives, therefore, are structured according to the overarching concerns and conditions which inform our national ideology.

Benedict Anderson defines nation in his introduction to **Imagined Communities** as “an imagined political community . . . imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). It is through this definition that he determines that nation-ness is a modern concept in the history of communities. Because nations are the socio-political and cultural expressions of large, though limited, associations of purportedly equal individuals, they stand as the social expression of modernity. Thus the thrust of Anderson’s argument is located in theorizing the postcolonial desire for, and attainment of, the independence and

respect afforded to communities recognized as nations. Impossible before the advent of the Enlightenment, nation-ness is the signifier of a community's political and temporal place in the world.

In "*DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation*," Homi K. Bhabha proposes the "cultural construction of [modern Western] nationness as a form of social and textual affiliation" (140). In locating these cultural affiliations, Bhabha first posits that the modern nation is "an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the *locality* of culture. This locality is more *around* temporality than *about* historicity" (140). Thus Bhabha presents the challenge of his project in terms of the spaces of time and the times of space.

The time of the space of modernity, then, is the modern era of capitalism as colonialism. It was through the expansionist regimes of colonialism that disparate groups of peoples of many ethnicities, languages and cultures were forcibly brought together to serve the needs of the empire. And it was in the communal rejection of the empire by those peoples that postcolonial societies came into being. The social organization of the former colonized and colonists (and later, of their indentured servants and slaves), necessitated an implicit agreement to "actively" communicate among themselves, and with (against) their colonizers. Thus social and economic conditions created the impetus to share a common language, to teach that language to all the acting members of their community, and to create vehicles for the dissemination, through that language, of the ideals of the community, via the most modern, and readily available technology of

communication - the printing press. And, as Anderson goes on to argue, “print-capitalism” was one of the greatest factors in the development of modern nations.

The project of modernity was to declare its moment as the natural culmination of the pedagogical progress of time. The imagined “homogeneity, literacy and anonymity” (Gellner, qtd. in Bhabha 142) of the modern nation seemed, indeed, to reify the teleological promise of the Enlightenment. But the horrors of colonial modernity were never anticipated. It was only after having lived through the unimagined chaos of the Real in the twentieth century that the fatalism of causal chains was finally cast off, and the uncertainty of presentness was reluctantly embraced (if only by philosophers).

Because the Enlightenment which preceded modernity proposed rationality over religion, a new concept of *communal* immortality was required to explain/expound the intuited bond amongst members of geographically contained groups. Anderson contends that “what then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning” (11). In essence, Anderson is calling for the construction of a communal mythology: a symbolic universe to give meaning to the nation’s social reality.

The transposition of national mythologies is the means through which empires continue to dominate their colonies. This hegemonic enabler subdues the colonial urge to independence through the imagined inclusion of colonists in the great traditions of their homelands. In **Mythologies**, Roland Barthes suggests that since myth functions best at reproducing itself, the empire has all the power of Myth at its disposal. “Because myth is speech *stolen and restored*” (125), and “transforms history into nature” (129), the existing empire justifies itself (to itself and its subjects) through its myths, as the natural

culmination of history. As the former subjects of European colonies, Canadians have historically succumbed to the controlling will of the empire, and believed that “history and culture were things that took place elsewhere” (Atwood 18). Similarly, as Pierre Berton argued, Hollywood images have “blurred, distorted, and hidden” Canadian identity *from Canadians* (qtd. in Hedley 211). Repressing the speech of the oppressed by stealing and restoring its content into a manageable, though “distorted” form, the myth (whether generated in Europe or the U. S.) controls “all aspects of law, of morality, of aesthetics, of diplomacy, of household equipment, of Literature, of entertainment” (Barthes 148), and the oppressor leaves no space for the oppressed to speak, except of change:

The oppressed *makes* the world, he has only an active, transitive (political) language; the oppressor conserves it, his language is plenary, intransitive, gestural, theatrical: it is Myth. The language of the former aims at transforming, of the latter at eternalizing. (149)

As the “makers” of the world, then, the colonist/colonized exist, *as colonials*, only through their willing association to the centre of imperial power; and for today’s Canadians that “willing” entails the preservation of our socio-political links to Europe, and the continued delegation of the right to reproduce our image(s) to Hollywood.

Anderson finds the mark of nation-ness in the repeal of the will to be marginal, and the concomitant construction of a community’s own mythology. Through this construction, nations-in-the-making create a mythical past through which they might enact a present and envision a future; a future which is understood as independent of, though contingent upon, the deaths of its individual members. In **The Social**

Construction of Reality, sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann note that the creation of this type of “symbolic universe links men with their predecessors and their successors in a meaningful totality, serving to transcend the finitude of individual existence and bestowing meaning upon the individual’s death” (95). Thus Anderson asserts that the test of a community’s identity as a nation is in the willingness of its members to die in its defence. This willingness connotes an aligned communal imagining of an “immemorial past . . . out of which - as well as against which - it came into being” (Anderson 11-12), which in turn calls for, and rationalizes, the deaths which will ensure its continued existence.

Nationalisms, as secularized religion, were facilitated by the coincidental advent and proliferation of capitalism and localized literacy (42-43). “Print-capitalism,” while promoting the standardization of vernaculars and restricting profit making (taking?) to the literate, simultaneously created communities of/from markets previously connected only tenuously, through their geographical and linguistic proximity. Literacy became necessary to compete in the market, in turn creating new markets for print products. As these products were only intelligible to a limited and local market, their content necessarily was limited by (or manipulated to instill) local interest. Market and product were thus symbiotically integrated; print-capitalism became both means and ends to the willing affiliation of a community.

This linkage of nation, literacy and capitalism also connotes an accompanying expansion of public education, since a basic education and specialized training in the modern technologies of “print-capitalism” now become necessary for the nation’s

constituents to partake fully of its mythologies. Thus the embracing of the technologies of socio-economic progress, as modernisation, enables the production of the variables of “literacy, culture, communications” (Smith 110), that can result in nationalism.

Anderson carefully links his concept of print-capitalism with the spread of the republican ideals of the Enlightenment, the spiritual quest for immortality renewed through the secular primacy of community, and the circumstantial, temporal and geographical locales that coincide with the advent of nations as imagined communities. He posits that the main impetus for revolution sprang, not from the rationalisms of an intellectual elite, nor from the emancipatory struggles of slaves, but from the upwardly mobile yearnings of the local *petite bourgeoisies* (48).

European empires, the structures that Barthes, in this context, would characterise as the “oppressors,” were economic enterprises intent on expanding their markets while “discovering” new sources of exploitable raw materials and labour. A late precursor of capitalism, imperialism created the climate for its own demise through the virtual disenfranchisement of its emissaries - the colonists themselves. Far away from the decision makers of the metropole, on-site colonial administrators gradually lost their attention and respect. While European-born colonists and their “Creole” (47) descendants, alienated from/by their originary peoples, came to think of themselves in terms of their adopted lands, the Empire, in turn, began to think of *them* in terms of their colonized peoples. “The hatred and sense of inferiority felt by many Creoles for the mother country was in them developing into revolutionary impulses” (Bolivar, qtd. in Anderson 57). But even though “they were to be economically subjected and exploited . .

. they were also essential to the stability of the empire” (58). Ever cognizant of their role in the Imperial economy, the colonials, distanced from foreign imposed power, yet holding all the trappings of provincial rule, soon capitalized on the benefits of the local press and incited their comrades, whether colonized or colonizers. to revolt.

Because of the metropole’s restrictions on their trading partners and practices, and the high taxes they imposed, colonists and Creoles saw any philosophical, political or social benefits of independence as secondary to the obvious economic advantages. “Nonetheless,” Anderson admits, “market zones, ‘natural’-geographic or politico-administrative, do not create [the significant cultural] attachments” inherent to imagined communities (53). He locates the source for these cultural attachments in the offices of the local printer-journalists, which “emerged as the key to North American communications and community intellectual life” (61) since, as Berger and Luckmann note, “man’s consciousness is determined by his *social* being” (5, emphasis mine).

In reporting the news of interest to colonists, newspapers helped create an atmosphere of community among individuals previously only tenuously linked through their shared status as second rate Europeans. And, as Smith observes, once the indigenous production of one’s own literature (and literacy) comes to be understood as a right, the newly created community becomes an inherently *political* one (172). Thus their physical, social and economic isolation from the metropole, celebrated and mythologized through the local press, provided the impetus for individuals to come to imagine themselves as members of communities. And, as the local newspaper announced forthcoming occasions of import to the colonists, explained why they were important, and in later issues retold

the events; they entered into the *written* and thereby *objectified* history of the community and concurrently celebrated and imagined former colonists as the constituent social beings of a developing social and, indeed, a political community.

The news reported in these papers celebrated the differences between the colonies and the empire, between *here* and *there*, creating an *us* as opposed to *them*. Today, films can similarly celebrate and create national differences; by embracing our own traditions, Canadians can control the way our nation is imagined. Anderson argues that if *here* was the site of colonial modernity, “dynamism, progress, [and] self-sacrificing idealism” (119), *there* was the time and place of/for the *ancien régime*, where dynasties based on inherited superiority ruled over feudal subjects. Just as historical colonies used print-capitalism to render *there* as distant temporally as it was geographically by linking the empire to everything staid, ancient and out-of-date, so do Europe and Hollywood’s cultural colonies produce films to render those empires equally irrelevant. The imagined associations that were utilized then by the economically motivated, are used today by the culturally motivated. Not simply a revolt against the indignities of high Stamp Taxes, the colonists’ fight was for the emancipation of men [sic] from the aristocracy’s imperial yoke; and today the impetus to produce one’s own images is similarly motivated by the desire for cultural independence.

The ideals engendered by the French Revolution, through their reification and commodification by print-capitalism, were subsequently embraced by literate, though tax-weary colonists and became products worth pirating under the aegis of nationalism (156). The final step to achieving nation-ness, Anderson argues, is to provide the

community with shared “memories” which can be invoked, as needed, in fending off attacks from without, or, more threatening, from within.

Such memories are created through the manufacture of history via the cultural constructs reified by the employment of the census, map and museum (163). By representing the nation (to its literate self) in reproducible terms, through the naming and placing *of itself* in time and space, and through the concomitant imperative to act as a nation in its reception, the community assumes the authority to write and read its own narrative. The national narrative, written with its own lexicon, and rooted in its timeless geography, thus becomes “available for surveillance and infinite replication” (185). This thesis argues that in Canada we have access to such censuses, maps and museums in the products of our filmmakers. Film, by reproducing our many images acts as an ongoing census, as a museum it curates and recognizes our documentary and narrative traditions, and as a map it provides the bearings that can locate our identity and direct our future. And here, at last, is the intimation of immortality that links nationalisms to the comforting continuities enshrined in all the religious “-isms”; through the ongoing, active production and consultation of indigenous censuses, maps and museums, the colonized geography is re-imagined as ancestral.

This re-imagining, of course, becomes the task of an emerging nation’s intellectual and cultural actors: those for whom a break with the traditions and constraints of the Empire represents the greatest good. Gellner notes that the “skills and faiths of the intelligentsia . . . entail a *rejection*” (170) of those constraints. Smith also addresses the role of the intelligentsia in the formation of a sense of nationalism when he asserts that it

is their “interests and attitudes which set the identifying seal” on a nation (133). Since “education stirs only such as are ‘ready’ for it, i.e. structurally available and culturally attuned” (134), as the spiritual leaders of adults, and institutional teachers of their children, intellectuals prepare nations-in-the-making for the coming revolution. Thus the histories of ancient republics and (relatively) recent revolutions are appropriated by those “culturally attuned” nationalists, transformed into national narratives, and through the mythologizing powers of census, map and museum embedded in the nation’s collective memory. The intelligentsia of a nation’s community, then, whether in their formal role as teachers, or their cultural role as the producers of the narrative artifacts of the “rejection” of the empire, inspire the recreation of the *différence* that defines them.

As metaphors for, and agents of shared knowledge, what do the narratives of nations reveal about their peoples and their ideals? In their work on Australian cinema, Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka have sited the first revelation of postcolonial artifacts in a discourse, like Gellner’s, of rejection, of *différence*. First, they assert, narratives tell us what we are *not*, “since any definition of identity is a declaration of difference, figured against a ground of sameness. To define who ‘we’ are, we identify the other, from which we separate ourselves” (38). The tradition in Canada, as Atwood has shown, has been to identify that “other” (to which we judge ourselves inferior), as either our former European colonizers, or our current cultural colonizers. So, for Canadians, our national narratives first connote both our difference and separation from the European and/or American other; our narratives declare our identity as primarily *not* British, *not* French, *not* American.

Second, they expose our shared knowledge as neither linear nor complete. I will argue that our narratives recognize the imperfect state of our knowledge of self through a structure which simulates our national experience. Our knowledge of ourselves is imperfect due to the proliferation of foreign hegemonic texts and our concurrent cultural amnesia. We have too much information about others and are unable to access many potentially informative memories. As the former colonizers/colonized we retained and then rejected or forgot the ways of our ancestors, whether Aboriginal, European, or those who came later.

We are a nation divided by two opposing “founding” religions, cultures and languages. Although the country was long inhabited by aboriginal peoples, and probably first visited by Vikings, it was the “discovery” in 1497 of Newfoundland by Giovanni Caboto, on behalf of King Henry VII of England, which precipitated the Anglicization of the land now known as Canada (and the name of its discoverer). But, as Brian Bergman notes in his article commemorating the 500th anniversary of that discovery, the peoples of many other European nations emigrated here, and “it was not until the late 18th century that the first major wave of settlers arrived from Britain” (16).

Thus began the long Canadian tradition of colonization and abandonment. The British and French, our most successful colonizers, have left us a legacy of mutual intolerance, or at the least, suspicion, based on their historical, imported differences in religion, culture and language. After five hundred years the bulk of our population still imagine themselves as the constituents of two solitudes, afraid to acknowledge the potential in an association of respect and fraternal inclusion.

We are also divided by the regional interests and issues imposed by our landscape and resources, and exacerbated by their resultant restrictions on travel and communication. Our geography tends to reinforce ancient imagined differences by keeping regional groups spatially separated. The livelihoods of regional peoples are often determined by the landscapes in which they live: indigenous resources and environmental conditions dictating their ways of life and relative prosperity. Well-meaning government policies created to redistribute and equalize the nation's wealth often have the unexpected and ironic effect of creating animosities between the have and have-not regions and provinces, undermining any fiscal benefits the less favoured areas might have enjoyed. Self-perpetuating poverty, rooted in the often unpredictable bounties of our soils and seas, re/create regional dependencies on the national largess, whose monetary resources depend on the prosperity of central commodity-based economies, economies increasingly dependent in turn, on tenuous associations with global corporate interests.

As well, our dependence on our national travel and communications systems continues to be undermined by privatization and foreign ownership. Although our nation was built on economic associations made viable by the construction of the transcontinental railway system, and the telegraph and telephone lines that ubiquitously paralleled the tracks, the railway ties that once bound us are disintegrating, as we allow ourselves to become dependent on privatized airlines and foreign owned and controlled satellite communication systems. Thus our alienation from our fellow Canadians grows as we increasingly depend on profit hungry globalized corporate interests.

Through our long-term immigration and multicultural policies and incentives Canadian governments have encouraged a vigorous polyphony of cultural voices within a Canadian cultural context. Although we often refer to two founding nations, many emigrants sailed from Europe in those early years, and many more from Asia and Africa followed, as colonizers sought cheap labour to facilitate their exploitation of the New World. Although many initially lacked the financial resources and/or political connections to directly profit from the plunder of the land, and many died in the construction of the railways and canals, and in “the mines, the mills and the factories for the good of us all” (Lightfoot, *“Canadian Railroad Trilogy”*), some survived, and even prospered enough to build a life for themselves and their families. As they settled here they brought with them the languages of their ancestors, and continued to practise the rites and rituals of their cultures and religions.

In more recent times, Canada’s immigration policy has been among the most “open” of the modern, industrialized nations, welcoming settlers and refugees from around the world, without inflicting harsh assimilation requirements. Thus Canada continues to promote its multicultural ideals, both in encouraging immigration without strict quotas, and in its official tolerance of racial and cultural differences. And while these ideals and policies celebrate our internal differences and enrich Canada’s traditional cultural polyphony, they also serve to enhance the dissonances between us. Together we are all united within the mosaic, yet individually we cannot begin to truly understand the solitudes represented by each shard. Although we can learn to tolerate, and even accept our differences, we are all outsiders to the others’ imagined communities. Thus we are all

aliens in our own land, unable to access the shared eternal myths of an (even) imagined oneness that bind the constituents of older, more traditional nation states.

Our memory is incomplete due to the official “youth” of our country. Our cultural knowledge is limited by our apparently short history; we cannot remember a shared history pre-dating Confederation. In the years before 1867, regional and cultural differences were legitimized by political borders enforced by colonizers, and in the centuries before that, lies a tenuous oral cultural legacy whose voice was nearly silenced by the invading Europeans. The voices of the descendants of North America’s first peoples contribute to the national polyphony, and contest notions of Anglo- or Francophone cultural primacy over those of more recent immigrants. But the Canada we know today is a nation of only 130 years; any older histories, whether indigenous or European, cannot be ours, and therefore, for our youthful population (at least), there appears to be little cultural consequence to their remembrance. And an outsized portion of our nation’s population *is* comparatively young. In a recent newspaper article on housing, Pat Brennan notes that the median age of Canadians is 31.7, younger than Britain (38.8), or Australia and the U.S. (both 33.4). And our young people are alone and highly mobile; statistically, our homes are “the least crowded of the industrialized nations. We average 0.44 people per room” in homes we frequently vacate; “Statistics from 1991 indicate 18 per cent of the country’s population relocated their households that year” (Brennan). Youth, without the continuity inherent to communities where elders live with their families in ancestral homes, lack many of the resources necessary for the preservation of their cultural memories. Thus the short span of our political existence and the

comparative youth of the current population inhibit the recognition of our colonial or pre-colonial heritage.

As well, our knowledge of ourselves has been restricted by other, more artificial forces. We elide the distasteful from our memories. We choose to forget painful elements of our history: the genocide of indigenous peoples, the extradition of Acadians, the war-time internment of Japanese Canadians, our complacent acquiescence to American foreign policy, and the erosion of the universality of social services. And, multicultural policies to the contrary, the forced break in tradition imposed by a foreign landscape and language erodes ancestral cultural memories from the minds of immigrants, generation by generation.

Our deficit of self-knowledge is also a function of foreign hegemony. As its closest neighbour, we are most susceptible to the overwhelming influence of American arts and entertainment. Without formalized Canadian content regulations, we are subjected to foreign interpretations of Canadianness. Semiotic theories show that, in this way, we become imperfect subjects to their products, welcoming interpellation but unable to fully participate in their consumption. Thus we are simultaneously restrained, withheld from our own knowledge and subjected to unignorable yet unintelligible communications from someone else's. This is a double-restriction of knowledge; we cannot completely understand and assimilate what we are told, nor are we fully able to access what we need to know about ourselves. Through these hegemonic factors, self-knowledge is simultaneously increased (acknowledging foreign influence) and suppressed (we cannot know what has been omitted to make room for this recognition of our own other-ness).

We enjoy the privilege of consciousness of the knowledge of other cultures and submit to a concurrent lack of self-awareness. These multiple and often conflicting sources of shared cultural knowledge, rooted as they are in our history and geography, have resulted in a base too large and varied to allow for its perfect and complete assimilation by its member subjects.

Thus Canadian knowledge can be seen as a combination of proliferation and lack. Our cultural knowledge is augmented by our founding, immigrant and regional differences, as it is checked by elision, omission and suppression. This imperfect polyphony of knowledge informs our national narrative structure and is revealed in its texts.

Narrative structure, the *way* a story is told, thus reveals as much about an imagined community as the story itself. Through its choice of presentation style and structure, a national narrative exposes that nation's ideological ideals and biases. An implicit message to those it interpellates, narrative structure reproduces the mythology of its producer. If we agree with Barthes, that "myth is a type of speech defined by its intention" (**Mythologies** 124), then the intention of a national narrative artifacts is to recreate the nation. Thus a nation mired in modernity will produce narratives which "naturalize" industrial progress, while postmodern nations will revel in fragmented, elliptical narratives. These assertions will be further illuminated through an examination of the narrative strategies of imitation and mimesis.

Narrative styles as the literary representations of social realities have been examined by Erich Auerbach in **Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western**

Literature. Far from traditional philosophical debates on the difference(s) between life and art, Auerbach's conception of mimesis allows for a further, internal distinction between imitation and mimesis *within* art-as-representation. This distinction is particularly relevant to a national tradition rooted in the purported realism of the documentary. In Chapter One, in particular, Auerbach proposes two main narrative styles: the Homeric and the Old Testament. The Homeric, based on imitation, depends on the "uninterrupted connection" (23) of all the story elements, and presents legends, for example, as finite narratives, sufficient in and of themselves, without any direct connection to the life of the reader. The Old Testament style, in contrast, is concerned with the "doctrine and promise" (15) of the "historical" (19) rather than "realism" (14), such that its narratives are "fraught with 'background' and mysterious, containing a second, concealed meaning" (15). Thus Auerbach differentiates between imitation and mimesis, and raises our collective consciousness to the problems that might face a culture dependant on imitative narratives. If narratives reflect the shared ideals and concerns of a nation, then perhaps imitative narratives reflect a complete, and self-assured culture, while mimetic reveal the acknowledgment of "becoming." If these assumptions were to prove correct, would Canada's aesthetic preoccupation with documentary practices connote a fully realized, self-sufficient culture, one that clearly has no relation to the nation I have thus far described? I will argue against such interpretations, and show that our narrative tradition, though rooted in the legacy of the documentary, actually utilizes a mimetic style, one which functions as "a method of strengthening and deepening the

moral understanding, just as it is also a method of exploring and challenging received notions of the real” (Baxter 592).

Auerbach makes claims for the perceived veracity of the narrative styles. The Homeric style, being concerned with legend, loads its narratives with the assumed presentness of detail; nothing is left to the imagination. Thus, by perpetually keeping the reader in a narrative present, and by providing an apparently objective discourse and atmospheric detail beyond satiety, this imitative style offers no opportunity for interpretation or recourse to perspective. It is obvious, illuminated, teleological, dealing in the fixed, and therefore closed and lifeless.

Mimesis, conversely, which retells historical events in the voice of a fallible human narrator, “runs more variously, contradictorily, and confusedly . . . [relating] a situation so complicated - that is to say, so real and historical . . . [that it is] unfit for legend” (19). Because it deals with specific incidents and characters yet provides only the information necessary to relate *that* episode, the reader is invited to make connections to other episodes and characters, to interpret the meaning of those connections and draw conclusions. This is the “background” quality to which Auerbach refers - an essential contextualizing feature through which all present events (or readings of texts) is necessarily filtered. No text is read as an isolated narrative, but rather as a fragment of an eternal, historicizing metanarrative. Berger and Luckmann reiterate this thesis of a contextualizing background in terms of social knowledge, noting that “human knowledge is given in society as an *a priori* to individual experience, providing the latter with its order of meaning” (7-8). Thus the metanarrative need not be specifically cited within any

such text as it is always/already within the unconscious of the anticipated/interpellated reader. In actively reading these texts the subject imbues them with the vitality of a lived and living history of which s/he is a part.

The two styles of literary “realism” thus produce ironically contradictory results. The imitative, in providing an overabundance of information, produces a narrative so specific and closed that the reader cannot but attribute it to the legendary. The “legendary,” or *mythic*, in this sense, is to be understood as untrue iterations, rather than as *mythological*, a function/reproducer of ideology [Barthes notes in **Mythologies** that this latter type of myth “is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflection” (129)]. Imitative narratives are of the legendary mode because they fail to successfully interpellate the reader - they provide entertainment but not instruction. I submit that by these indicators, Hollywood narratives, rather than the realisms of Canadian practices, fit the imitative mode. The episodic mimetic style, through ellipsis and by eliding details, forces the reader to fill in the blanks, creating a living document exposing “the simultaneous existence of various layers of consciousness and the conflict between them” (Auerbach 13). In **Image/Music/Text**, Barthes maps out these “layers of consciousness,” as tiers, or storeys, to which an interpellated reader is attuned:

To understand a narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in “storeys”, to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative “thread” on to an implicitly vertical axis; to read (to listen to) a narrative is not merely to move from one word to the next, it is also to move from one level to the next. (87)

No such “layers,” “conflicts,” or “storeys” are to be discerned in imitative narratives; they tell stories of alien gods and worlds whose fates have no impact on their readers. Due to

this temporal and psychological distance between mythic legends and unsuccessfully interpellated readers, the texts must provide a wealth of detail simply to describe and illuminate their alien landscapes and characters. Indeed, as Auerbach asserts:

their temporal, local, causal, final, consecutive, comparative, concessive, antithetical, and conditional limitations - are brought to light in perfect fullness; so that a continuous rhythmic procession of phenomena passes by, and never is there a form left fragmentary or half-illuminated, never a lacuna, never a gap, never a glimpse of unplumbed depths. (6-7)

Thus the imitative text illuminates only the facts, while the mimetic illuminates and inflects the reader's very existence. This observation further supports my suggestion that it is Hollywood's narratives that come closest to Auerbach's imitative style; their overarching concern with the "realism" of location shooting, intricate make-up and the details of special effects are all offered to the viewer with promises of accurately reproduced events, with a concomitant expectation of the part of the audience of a satisfying, entertaining sense of closure. Auerbach's conception of mimesis allows for, even insists on, the co-acknowledgment of a continuous, *living* history by both writer and reader. Their shared history, then, is (in) a continuous, contentious state of "becoming," necessitating a dynamic relationship with their past as the precursor and prophesy of their present and future. The key to this relationship is in its dynamism. Because history is not a causal chain of events, nor a series of isolated incidents, the subject can interpret and take instruction from the past. Based on these interpretations and instructions, which create a *perspective* on one's own position in contemporaneity, one can make moral decisions and take actions, whose traces will remain to be interpreted and contextualized in the future. This allows for a symbiotic relationship with art as a representation of

reality which does not insist, nor ever expect it to faithfully imitate facts, but rather to present moral concepts through historical events and texts. Thus mimesis can be understood as narrative with a cultural purpose, the first element of which (as with any mythology) is its own reproduction. And, I submit, mimesis comes closest to describing Canadian narrative texts.

This concept of mimesis allows for unconventional or apparently incomplete narratives, such as the unsuccessful quests or interior journeys which inform so many Canadian narrative film texts, which now can be understood as particularly cited “durations” within the Western metanarrative:

Thus the journey is like a silent progress through the indeterminate and the contingent, a holding of the breath, a process which has no present, which is inserted, like a blank duration, between what has passed and what lies ahead, and yet which is measured . . . (Auerbach 10)

As well, because they are “articulated by difference,” and through their oppositional nature (Dopp 557), these narratives qualify as “performative” texts in the Bhabha-ian sense (“*Dissemination*”). Thus mimesis can be seen as a vehicle for the postcolonial narrative *par excellence*. In **Imagined Communities**, Anderson argues that previously colonized peoples came to imagine themselves as communities without necessarily linking their metanarratives to religion through “a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning” (11). This “secular transformation” takes the form of a communal postcolonial (re)creation of an “immemorial past . . . out of which - as well as against which - it came into being” (Anderson 11-12). “Fraught with background,” the mimetic texts of postcolonial communities are structured by the

culturally inherited meanings which are continuously reproduced by the interpellated members of those communities and their reconstructive interpretations of those texts. Through mimesis, the “representation of reality” is thus artfully co-opted by cultural subalterns, who may thereby, re/create history in their own image.

In rejecting “horizontal” notions of nation, Bhabha offers a postcolonial reading of cultural modernity. Re-reading concepts of nation, centre and margin, he outlines what his argument is *not* [*not* about “the discourse of nationalism” or “historical certainty”, or “any hierarchical or binary structuring” (140)], and begins his project of trying to fix nationness in the ephemera of the liminal. Bhabha then narrows his argument to an examination of the apparent split between “pedagogical” and “performative” mythologies of culture (145), and it is in this fissure that Bhabha locates the site of the modern nation’s narration. An analysis of the pertinent terms will further illuminate these concepts.

When Bhabha refers to the “pedagogical” he seeks to include all its attendant resonances. Thus he conjures all the notions of power, tradition, history, hegemony, *langue* and language, that comprise the authority behind the imperial “voice” - the Word - of the Father. This social “pedagogical,” process of reification, as “the apprehension of the products of human activity *as if* they were something other than human products - such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will,” has been examined by Berger and Luckmann (82). In **The Social Construction of Reality**, they refer to it as a process of “objectivation,” wherein humans manage to forget that the social world they perceive as real and “inert,” is actually a product of their own design

(83). The Word of the father is the inherited accumulation of the heavy structures of cultural tradition, perpetuated by its acceptance as “divine will.” The patriarchal Word, it is imagined, speaks of the veracity of reason and the unquestionable evidence of its *raison*. The Word was spoken so long ago that its speaker, no longer available in body, seems to live on in the quotidian reiterations by Ideological State Apparatuses in His name. Through these daily utterances, these ideological mantras, the power of the Word [which comprises many words - “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” (John 14.2)] reifies its structure as *the* structure, while simultaneously remaining invisible to its subjects. It is against this perceived “inert facticity” (Berger 83) of the pedagogical, Bhabha posits the potential evidenced through the *parole* of the performative.

Since postmodernity is marked by the death or absence of the author/Father, it can not narrate itself without referring to either the Father or his narrative/Word. If a nation’s narration, that is a nation’s *énonciation* [“the act of producing an utterance or text” (Havercroft 540)], is an act which can only be understood in terms of its place in time, then the subjectivity of a nation’s people is seen as a temporal function of any specific *énoncé*. Since “what is emphasized in most descriptions of the *énoncé* is its closed, static, completed nature, whatever its length might be” (540), any alteration of that inherent closure can only occur *when* it is uttered *at another time* (whether earlier or later). Thus Bhabha demonstrates that national narration *itself* is a temporal function of its site of subjectivity. The *énoncé* of the performative, then, is heard in the utterances of the marginal and the colonized - who speak against/despite the pedagogical, or of the elite - who speak to break the unbearable silence of His absence. The modern nation’s pre-

existing *énonciation*, though, absurdly continues, oblivious to its fatal fall. The structure of the system, buttressed by the strength of tradition, persists in its reproduction of the old myths, arrested within its own ironically static concept of progress.

But the performative, too, has its traditions. The performative, by its nature, is perpetually in a state of *becoming*. Emerging from an imagined oneness, in a forever contentious state of *to be*, of unimagined others always/already within the one “the performative intervenes in the sovereignty of the nation’s *self-generation* by casting a shadow *between* the people as ‘image’ and its signification as a differentiating sign of Self, distinct from the Other of the Outside” (Bhabha 147). Never attaining the maturity of the *is*, nor the exoticism of the *Other*, the performative continues in the forever shifting, nonsynchronous *to be*, contesting official *histoires* with the fact of its presentness. Thus it is only through the peoples’ preservative and willful repression (of that other sign of itself) that the modern nation can continue to exist.

It is at the site of this repression that Bhabha posits the location of a vibrant postcolonial culture. If the pedagogical is understood as the teleological reproducer of Self, and the performative is in the unacknowledged presentness of becoming, it is in the opaque and chaotic “shadow” that the performative casts upon the pedagogical that a culture is inspired and revitalized. It is important to stress that it is not the content of the performance that breathes life into a nation: it is in its *assertion* as performance, as utterance. Thus rejuvenation is only possible if the possibility of change is denied. And it must indeed be denied, since change itself would concomitantly infer death to a system whose *raison d’être* is the preservation of order and stasis. Order encompasses, and

indeed is supplemented by, chaos, but only on the seemingly untenably irrational condition that it deny that this is so [*vis* Barthes' acknowledgment of the "restored," and thereby managed speech of the oppressed (**Mythologies** 125)]. Thus, the essence of a viable postcolonial culture is (in) the liminal time/space when/where *parole* alters *langue*. In this shadow, this threshold of the consciousness of Self, the transgressions that are the harbingers of change provide the incubating medium necessary for the growth of a truly postcolonial culture. It is into this medium that the repressed knowledge is disseminated, and it is through this same medium that Renan's much loved national house is "made over."

In **Survival**, Margaret Atwood located Canada's best chance for remaking our house through cultural sovereignty; in knowledge of self: "For the members of a country or a culture, shared knowledge of their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive" (19). When survival is the goal, self-knowledge is a nation's best defence. Berger and Luckmann contend that this type of social knowledge is "a *realization* in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing this reality" (62). Knowledge about one's community, then, is not simply a passively received accumulation, but an *active* process, wherein it is continually realized through its reproduction (note that the films of francophones are credited as the "*realizations*" of their directors); and is, therefore, the only route to an identity that is asserted from within rather than imposed from without. This type of realization, of course, can (and does) work equally well for both pedagogical and performative interpellations. Thus films, for

example, as realized cultural artifacts, can be seen as commodities, that is, as artifacts produced for circulation within a community with its own reproduction (implicitly) in mind. Pedagogical films interpellate their national subjects, and reproduce within those subjects the will to maintain their subjectivity *as nationals*, and the performative articulations of liminal members will further their project of altering the course of both that nation's "becoming," and of its subjectivities. Therefore, the problem with the importation of foreign commodities, as Herbert I. Schiller notes in **Culture Inc.**, is that "However much they may be appreciated, imitated, or adopted elsewhere, they remain the specific cultural forms of a particular set of institutional arrangements" (32). Thus Hollywood films are pedagogical in that they are intended and designed for a specific cultural market, an *American* market.

Schiller sees globalization, the purposeful elision of cultural difference, as a western corporate agenda for the creation of consumers and the expansion of their market. This is their first priority, above even the production of goods for that market. Thus the films generated by Hollywood are designed, not just for their American market, but with the intent of expanding that market; they are the pedagogical tools for cultural colonization. These American-based multinational corporations are in the business of the construction of desire, where cultural or social programs which are not immediately or apparently profitable are deemed to be not worthy of funding. This policy is one based on a corporate model of fiscal responsibility to its shareholders. In this scenario there are no individuals, nor individual nations, only markets whose power to choose has been annexed by corporate interests.

Thus, colonial “intention” is not necessarily located in a nation; no grand conspiracy plotted by the evil American Empire (à la Pinky and the Brain - “tonight we take over the world!”) is suggested. In this global cultural colonization project, *intention* is found in the products and production/consumption facilitators of American-based multinational cultural producers, which must by definition continuously create new consumers to justify and maintain their own existence. Therefore globalization, westernization, or even modernization may no longer be seen as an “intentional” Americanization, but situated rather in a *corporate* agenda of global cultural colonization.

Atwood has argued that Canada has historically imported, imitated, and adopted American cultural commodities to the point that we think of ourselves as Americans; we consider ourselves as *valid* subjects of American interpellations. But such a subject position is contingent upon actually being American. If we depend on the cultural articulations of other nations to “realize” reality for us, we will necessarily be subjected to, and recreated in the image of, their conception of reality. This is the essence of cultural imperialism.

And this is the position in which the Canada of the sixties found itself, as the historical colony of Britain and France and the cultural colony of the United States. We had to learn to recognize our own culture in our own terms, in our own “mirrors” (as Harcourt has said), in order to “see” ourselves as a nation. In seeing ourselves as Canadians, not as the “other” of foreign interpellations, we learn to know ourselves and thereby *realize* a national identity. But first we had to de-colonize our imaginations; freeing our minds from “other” imposed identities. Just as in recent years we have shaken

our European colonial identity through constitutional reforms, so, through self-realization, we must (continue to) shuck off the branch-plant mentality of our identity as an American cultural colony. Canada's film traditions, whether the pedagogical of the NFB or CBC as sanctioned by the CRTC, or the performative of the filmmakers who brought us an indigenous *cinéma de la parole* are de-colonizing our imaginations and our art, recreating our cultural identity, and thereby our subjectivity, in a global context. The realized evidence of nation-ness, curated through metaphorical censuses, maps and museums, reifies what human memory cannot, while simultaneously through its imagined scarcity as secular relic, engenders the desire that precipitates the recreation of a nationalist market and a national spectatorship for its own reproduction. Through this self-perpetuating cycle communities come to imagine themselves nations.

The map that this project examines is one drawn from/by our early documentary films, from which more recent filmmakers have taken their bearings, and through its concurrent citation and refusal style their performative texts. The thesis is one which posits significant differences in the narrative structure of Canadian filmic texts from those produced within the classical Hollywood system. And, since, as the above cited observation by Dermody and Jacka points out, "any definition of identity is a declaration of difference, figured against a ground of sameness. To define who 'we' are, we identify the other, from which we separate ourselves" (38); our national narratives imply both our difference and separation from the American other. If our narratives, then, declare our identity as primarily *not* American, we must first identify the "sameness" reproduced by

classical Hollywood texts before we can adequately identify, declare and address our difference.

David Bordwell, in **Narration in the Fiction Film**, has performed an exhaustive study of the theories, forms and modes of filmic narration. And though his examination later includes other “modes” of narration, Bordwell concedes in his Introduction that he has developed his thesis on an assumption that “takes ‘normal cinema’ as intuitively given” (xiii). Thus, before he even begins to define his terms, Bordwell belies his supposed critical objectivity by proposing Hollywood cinema as not simply Classic, but Canonic, and even “*normal*.” This conception of Hollywood cinema, then, will constitute the “ground of sameness” from which Canadian narrative films declare their difference.

In his Introduction he proposes that there are three ways to study narrative: as representation, structure, or process (xi); and he subsequently reveals that, through his examination of narration as “process,” his aim “is to set forth a poetics of narration” (xiii). Unlike Auerbach, who delves into the spiritual principles behind imitative and mimetic styles of narrative, Bordwell narrows his project to an examination of how narration “operate[s] in the fictional cinema” (xii), through the development of a theory of film narration, the formulation of sets of modes of convention, the analysis of the spectators’ activity in narrative comprehension, and an argument for his hypothesis on the formal systems which cue and constrain that comprehension (xiii). While his examination is useful to film scholars, his nearly complete elision of the social and cultural forces which structure those modes and systems, and their comprehension, impoverishes his

theory. Since narrative construction and comprehension depend on shared knowledge, and ideology is the structure of shared knowledge, narrative and ideology are inseparable.

Through pedagogical texts, the ideologies of nations are realized and perpetually recreated. Individual texts stand as artifacts, and the study of an artifact may reveal its embedded/inherent ideology. With these tools, as argued below, the deconstruction of classical Hollywood texts reveals American ideological concerns with technocracy, the “will to mastery” (Elder, “*TCWN*” 265), teleology and final causes. These concerns reveal in turn their concatenated roots in a historical national synoptic perception of time as linear progress. Thus Bordwell unwittingly limits the potential of his own narrative theory of cues and constraints by rooting it in his own ideological paradigm. Every element offered in the structuring system he theorizes, he defines in terms of causal control. That he prefaces his theory by debunking enunciation theories as problematically dependent on discursive intent, and then limits his own theory in the teleological, can only be seen as the inherent and insidious influence of ideology on critical thinking. And by relegating any non-linear text to the heady strata of “Art Cinema Narration,” he belies his American boast/shame that his national cinematic tradition is not art.

The classic narrative structure of fiction film, as defined by David Bordwell, is “the process whereby the film’s syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channelling the spectator’s construction of the fabula” (53), where “syuzhet” is understood, roughly, as plot, and “fabula” as story. Bordwell’s definition hinges on three key principles which reveal his Aristotelean bias in relating narrative to teleology. By

relating *syuzhet* to *fabula* in causal terms of logic, time and space (50), Bordwell reveals his Aristotlean insistence on the natural progress of linearity.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle discussed the structure of a unified plot as having:

a beginning (that which is not necessarily caused by something else but which produces other events), a middle (which derives from what has gone before and which something else must follow), and an end (something that depends on what has happened but which need be followed by nothing else). Aristotle says further that the plot should be so constructed that no incident can be displaced or omitted without destroying the unity of the whole. (Beckson and Ganz 204)

This insistence on causality, closure, and unity is central to Bordwell's theory.

While dismissing Plato's presupposition of the "priority" of the narrative voice (Bordwell 16), and the transmission theories of Barthes, Metz and Heath as dependent on an imagined narrator (17-25), Bordwell fails to recognize his own presupposition that the "narrative process" is inherently teleological (49). Bruce Elder, in his prescription for "*The Cinema We Need*" in Canada, has observed that as a teleological structure narrative "explains how events lead up to the final event in order to clarify the past but the notion of causality on which the narrative is based is all too simple and serves only to cover over mysteries" (265).

As the products/producers of their respective ideologies, national narrative artifacts must re/produce those ideologies. Elder contends that American artifacts (in this case Classical Hollywood narratives) reveal a "technical empire" (262), a "dominant mode of thinking" (261) conceptualized as "the will to control and master" (262). By mistakenly assuming narrative to be teleological *per se*, he concludes that "Narrative is the artistic structure of technocracy" (265). But when narrative *qua* narrative is freed of a

specific determining ideology and is recognized as ideologically inert in itself, the role of ideology in a narrative can be seen as one which enables the producer of the text to be exposed. Therefore, Elder could more properly conclude, *American* (read “Hollywood,” or “corporate”) narrative is the artistic structure of technocracy.

Ideology, unlike narrative, is not inert; it produces, and in turn is reproduced, by its artifacts and member-subjects. Bordwell attempts to recognize these principles in his Conclusion, where he belatedly adds that “narrational modes are central mediations between ideology and its manifestations in artworks” (335), but he remains unable to distinguish between ideology and narrative structure by relegating it to a modal influence in the marginal cinemas of *other* nations. Here, I would submit, Bordwell reveals the flaw in his theory. By presuming ideology to be a modifier of (an inherently teleological) structure, rather than the condition/essence of structure, *Structure* itself, he necessarily raises the classic Hollywood narrative to the status of ideal. When American cinema is understood to be “natural,” “effortless” and “realistic,” every other narrative must appear contrived, tainted by overt ideological agendas. Thus teleological structure (American ideology) is co-opted as narrative structure, and (foreign) ideology demoted to extrinsic modifier. The assumed norm of teleology is revealed by the theory’s inability to comfortably contain the narratives of the so-called “Art Cinema” and those of Godard, for example.

But these inadequacies do not justify a total refusal of his theories. The twin concepts of cue and constraint and the notion of narrative as dynamic activity are essential to any understanding of narrative practice. By acknowledging the implicit nature

of ideology as the structure and mediation/mediator of (shared) knowledge, and considering the shared etymological origins of *recognize* (to know again), *knowledge* (process of knowing), and *narrative* (to make known), the interconnectedness of knowledge, ideology and narrative becomes apparent. When these conditions are blended with Bordwell's definition (as above), thereby acknowledging the influence of ideology on every essential component of that theory (*syuzhet*, *style*, *fabula*, as well as the process and the spectator), a more flexible, comprehensive and therefore useful paradigm emerges. A paradigm that recognizes ideology (itself) as structure, rather than insisting on teleology (a specific ideological construct) as structure. This paradigm, through which I will analyze Canadian narrative films, accepts that narrative *per se* is ideologically neutral, and that it is *the way* a narrative is structured that is ideological. Thus "the process whereby the film's *syuzhet* and *style* interact" (Bordwell 53) is predetermined by the producing ideology.

The structure of a typically pedagogical NFB documentary, for example, whether a nature film or a critique of strip-logging, is determined before filming has even begun, and expected by its audience, even before it is viewed. Such a structure re-enacts our "official" ideology, supportive of the repressed, tolerant of others, and ecologically concerned. Similarly, classical Hollywood narratives can be expected to be structured in ways to re-enact an "official" American ideology; aggressively protectionist, humanistic yet capitalist and confident. Performative films, conversely, are often concerned with the refusal of official narratives; and thus the structure of individual texts must be analyzed for evidence of both the pedagogy they refuse, and the specificity of that refusal.

Bordwell's attempts to reconcile Art-Cinema narration with his theory resulted in awkward conclusions based on the faulty logic necessitated by his flawed premise, *vis*:

. . . art-cinema narration loosens up *cause and effect* Certainly the art film relies upon psychological *causation* the film's *causal impetus* often derives from the protagonist's recognition that she or he faces a crisis of existential significance the art cinema presents psychological effects in search of their *causes* the 'open' ending characteristic of the art cinema can be seen as proceeding from a narration which will not divulge the outcome of the *causal chain*. (206-209)

These contentions reveal Bordwell's futile attempts to fit non-linear, episodic narratives into his teleologically skewed structure. His insistence on cause and effect, causal impetus, and a causal chain require these contortions of logic which belie their theoretical foundations. But now, stripped of its (previously invisible) ideological bias, Bordwell's theory can be applied to any fiction film, regardless of its genre, authorship or producing nation. Coincidentally, it has now lost its former insistence on a culturally specific "reliance upon character-centred causality and the definition of the action as the attempt to achieve a goal" (157).

Bruce Elder, by defining narrative in terms of teleological reminiscence and hegemonic misrepresentations, rather than recognizing that, like Bordwell, he has exclusively focused on one *mode* of narrative, is forced to conclude, "The cinema we need, the cinema that combats technocracy, will, therefore, be non-narrative" (265). Thus Elder argues that "the cinema we need" is non-narrative because narrative is not the cinema we need. But the narrative theory which I propose allows for the teleological, pedagogical, and/or imitative without insisting that all narratives must enact those strategies. Similarly, it allows for structural ellipsis, fragmentation, extraneous

information and “open” endings; again without insisting on those. It insists, rather, that the formal strategies enacted are structured by the ideology, whether dominant or marginal, of the peoples that produce *and consume* individual narratives.

National spectatorship, then, whether of one’s own or of foreign cultural products, is a function of a nation’s subject position and therefore of its underlying ideology. Thus, when examining Canadian subjectivity, we must look at the relationship between the products of Canadian (and foreign) film practices and Canadian subjects: practices which reveal and reproduce the subjectivity(s) that inform them. When ideology is understood as the shared cultural knowledge of a community, the logarithmic sum of the realization of its mythologies, memories and desires, Canadian ideology is exposed to be the schizophrenic result of generations of conflicting messages from our many and various founding peoples.

As well, as the artifact of an emerging postcolonial nation, Canadian ideology oscillates between the pedagogical of our official cultural producers and regulators (the CBC, NFB, CRTC, etc.), and the performative of the énoncés of our intellectuals and artists. And, unlike classical Hollywood texts, which require a teleological impetus to successfully reproduce American ideology, the texts of the Canadian narrative tradition enact “cues and constraints” that reveal the instability of our shared knowledge and ideology.

Our narrative texts, the products of a nation enriched and divided by the diversity of its population, represent the conflict and cohesion that results from our multicultural heritage. Thus, in spite of the hegemonic imperatives of our historical and cultural

colonizers, Canada continues to produce a body of films which refuse to submit to conventional notions of nation or narration. **Sam and Me** (Deepa Mehta, 1990), for example, shows the friendship that develops between Nikhil, a very recent immigrant from India, and Sam, a Jew who immigrated from Israel fifteen years before. As they struggle to find common ground in the new country they share, they negotiate their differences without ever understanding the disparate ways they see Canada and their respective homelands. The film ends unexpectedly, and without dénouement, thwarting any desires for closure. We are not told how Nik fares after the death of his friend, nor is there any causal impetus for Sam's death. He is hit by a bus crossing the street one night and dies; there is no reason for him to die, nor does his death serve to change the lives of the other characters - he just dies. It will be shown that this episodic structure and lack of conventional closure are strategies, among others, enacted by many Canadian narrative films.

(How) can a postmodern cinema of refusal (of convention, of colonization) persist in the re/production of its audience? One clue comes from the work of Laura U. Marks, who wrote (paraphrasing Bergson) that subjectivity is "subtractive insofar as it means a thing is not perceived in its fullness but only in those aspects that interest the perceiver" (*"A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema"* 252). This position suggests an avenue for the examination of the systems which allow for the re/production of Canadian national subjectivity as a function of such perceptual subtractions. Thus, as the previously cited Lévi-Strauss observation alludes, we are imperfectly interpellated by Hollywood's imported, "impoverished and confused" mythologies, subtractively perceiving their

ideologies, not in their “fullness but only in those aspects that interest” or *speak* to us.

Similarly, we must labour to understand our own film texts, mired as they (and we) are in the colonizing languages of foreign empires.

Bhabha demonstrates that national narration *itself* is a temporal function of its site of subjectivity. Canadian narration, then, due to the accident of its advent coinciding with the break with the modern, must be recognized as being always/already *postcolonial*, *postmodern*. And it is through the patriarchal power of the pedagogical that the Classical Hollywood narrative lives on in the cinemas of America’s cultural colonies. Thus Canadian film practice must always refer, consciously or not, to the paradigm of the Hollywood tradition.

The fragmented continuity that I shall argue is exposed by Canadian narratives does assume a past and future which are linked through the actions and perspective(s) of the present, but it does not presume to impose causality on those linkages. Events occur in time, but their temporal relationship is one imagined through the perspective of presentness. Thus any causality presumed to connect temporally separate events is one imagined through culturally predetermined meta-narratives, whose very *raison d’être* is to provide the “correct” readings of perceived realities. Auerbach’s concept of the “*figura*,” which “establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first,” (73), is essential to the understanding of the cultural function of meta-narratives. He proposes that figural interpretation can connect events “which are linked neither temporally nor causally - a connection which it is impossible to establish by

reason” (73), thus allowing for the apprehension of supra-historical linkages between events. Causality is revealed, in this way, to be a culturally specific mode of interpretation: a communally agreed-upon perspective from which to view historical events and persons, and which provides plausible connections between them which would be “impossible to establish by reason.” Causality, then, is not present in a text, but can only be inferred by its reader, and the inferences drawn are influenced by the meta-narratives in which the reader partakes as a member of an imagined community. In this way causality is understood as a function of subjectivity rather than of emplotment; what is interpreted as a teleological text in one community may not be in another. As well, texts which revel in ambiguity, presenting episodic events without the specific cultural cues essential to their interpretation, allow individual readers to construct those connections according to the requirements of their own community’s meta-narratives.

Being the products/producers of their respective ideologies, national narrative artifacts must reproduce those ideologies. This new understanding of causality as subjective inference allows for narratively “looser” texts in a nation whose community is composed of an imagined mosaic of constituent communities. Regional, ethnic and cultural differences can flourish when their various meta-narratives are enabled to freely interpret the texts of the encompassing national community, without compromising the integrity of those differences. In allowing for the episodic and non-linear, without an overarching agenda of cultural homogeneity, texts are freed from the technocracy of an embedded, insistent causal chain. The will to mastery requires a linear structure whose text must be manipulated to imply causality. Having neither a (necessarily) linear

structure nor a causal imperative, this figural interpretation of narrative structure rejects the teleology of the Bordwellian and the technocracy of the Elderian narrative paradigms. Figural interpretation is enacted in the comprehension of ideologically structured texts; thus even pedagogical texts “use” the associations that their subjects perceive. But it is when it is enacted by the viewers of performative texts, that figural interpretation allows colonials to better negotiate their marginality.

Another by-product of an ambiguous, episodic strategy is seen in its reception as connotative of a more “realistic” narrative. In **The Sense of an Ending**, Kermode notes that the introduction of the element of *peripeteia*, “the falsification of one’s expectation of the end” (18), through the abrupt or sudden change in a course of events, lends an aura of reality since it seems to reflect a refusal of the stereotypes associated with fiction. Kermode points to the writings of Alain Robbe-Grillet as exemplifying this “new realism” (19) in literature, a postmodern realism which we might easily ascribe to many Canadian narrative films which also withhold the “gratification to be had from sham temporality, sham causality, falsely certain description, clear story” (19). He further contends that the subject of these narratives “is not offered easy satisfactions, but a challenge to creative co-operation” (19). This lack of “easy satisfactions” is the result of the rejection of the tyranny of structure as teleology, and the “technical empire” (Elder 262) of classical Hollywood texts.

If Canadian narratives, as cultural realizations, do not share Hollywood’s overarching concern with causality and teleology, what do their open-ended structures connote? Interpellated as Americans, Canadians are displaced and/or dissatisfied. Thus,

as postcolonials, we begin to *refuse* to think of ourselves as “other,” when we cannot find our own image in American myths and their by-products. We begin to selectively ignore those aspects of the interpellations which were unintelligible to our imperfect subjectivity. Canadian national spectatorship, of both foreign and domestic products, then, is the subtractive byproduct of the internal differences that constitute our nation.

Peter Harcourt, in “*The Canadian Nation - An Unfinished Text*” suggested that

If through a curious concatenation of events, Canada by-passed the Enlightenment (as Northrop Frye has suggested) and then managed to skip over Modernism (as Bruce Elder has claimed), perhaps Canada has been hanging in there, dormant but not dead, waiting to lead the developed world into the New Age of the Twenty-First Century. (18)

So, if modernity, as the tyranny of progress, is unintelligible (or confused) to Canadians, and history, as the iteration of progress, is unavailable to us, perhaps Canada is not *unmodern* (Dorland, “*Richard Hancox*”), but rather, *postmodern*. In **The Open Work**, Umberto Eco examines causality as a convention, and as such, finds as Elder has, that it is “ineffective as a means of explaining the world or of founding a new one” (90). If Canada is, indeed, waiting to lead us into the postmodern, then our art must show its marks, as well as the marks of our own knowledge. Eco goes on to propose that “The open work assumes the task of giving us an image of discontinuity. It does not narrate it; it *is* it” (90). What Eco is calling for is an art that can re/present the real of the postmodern age through itself. An art form that, in its structural insistence on “discontinuity” of image and narration, will be, like the cinema that Elder calls for, “of immediacy, multiplicity; will use non-causal, non-teleological forms of instruction and will not attempt to arrest time” (“*TCWN*” 270). Thus Eco confirms that open works of

art, such as films, are indeed the postmodern cultural *realizations*, in Berger and Luckmann's "double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing" (62), in turn, the realities of their producers.

In this Chapter, I have shown how national narratives are structured by the ideologies which produce them, and noted that Canadian narratives, too, are structured by our national ideology. I have developed a thesis which acknowledges the Canadian narrative tradition as one based on a postmodern proliferation and lack of Canadian cultural knowledge. The following chapter will examine Canadian narrative films, with the intention of showing that these films are the realization of a cultural mythology; one which must refer to both the "ground of sameness" that has been produced by the Hollywood tradition, and to the indigenous Canadian documentary tradition that preceded, and continues to inform it. Through the analysis of these films, I will show how Canadian identity is articulated as practice, and how our cultural myths are reproduced in a national narrative structure.

Chapter III

A person who is “here” but would rather be somewhere else is an exile or a prisoner; a person who is “here” but *thinks* he is somewhere else is insane.

But when you are here and don’t know where you are because you’ve misplaced your landmarks or bearings, then you need not be an exile or a madman: you are simply lost. (Atwood, **Survival** 18)

This chapter will ask how the narrative structure of individual Canadian films recognizes/reveals the implied authorship of its producing nation, and will address how that structure (and nation) declare its difference from the imposed American paradigm. It will be submitted that a distinctly Canadian system of structures is revealed by the films of the Canadian canon: a system which is repeated in contemporary texts and which acknowledges its position and role within an encompassing and defining ideological system, without limiting its structure to the promulgations of any one ideology.

The texts chosen for analysis in this chapter will include some of those which are most often screened and examined in Film Studies survey courses of Canadian cinema, as well as a sampling of Canadian documentary and narrative fiction films from the sixties through to the nineties. The selection will include films from Québec and the rest of Canada, films which feature themes of regionalism, language, feminism, immigration and/or race relations, as well as some representative texts from Canada’s best known auteurs. Although the individual works cited will be relatively few, in view of the huge body of films they are to represent, it will be shown that these films exemplify the stylistic and thematic concerns of the Canadian narrative tradition. Together and individually they reveal the archetypal framework of a Canadian narrative structure.

The social and cultural upheavals of the sixties are most often remembered in the global consciousness with an American perspective: race riots, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and President Kennedy, the British Invasion, the Vietnam War, Woodstock. And while Canada participated vicariously in the American experience, we, in our characteristically non-confrontational and unassuming way, grappled with some revolutions of our own.

Proudly anticipating the 1967 Centennial of the Dominion, we cast off the Union with the Jack and assumed nationhood under the Maple Leaf (Forever). Québec, while gladly distancing itself from the Empire, struggled to maintain a separate unifying identity within the official cultural mosaic. Both processes simultaneously caused, and were caused by an examination and questioning of our identity as Canadians.

On every contemporary map, every schoolroom globe, Canada could be identified as one more pink blob - the mark we bore to profess our membership in the Empire of the colonized. We were the Dominion of Canada, dominated by/ for our Commonwealth. We were the *biggest* pink blob on the map - something to be proud of, just as we were proud to sing “*God Save the Queen*” while we gazed reverently at her portrait, front and centre of each classroom, just above the blackboard (which was just behind the enormous pink-blotched map of the world, and just to the left of the Union Jack). Our minds had been colonized as effectively as the land.

At the same time our minds have been colonized by that “American perspective” on popular culture, and on contemporary history. The notion of identity as reproduced by a nation’s arts and artifacts is contingent on that nation’s peoples’ recognition of their

subjectivity *as* a nation. Traditionally, Canadians have imagined themselves as rightful subjects of American or Imperial interpellations. “Given a mirror that reflects not him but someone else, and told at the same time that the reflection he sees is himself” (Atwood 16), the Canadian subject has been unable to see a true reflection because the wrong mirror has been relied on. So when Canadian mirrors are offered, Canadians do not recognize their own reflection.

This explains our infatuation with Hollywood’s movies. Their representations, their codes of “realism” are more comfortable, more believable, not because they are inherently better but because they are more familiar to us than our own. We have accepted the reflections in the foreign mirror as our own and thus have been blinded to the value of our true reflection and oblivious to our own mirrors. Thus Canada has been (at least) twice colonized.

In the sixties, the “fact” of our nationness was celebrated, even as we continued to blithely import American mirrors. In the process of adopting a new flag and a new, bilingual, national anthem, Canada quite incidentally bled the identifying colonial colour from its maps. Bleeding it from our minds has required a more concerted effort.

Canada in the sixties was a country that inadvertently found itself without self-sustaining viable symbols: a country that, without the benefit of an identity-producing, symbol-producing revolution (as enjoyed by our neighbours to the south), awoke from a hundred-year nap to find itself in a state of cultural amnesia; it didn’t know who it was, how it got there, or where it was going. Lost.

“What a lost person needs is a map of the territory, with his own position marked on it so he can see where he is in relation to everything else” (Atwood 18). Fortunately, though lost, Canada was in possession of a map, a map thoughtfully provided by the artists who chose to chart the cultural landscape while the rest of us slept. The poets, painters, musicians and filmmakers, together and independently, toiled in anticipation of our awakening, and, true to Anderson’s thesis, produced a map which is “available for surveillance and infinite replication” (185) to those who care to consult it. As Gellner suggests, the map has been prepared by our cultural intelligentsia as a “rejection” of our past constraints (170), and they have the power to stir the “culturally attuned” (Smith 134) to draw upon it (and *on* it) in their ongoing production of Canada’s national narrative. But the resultant map, being the product of many pens, is not easily read. The inroads described by Robertson Davies and Northrop Frye do not always intersect with Gordon Lightfoot’s “*Carefree Highway*,” or even with Tomson Highway. Is Margaret Atwood **Surfacing** from the lakes painted by A.Y. Jackson, *et al*, or from Margaret Avison’s whirlpool in “*The Swimmer’s Moment*”? Is that Joni Mitchell’s “*Parking Lot*” that imprisons Peter in **Nobody Waved Goodbye**? Can the Montreal inhabited by Leonard Cohen be the same city Claude flees in **Le chat dans le sac**? There seem to be many uncharted areas too; promising roads often turn sharply only to end abruptly at the 49th parallel - victims of our infamous unguarded border. Other roads end just as abruptly at Ottawa’s stone walls, construction apparently stalled by reams of red tape and a dearth of funding.

The mosaical format of our map defies attempts to reduce or simplify it. And we the readers, Atwood's former exiles, prisoners and madmen [sic], often find we lack the code required to read it. Nonetheless, we have the map, and some of us are bothered enough by our apparent lack of identity to want to read it, painful as that may be.

One source of our pain is in the knowledge that we produced this map ourselves. By discarding the previous map we discarded the traditional supplier, our Colonizing Father-figure, and patricide *can* induce painful feelings of guilt. But without Our Father, without His voice to guide us, can we trust ourselves to do the job? Does the absence of the colonizing voice necessarily preclude *a* voice? Should we be listening instead to the voice of our older brothers, the Americans, who learned to speak so forcefully (and so *loudly*), that our own voice remained unheard and unfamiliar?

In 1967, in the quietest of revolutions, Canada meekly declared its independence from Great Britain. In our Centennial year, rather than openly seceding, we surreptitiously adopted a new flag and national anthem and backed our way into nationhood. The resultant identity crises should not have been difficult to predict. Without a tradition of national identity-producing/confirming symbols, Canada was a nation in name only. Wandering in a cultural landscape that lacked recognizable landmarks, Canadians lost their bearings. In a state of cultural amnesia, not knowing where we were, how we got there, or where we were going, we consulted our maps.

The Canadian cultural maps of 1967 provided little direction for our artists. Most of the previous landmarks were wiped off when we erased our British/American heritage from our memories. Feature-filmmakers, in particular, had few examples of a purely

Canadian product to direct their efforts. But a few milestones remained to guide the way. Some of our artists had already begun defining a new Canadian tradition, anticipating the postcolonial cultural lack we now faced.

Two films from 1964 stood as beacons for all future Canadian filmmakers to follow, and by 1969 an iconic trilogy was complete. **Nobody Waved Goodbye** (Don Owen, 1964), **Le chat dans le sac** (Gilles Groulx, 1964) and **Goin' Down the Road** (Don Shebib, 1969) laid the groundwork for a Canadian narrative tradition. By honouring their collective documentary heritage, their directors created a uniquely Canadian narrative form, style and genre. Thirty years of respectful citations, and twenty of academic study, have raised these films and their makers into landmarks from which all others take their bearings.

In **Nobody Waved Goodbye**, Peter (played by Peter Kastner) wants to escape the stultifying influence of his parents' suburban Toronto home. He is unwilling or unable to accept the responsibilities of either adolescence (high school) or adulthood (a job). His mother personifies the traditions (British) and his father the hegemonic influences (American) of power structures alien to Peter's emerging identity. He feels the need for autonomy but is unequipped to survive independently. He subsequently fails to achieve success by his parents' or his own standards. Peter's psychic orphan is last seen goin' down the road, heading west in a stolen American vehicle, abandoning his own now fatherless child, leaving nobody to wave goodbye.

Similarly, Pete and Joey find their only survival tactic in avoidance in **Goin' Down the Road**. Initially, their avoidance seems to be a positive act, leaving behind the

chronic unemployment of Cape Breton for the imagined prosperity of Toronto. But in their haste to follow Horace Greely's advice to American Dreamers, they fail to hear the whole sentence: "Go West, young man, and *grow up* with the country." Older, but no wiser than Kastner's Peter, Pete and Joey repeat all his mistakes. Uneducated and untrained, all three find and lose dead-end unsatisfying work, find and lose shabby rooms, and resort to thievery to survive. And in their final flights west, Joey and Peter both leave behind pregnant women to deal with realities they cannot.

Le chat dans le sac also examines the youthful reluctance of its protagonist to accept the responsibilities of agency. Claude, like Peter, doesn't know what he wants. His claim "I don't really want anything" echoes/anticipates Peter's "I know what I *don't* want." In their provincial Solitudes they share an innate dissatisfaction with the way things are, and an inability to act constructively. But while Peter's self-perpetuating flight from positive action stems from his lack of forethought, Claude's is fueled by his self-absorbed intellectual ennui. Peter never thinks before he acts; Claude thinks *instead* of acting. Both tactics effectively restrict action and dictate their respective modes of avoidance. Pete and Joey's pilgrimage west magically elides Québec altogether and Peter's only begins in Toronto. But Claude's introspective nature and political pretensions require a different escape route than the others'. So Claude abandons Barbara and retreats in to the Québec he imagines to be more real, more authentically Québec than the Montreal he leaves behind (interestingly though, he does describe his sanctuary as being located west of the U.S.A!).

In 1964, in his denial of Hollywood, Groulx co-opted some stylistic elements of the Nouvelle Vague in **Le chat dans le sac**. His highlighting of the filmmaking process by including shots of the reflected camera and crew, and the jarring jump cuts, are filmic references to the French New Wave's critical and theoretical reflection on/of Hollywood films. And as a political refuge from the NFB, Groulx co-opted some of the documentary techniques he learned there, while making such landmark films as **Les raquetteurs** (1958), among others. As well, he cites specific French films and filmmakers - the hunting scene from **La règle du jeu** (Jean Renoir, 1939), and the bed-chat from **Au bout de souffle** (Jean Luc Godard, 1960). Nor is the film without American references: the ever present Coca-Cola, the music of John Coltrane, and the newspaper-at-the-breakfast-table reference to **Citizen Kane** (Orson Welles, 1941). But by 1985, **Le chat** itself was cited in John Paisz's **Crime Wave**, with its eerie street lamp outside the writer's "torture chamber."

In 1964, when a childish Peter borrowed the American Dream along with an American car and headed west, he was merely acting out the fantasy of the bad little boy he was. But by running away from home, he began a journey of self-discovery that has been taken up by our filmmakers ever since. While our protagonists still embark on journeys, they are no longer compelled to make the same mistakes as their antecedents. They have learned that American/Hollywood solutions cannot resolve Canadian problems, just as American-made maps cannot guide us through our own landscape.

Where once our embattled heroes futilely sought their fortunes in the west, the eighties find them on Eastern pilgrimages, *vis*: William D. MacGillivray's **Stations**

(1983), or Atom Egoyan's **Next of Kin** (1984). Or the journey takes place not on the road, but within familial structures or the confines of the mind, as in **Life Classes** (MacGillivray, 1987), or in Egoyan's **Open House** (1982), **Next of Kin**, **Family Viewing** (1987), and **Exotica** (1994).

The traditional allegorical journey to the inner discovery of identity has become the Canadian genre *par excellence*. We have made that journey our national pastime as our artists have made it their national passion. But those generic concerns alone do not define our self-reflexive cinema. Our films continue to (re)place our landmarks and bearings in contemporary contexts. And our narrative films, whether of geographical or spiritual journeys, continue to employ structures that mirror and reflect the temporal continuity and incomplete knowledge through which our culture has (subtractively) come to "see" itself.

Our television and documentary heritage is repeatedly referred to in our films. Indeed, **Nobody Waved Goodbye** had originally been conceived as a documentary, but Owen somehow managed to wrest control of its production from the NFB, and from miles of (unauthorized) footage, recreated the film as fiction. Documentary production techniques highlight and inform the narratives of MacGillivray's **Stations**, **Life Classes**, and **Understanding Bliss** (1991). The uses and abuses of recording technology and documentary images dominate familial communications in Egoyan's **Open House**, **Next of Kin** and **Family Viewing**. And the veracity and tyranny of those technologies and images are further examined within the strictures of that archetypal Canadian film

format, the short subject, in Philip Hoffman's **?O, Zoo! The Making of a Feature Film** (1986) and Lori Spring's **Inside/Out** (1988).

Journeys that began with Claude's and Peter's flights from the responsibilities of the imposed identities of the colonized, have found an interim respite in the recognition of our own agency. We have entered the postcolonial phase of our quest. No longer must we use the language of otherness to speak to ourselves about ourselves. We have rediscovered our own landmarks, which, invisible to our colonized eyes, now loom large on the cultural maps of our own design. And to our great joy we find our national symbols no longer empty of meaning, but gaining in significance at a logarithmic pace. The authorities of tradition, age and self-reflexive self-perpetuating citations have finally created viable infant referents for our symbols. What was impossible in the sixties - a national cultural identity unprelaced by the disempowering otherness of the "not" - is the nineties reality that thirty years of goin' down the road has revealed.

Peter, Pete and Joey, and Claude are lost souls wandering the uncharted territory of the cultural landscape of a young nation. As Atwood's exiles, prisoners and madmen they futilely seek meaning and assurance from the bankrupt philosophies and policies of the *ancien régime*. Similarly, Owen, Shebib and Groulx lacked viable precedents when attempting to create their distinctively Canadian protagonists - characters immediately identifiable as not British or French, not colonizers or colonized, not American, but purely Canadian. It seemed all the cultural landmarks available to them connoted their "otherness." How to signify "Canadian-ness" without resorting to the neutering "not"?

Owen revealed one viable landmark by at once subverting and celebrating the documentary tradition of the NFB. Groulx took his bearings from the French New Wave in de- and re- constructing the narrative. And Shebib, a mere five years later, drew on the NFB documentary for style and technique, and like Groulx, used those styles and techniques to reveal the tyranny of language and narrative closure.

While in retrospect the three films cited are undeniably Canadian in form and content, they serendipitously availed themselves of their contemporary traditions and techniques. Owen created his film by subterfuge, using NFB resources to fashion fiction from ostensibly documentary footage. Groulx referred to his Québécois documentary roots through Claude's return to the snowy rural community reminiscent of **Les raquetteurs** (Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx, 1958). And Shebib's film is informed as much by the style and substance of CBC television dramas as by contemporary filmmaking practices.

All three drew on previously "invisible" Canadian traditions and techniques. Atwood's "misplaced" landmarks and bearings guided them (and us) out of the cultural wilderness and into the recognition of our own identity and landscape, and in the process created new landmarks and bearings for future artists. In our films, as in other art forms, Canadian self-consciousness had developed into self-reflexivity. The mothers of Canadian literature, Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill, are honoured, respectively, by Margaret Atwood in **The Journals of Susanna Moodie** and Margaret Laurence in **The Diviners**. Television's "*This Hour Has 22 Minutes*" resurrects the comic traditions of "*This Hour Has Seven Days*," and Rita MacNeil pays her homage to

“Don Messer’s Jubilee” and *“The Tommy Hunter Show”* (while our local CBC weatherman Ian Black guilelessly idolizes the iconic Percy Saltzman). The popular prints by Robert Bateman celebrate the Group of Seven tradition of landscape painting while utilizing the photo-realist techniques of Alex Colville and Ken Danby. Lynn Myles sings of *“Hockey Night in Canada”* and Stephen Fearing of *“Welfare Wednesday”* in haunting lamentations reminiscent of the early work of Joni Mitchell and Gordon Lightfoot, while Neil Young, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell must continue to refer to themselves.

Similarly, Canadian films delight in their self-reflexivity. The iconization of Groulx, Owen and Shebib has transformed the form and content of their films into the very landmarks that their contemporaries so sorely lacked. Canadian filmmakers now take their bearings from a Canadian filmmaking tradition, rather than from foreign traditions that can only result in the further colonization of our cultural artifacts. As pioneers in a seemingly barren landscape, Groulx *et al* had no recourse but to utilize the borrowed tools and techniques of others. The tools and techniques utilized by today’s narrative filmmakers draw on the landmarks left by their predecessors. Systems, structures and formal strategies, largely inherited from our documentary tradition, provide bearings once rendered invisible by our inability to “see” them. These landmarks and bearings provided by the documentary tradition have been invaluable in the production of a Canadian narrative tradition. Thus my examination of the structure of Canadian narrative films will begin with a review of the history of our documentary tradition.

Though many Canadians will admit to preferring American fiction films, few would deny the global reputation of our documentaries as the epitome of their genre and

our filmic ambassadors to the world of cinema. With great pride we cite the growing number of Oscars and other foreign awards our documentaries have earned, yet we rarely consider them as sites for the production and re/creation of our national cultural identity. Still, the Canadian documentary tradition is the film tradition which best exemplifies our national culture, psyche - our very identity.

The documentary tradition in Canadian film is one of a “voiceless” colony speaking through the voice of its colonizer. Rare (until recent years) is the National Film Board documentary production that does not depend on a disembodied voice of authority to lend credence to its images. The voice of authority is, of course, a male voice. The patriarchal omniscience of the voice-over directs the viewer to the “correct” reading of the images presented, a reading sanctioned by the colonizer for the consumption of its subjects. This reification of the ideological relationship between Canada and Great Britain was first introduced to our documentaries by John Grierson. Influenced by Sergei Eisenstein’s **The Battleship Potemkin** (1925), and the success of his own films for the Empire Marketing Board, Grierson believed the role of documentary film was best exploited in its potential as a tool for the dissemination of state propaganda:

He sensed that film and other popular media had acquired leverage over ideas and actions once exercised by church and school. . . .

The documentary film maker, dramatizing issues and their implications in a meaningful way, could lead the citizen through the wilderness. . . .

That this implied an assumption of leadership, of an elitist role, did not trouble Grierson. He believed in “the elect having their duty.” They must not only explain, they must inspire. He was not frightened by the word “propaganda.” He could even say: “I look on cinema as a pulpit. . . .” (Barnouw 85)

From his imperially sanctioned pulpit, Grierson developed the “advocacy” model of documentary, a model he brought to Canada in establishing the NFB in 1939.

Due to the historical accident of his arrival in Canada at the outbreak of World War II, Grierson’s cinematic mission of propaganda was perfectly suited to the state’s requirements. Wartime is the one exception to the usual dichotomy between the agendas of artists and their national governments, and WW II was a time when “Patriotism was the order of the day, and all activities were designed to further and improve the war effort” (Pratley 62).

But patriotism in 1939 did not require a Canadian national identity, since our identities were first and foremost those of British subjects. As Margaret Atwood wrote in **Survival**, as colonials of the British (and for some, the French) Empire we assumed a colonial mentality, one that looks on its own landscape as a foreign wilderness and prompted Northrop Frye to alter the central question of Canadian national identity from “Who am I?” to “Where is here?” (17, 36).

Our nonfiction film tradition hinges on the Imperial Voice telling its subject what to see, and what was seen in those early films, was, by historical default, seen from a Eurocentric point of view. Atwood theorizes that through this “deluge of values and artefacts flowing in from the outside, from ‘there,’” we have learned to understand “that ‘there’ is always more important than ‘here’ or that ‘here’ is just another, inferior, version of ‘there’ . . .” (18). This mind-set served the war effort well, but when the war ended and Grierson abandoned the NFB and Canada, we were left with a template which had outlived its purpose.

Until the late fifties the documentary in Canada continued with the tradition of the guiding voice-over. Then, with the NFB's role in the rapid technical advances in smaller and lighter motion picture cameras, faster film stocks, and the development of synchronous sound recording, Canada finally found its own voice (Evans 70-72). The Canadian national anticipation of our 1967 Centennial and the concurrent rise in Québécois nationalist sentiments were both served by these technological developments, though in widely differing ways.

In Québec, Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx made **Les raquetteurs**, the seminal film of the *cinéma direct* movement. The film was hailed as a home-grown ethnography:

The innocence, confusion, lack of decorum, country-roughness, and humour demonstrate that the key element for the French was that this was, above all, *cinéma de parole*, the arrangement of spontaneous language which cultivates an aura of innocence. . . . Quebec audiences, as yet unnumbed by television, were thrilled at seeing and hearing themselves. (Evans 73-74)

In Ontario, the "*Candid Eye*" television series developed into a new film aesthetic which called for spontaneity over traditional formal concerns for scripting, lighting, or narrative "discipline," all of which were deemed to be "less important than catching the moment of drama" (73). Though ostensibly similar in genesis, the two movements grew apart to serve their individual socio-political agendas.

Because the Québécois filmmakers were among the intellectual elite who sought the liberation of their culture from the Anglo constraints of both the British Empire and the rest of Canada, their films became their weapons and the best examples of their *différence*. As the reaction to **Les raquetteurs** indicates, the Québécois were hungry for a

cinéma de la parole, a reflection and justification of their heritage, language and culture.

Thus the Québec cinema developed into one whose form, structure, and narrative concerns conspire to produce an artifact that is, as Pierre Perrault named his 1963 film, **Pour la suite du monde**; “for those who come after.” Wearing their hearts, as well as their political agenda, on their collective sleeve, Québec filmmakers of both fiction and documentary practices fought to remember and retain their difference.

Young aspiring filmmakers saw these films of Perrault, Groulx and others as the defining motivators of their nationalist movement. In “*Snapshots from Quebec*,” director Jean Pierre Lefebvre recalls:

It is interesting to note that the series “Candid Eye” was essentially the work of anglophones at the NFB, while **Les Raquetteurs** was the work of a small group of francophones. Though both the series and the short film by Gilles Groulx originated in a candid and spontaneous observation of reality and people, only **Les Raquetteurs** came within an inch of being banned by the directors of the Film Board. Why? In my opinion, because they sensed they were losing control of the way a people and its culture were represented with this film. The official reaction to the film . . . only served to reveal the intense fear Canada’s “official voice” had of dirtying its hands and its films with “marginal” subjects, or subjective interpretations. . . . *Cinema direct* for the first time gave a voice to those in front of the camera as well as those behind it. . . . *it was so good to break our ancestral silence*. (81-82, emphasis mine)

This breaking of the silence is the essence of the Quebec *cinéma direct* movement. The *cinéma de la parole* spoke to and of the silenced Francophone in the language of its subject. Because the spoken word was its motif as well as its thesis, *cinéma direct* gave less emphasis to the import of the visual image. The Image was the domain of Hollywood. As Susan Barrowclough notes, when Francophone Quebecers went to the movies:

They went for the decor, the actors, the *spectacle*, having already read in the paper the plot of the story. It was thus the images which sold an image: i.e. the American Way of Life. At the same time, the English language, incomprehensible and not understood, inscribed itself in the subconscious, as *the key to the image* . . . (8)

Thus the insistence on the Québécois dialect worked with the denial of The Image to create an aesthetic that defiantly announced their new/found identity as a distinct society. No longer the mute subjects for Hollywood images, nor the inferior colonial cousins of French society, Quebecers declared their independence and the recognition and celebration of their own existence.

The dichotomy that ensued between the cinemas of Québec and the rest of Canada was not unique, but reflected a divergence in the formal concerns of filmmakers throughout the world. The introduction of new technologies brought new choices for filmmakers, choices that often reflected their preference for either image or narrative. The documentary, in particular, was a site for heated ideological and formal debates in the sixties. The advent of synchronous sound recording, and smaller, more portable cameras required filmmakers to acknowledge their socio-political points of view. Filmmakers had to decide which formal structure best suited their ideological agenda, and these decisions stood as statements of principles to their viewers. Thus the early Québécois choice to favour the francophone voice over any pretensions to the existence of an innocent image, openly proclaimed their ethnographic biases, and acknowledged their role as cultural archaeologists and advocates.

Québec filmmakers, like those of other emerging nations, viewed the voice-over as an unnatural and controlling feature of traditional Griersonian documentaries. The divergence in construction, then, became one between those who had faith in the unmediated power of the image, and those who chose to include, even *involve* the voices of those being filmed.

The inclusion of those voices necessitated the exclusion of the voice-over. As Barnouw observes, “When the field footage began to talk and assume *human* dimensions, it raised problems: the commentary was in the way” (251, emphasis mine). Indeed, it was this acknowledgment of the humanity of those whose lives were being recorded that demanded the silencing of that guiding voice and the refusal of its direction. By speaking in their own voices, Quebeckers asserted their humanity and refuted the controlling, patronizing voice of the Empire. Thus, addressing the problem of survival for the Québécois in this Canadian wilderness has come to incorporate both the spiritual re/location of their culture and the symbolic shrugging off of the imposed Griersonian classification of their identities as contented parishioners at the foot of the Imperial pulpit.

At the intersection of the real and the imaginary, of the literal and the figurative, of melancholia and the banal, resides the constructed degree-zero of the Québécois tradition of *cinéma direct*. This precarious axis, constructed through the inscription of poetry on history (and/or vice versa) exists only with the cogent blessings of all parties

concerned: the films' "actors," the filmmakers, and the films' viewers (commodity / producer / consumer).

In **Pour la suite du monde** (1963), the people of Ile-aux-Coudres have agreed to the request of filmmaker Pierre Perrault to record the re-enactment of their long abandoned tradition of whale hunting. The film's ostensible *raison d'être*, then, is the preservation of images of technique for the edification of "those who come after." Ironically, the elders have failed to teach their skills to those who are here *now*, necessitating the intervention of outsiders (the filmmakers) to record their instructions before it's too late.

In order to maintain the illusion of objective documentation, the filmmakers foreground the process of production. The subjects are shown discussing the project, and (what is usually) *profilmic* planning is incorporated into the text. In contrast to more naive forms of documentary, not just the whale hunt itself, but the necessary preparations *and* the justifications of both hunt and film are recorded. Thus the apparent transparency of document, narrative, and purpose collude to disguise the illusory nature of the finished product. "A manifest avowal of content inaugurates the latent repudiation of form" (Bellemare, 39).

While he eschews the term *cinéma direct* in favour of *un cinéma vécu* (Harcourt, "Pierre Perrault" 126), Perrault cannot resist the creative impulse to aestheticize the lived experiences of Grand Louis and his confreres. And while "At no point is there a privileged voice to tell us what to think" (131), Perrault's hand, if not his voice, gently

guides the viewer from the particular to the pastoral. The non-diegetic inclusion of lyric shots of romping children in bucolic fields belies an agenda outside of ethnography.

When Perrault's gaze captures *la vie vécu* he sees not history but poetry. In order to show us his vision, Perrault cannot simply re/present history; he must *recreate* it.

The recreated history - the whale hunt - is the false intrusion of the past into the present (non-viable technology) and the present into the past (the absurdity of "recording" what no longer is). It functions merely as a pretense for Perrault's unspoken purpose - to create and communicate a poetics as sensuous and tenuous as the one his own gaze captured.

In high contrast to the melancholia of **Pour la suite du monde** is the banal of Jacques Leduc's **Chronique de la vie quotidienne** (1977). Released from the demands of re-creation, Leduc is content to record what is, producing images of *une vie vécu* that expose the construction of Perrault's as those of *une histoire joué*. While the narrative is structured to create a representation of a week of everyday life, each "daily" text exposes the non-teleological nature and the mind-numbing banality of existence.

From Monday's revelations of what "*Happiness is,*" to the "*Granite Womb*" of the weekend, **Chronique** tells the story of lives lived without self-determined plots or fondly imagined pasts to direct them. When happiness is defined in terms of private ownership of real estate and shiny new American cars, imagination turns away from the memories of deprivation to dreams of easy success - whether at the bingo, the race track, a dance marathon, a hypnotist, or through the services of a Cupid for hire. Fantasy lives

atrophy in the land of the banal. The dream prize is reduced to the thrill of anticipation itself; the bingo jackpot includes Olympic Lottery tickets. “Play bingo tonight and win the chance to dream of a real win!” The ostensible prize of the dance marathon is a Caribbean vacation, but the contest itself functions as a pretext for the public performance of private fantasies. A woman “of a certain age” competes in a too-snug, too-short scarlet dress; black bra straps and bleached and permed hair defiantly proclaiming a youth her tired face belies. The glamour of ballroom dancing, like Norma Desmond’s makeup, is a thin veneer over the face of *une vie vécu*.

The “*womb of night*” is the hypnotic appeal of impossible yet necessary fantasies. The tired routine of everyday existence requires the sustenance of dreams. If, according to Bellemare, Denys Arcand “has continually tracked down that site where the real stumbles” (37), Jacques Leduc has located it at the intersection of fantasy and the banal. At that intersection signification overwhelms the real; capture of the exterior real founders on the shores of the recognition of the (equally) real of perception. By acknowledging the impossibility of the cinematic capture of perception, Leduc comes closer to revealing *la vie vécu*.

An integral component of banality is the isolation of individuals within the silent cells of their daily lives. “The banal itself is a lure to the extent that it is invariably present to replace something else” (Sami-Ali, qtd. in Bellemare, 37). If we tend to take too much comfort in the routine, it is because “something else” is missing. If work expands to fill the time available, it is because we have lost the ability to imagine what we might do with

that time. **Chronique de la vie quotidienne**, through the techniques of *cinéma direct*, exposes that loss by capturing what *is* and allowing the viewer to imagine what is missing. The film allows the individual viewers to construct the absence in their own terms, acknowledging the particular of perception of both object and subject.

We cannot know what void the ballroom dancer refuses through her performance; we cannot know how the spectator in the next seat perceives the dancer's refusal, nor how that fellow viewer acts in their own daily refusals. The banal doubly prohibits meaningful communications, first by the isolation engendered by the rigid adherence to the routine, and second by the inaccessibility of signification in an existence governed by artificial modes of perception. "The signifier loses its vitality, empties itself contradictorally [sic] enmeshed in its own excess of meaning" (Bellemare, 36).

On the eve of the postmodern, Leduc exposes a culture whose modes of signification have become so saturated with meaning as to render them virtually meaningless. He documents a Québec obsessed with the mundane pursuit of dreams manufactured through the hegemony of cultural imperialism and sanctioned by corporate interests. By presenting images of what is, rather than retreating into the imaginary of fiction or the contrived re-creation of the past, Jacques Leduc locates the site of the failure of the real. In the Québec of 1977, at the intersection of melancholia and the banal, *la vie quotidienne*, the everyday life of the Québécois resides at that site. In an articulation more poetic than Perrault's songs "of skeletons and geology" (Harcourt,

"*Pierre Perrault*" 134), *histoires* of what was, Leduc directs us to contemplations of what might be.

The cinematic tradition took a different direction in the rest of Canada. Unlike Québec, which had found its voice and was ready to speak it at every opportunity, the rest of Canada seemed unable or unwilling to locate and/or speak in a voice that did not mimic the patriarchal voice of The Father. Either afraid to take on the typical adolescent challenge of refusal and rebellion, or oblivious to the necessity of this defining act of separation from its parents, English Canada remained silent and therefore unintelligible and/or nonexistent as a nation. This silence took two forms in Canadian films. They either continued mutely to mouth the commentary written and spoken in traditional Griersonian tomes - a national version of the Charlie McCarthy routine - or they simply withheld speech entirely, presenting images without commentary and therefore without an *acknowledged* point of view.

In "*The Silent Subject in English Canadian Film*," Seth Feldman theorized that this type of silence was the restraint that led to a new, and often problematic aesthetic in English Canadian documentaries, with the result that by the seventies the NFB had "institutionalized . . . the signification of veracity through the withholding of both voice-over and *the structuring voice-over can impose*" (53, emphasis mine). Silence, then, became the ultimate signifier of unmediated fact in English Canadian documentaries. The images were thought to speak for themselves and the absence of spoken commentary "proved" a concurrent lack of authorial bias. The problem here, of course, is that the

spoken word is only one of many formal strategies filmmakers may utilize to impose a structure on their images. Camera angle, point of view, lens focal length, depth of field, lighting, location, and composition are all variables at the command of the cinematographer, even before their inevitable manipulation by the film's editor or the addition of a sound track.

Another problem with this stance, as Feldman notes in his analysis of **Nobody Waved Good-bye**, is that:

The Voice has now been internalized in our perception of the film; it need no longer be articulated on the sound track. Sympathize as we may with Peter's adolescent awkwardness, we have been told - by our entire heritage of socially responsible documentary cinema - what must happen to him. We watch Peter from the perspective of the Imperial Voice . . . (53)

Thus it is revealed that in Canadian films neither strategy of silence can ever truly avoid imposing a colonial structure on the images they accompany. By refusing to speak in our own voice we have not refused The Voice: we have only provided a silence through which the Imperium can still be heard. Silence can never be a productive identity producing or proclaiming act - only a reactionary response or resignation to an irresistible force. Yet silence remained the premiere cultural strategy in English Canada.

Michael Dorland, in "*A Thoroughly Hidden Country*," interprets Canadian cultural silence as a psychological "acting out" of deep-seated feelings of *ressentiment*, the repression of a terrible anger whose revelation, since unspeakable, is unthinkable. Drawing on the writings of Northrop Frye, George Grant, Harold Innis, and Marshall McLuhan, Dorland summarizes the Canadian cultural experience in terms of this

ressentiment; “the ‘creative no’ developed by one modern state, namely Canada, in its experience with the *adiaphora* of the history, culture, and multinational organization of modernity” (47). This “creative no” is manifested in a strategy of silence, a silence that is an angry resistance to the impositions placed on our national imaginary by our colonial history and the immensity of our landscape. He submits *ressentiment* as the underpinnings of Atwood’s literary theories of **Survival**, and the source of repressed anger found in the landscapes of The Group of Seven (49-50, 57-58). The art of The Group of Seven, in particular, he argues, was a reactionary response to a “clichéization” of the Canadian landscape in painting and photographic traditions (57-58).

This “clichéization,” of course, was the visual correlative to the Canadian colonial subjectivity addressed by the Imperial Voice. Just as The Voice speaks to a homogenous, colonized subject, so the clichéd landscape is the one imagined by the distant Empire. A colonized landscape is a generalized one which can never speak of any regional specificity - only of an imaginary, idealized vision of “there-ness.” Colonial there-ness cannot recognize any internal diversity. Thus our landscapes were reduced to recognizable clichés of Canadianness and our identities reduced to a single recognizable colonized subjectivity.

Similarly, our documentary film tradition has often been associated with the depiction of a depoliticized “natural” landscape. Indeed, for many of us the sound of the call of the loon immediately summons memories of darkened classrooms illuminated only by the pastoral images of Canada projected by yet another nature film from the NFB.

More recently these memories have been augmented by the satirization of this aural logo by “Bob and Doug Mackenzie” of “SCTV’s *Great White North*.” The iconic stature of the NFB is assured when it is as recognizably Canadian as toques, plaid lumber jack jackets, back bacon and beer!

But does the amenability of our comedians to recognize the clichés of Canadianness indicate an alternative to the inevitability of *ressentiment* and silence? If we have finally achieved an identity independent of our colonizers, perhaps we have found an identity of our own without recognizing it. Unfortunately, these clichés reveal neither. Instead what we find is the perpetuation of the myths of our colonial working/lower class past and the attempt to usurp the signification of an essentially foreign landscape as our own.

Just as the belief that all Canadians live in igloos reveals an exterior ignorance of Canada, so the assumed “ownership” of the landscape betrays an interior silencing of our history. As George Grant reminds us, as the descendants of Europeans this land can never truly be our own because the memory/knowledge of our coming belies our claim. And the Imperial purpose for our coming has precluded the possibility of the land’s adopting us:

That conquering relation to place has left its mark within us. When we go into the Rockies we may have the sense that gods are there. But if so, they cannot manifest themselves to us as ours. They are the gods of another race, and we cannot know them because of what we did. There can be nothing immemorial for us except the environment as object. (**Technology and Empire** 17)

And for those of us who have immigrated more recently, this landscape and its gods can only signify the new and alien, never the traditional or the familial. Thus the landscape must remain unknowable to many of us, and ancestral to few.

Here we detect another explanation for the failure of the authority of The Voice. Even in its anonymity the Voice was never without its patriarchal European pedigree. Effective modes of subjectivity require the subjects' recognition and acceptance of the authority of the interpellation. Aboriginal peoples, recent and/or non-European immigrants, former colonials of non-British colonies, as well as many of the Canadian-born offspring of early colonials, do not recognize authority in the Voice. Without the willing and unconscious acceptance of interpellation, subjectivity is impossible. Thus the Voice of the documentary tradition is neither "abstract" nor "resonant with authority" to many of its intended subjects (Barnouw 131). Instead, it is heard as a cliché, an imitation of an outmoded Eurocentric, class structuring, elitist Voice whose omnipotence has long since been challenged and annulled.

Thus both landscape and voice are always/already foreign or unknowable to many Canadians. Because of our diversity of heritage, history, language and culture, Canadians are unable to share in a homogenous subjectivity and therefore unable to share in a recognizable unity of identity. Lost in our own landscape and deaf to direction, mute through our choice of silence, and as Margaret Atwood submits in *Survival*, blinded to our national reality by the reflections offered by foreign "mirrors" (16), Canadians are unaware of their own existence, let alone their maps. The body of literature to which she

refers, as well as our cinema and other cultural articulations, may well exist as potential maps for Canadians, but until we recognize ourselves as the intended readers of those maps they will remain unread or unintelligible. Our subjectivity has been mis/placed to the point that our scholars have had to ask “Where is here?” rather than “Who am I?”, and our artists have had to continually document our landscape in order to help us locate ourselves within it. These re/creations of Canada, these unacknowledged, unrecognized mirrors of our physical and cultural landscapes are the maps to which Atwood looks for the key to our survival. And just as valid as our literature are our cinematic traditions in fiction, animation, experimental and documentary film genres.

Atwood closes her argument in **Survival** with a call for “a ‘jail-break,’ an escape from our old habits of looking at things, and a ‘re-creation,’ a new way of seeing, experiencing and imaging - or imagining - which we ourselves have helped to shape” (246). In essence, what she is calling for is a recognition and acceptance of our subjectivity as Canadians; an ability to “see” ourselves in our arts through our active participation in their creation and consumption. If the maps and mirrors have always/already been in place, then it is the task of our cultural intelligentsia to locate them for us, and provide the bearings necessary to attune us to their interpellations.

If the documentary tradition we have inherited is one predicated on an imperial Voice of authority, that voice has been rendered impotent in this postmodern age and this postcolonial country. Because of the fatal timing of Grierson’s arrival in Canada, the Canadian documentary tradition was born of the wartime romance of Imperialism and

propaganda. And as the bastard child of this union, the Canadian documentary film is ill equipped to survive in a postcolonial nation. Having rejected the patronizing Voice of authority, Canada has begun the difficult project of self-actualization through the revolutionary act of speaking in its own, albeit untried and breaking, voice.

During its “Quiet Revolution,” Québec began, through its *cinéma de la parole*, to speak in its own voice - long before the rest of Canada was even willing to acknowledge that it too, might have a voice of its own. By recognizing their unique subjectivity Québec filmmakers were able to create films which spoke to the Québécois in their own language. The rest of Canada, a predominantly English-speaking Canada, however, must first recognize that even though they share a language with both their historical and their current cultural colonizers, they too, have a voice through which they can speak of their Canadianness. In “*Canada: New World Without Revolution*” Northrop Frye locates that voice in our documentary tradition:

it is still perhaps the absence of a revolutionary tradition in Canada, *the tendency to move continuously rather than discontinuously through time*, that has given Canadian culture one very important and distinctive characteristic. This is its respect for the documentary. Canadian painting began with documentary painters Canadian film has always been remarkable for its sensitive documentary feeling (179-180, emphasis mine)

Thus Frye links Innisian notions of Canada as a “time biased” culture with that culture’s artists’ historical preference for documentary forms of narrative. As a nation whose existence is one rooted in perseverance and persistence of memory rather than in the revolution and separation from history preferred by our neighbours to the south, it

only seems natural that our mode of cultural articulation of choice should be that of documentation.

Further, Frye writes in *"The Narrative Tradition in English-Canadian Poetry"* in **The Bush Garden**, that "the Canadian poet [read "artist"] cannot write in a distinctively Canadian language; he is compelled to take the language he was brought up to speak . . . and attempt to adjust that language to an environment which is foreign to it" (145). This is problematic when the language cannot support the images the artist wants to recreate. "What the poet sees in Canada . . . is very different from . . . what his European contemporaries see" in their landscapes, yet the Canadian is compelled to use their language (146). So how have our artists managed to reproduce their own cultural landscapes burdened as they are with a language inappropriate to their environment? The question of identity, then, is perhaps not one of the *language* of our articulations, but perhaps one of its *cadence*.

Taking up Frye's discourse on language and landscape, Dennis Lee has theorized that "the colonial writer does not have words of his own. . . . the texture, weight and connotation of almost every word we use comes from abroad" (*"Writing in Colonial Space"* 399). This insight forced Lee, a Canadian poet, to recognize that as a colonial writer, it is the *cadence* of his verse, not the borrowed words, that give his work its meaning, context and identity. Lee uses the concept of *cadence* in a role similar to the one Bhabha has used for the function of the *performative*, and semiologists have used for *parole*. Cadence denotes the unconscious ability to use and hear words in their Canadian

context; a colonial (or, I submit, a postcolonial) context which augments and/or subtracts from the original to reveal a meaning “still unspoken, but rampant with held-in energy” (400-401). Lee further asserts that cadence, in colonial cultures such as Canada’s, is a “direction one’s *inner ear*” takes to locate the “living barrage” of “indigenous meaning” in the words we have appropriated from other cultures (400-401, emphasis mine).

Margaret Atwood, too, knew of the power of cadence as an indicator of identity. In this excerpt from “*First Neighbours*” in **The Journals of Susanna Moodie** she wrote of the unexpected language barriers faced by the newly arrived British immigrant Moodie to English-speaking Upper Canada:

The people I live among, unforgivingly
previous to me, grudging
the way I breathe their
property, the air,
speaking a twisted dialect to my differently-
shaped ears

though I tried to adapt

.....

in this area where my damaged
knowing of the language means
prediction is forever impossible
(14-15)

The English spoken in Canada was as alien to her “differently-shaped ears” as the French she encountered on “*Disembarking at Quebec*,” where she found *she* was “a word / in a foreign language” (11). And, anticipating Lee’s discovery that he was “mute in the midst of all the riches of a language” (399), Atwood acknowledges the “inept remarks, /

futile and spastic gestures” that mark Moodie as “a minor invalid” whose “damaged / knowledge of the language” renders her, too, virtually mute in Canada (“*First Neighbours*” 14-15). The postcolonial ear, whether described as “differently-shaped” or “inner,” is the result of an (embraced) indigenous recontextualization of language, which, of course, is the manifestation, even if unconscious, of the location of subjectivity. As Roland Barthes has noted, texts “desire” and “choose” their subjects, creating symbiotic relationships of mutual desire: “*I desire the author: I need his figure . . . as he needs mine (except to ‘prattle’)*” (**The Pleasure of the Text** 27).

“Myth,” Frye wrote in the Preface to **The Bush Garden**, “is the key to a poem’s real meaning . . . the integral meaning presented by its metaphors, images and symbols” (ix). But he went on to augment the parameters of his definition in two of the essays that followed. “There is another kind of mythology, one produced by society itself, the object of which is to persuade us to accept existing social values,” he suggested in “*Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada*” (235). And further, in “*Silence in the Sea*” that “myths are expressions of concern, of man’s care for his own destiny and heritage, his sense of the supreme importance of preserving his community, his constant interest in questions about his ultimate coming and going” (194). It is through these myths, then, that Canadian artifacts come to desire, and to be desired by, their Canadian subjects. Once the interpellated come to recognize themselves as “chosen, as the addressee[s] of a call” their identity is confirmed, and reified (Žižek 224). These insights into the active workings of

cultural mythologies, then, allows for the recognition of our documentary tradition as a legitimate, *because mythic*, representation of Canadian knowledge.

Recent Canadian documentaries have revealed a new willingness to accept and preserve the restrictions our heritage has placed on our language and landscape. By the open acknowledgment of the strictures of this national genre our filmmakers have been able to work with and through the “Great Tradition” without succumbing to its pitfalls.

In **Picture of Light** (1994), director Peter Mettler appears in and narrates his own film, thereby giving a face and form to the previously disembodied Voice. This strategy deproblematizes the Voice, acknowledging its source as it articulates its agenda and biases. Mettler takes great care to explain his mission and goals in visiting Churchill, Manitoba, as well as his methods of photography and documentation. We anxiously await the images he audibly fears he cannot reproduce. “It may well be that the Northern Lights cannot be filmed,” he says, “that film or media is in conflict with nature. Is it just a surrogate for the real thing? Is film a surrogate for real experience?” In sharing his ruminations over whether or not the Northern Lights can be filmed, Mettler draws us into his text and creates the conditions for successful, if overt, interpellation.

Thus interpellated, when Mettler quotes a resident of Churchill as describing his town as “a meeting place of edges, ocean and land, Indian and Inuit, trees and tundra - the Real North and the Civilized South,” we can easily make the imaginative leap from the particular of Churchill to the general of Canada. And when he refers to his experiment as the manifestation of a “desire to be part of time - like the weather,” we understand the

Arctic weather to which he refers, from the relative comforts of Victoria, or Hamilton, or even Ottawa.

If the text of **Picture of Light** is of the filming of the Northern Lights, its subtext is of the inadequacy of language or image alone to convey meaning. When Mettler refers to the “one hundred and seventy words for snow” in Inuktitut, his image is shown walking over the omnipresent snow accompanied by the familiar crunching sound for which English has no word. Later, as he interviews various local people, he underscores their inability to find the right words to describe the Aurora Borealis by imposing the words of one over the images of another. As their hands wildly flail, the innkeeper, the shopkeeper, the priest and the hunter each try to articulate their perceptions under the soundtrack of his friend’s description. Mettler’s technique emphasizes the impotence of their words while their body language augments and discounts their stories.

Later Mettler reminds us of the inflated power of images in the era of mass media. “We know what ‘is,’ by what is represented, as much as by what we have seen for ourselves,” he says, in a sly *caveat emptor* to the viewer. And later still, his images speak volumes that the sound track cannot belie in its absurdity. Over indescribably beautiful images of the aurora the inadequate techno-babble of Dr. Don Lind of the space Shuttle Atlas I can be heard:

Now, the aurora is of interest to us because if one of these great impulses of energy comes into the Earth’s ionosphere it wipes out long distance radio communications and causes power surges in the high altitude power lines, and this sort of thing, but more importantly, this magnetosphere is the environment in which we live and we simply need to understand it.

Picture of Light uses the documentary genre to question the ability of film to document nature and the ability of language to convey meaning. In and of themselves these issues would qualify the film as a valid articulation of Canadian identity, but the addition of its ironic tone sets up a document of an undeniably Canadian pedigree. To add to the irony, it should be noted that, yet again, it has taken a cultural “outsider,” a Swiss, to document Canada for Canadians.

Irony, again, is the subtext of Alanis Obomsawin’s **Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance** (1993). As she exploits and doubly subverts the traditional Voice of authority by having it speak in the words and voice of an Aboriginal woman, Obomsawin allows the film’s narrative to proclaim its bias while appropriating a recognizable structure for the interpellation of Canadians.

Kanehsatake tells a uniquely Canadian story from a previously silenced voice. The landscape depicted is recognizably Canadian, but photographed from a pre-colonial point of view; that of its indigenous peoples. The historical “fact” of the Mohawk defense of The Pines from the destruction of its burial grounds for the construction of a golf course is documented from a perspective both startlingly new and yet unquestionably Canadian. Through the retelling of the events of the summer of 1990 from a feminized, aboriginal point of view, many Canadians are exposed for the first time to an interpellation which addresses them as interlopers in their own country. This interpellation, made by Canadians to Canadians, underscores the diversity *within*, which is integral to our understanding of ourselves *as* Canadians. That the subjectivity implied

by the narrative is one of guilt or shame, yet simultaneously assuredly national, exemplifies the Canadian psyche as one of inclusion.

The ironic appropriation of the Voice in **Kanehsatake** is doubled and redoubled. The voice of the patriarchal male European colonizer has been replaced by a feminine aboriginal voice which speaks (!), not of colonization, but of its refusal to accept any inherent authority in the voice of the Other. Further, this voice of a warrior nation speaks of peace and negotiation, of *resistance*, rather than aggression. And, as an aboriginal *woman* directing an NFB production, Obomsawin *twice* appropriates, exploits, usurps and subverts the authority of the traditional Voice even before she begins to speak.

Yet the document produced is finally one which exemplifies both our nation and our documentary tradition. The film assumes the traditional structure and agenda of Canadian documentaries in that it is concerned with the preservation of our heritage through the conservation of images. The appropriation of voice cannot be understood as problematic since, as Lee has noted, as the members of a former colony, our only means of articulation has been through the appropriation of whole languages. Thus the tradition itself is one of appropriation.

The history that is retold is one dependent on a tradition of myths with which not all Canadians are familiar. But it is a tradition that, as George Grant's spiritual descendants "we cannot know . . . because of what we are" (**Technology** 17). Our Canadian national mythology thus incorporates the recognition of the gaps in our self-knowledge; accepting our colonial heritage without disavowing our complicity or shame

in it. **Kanehsatake** reminds us of those gaps, exposes that complicity, and heightens our shame as we are shown that our sins are not all safely in the distant past.

Although non-indigenous Canadians may not actually *desire* the pain that accompanies the recognition of self in this text, it is clear that we are the subjects of its interpellation. This film has “chosen” us, *as Canadians*, and without us would surely “prattle” (Barthes, **Pleasure** 27). In his examination of Lacan’s theories, Slavoj Žižek points out that as we watch fiction films our gaze is symptomatic of our subjectivity: “the viewer is compelled to assume that the scene he witnesses is staged for his eyes, that his/her gaze was included in it from the very beginning” (223). This, he submits, is “the illusion that defines the ideological interpellation” of a film’s viewer (224).

The central illusion for documentary films of **Kanehsatake**’s genre, of course is one of an *unstaged* scene, but the implications of his observation remains; “we perceive ourselves as chosen, as the addressee of a call, because *we recognized ourselves in it*” (224, emphasis mine). Aboriginal peoples can thus recognize themselves as the protagonists of **Kanehsatake**, while non-aboriginal Canadians recognize themselves as the antagonists in the text, and both understand themselves as the chosen subjects of it. Indeed, the film’s very *raison d’être* is the inclusion of our gaze; and while the historical events were surely not staged for the film, the film *itself* was created and edited, and by design staged for our interpellation as Canadians.

Both **Picture of Light** and **Kanehsatake** subvert the Canadian documentary tradition while still managing to exploit its form and structure. By utilizing a recognizable

form, the filmmakers have kept their films accessible to the mainstream Canadian national subjectivity, while insinuating their own point of view on topics most Canadians imagined they already knew “all about.”

Mettler’s film reinterprets the meaning of the Canadian north and the Northern Lights through its questioning of the authority of language, the disembodied Voice, and the documentary image. A documentary about documentaries, it speaks to Canadians about all things Canadian without ever having to voice its agenda.

Similarly, the effect of **Kanehsatake**’s radical subversion of our subjectivity is, paradoxically, a testimonial to, and the re-emphasis of our national identity. Both films constitute the “jailbreak” called for by Margaret Atwood in **Survival**, providing a “new way of seeing, experiencing and imaging - or imagining” our own cultural landscape (246). Mettler has re/imagined the Canadian North, and thereby the Canadian imagination. Obomsawin, acknowledging our inherited traditions, has re/created them in her own image. That these imaginings and images are not the ones we have come to expect, cannot negate the fact that they have chosen us and that we recognize ourselves in them.

The Canadian film tradition had once been based on the reified patriarchal Voice of the documentary. The Voice-over overwhelmed the image and thereby the spectator with irrefutable omniscience. We grew accustomed to accepting direction from the Voice, never questioning its authority over the image. The films of the sixties exposed our cultural map as a virtual *tabula rasa* - uncharted territory. In discarding the old maps we

rejected our most familiar landmark, the former map maker himself, Our Imperial Father. The absent landmark left a silent void where the Voice of the father had been, resulting in a loss of bearings. We had traded in our previous identities as prisoners/exiles of the Empire or misplaced/mad Americans for the nonidentity of a lost orphan. Without a father to give us a name and a history we had no knowledge of self, only an acknowledgment of what we were *not*. No longer prisoners, exiles or madmen we were simply lost. We were lost orphans without identity, or place or (pre) destination. Where do we go when we no longer have our Father to tell us where and who we are and where we should go? When Don Owen made **Runner** in 1962, his images were dominated by the British/American intonations of W. H. Auden speaking the rhythms of an ancient metre. But by 1964, in **Nobody Waved Goodbye**, both filmmaker and protagonist were resisting those authorities, and the images presented themselves without the benefit of a guiding Voice-over. Bereft of paternal direction, protagonist and spectator alike were abandoned and left to find their own way. Orphans by our own design, we stood at an unmarked crossroads, undirected in an unknown landscape.

Nobody Waved Goodbye, the fiction film which had originally been intended as a documentary, opens, as do so many subsequent films, *in medias res*. Without formal textual introduction, Peter and Julie are shown playfully lingering in an urban park. Similarly, the film ends with images, not of closure, but of potential: Peter's embarking on a journey, and Julie's pregnancy. Throughout the film Peter encounters various discouraging people (his parents, his employer, his counselor) and events (failure at

school, loss of job and apartment, Julie's pregnancy), none of which are linked causally. Nor can these events, mired as they are in the mundane, correctly be identified as crises. The plot is less concerned with cause and effect, or crisis and resolution, than it is with presenting/exposing Peter's on-going experience as a young man with no discernible identity.

Themes of agency and identity are also apparent in **Le chat dans le sac**, as Claude considers his social and political future. Claude's inability to act or decide is reflected in the formal structure of the text. The narrative is episodic with emphasized gaps and an ambiguity of temporal order which renders any viewer's attempts to re/structure a linear text futile. And Claude's lack of attachment to Barbara is so defined that their break-up cannot possibly be construed as a crisis of any magnitude. The text also resists closure through Claude's symbolic return to the snowy rural Québec landscape of a fondly imagined past.

The films that followed **Nobody Waved Goodbye**, **Le chat dans le sac**, and **Goin' Down the Road** built on their examples. The self-reflexive mythologies they first acknowledged and developed have created the maps that Anderson and Atwood have shown to be essential to the maintenance of cultural identity and the reification of a viable sense of nation for its peoples. Through the sixties and into the seventies, fiction films took their bearings from the documentary tradition, and from the examples of its subversion, as seen in the *cinéma direct* and in the iconic films of Owen, Groulx, and Shebib.

Mon Amie Pierrette (Jean Pierre Lefebvre, 1967) begins and ends on a highway between Montreal and Lac Bonnalay. The circular structure is reinforced through the mirrored introduction/farewell to both driver (Yves) and pedestrian (Raoul). The apparent plot of “Love’s Labours Lost” exists only in Yves’ mind. Formal gaps, temporal ambiguity, and the intermingling of images of subjective desire with those of “real” events combine to reveal an implicit text centred on Pierrette as the subject/site of ideological negotiations. Pierrette, as future/potential personified, mediates between history (Yves and her parents) and contemporality (Yves and Raoul) in contexts of family, religion, art and politics. Yves’ dual placement in past and present, and as agent of memory and desire, further clouds Pierrette’s choices. Thus her final rejection of Yves (“You’re not my friend”) is rendered ambiguous, a resistance rather than a rejection. Though she turns away from him (past and present), she (the future), the children and the dog (the “ideal” family) are still in *his* car, on the same road between the urban and the rural as Raoul (present) and her parents (past). This proliferation of signifiers effectively thwarts any imposed closure.

Similarly, the formal strategies of **Isabel** (Paul Almond, 1968) encourage the acceptance of ambiguity from both protagonist and spectator. Again, the title character acts as a site of negotiation, now between memory and desire, past and present, language and culture, urban and rural, determination and agency, nihilism and hope. In her final embrace with Jason, Isabel embraces ambiguity, accepts uncertainty, and leaves the viewer to contemplate potential rather than closure.

In contrast, Pete and Joey in **Goin' Down the Road** are unable to accept the uncertainties of life. This is partially due to their naïve and peremptory acceptance of the American Dream, and partially to their total inability to deal with the constant state of crisis in which they live. While other texts lack an acute *defining* crisis to be resolved, Pete and Joey encounter so many that attributing them to any single causal chain becomes impossible. Chronic crisis allows no respite for existential contemplation. No cause or solution for their condition is offered. The film illustrates the futility in seeking closure as it leaves us in the middle of a journey and the beginning of a new life.

Like **Mon Amie Pierrette**, **Mon Oncle Antoine** (Claude Jutra, 1971) fondly celebrates the continuity of family and religious values of Québécois culture, while acknowledging the forces that threaten them. Benoit assists his family in preparations both for Christmas and for funerals. Death provides an ongoing and necessary source of income for the family, as do the much anticipated Christmas Eve shoppers. The Christmas Eve death of the Poulin boy counterpoints the promise of Benoit's youth and confounds closure, as his family gathers around his coffin in a surreal Nativity crèche. For Benoit and his family, death brings hope, just as their Catholicism assures them that death provides for resurrection.

La tendresse ordinaire (Jacques Leduc, 1973) exemplifies the tension created by our concurrent lack and proliferation of knowledge through a text which defies teleological emplotment. While the plot ostensibly centres on Jocelyn's journey home to Notre-Dame-du-Portage from a four month winter sojourn in Shefferville, the text

concerns itself with the continuity of social traditions and relationships. The formal embedding of flash-forwards and/or flash-backs, and the layering of spatially and temporally mis/placed sound over those images results in the confounding of diegetic linearity.

The film opens with a succession of seemingly unrelated images. An extreme close up of Esther as she states “Christ, it’s cold, and dark too,” is followed by an image of a decorated cake inscribed “*La Tendresse Ordinaire, 1972.*” This visual image is juxtaposed with an overlaid aural image that suggests a knock at the door, followed by the sound of footsteps crunching through squeaky-cold snow (note that a visually unmodified sound could connote so much information regarding season and extremes of temperature, indicates a culturally specific interpellation). The addition of the sound of fiddle music then heralds the anticipated visual image that confirms the aural allusion; we see the feet of an unknown person walking on a freshly ploughed, pristine white rural road. As the camera tracks along with the walker (later identified as Jocelyn), it pulls back enough to reveal that he is carrying a fiddle case, an image which suggests the walker is the performer of the music, but which heightens the awareness of the diegetic disparity between the visual and aural imagery - he is not currently playing his fiddle. Occasionally the text will verify the spectator’s assumptions, as when Jocelyn is confirmed to be the walker and the fiddler. But often those assumptions are proved to be either misguided (the knocking is the sound of Luce’s spoon tapping the mixing bowl) or entirely wrong (the decorated cake is not the one Esther and Luce prepare).

As the structural cues and constraints are repeatedly proved unreliable, unintelligible, and/or irrelevant, the viewer is compelled to actively sort through the information, only to discover that the apparent textual fecundity is offset by concurrent structural gaps and elisions. The cake baking sequence illustrates how this strategy serves to enrich textual reception.

This sequence provides much more information about cake preparation than a typical Classical narrative might. The carefully repeated recipe is seen to be part of an oral tradition: Luce has no written copy, nor does Esther write it down. The ingredients are not simply listed, but explained and individually savoured. The women take sensual pleasure from the feel of the eggs, the aroma of the vanilla and the flavour of the batter. The process and procedure - setting the oven temperature, the choice of nuts, the most efficient mixing technique, the careful sifting and counting of cups of flour - takes precedence over the results - the cake is left uneaten. When Luce states (off screen, as the camera stubbornly remains fixed on a now-empty frame while they place the cake in the oven), "Now, we have to wait," it is not a lament over "wasted" time, but a simple acknowledgment of the conditions. Waiting does not connote non-productive anticipation, but an opportunity for further pleasures. In an extended take the women enter the dining room, peel and eat luscious oranges while discussing the "funny things that kids say." The pleasure they take imbues the potentially banal small-talk-over-a-snack with a celebratory aura. Later (?), they play with a stereoscope and later still (?), repair a floor all the while talking about Jocelyn, relationships and letters. The episodic

continuity of their activities and conversations suggests that they are temporarily structured, *but not limited by*, the duration of the cake's baking time.

The actual baking time of a cake is closely approximated by the on-screen baking time, which in turn, closely approximates the film's screening time. This signals the textual weight of a sequence which would normally be elided from a classical narrative. In such a text, Luce would have proposed "Let's make a cake" while walking into the kitchen. The ensuing montage might have included a shot of her mixing the batter, one of the batter being poured into the pan, one of the pan going into the oven, and finally one of the now baked cake cooling on the counter. Or the ellipsis might encompass the entire process: cutting immediately to the cooling cake after Luce's proposal. Through this traditional formal ellipsis all the attendant joy and banality encompassed by its inclusion would be lost to the viewer. In the pursuit of teleological unity this information would be deemed unimportant, unworthy of inclusion. That it is included, even celebrated, indicates an importance to which the viewer must attend. As Roland Barthes notes in **Image/Music/Text**, "a narrative is never made up of anything other than functions: in differing degrees, everything in it signifies. . . . in the realm of discourse, what is noted is by definition notable (89). What, then, is "notable" about this sequence? What essential structural "function" does it serve? What information does it withhold? Replace? Augment? Its inclusion, in short, satisfies another of Elder's formal requirements for the cinema we need:

Such a form would not depend on separating out one aspect of experience from all the others, nor on any pre- or post-conception. . . . It will present, simply and

directly, the manifold of forces and relations that come into interplay in the coming-to-presence of an event. (“*TCWN*” 268)

That this sequence reflects and disturbs the temporal duration of both diegetic and screening time, further illustrates its thematic centrality. Thus the structure, text and theme co-operate to reproduce/acknowledge the paratactical proliferation and lack inherent in both knowledge and narrative.

Memory and desire compete with the tyranny of presentness in **L'hiver bleu** (André Blanchard, 1979) as Christiane and Nicole leave Abitibi in search of work. As in **La tendresse ordinaire**, the opening sequence introduces the potential conflict between aural and visual imagery. The sound of a cold winter wind precedes the first visual images: a series of blue-cast stills of rural winter landscapes. As the wind gives way to the sound of fiddle music, the blue stills are replaced by moving colour images. Though the camera now actively pans the landscape, the images it reveals stubbornly retain their eerie static quality. Both still and moving images transmit a detached archival feel, confounding the cue of presentness that attaches itself to classical cinematic transitions from still to moving imagery. Though ostensibly present (as per the cue), a lingering aura of remembrance imbues the imagery with intimations of nostalgia. Similarly, the sound of the fiddle music, which recalls **La tendresse ordinaire** and cues the spatial placement of the visual within rural Québec, confounds that placement as the tune to “*Farewell to Nova Scotia*” is recognized. That the visual is now focused on a waterfront farm house further augments viewer uncertainty; can the claim of the inter-title “*Abitibi, 1978*” be trusted?

Though the cues of conflict are subtle, the ensuing sequence builds on the viewer's increasing sense of uncertainty. An extreme long-shot and an indistinct sound track suggest a farewell, but the resultant distancing of the viewer encourages the eye to wander over the snowy landscape. We cannot distinguish who is leaving nor their relationships to those left behind. As they approach the camera, we see a couple wearing snowshoes and pulling a heavy toboggan. Neither the landscape nor their clothing has yet revealed any contextualizing information. Time, place and gender remain ambiguous. Is this taking place in "*Abitibi, 1978*" or is it a flash-back? The non-diegetic howl of the wind underscores the nostalgic aura as the viewer is abruptly confronted with repeated, slow-motion images of the demolition of an industrial building. Temporal and spatial conflict are heightened as the sequence is followed by documentary images of a workers' demonstration. Are they out of work following the demolition, or do those images represent their fears for the future? The film's opening is completed with the couple's arrival in Rouyn-Noranda.

Confused and disoriented, the spectator has been exposed to several cinematic techniques (i.e., blank screens, stills, artificial colours, repetition, documentary images, inter-titles, non-diegetic sound, imposed distancing through extremes in focal length, and temporal dislocation through slow-motion and editing) which serve to heighten viewer awareness of the conditions of their subjectivity. But, far from being mere "breaches of convention," "self-reflexive constructions [which] serve primarily to create an unconventional surface" (Elder, "*TCWN*" 267), these strategies (and others) combine to

produce a narrative text which defies teleological entrenchment. Although the film concerns itself with two central characters, Christiane and Nicole, the text introduces characters and situations with no, or only tenuous connections to them.

Christiane only becomes aware of the workers' plight through her friendships with Lise and Michel. Nicole remains unaware of labour politics, even as she negotiates the trials of finding employment. Several unrelated characters refer to unemployment, Welfare, U.I.C., Workers' Compensation, asbestosis, local versus Anglo ownership, industrial pollution, poor education, proletariat revolution, and the social repercussions of profit-oriented enterprises, but Nicole's only employment concern is making \$200.00 (!) in order to travel to South America.

While Nicole may be a victim of a system to which she is oblivious, Christiane assumes a double role as heir to both the traditional Québécois values of her family and the rising political consciousness of her contemporaries. When Nicole privately confesses her fears and insecurities, Christiane's reply, "I feel like I'm sitting on two chairs" reveals her acknowledgment of, and discomfort with her dual role. Though she happily anticipates her family's reunion for her parents' thirtieth wedding anniversary, Christiane purposely provokes a dinner-table argument with her sister-in-law Gyslaine. And while the priest attempts to smooth over the discord, his authority is undermined by his inane ramblings and his conspicuously absent clerical collar. The seating arrangements also reveal Christiane's ambivalence. She is seated between her father (who dreams of owning land without fences) and her brother (who plays traditional tunes on his harmonica and

spouts leftist ideology as if by rote), and directly across from Nicole (with whom she shares an unspoken but “heard” conversation). Her guileless affection for these three is counterpointed by her obvious antagonism towards her yuppie brother Gilles and his wife Gyslaine, her disdain for the priest, and her unaccountable disregard for her mother.

Back at the commune she tearfully discusses her alienation from her siblings with Michel, whose family is experiencing a similarly vague, yet painfully real dissolution. Her confusion at her mixed allegiances is reinforced by her conversation at the hotel with Lise and Francine. While Lise advocates violent revolutions, Francine, a latter-day Fabianist, is convinced the “change will come quietly - like this - thinking, talking and being open yourself.” And although Lise assumes a revolutionary’s posture her ambivalence/inertia is revealed as she argues “but we’ve been in these hotels five years - nothing ever changes in Rouyn.” Though her words imply an urgent need for action, she has apparently belied that urgency by speaking without acting for the last five years.

This conflict between knowledge and action, present and potential, memory and desire is reflected in the film’s structure. That the conflict is never resolved signifies a resistance to closure. While the plastic space/time limitations imposed by viewing conditions (the viewer must commit to 82 minutes in a darkened screening room) may suggest a certain linearity in the development of the narrative (the text does reveal a discernible beginning, middle and end), that linearity is proved illusory. The film opens with allusions to endings (the good-byes, the demolition) and closes with intimations of beginnings (Michel is leaving on a trip, Nicole may have already begun hers, and

Christiane has a new job and has moved in with Lise). As well, the film's opening has a somber, nostalgic tone, but ends with a challenge for change.

As the film closes, Christiane chooses a song from the juke-box. The blue-cast aerial shots of the urban landscape that accompanies the song both recall and counterpoint the opening sequence. Where once the blue cast connoted the past (stills), it now contains the present (moving, aerial). Where the images had imperfectly revealed the rural, they now depict the urban as juxtaposed to the rural while repeating the waterfront imagery. The closing shot contains elements of the memory of the past (blue) imbued with the potential of the future (active motion) imposed over an image of the present (urban/rural harbour). Similarly, the closing guitar sound-track recalls the opening fiddle music, but the new tune is enriched through the addition of voice.

The singer laments the passing of a former way of life ("I don't even know my neighbour's name"), while celebrating the assured continuity of natural cycles (January snow, spring fires and the wind on the St. Lawrence). He questions the possibilities for the future through allusions to a thirst and hunger unassuaged by communal bread and wine, and wonders "why it is / That some have it all and others' nothing." His celebration and lament echo the film's narrative structure and textual concerns. The song stands as a summation of the narrative that precedes it. Its final line, "Change it!", reflects the changes the film has depicted, recalls the conditions that require change, and anticipates the changes we expect to be made through the alliance of Christiane and Lise. As well, the invitation serves to re-establish the interpellation of the spectator. A re-suturing, to

off-set any sense of potential closure that may have been inferred from the abrupt ending to Michel and Christiane's final conversation. Finally, the song's invitation is to the viewer: a reveille to action to the temporarily passive subject of the film (the spectator) and the historically passive subjects of the systems that subdue them (the Québécois).

But the film again thwarts closure by following this passionate invitation with a repetition of the opening howl of the winter wind. The wind continues through the closing credits and remains after the screen has gone blank in a mirror image of the opening, when the sound of the wind over a blank screen preceded the first images. As in **La tendresse ordinaire**, memory and desire, the continuity of instability, and the concurrent proliferation and lack of knowledge is reproduced by the narrative's structure, text and theme. Far from serving "primarily to create an unconventional surface" (Elder, "TCWN" 267), the avant-garde techniques employed in **L'hiver bleu** serve to create/thwart a structure that enhances and informs its text. The structure and text of this film combine in a form that effectively refutes Elder's caveat:

I do not believe that the self-reflexive strategies used in some forms of avant-garde filmmaking can be comfortably accommodated within story-telling forms or that they serve important ends when they are used in that context. (266-267)

The tradition of self-reflexive narrative parataxis and structural instability, which was appropriated from our documentary tradition and initiated in the narrative fiction films of the sixties, and which has proved to have been further developed through the seventies, has continued to inform Canadian films through the eighties and into the nineties.

Denys Arcand began his filmmaking career by subverting the Canadian documentary tradition to the extent that his sponsors, the NFB, first suppressed, and then censored his 1970 **On est au coton**. He continues making unorthodox films, now as features, which subvert their traditions. **The Decline of the American Empire** (1986) features an ensemble cast, as a group of Montreal academics and their various lovers meet for a gourmet dinner in the country home of their hosts Rémy, a professor, and Louise, his chatelaine wife. As the women work out at the gym and the men prepare the meal, each group engages in conversations about their sexual experiences and past lovers. But the veracity of their conquests is continually undermined by flash-backs which augment, and frequently contradict, the stories they tell. As well, the relationships between couples and among individuals remain unclear until the final scenes. At first we (think we have been led to) assume that the blonde youth Alain is Claude, the gay man's lover. Then (we imagine) it seems that he must be Diane's new sadist lover. Finally, we discover in the closing scenes that he is, in fact, Dominique's current paramour and confidant. Part of our confusion lies in the text's refusal to make these relationships explicit, but to a great extent it is due to our expectations being exposed as the learned and thwarted response to Hollywood narratives.

When we are first introduced to Dominique St. Arnaud, she is being interviewed by Diane Leonard about her theory of the decline of western civilization. The anonymous modern construction of the setting, the CBC tape recorder, the tone of the conversation and the women's body language suggest that Dominique is an eminent scholar and Diane

a mere reporter. It is not until much later that it is revealed that Diane, too, is a professor of history. And not until the final scenes that the perceived power relationship is explained when Diane tearfully reveals her frustrations as a late arrival in the academic world, and that she will therefore never qualify for tenure. But true to the Canadian tradition, this revelation is neither causally precipitated, nor essential to any preconceived “unity” of plot. In fact, it is Dominique’s revelation of her affairs with both Rémy and Pierre which *introduces* a (very late) crisis, one which is never adequately addressed, or resolved, so as to constitute a causal element of a unified whole.

Jesus of Montreal (Arcand, 1989) features a thirty-ish male actor as the central protagonist. Daniel Coulombe has been asked by Father Raymond Leclerc to revise and act in the annual Montreal production of the Passion Play. An enigmatic character, Daniel is first seen entering a Catholic church in response to the priest’s request, and we are given little to no information about his life prior to that scene. All we learn is that he once attended an acting school and that he has not been seen in some time. Although the other characters project grand journeys and principles on his time away, neither the text, nor Daniel, ever give the viewer cause to come to similar conclusions.

The four actors Daniel recruits are given only the sketchiest of pasts; we know Constance attended the same acting school as Daniel, but she is first encountered serving lunch in a soup kitchen. When Daniel tells her “I’ve come for you,” her face lights up with the hope appropriate to her allegorical role as Mary Magdalene, but after her “calling,” unlike Mary, she continues to sin. Mireille, the model, is leaving her lover

because he doubts her ability to play the Virgin Mary, but the audience is not initially given any cause to doubt his assessment. Indeed, although she seems to undergo some sort of spiritual transformation, Mireille never really changes; she continues to audition for commercials, and remains willing to sacrifice her dignity in pursuit of meaningless roles. Both the male recruits are currently employed as professional actors: Martin doing voice-overs for a pornographic film, and René also providing voice-overs, but this time for a pseudo-scientific documentary. Martin is quick to answer the call, but his willingness to join in the project is made problematic; with only the vaguest idea of the role he has been offered, he leaves the job he has yet to complete without notice or remorse. René is more contemplative; first he asks if he can incorporate Hamlet's soliloquy into his role, because he's always wanted to play it.

Other than their professions, and their living conditions at the time of their recruitment, we learn nothing about Daniel's disciples' pasts; indeed, the viewer must attend closely in order to even learn their names. The only character whose past (and thereby, his lack of "character") is revealed is Father Leclerc, whose maudlin tale of his tribulations as a "poor little rich kid" is offered to justify his sexual affair with Constance.

Although the text is structured by the conceit of the doubled parallel to Jesus' final days, the cues and constraints direct the viewer to continually doubt Daniel's convictions. When he first begins to research his role at the library, he is more fascinated by the illustrations of the Passion than interested in learning about Jesus. And when the librarian assures him that "Jesus will find *you*," the viewer is cued to expect a religious

conversion that never materializes. The story of the money changers in the temple is transformed to one of the commercial sponsors at the audition, but Daniel's rage is not one of pious spiritual insult, but of the human and base reaction of a friend who has seen his friend hurt. And when Father Leclerc washes his hands of the responsibility for Daniel's production, we find that perhaps this time Pontius Pilate is right, for we are given no evidence to believe that the troupe has any but selfish stakes in its refusal to repent.

Jesus of Montreal thwarts closure at every turn, leaving gaps in history and in presentness, and making textual interpretation difficult. The scene in the catacombs, for example, is one which might have been easily played for laughs, as René finally gets to perform Hamlet's soliloquy in an absurd requiem. But this scene seems to impart more "truth" to the play than did Daniel's on the cross, which reminded us of his research and rehearsals, trying to find the right, tragic-yet-demure body language to recreate the beatific images of suffering he found in renaissance illuminations. And the casting of Rémy Girard, as Martin, presents extra difficulties for Arcand fans, who saw Girard as the faithless and libidinous Rémy in **Decline**, only three years before. Certainly the character of Martin is augmented by Girard's ubiquitous television image, and the remembrance of Rémy's charms, but it is also haunted by troubling associations. We are cued to enjoy his antics, but without new information about Martin, we are simultaneously constrained from any emotional investment. And a similar constraint is imposed on all the characters; we are offered fleeting textual cues to enhance their allure

as the potential objects for our identification, but we are never given enough information to comfortably embrace them as allies.

Although the narrative does offer an Aristotlean beginning, middle, and end, the characters, text and tone act to effectively thwart any attempts to read causal links between them. And by thematically linking Daniel's experiences with those of Jesus, the narrative is able to mask the open ending of the film as allegory; Daniel does not die, he lives again through the miracles his transplanted organs provide.

Love and Human Remains (Arcand, 1993) also has a would-be actor as its central character. David MacMillan is working as a waiter because he fears the anticipated rejections that are a necessary part of life for auditioning actors. The film presents itself as a conventional generic murder mystery, but its subtext examines the vagaries of identity; rather than "who done it?", the question asked of almost every character during the course of the film is, "who are you?" Identity as a function of, or as defined by, occupation, gender, sexuality, age, desire, familial role, and/or state of health are all exposed or critiqued during the course of the film's narrative.

Although David identifies himself as a gay, and happily unattached waiter, his roommate Candy views him as her once and future lover; his busboy Kane sees him as a successful actor and father figure; Benita, the sado/masochistic call girl thinks of him as a friend and some-time assistant; and Bernie, the public servant and David's childhood pal, sees him as a role model for an impossibly high standard of success and masculinity. Each of these characters tests David's and their own concepts of identity in their daily

interactions with him, and with the other people they seek out to substitute for him in their attempts to recognize and realize their desires.

Candy, disappointed by her romantic failures with men who cannot live up to her fantasies of David, experiments with lesbianism with a friend, Jerry, that she has met at her health club. Kane, at seventeen, displaced and lonely, and mistakenly thinking his attraction to David is an indication of homosexuality, hesitantly offers himself to David, even while he continues a relationship with a girl who could be his twin. Benita, who uses her psychic abilities to help David in his relationships, ignores her own unhappiness as she hides behind heavy make-up and black leather costumes, persistently reenacting the abuse she suffered at the hands of her father with her middle-aged, white, male clients. And Bernie, the strikingly handsome, athletic and seemingly successful man's man, unable to articulate his love for David, plays out a simulation of "lady killer" heterosexuality as he stalks and murders the young women he believes he should be attracted to.

The "who done it" generic conceit is merely a backdrop, against which the characters wrestle with their angst, the central concern of which is their collective fear/attraction to commitment, whether to themselves, their relationships, or their desires. The object of their desires, and thereby their identities, is personified in David. If they can't have David, they will become David, or rather, what they individually perceive to be the essence of David: his sexuality, his self-deprecating assurance, his talent, his job. But none of these perceptions matches David's image of himself, skewed as they are by

the personal, though unacknowledged agendas each character must act out. The self-confidence they imagine they see in David is only a reflection of their own desires. David does not share their perceptions; he increasingly doubts his homosexuality, his acting ability, his ability to love, and his commitment to maintaining the fiction of the identity these roles provide.

The characters in **Love and Human Remains**, unsure of their own identities, act out the roles they have decided are “acceptable.” But the assumption of false identities brings risks; David asks a casual lover, “is it safe?”, and Candy tells David, “hope you’re playing safe.” Benita continually risks unscheduled abuses from her clients, and Candy risks her physical and spiritual health as she searches for love and commitment in the wrong beds. Thus, rather than the initially cued and expected murder mystery, the film presents an exposé of the demands that a self-directed identity involves. And while the text concerns itself with the individual tribulations of its characters, the narrative structure never insists on any simple reliance on causality.

We never learn the source of David’s propensity to self doubt, nor is his future success assured. Candy’s experiments, though badly timed, reveal nothing (to her or the viewer) that was not understood from the outset. And Bernie’s confession of love, and his subsequent suicide at the proffered dénouement, are inadequate as causal agents for any later path David may chose.

The final shots of the film seem to offer closure, as Benita is seen freshly scrubbed and cleansed of her sins, offering her best to David (via the answering

machine), as he presents himself for an audition. A soft snowfall has hidden all the horrors of the city, and the cat is snugly nestled in their home, as the newly formed nuclear family of David, Candy and Kane, walk to the site of David's spiritual coming-out. But these images cannot be read as anything but ironic or absurd; we know that David has not yet come to terms with his sexuality, that Kane has a family already, and that the chances for this family's success are few. As David calls out his final "I love you," before entering the audition, the camera focuses on Candy and Kane, and the viewer expectantly awaits the reply that will resolve all the unanswered questions. The reply never comes.

I Love a Man in Uniform (David Wellington, 1993), which also focuses on the identity crisis faced by an out of work actor, opens with the unexpected and dramatic shooting of a Toronto Metro street cop. In the anonymous crowd which gathers in its aftermath, is mild-mannered bank clerk, Henry Alder, an aspiring actor currently up for the small part of "Officer Flannagan" in a police drama television series named "*Crime Wave*." Alder uses what he has seen in his private rehearsals, enabling him to successfully secure the part after his audition, in which he impresses the director with his convincing ad libs. But Alder's theatrical successes are counterpointed by his increasingly tenuous position at the bank, where the manager challenges him to decide whether he's a "banker or an actor."

As Alder immerses himself in his role as Flannagan, his sense of reality and of self become increasingly confused. When asked by the series' wardrobe mistress, "Who

are you?”, he assumes she is referring to his character and replies “Flannagan,” perhaps responding appropriately to that question for the last time. As Alder gradually takes on the persona of Flannagan, he experiments with his preconceived notions of what and who a cop is. These notions, based as they are in Hollywood stereotypes, do not all meet with the same success that his earlier impression did. He practises his cop patter and posture in front of a mirror, in a vignette reminiscent of Travis Bickle’s (Robert DeNiro) infamous “Are you talkin’ to me?” scene in **Taxi Driver** (Martin Scorsese, 1976), buys a police scanner to monitor emergency calls, and walks the beat in the mean streets of Toronto, timidly, at first, and with growing confidence as he earns his imagined stripes by assisting a real cop in making an arrest, and later, relieving a young break-in artist of his stolen gun.

But all is not well - he is taken hostage by a team of bank robbers headed by a **Seven Year Itch** (Billy Wilder, 1955) vintage Marilyn Monroe impersonator, who emasculates him by forcing her gun into his mouth, and later inadvertently implicates him as an accomplice by calling him by his first name as she makes her getaway. Hurt by the police investigator’s innuendoes regarding his possible involvement, and embarrassed by his impotent (lack of) response to the robbery, Alder insists as he relates his adventure to his actor buddies, that if he had “had a gun or something, maybe . . .” he could have stopped it. Later, he slips into his Flannagan persona while dealing with a customer at the bank, and defends his behaviour to the manager by telling him that he knows “how to handle scum like that.” Taking off his glasses, as he does each time he assumes the cop

role, he defiantly announces “I quit,” thereby effectively abandoning his Henry Alder identity for the last time.

When Officer Flannagan is killed off in “*Crime Wave*,” Alder is given his prop police name tag as “a souvenir of [his] brush with death” and then promptly steals the uniform that it had once adorned. Back at home, Alder/Flannagan, now doubly unemployed, and doubly abandoned through the death of his father and the rejection of his romantic overtures by his “*Crime Wave*” co-star, repeats his earlier role-playing rehearsal, with the addition of real bullets which he spits out one by one, as he leaves behind Flannagan and becomes the gun itself, all the while muttering his mantra, “It’s all about priorities.” The final words spoken in **I Love a Man in Uniform**, are those called in over a police radio by a cop who has found Alder’s body. In the ultimate, yet unheard tribute to his final act (in both senses), the cop reports “We have an officer down.”

The film offers us few clues to Alder’s character or past. His relationship with his widowed ex-cop father is strained, but the reasons for their distance, the source of his father’s bitterness and the cause of his mother’s death remain unexplained. Certainly we are given to understand that Alder is emotionally disturbed, but contrary to Hollywood films which are careful to reveal the sources for every nuance of the protagonist’s character, **Uniform** is content to expose his maladaptive behaviour without tidy explanations. Similarly, the film ends with the suicide of the protagonist, an act rarely offered to audiences expected to identify with a strong male lead.

Alder's fascination with police might have been easily explained as the Oedipal desire to be the father, but instead, the film's text suggests his interest has more to do with Hollywood produced fantasies than causal, familial crises. Nor does the film overtly "blame" Hollywood texts as the causal impetus, since it freely cites Canadian film texts as well, notably through the name of the series, "*Crime Wave*," a reference to John Paisz's film of the same title, whose tone and subject matter constitute an ironic counterpoint to the obviously American influenced police drama. This citation is particularly rich, since, as noted above, **Crime Wave** itself cites **Le chat dans le sac**, which in turn refers to many classic and New Wave texts.

Another Canadian filmmaker of the eighties and nineties has made a career, as has Arcand, of examining families, traditional and otherwise, and the tensions that ensue as they negotiate the conflicts between their memories and desires. Atom Egoyan though, tends to illuminate his studies through the use of technology as metaphor. Like Wellington's film, Egoyan's films problematise the veracity of recreated imagery and its reception. His early short films, **Peep Show** (1981) and **Open House** (1982), focused on themes of urban alienation, and later, his **Speaking Parts** (1989) and **The Adjuster** (1991) examined how modern technology has induced that alienation. In **Gross Misconduct** (1993), a made-for-television production, he exposed how even that national treasure, the NHL, has degenerated, and has ruined the lives and families of some of its most ardent supporters. Memory, of forgotten homelands or lost loves, and desire,

whether for identity, success, or the imagined sanctuary of family, have formed the subtext of all his films.

Next of Kin (Egoyan, 1984), as so many Canadian film texts before, examines the development of the identity of its central protagonist Peter; another in a long line of Peters (*vis* **Nobody Waved Goodbye**, **Goin' Down the Road**, etc.). Like the Peters before him, he is trying to find a way to assume control of his life and his identity. Unlike those other Peters though, this one actually finds the life he desires; through assuming the role of Bedros, the long-lost son of the Deryans, an immigrant Armenian family living in Toronto.

Issues of identity in Egoyan's films are often mediated through the technologies that pervade the characters' lives. In this film, Peter takes to recording his perceptions of his adventures on audio tape. By the end of the film Peter/Bedros has managed to reify his new role in the Deryan family through the inclusion of his recorded image with those of his adopted family; both on video tape, and in his "sister" Azah's photo album.

Peter explains early in the film that he believes that "Lies are gifts you give to the ones you love," and by the end we see he has given himself the finest gift of all. By insinuating himself into the Deryan family Peter has found the family, the identity and control for which he longed. That these have come at the expense of truth presents no moral or ethical difficulties for Bedros, and the viewer is left to imagine what the future holds for the two families his gift has altered. Although the narrative "cues" suggest

closure at the film's end, Peter's direct gaze into the camera challenges the viewer to ignore those cues and imagine the future(s) that the characters may encounter.

Family Viewing (Egoyan, 1987) also studies family life and the effects of technology. Again the evidence of familial inclusion is to be found on video tapes, but this time the tapes are being erased and taped over with home-made pornography. Like Peter, Van is trying to find a space for his identity, but Van's journey includes his maternal history, which his father has tried to erase.

Stan, Van's father, has so distanced himself from his wife's memory and family that when Van cajoles him into visiting his mother-in-law, Armen, in her nursing home, he pours out his false expressions of sincerity to the wrong woman. Through his relationship with Aline, a woman he meets at the nursing home, Van tries to re-establish his identity; first by substituting her mother for his grandmother, and then through their spiritual alignment as second generation Armenian-Canadians.

The intrusion of technology in their family lives is emphasized by the use of video tape to record the home location scenes, rather than the film stock that is used over most of the film. This lends an air of unreality to all the scenes that take place there, and cues the viewer to distrust any evidence presented in that format. Thus the "old" footage of Van as a child happily playing with his mother and grandmother belies the violent subtext of his parent's abusive relationship. That this footage is being covered by images taped in Stan's studio-equipped bedroom (complete with key lighting and remote controls), indicates a desire to not just forget the past, but to obliterate it.

Van's rejection of his father's desire, first by saving the remaining images of his past, and then by actively protecting Armen (and ultimately his mother) from Stan's further abuse, illustrates the value of memory in the construction of the familial. And while Van's construction is not as exotic as Peter's, it is just as vital to his developing sense of history, family and self.

The film's ending, wherein Van, Aline, and Armen are "miraculously" reunited with Van's mother suggests closure, but this is a formal illusion (Harcourt *Imaginary Images*, 7). Many questions remain unanswered, and no indication of any future resolution to their many difficulties is offered. The family, whose initial composition relied on the rejection of the past through the enforced exclusion of the memory of the mother, has now been reconstituted through the rejection of another past, that of the father. Thus the narrative structure suggests that by traditional, Aristotelian standards, emplotted stasis can only be achieved through the elimination of one of the parents. This position of constructed lack is of course untenable *as stasis* - thus effectively rendering the Aristotelean model obsolete, or irrelevant, or both.

Calendar (Egoyan, 1993) looks at technology as a mediator that misrepresents the vagaries of human relationships. Visual and aural images from answering machines, tape recorders, video tape, film, photographs, calendars and taped letters are exposed as poor vehicles for communication when the characters refuse to attend to the realities of their relationships. Subjectivity, then, is shown to be an *activity* with responsibility. The photographer (played by Egoyan), in particular, is seen to be actively refusing to be

interpellated by the messages of his wife and translator; he prefers to listen-in rather than participate in a conversation as his wife leaves messages on the answering machine. Throughout the film her image and voice reveal information to the film's viewer which he seems unable, or unwilling to absorb.

In contrast, she is acutely aware of him, their relationship, her surroundings, the weight of her responsibility as translator, and the alterations that each undergoes during their trip to Armenia to photograph its churches for the calendar. Since the photographer is unable to communicate with her their relationship ends. As she embraces her Armenian past in the person of their driver, he attempts to re-enact a past that never was by hiring specific ethnic "types" of women to act out a pathetic parody of their relationship.

The film is structured according to the conceit of the calendar; one scene for every month, one month for every holy site or church that is photographed. Thus the end is assumed in the beginning: we expect the story to conclude in December. But in the course of its duration the viewer becomes aware that the technologies have interfered in the expected linearity of the narrative. The images from the beginning of the film are from the end of their relationship, and the film ends with the repetition of those images, suggesting a circularity which more accurately reflects the diurnal flow. Similarly, nearly all of the photographer's conversations are revealed to be carefully constructed scripts, which he follows in order to avoid any uncomfortable emotions that might result from "real" communication. Thus even the evidence of the spoken word is proved unreliable as a source of potential causality.

Just as May does not “cause” June, but only precedes it, so the intrusion of the driver in their relationship cannot be understood to be the cause of the dissolution of their relationship. The accumulated evidence of all the un-cited months and years might hold the key to the break down, but we are not given any information which precedes the text to confirm or refute such assumptions. Similarly, the photographer is left, at the film’s closing, with an accumulation of evidence (films, tapes, photographs) from the past year, but evidence of what? When the translator asks, via the answering machine, “Did you see, did you know?”, the aural image of her voice is superimposed over footage of the moment of which she speaks. That this is the same footage which opened the film, and since we know that he is incapable of “seeing” unmediated life, suggests that we share his affliction: even after review, and with new information, we *still* cannot see her hand clasped in the driver’s. However, unlike the photographer, who looks through his viewfinder and sees, not history or sacrifice, but merely architecture; the viewer, like the translator, knows that the images he captures are heavy with meaning.

Calendar reminds us that images are not simply re-presentations of objects, or people, or events; they are also the realizations of the mythologies of those who capture them, but even more, of those who interpret them. And while Mettler, in **Picture of Light**, wonders if technology is able to capture the essence of his subject, Egoyan assures us, it is not.

Exotica (Egoyan, 1994) continues Egoyan’s tradition of relating the technologies of communication to familial and self alienation. After the credit sequence we are

presented with a scene at the customs counter of an airport where the senior customs officer asks his trainee, and the viewer, “What do you see?” The narrative that ensues is all about seeing and being seen; the difficulty, though, is that you can’t believe everything you see.

In our introduction to Tracey, the protagonist Francis’ niece, we assume we are witnessing a transaction between a child prostitute and her client, rather than, as is later revealed, one between a “babysitter” and a parent. Our assumptions prove to be based on a misreading of the “cues,” cues which have been made deliberately ambiguous and constructed to lead to such misreadings. This pattern is continued throughout the film, as our expectations are falsely raised and knowingly thwarted. None of the relationships are as they appear, and many of them are never explained. Similarly, much of the text is concerned with activities which have little or no bearing on the proffered plot; or rather the text never focuses on one aspect of the narrative long enough for the viewer to be sure which story line should be understood *as* the core text. Certainly we know that Francis is troubled by the deaths of his wife and daughter, but why his troubles should come to involve the mysteries surrounding the paternity of his daughter Lisa, of Thomas’s nightly forays to the opera or of his desire to smuggle exotic birds’ eggs, of Eric’s tortured relationship with Christina or of his insemination contract with Zoe, or of Christina’s haunted past and her relationship to Lisa (to mention a few of the many mysteries in **Exotica**), remains unclear and unresolved. The proffered dénouement, as Christina relates to Thomas the story of the search for Lisa’s body, elevates rather than resolves the

viewer's sense of foreboding and reveals little information that the interested spectator would not have inferred already.

The film closes with a flashback of Francis driving home a much younger Christina from babysitting Lisa. Christina is obviously charmed by Francis' fatherly aura, and seems reluctant to leave his car once they arrive at her home. The source of her reluctance is suggested by the eerie shot of the house as she approaches the door. This is no loving family abode, indeed its framing and the lack of depth with which it is shot imply a house of horrors which its tidy exterior belies. Like the other mysteries which the text never resolves, the house's façade leaves the viewer with the uneasy feeling that there are further stories to be told, and even more stories which may never be told.

The films of Egoyan and Arcand, Mettler and Obomsawin, Perrault and Leduc, have built on, augmented, and critiqued the traditions established by the Canadian documentary and fiction filmmakers before them. In their self-reflexive techniques they have managed to keep those traditions alive, even while they are being re-imagined in the fragmented images of a postmodern Canada. Through the conscious inclusion of textually irrelevant, extraneous, or erroneous information, and the just as conscious exclusion of elements of causality, closure, and linearity, these filmmakers have recreated the colonial traditions of their predecessors, while imbuing their texts with the cadences of an emerging postcolonial perspective.

The following chapter will summarize and analyze the data offered in the first three, and propose that together and individually, the films examined expose a system of

narrative structures that enact “cues and constraints” which reproduce an indigenous Canadian mythology.

Chapter IV

The project of this thesis has been to discern whether an identifiably Canadian narrative structure exists, and if so, to enumerate the qualities that denote that structure as uniquely or particularly Canadian. I began by acknowledging that the concepts of nation and narrative must be defined before the primary task of discovering how narrative structure might reveal the implied authorship of its producing nation could be adequately addressed, and recognized that I must also examine how that structure declares its difference from the imposed American paradigm. My project, then, has been to examine Canadian cultural identity as practice, through the analysis of the Canadian narrative film tradition; and to discover the evidence of a *position* from which Canadian culture is enunciated, as suggested by the ongoing activities of filmmakers in Canada. This required an examination of the critical concepts of nation, as well as an analysis and critique of traditional and contemporary narrative theories.

I began this examination with a short review of theories of nation and nationalism. It became apparent that the impetus for the will for independent nations was firmly sited in the age of modernity. I noted that the voices of Canadian culture have distinguished themselves from those of modern nations in their refusal to embrace prescriptive technologies as the mark of nation-ness. As opposed to those of modern nations, Canadian articulations have shown evidence of the preference for viewing time in terms of the cyclical, and tend to value the continuity inherent in the eternal. It was proposed, in light of these significant differences, that the artifacts produced by the Hollywood system,

as evidenced by the films of its Classical tradition, are the modern vehicles through which the prescriptive ideals of the United States have been reproduced; and that the films of Canada's narrative tradition reflect and re-enact the holistic ideals of a postmodern culture.

This premise was initially made problematic by the recognition that, since many Canadians prefer to watch Hollywood films, perhaps, *ipso facto*, our biases were not really that different from theirs. The problem presented the possibility that Canada had been subjected to the "colonization of our [national] imagination," a possibility that initially seemed to be born out in the writings of Margaret Atwood and Peter Harcourt. The thesis showed, however, that although we have been interpellated by the cultural artifacts of other nations, notably by Hollywood films, their mythologies have not been successfully transmitted to ours. The theories of both Claude Lévi-Strauss and Laura Marks have noted that through such interpellations foreign mythologies become "impoverished" (Lévi-Strauss), and we begin to perceive them subtractively, attuned only to "those aspects that interest" us (Marks). Through these subtractive perceptions, our subjectivity as Canadians has been augmented to allow for both the enjoyment of foreign films and a concurrent awareness of our own films *as* our own.

Some theorists have suggested that we lack a mythology of our own, since our film tradition has sprung from a realist, documentary practice, which, due to its formal constraints, necessarily precludes the mythologizing potentials of fiction. This objection

has been found to be groundless, as the documentary tradition itself has been shown to be one of the sources on which our mythology has been based.

I then reviewed and analyzed the theoretical literatures of nation and narration, literatures which proved to overlap in their treatments of ideology as the shared mythologies of the producers and consumers of cultural artifacts. Ideology was defined as both “explicit or tacit sharing of certain attitudes, values, assumptions, and ideas,” as well as “a covert means of social oppression and exploitation because it offers ‘concepts and categories that distort the whole of reality in a direction useful to the prevailing power’” (Solecki 558). Ideology, then, functions both to realize and control the ideals of a nation as expressed by their shared memories and desires.

The theories of nation examined, whether those of philosophers or sociologists, proved to agree in their insistence that nations are formed through the recognition of these shared memories and desires. In particular, it was found that the role of the intelligentsia was crucial to both the impetus to secede from the controls of oppressive, though distant, centres of authority, and the creation and maintenance of the “collective sentiment” (Smith) of nationalism. These notions were found to be contingent on the exclusionary location of “nation” in the modern, since the uneven distribution of wealth that was the byproduct of industrialisation generated a common will to secede from the existing socio-economic structure in pursuit of their own nation. The coming into being of modernity, then, was shown to coincide with the rise of colonialism and capitalism. The coming into being of *postmodernity*, I argued, has coincided with the rise of the postcolonial impetus

to cultural independence. And just as the early (North and South) American colonials had to create their own mythologies to replace those of the empires that had governed them, so must postmodern nations realize their own indigenous mythologies as protection from any would-be cultural colonizers. Thus, I have argued, the mark of nation-ness is in the repeal of the will to be marginal, and the concomitant construction of a community's own mythology. Through this construction, nations-in-the-making create a mythical past through which they enact a present and envision a future. Using Anderson's theories, I proposed that "new" memories are created through the manufacture of history, and reified through cultural artifacts, such as films, as metaphorical censuses, maps and museums. By representing the nation to itself, and through the tacit agreement of nationals to act *as a nation* in the reception of those representations, the community assumes the authority to write and read its own narrative. Through their cyclical nature, the performative narratives that are initially produced accumulate, and come to form the institutional pedagogical meta-narratives from which later, liminal voices must, in turn, differentiate themselves.

National artifacts, I have argued, as exemplified by narrative film traditions, reproduce and thereby expose a nation's self-knowledge. In this argument I have noted that Canadian artifacts have exposed a fragmented, incomplete knowledge, one that reflects the polyphony of historical and cultural realities that constitute a postmodern nation. Among these realities I have examined and analyzed Canada's identity as one which first articulates itself as neither European nor American. It is also one which is

imperfect due to the opposing practices of religion, culture and language that formed the ideologies of our “founding” British and French colonizers, and to the forced break in the traditions of the practices of those peoples that inhabited this land before the arrival of those colonizers. Canada’s peoples have been divided by regional interests imposed by our landscape, and by the imported differences of its immigrants. As well, we suffer from a lack of memory of our nation *as nation*, since our political history seems so (comparatively) short, and our current population is so young. And our apparent lack of memory has been shown also to be a function of the accumulative interpellations of foreign cultures, notably those enacted through Hollywood films; we continue to import the artifacts of another nation at a rate much greater than we produce our own. These multiple and often conflicting sources of shared cultural knowledge, rooted as they are in our history and geography, have resulted in a base too large and varied to allow for its perfect and complete assimilation by its member subjects. Thus, I have argued, Canadian knowledge can be seen as a combination of proliferation and lack. Our cultural knowledge is augmented by our founding, immigrant and regional differences, as it is checked by elision, omission and suppression, and this imperfect polyphony of knowledge informs our national narrative structure and is revealed in its texts.

I introduced the discussion of narrative by referring to Auerbach’s differentiation between imitation and mimesis, and argued that the episodic mimetic style, which through ellipsis and by eliding details, forces the reader to fill in the blanks, most closely approximates Canadian knowledge, and thereby, Canadian narrative structure. The

discussion of mimesis was augmented by the introduction of Bhabha's theory of performative narratives as the *énoncés* of the marginal or colonized, speaking against and/or despite the pedagogical enunciations of the centre(s) of power. The assertion of identity, through the performative, allows for the coming into being of communities of peoples, whose voice has been suppressed, or "managed" into submission, by the state. The defining essence of refusal in the assertion of the performative, then, supported the previously theorized definitions of modern nations, in which colonies willed themselves as nations through their refusal of the constraints of the empire. Through the performative narratives enacted through the utilization of modern technologies, print-capitalism objectifies their self-constructed identities. These cultural "realizations" (Berger and Luckmann 62) then become commodities for circulation within the community; ideological artifacts produced within the nation, for the consumption of its participants, and the future reification of its ideals. This concept of cultural realization led to a discussion of how the importation and circulation of foreign realizations might produce the type of cultural colonization that Harcourt and Atwood had theorized; but through an exploration of spectatorship as national subjectivity, it was proposed that subjectivity is an activity which depends on the subject's willingness to be interpellated. Therefore, I have suggested that Canadian audiences of Hollywood films have come to practise a form of subtractive subjectivity, through which they maintain their ideological difference.

The practice of narration was examined through a critique of the narrative theories of Bordwell and Elder, in which I proposed that the structure of narrative was inexorably

linked to the ideologies of its producer. It was shown that Bordwell and Elder mistakenly (whether approvingly or critically) assumed that narrative must be based in causally linked, teleological reminiscences. Instead, it was submitted that when narrative, *per se*, is freed of a specific inherent ideology, the role of ideology in a narrative can be seen as one which enables the producer of the text to be exposed. Refuting the assumptions of both theorists, I developed a theory of narrative structure which is based on the assumption that narrative itself is ideologically inert, and thus, any evidence of causality within a text is only inferred by the perceptions of the spectator, perceptions which have been skewed by the ideologies in which the subject partakes.

This in turn signals the formal departure from the Aristotelian archetype. This theory does not insist that narrative must define itself in terms of causality, character and closure. And while formulas based on the classical plot lines of exposition, crisis, climax, and dénouement (Beckson and Ganz 205) may inform generic texts, they are not inherently required by this theory of narrative structure. Unsullied by a specific ideological impetus, fiction film narrative structure can now be seen as one inextricably tied to ideology. Individual texts stand as artifacts, and the study of those artifacts may reveal their underlying ideology. The systems of structures that produce and inform a text and are required for its comprehension, constitute the ideological structure of that text, that artifact. And when causality, for example, is understood as a function of subjectivity, rather than emplotment, the role of the spectator is given a higher priority. The role of Canadian subjects, it was shown, is one in which spectators re-enact postmodern

Canadian mythological structures by attuning themselves to interpellations which feature elements of “discontinuity” (Eco), and which withhold the “easy satisfactions” found in narratives which offer “sham temporality, sham causality, falsely certain description, clear story” (Kermode 19). Thus, in examining Canadian films and Canadian subjectivity, I suggested, we must look at the *relationship* between the products of Canadian (and foreign) film practices and Canadian subjects. I argued that through the self-conscious use of excess and omission, non-linear episodic texts, the refusal of character- or crisis-driven causality, and the acknowledgment of the heritage of our documentary and “Art Film” traditions, as well as the hegemonic influence of Hollywood cinema, Canadian narratives reconstruct Canadian ideology as narrative structure. With these theories in mind, this thesis has focused on an attempt to recognize “the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall), and the narratives of others, and thereby discern a Canadian cultural identity *as practice*, through the analysis of the Canadian narrative film tradition.

An analysis of the Canadian narrative tradition was undertaken in Chapter III, in which I continued to develop my theory of a Canadian mythology as one rooted in a historical tradition of the proliferation and lack of shared cultural and social knowledge. I began by referring to the social and cultural challenges that Canada faced in the sixties; a decade which saw, along with the celebration of the Canadian centennial, the dawn of the postmodern era as defined by the announcement of the death of the author. Three films from this period, **Nobody Waved Goodbye** (Don Owen, 1964), **Le chat dans le sac**

(Gilles Groulx, 1964) and **Goin' Down the Road** (Don Shebib, 1969) were cited as the “beginning of a beginning” (Harcourt) of a Canadian narrative film tradition. It was suggested that these films drew on the narrative strategies and formal techniques of a well established documentary tradition.

The Canadian documentary tradition, I found, was one which was based, initially, on the authority of a controlling narrative “voice” (Barnouw), and later, on the refusal of that voice through the strategies of silence (Feldman), and resistance characterized as *ressentiment* (Dorland) in English Canada, and in the explorations of the possibilities of a *cinéma de la parole* as exemplified by the films of the *cinéma direct* movement in Québec. I then suggested that this refusal of the voice was the indigenous Canadian enactment of a postmodern acknowledgment of the death of the author-as-imperial-Father. This linkage supported my earlier arguments which situated Canadian nationalism in a postmodern rescinding of the will to be marginal, but also raised the problem of locating an indigenous voice and language through which a postcolonial nation might articulate its emerging mythologies. This problem was found to have been previously addressed by both Margaret Atwood and Dennis Lee, who located this new voice in the postcolonial willing of its reception. Even if the words of our articulations must be borrowed from the language of our imperial Fathers, the “cadence” in their re-iteration signals to those interpellated that these are *our* products, and should be heard as such. Thus, once again, memory (of our colonization), and desire (to be interpellated), are shown to be the agents and structure of identity (as subjectivity).

Successful interpellation, whether of an individual or a nation, requires the tacit collaboration of its subject. Through the unconscious alignment of our “inner” ears (Lee), we re/create our national subjectivity. Though our cinema may be one of silence, we are attuned to its indigenous intimations of cultural cadence. And while Lee, as an artist, wrestled with the words before he could hear the familiar and/or local within them, our subjectivity does not require anything more than our desire. Desire, whether to be entertained or interpellated, is the root of subjectivity and thereby, of identity.

Interpellation is the external recognition of one’s internal existence. Roland Barthes notes in **The Pleasure of the Text** that

The text is a fetish object, and *this fetish desires me*. The text chooses me, by a whole disposition of invisible screens, selective baffles: vocabulary, references, readability, etc.; And. . . in the text, in a way, *I desire* the author: I need his figure . . . as he needs mine (except to “prattle”). (27)

Thus if the interpellation is directed at one’s identity as a member of a national culture, it necessarily recognizes the existence of that culture; since any discourse requires communication between at least *two* parties or it is reduced to Lévi-Strauss’ “impoverished and confused” interpellations, Barthes’ unheard “prattle,” or Atwood’s “futile and spastic gestures.” Thus when imported, Hollywood interpellations can only be heard “subtractively” by Canadians, and through our national “baffles,” we come to learn to “screen” out what is unintelligible. Because national subjectivity is an ideological construct, a systemic infrastructure for the re/production of shared myths for and by the constituents of that nation, nations create “linguistic” barriers that select their subjects.

Even when the same vocabulary as their historical or cultural colonizers must be used, Canadians construct and perceive their narratives through the acknowledgment of our own “cadence.”

Canada’s myths, then, though written in a foreign tongue, speak to Canadians through their cultural artifacts of their own social values, their destiny, heritage, and community. The message, transmitted through a seemingly inadequate medium, is one of the survival of a unique and indigenous culture: indeed, of the perseverance of a wholly Canadian identity. Thus, it can be seen that what Lee called cadence, and Barthes identified as mutual desire, is Frye’s social mythology for the preservation of community, the mythic function for the re/production of ideology. Understood in this light, myths can only “speak” to those whose inner ears are attuned to their message. When the subject knows that a text “*desires*” her/him, the interpellation has been successful. Unsuccessful interpellations can only “prattle” to nonexistent or uncomprehending ears.

The secret of successful interpellation, then, is in the re/production and communication of *familiar* mythic schemas. And no image is more familiar than the one found in one’s own mirror. Slavoj Žižek, in his analysis of Lacan’s theories, contends that the most successful interpellation, and thereby, the most successful confirmation of one’s identity, is the one which recognizes and re/produces its subject; “we *recognize* ourselves as interpellated, as the addressees of an ideological call . . . [and] we perceive ourselves as chosen, as the addressee of a call, because we recognized ourselves in it” (224). This brings the interpellator - subject relationship full circle; we achieve an identity

(subjectivity) through the process of being recognized (interpellation), and we are recognized through the re/production of our identity. Thus postmodernity alters the Cartesian declaration of identity from “I think, therefore I am” to one which recognizes alterity and subjectivity as defining contingencies: “I think *I heard you call me*, therefore I am.” Of course this merely reflects the insidious nature of ideology; it exists only to reproduce itself. Our participation in it is contingent on our acceptance of the subjectivity we are assigned and its continual re/production through our tacit sanctioning of our mutual desire.

Here, I suggested, we can locate Atwood’s maps and bearings in mirrors of our own design. Frye has revealed our Canadian self-conscious predilection for the preservation and documentation of our heritage. Lee has shown how we can appropriate the language of others and hear our own in it. Lévi-Strauss, *via* Wollen, has demonstrated the mythical power of the directed address of interpellation. Barthes has exposed the *jouissance* in the recognition of our desire to be desired, and Žižek has reminded us of its necessity. And while none of these scholars was referring directly to nationality as reproduced or revealed by that culture’s national film traditions, their insights have allowed for the possibility of the *recognition* of Canada’s documentary tradition as a legitimate, mythic representation of our culture.

Peter Mettler’s **Picture of Light** and Alanis Obomsawin’s **Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance** were offered as examples of how the imagined strictures of the documentary tradition have been acknowledged and inverted to reproduce our changing

subjectivities. Both films deproblematize the narrating documentary voice, and call into question the veracity of their images, and the technologies that re-present those images. It was shown that these films interpellate their subjects through the co-acknowledgment of both the previous traditions and the subjectivity of their spectators *as Canadians*. This acknowledgment concurrently highlights the proliferation and lack of our shared cultural knowledge through its reproduction in their formal structures. It was suggested that our narrative films enact these same structural cues and constraints in their interpellations, and several narrative fiction films were then examined for evidence to support this claim.

On examining the continuation of the traditions enacted by **Nobody Waved Goodbye**, **Le chat dans le sac**, and **Goin' Down the Road**, as well as the previous documentary tradition that had informed *them*, it was found that the films that followed did, indeed, re-enact the mythologies that have constituted the framework for my thesis. These films exemplify the stylistic and thematic concerns of the Canadian narrative tradition; together and individually they reveal the archetypal framework of a Canadian narrative structure: a structure which by virtue of its difference, necessarily must *first* define itself in terms of *what it is not*.

It is not rooted in the Aristotelian model of causal unity. The openings of these films presuppose no initial stability. Instead, they indicate an ongoing state of instability, often through the formal device of entering a journey *in medias res* (**Nobody Waved Goodbye**, **Mon Amie Pierrette**, **Isabel**). Lacking initial stability, a plot-defining causal disruption of stability is impossible. The deaths that open **Isabel** and **Mon Oncle**

Antoine are thematically linked to existential continuity: Isabel's family's "tradition" of death, Benoit's roles as altar boy and heir apparent to the family's funeral service business. As the protagonists live in chronic states of crisis, no specific crisis provides a causal impetus for its text. Therefore, no dis/solution of a causal crisis is possible.

Overwhelmed, Claude retreats into a mythic past rather than acknowledge or address his present in **Le chat dans le sac**, while **Goin' Down the Road**'s Pete and Joey perpetually ricochet from crisis to crisis, unable to understand or recover from any before colliding with another. Thus no dénouement is possible in the absence of a climax precipitated by causal crisis. There can be no unveiling or explication of responsibility, reason, or motive for a text devoid of causal impetus. This lack of dénouement necessitates endings rich in ambiguity. Is **Isabel**'s acceptance of uncertainty an indication of insanity or well-reasoned acquiescence? Do the abandoned children of **Nobody Waved Goodbye** and **Goin' Down the Road** represent hope or futility? Do Pierrette (**Mon Amie Pierrette**) and Benoit (**Mon Oncle Antoine**) engender the continuity or the demise of Québécois tradition? Is Claude's *retour à la terre* (**Le chat dans le sac**) a rejuvenating respite or an admission of defeat?

And finally, acknowledging the opening lack of stability, and the formal absence of a specific causal crisis and its dénouement, the narrative structure can allow for no "return" to a stability which never existed. **Nobody Waved Goodbye**, **Mon Amie Pierrette** and **Goin' Down the Road** end as they began, mid-journey, still *in medias res*.

Similarly, **Le chat dans le sac**, **Isabel** and **Mon Oncle Antoine** leave their protagonists in an incomplete phase in their development of identity and/or agency.

This lack of opening and closing stability connotes a structure unbiased by teleology or technocracy. By denying the presupposition of the naturalness of stability, the structure concurrently denies the *disruption* of stability as a causal pretext. Acknowledging *instability* as the natural condition of life/text, the structure reduces crisis to a mere episodic element in the continuity of that instability. Thus, a paratactical structure rooted in the continuity of instability eliminates teleology as the defining feature of plot.

The supremacy of causality is *non sequitur* to a structure based on continuity (A then B then C), rather than on linearity (A ∴ B ∴ C). Similarly, the tolerance of temporal disorder (B then A then C), and narrative omission (A then C then D), is heightened by a structure informed by instability. Hence, instability of structure allows for the tolerance of instability of text.

If the early texts of the Canadian narrative tradition revealed the potentials in a non-teleological, elliptical structure, the films that followed confirmed its merit as a national narrative strategy. **La tendresse ordinaire** and **L'hiver bleu** were subjected to closer analysis, wherein specific scenes were selected to illuminate the formal entrenchment of ideology within both plot and text. In particular, the opening sequences were shown to contradict the Aristotelean template which calls for a beginning “which produces other events,” and their (in)complete texts defy a unity in which “no incident

can be displaced or omitted” (Beckson and Ganz), since both films include whole sequences which either augment, or are extraneous to, their proffered plots. **La tendresse ordinaire** and **L’hiver bleu**, like their predecessors, use structures and techniques that reveal and reproduce the ideological structures that inform them. This ideology, as noted in Chapter I, is one rooted in tolerance, caring, respect, and the desire for institutional acknowledgment of those concerns, even as it is divided by the internal cultural differences that constitute our nation. These concerns, then, are reproduced in texts which acknowledge those differences in their structure, through the self-conscious use of excess and omission, non-linear paratactic texts, the refusal of character- or crisis-driven causality, and the acknowledgment of the heritage of our documentary and Art Film traditions.

The evidence for the continued use of these strategies was found in the analysis of eight films from the eighties and nineties by Denys Arcand, David Wellington and Atom Egoyan. While all of these films, to some extent, feature plots revolving around their respective protagonists’ ongoing negotiations of identity, it was shown that *Canadian identity* was revealed by their narrative strategies and subtexts. Through the augmentation and critique of the traditions of narrative strategies and structures that preceded them, contemporary Canadian fiction films, filmmakers, and their audiences continue to realize the proliferation and lack of cultural knowledge that has been shown to define our shared mythology.

This thesis, then, has refuted the notions of narrative that have been promulgated by theorists such as Bordwell and Elder. National narratives can now be understood in relation to the mythologies that have produced them, and which are implicit in the subjectivities of their audiences. Both Bordwell and Elder want to allow for a cinema outside the strictures of teleological narrative, but neither is able or willing to recognize the possibilities of a post-Aristotelian system of narrative structures: a system which can encompass the non-linear and episodic without the value-judgements of Aristotle (who judged the episodic as inferior [Beckson and Ganz 204]) or Elder (who objects to the “hijacking” of avant-garde techniques as “breaches of convention” [“*TCWN*” 267]); a system which acknowledges its position and role within an encompassing and defining ideological structure without limiting its structure to the promulgations of any one ideology. And it is through the analysis of this “defining structure” that an individual text may be deconstructed to reveal the ideology and concomitant time/space bias which positions and informs it.

Thus these narratives can now be seen as innocent of Elder’s charges of “vandalization” (267). Canadian narratives do not “sack and pillage” (271) the experimental cinema, or any other cinematic tradition, to augment an existing teleological structure, since it has been shown that narrative need not be necessarily teleological. The formal, plastic limitations of filmmaking do require a certain overlap of technique regardless of theme or content, and it has been shown that it has been mainly documentary techniques that inform our texts. But no cinematic tradition can claim

ownership of the specific formal devices (repetition, polyphony, rhythm) or concerns (uncertainty, truth, time), which Elder ascribes to the concepts of the experimental. Nor are the devices and concerns of experimental or documentary cinema in any more danger of being “hijacked,” than could the techniques and strategies of deep focus or illusion be “hijacked” from Hollywood. The ability to manipulate sounds and images is inherent to the medium; it cannot be claimed by any genre, nation or ideology. In short, cinematic tradition in general, and postmodern imperatives in particular, call for the appropriation of any strategies, techniques, devices, concerns, or concepts in the realization of cultural artifacts.

Elder, like Bordwell, has ascribed everything teleological to narrative, and everything else to Art. Neither can see the possibilities for a non-teleological, post-Aristotelian narrative structure. Nor does Elder believe that “such a cinema, if it were to come into being, would represent our best possibility for countering the hegemony of the technical/managerial system” (266). Mired in their self-assured theories, based as they are on the ancient authority of Greek philosophy, neither demonstrates the ability to imagine a postmodern narrative structure, a structure as unforeseen by Aristotle and Plato as the existence of Canada itself. Canadian articulations, it has been shown, feature non-linear, paratactical structures. These structures, it has been argued, reflect indigenous Canadian mythologies, and the temporal location of Canadian nationalism(s) in the postmodern. I shall close by submitting a model by which these mythologies and narratives might be illustrated and identified.

If our narrative structure is non-linear, neither can it be characterized by the perfection and unity of the circular. A structure rooted in instability and informed by an imperfect polyphony, a form which refutes simple-minded closure and revels in ambiguity, a text which acknowledges technocratic hegemony while insisting on the prophecy of continuity cannot be content with the causal restrictions of the linear or the perfecting unity of the circular. It must acknowledge and encompass both.

The Elliptical model fulfils these requirements (see Appendix). Elliptic connotes both the eccentric structure of the ellipse as well as the acknowledgment of omission of the ellipsis. An ellipse can be seen as encompassing both more and/or less than a circle, depending on whether the eccentricity is the result of excess or elision. Excess information, such as that stemming from multicultural diversity and the potential inherent in polyphony, or the consciousness of American forms of knowledge, pushes the circular boundary from within. Elision, the result of the hegemonic suppression of memory, and ellipse due to the lack of knowledge, push and flatten the circle from without. The eccentric stretch along one axis informs the circle with knowledge of its once pre-conceived linear heritage.

The Elliptical model most closely resembles the structure of Canadian knowledge ($\therefore$ identity, $\therefore$ mythology, $\therefore$ narrative structure). It retains its defining circularity while acknowledging its omissions and excesses. Our co-existing conditions of lack and proliferation of knowledge actively push and pull the boundaries of the structure, acknowledging its formal potential and its inherent limitations. Embodying both memory

and desire, its texts celebrate the *past imperfect*; continuity and incompleteness coincide *in medias res*.

Surely this is the model for a narrative structure to satisfy Elder's criteria for the cinema we need: "it will be a cinema of immediacy, multiplicity; will use non-causal, non-teleological forms of instruction and will not attempt to arrest time" ("TCWN" 271). His earlier, *de jure* dismissal of narrative as problematically teleological has been belied by a pre-existing Canadian narrative structure, one which fulfils all his criteria for the cinema we need without the inherent misrepresentations of the Classical mode. Ironically (and with apologies to Geoff Pevere), the cinema we need turns out to be the cinema we already have. New narrative theories, like new horizons, beckon our intellectuals to embrace the realizations and the possibilities they represent.

And if the potential of a new theory is difficult to imagine, so is Canada.

WORKS CITED

- Anderson, Benedict. **Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism**. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 1991.
- Atwood, Margaret. "*Disembarking at Quebec*." Atwood, **Journals**: 11.
- . "*First Neighbours*." Atwood, **Journals**: 14-15.
- . **The Journals of Susanna Moodie**. Toronto: Oxford, 1970.
- . **Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature**. Toronto: Anansi, 1972.
- Auerbach, Erich. **Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature**.
Trans. Willard R. Trask. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1953.
- Barnouw, Erik. **Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film**. New York: Oxford UP, 1974.
- Barthes, Roland. **Image -- Music -- Text**. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill, 1977.
- . **Mythologies**. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Noonday, 1972.
- . **The Pleasure of the Text**. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Noonday, 1975.
- Barrowclough, Susan. "*The Dilemmas of a National Cinema*." **Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: The Quebec Connection**. Ed. Susan Barrowclough. London: BFI, 1981. 3-12.
- Baxter, John. "*Mimesis*." Makaryk 591-593.
- Beckson, Karl, and Arthur Ganz. **Literary Terms: A Dictionary**. 3rd ed. New York: Noonday, 1989.
- Bellemare, Denis. "*Melancholia and the Banal*." **CineAction!** 16, 31-39.

- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. **The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge**. New York: Doubleday, 1966.
- Bergman, Brian. "Rediscovering Newfoundland." **Maclean's** 23 June, 1997: 14.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation." Bhabha, **The Location of Culture**. London: Routledge, 1994: 139-170.
- "Big Screen Big Sound Big Difference . . . And Now Big Bucks." **Tribute** July 1997: 9.
- Bordwell, David. **Narration in the Fiction Film**. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985.
- Brennan, Pat. "Canada's relative youth has big impact on housing." **Ottawa Citizen** 5 July 1997: I 7.
- Dermody, Susan, and Elizabeth Jacka. "The Australian Cinema: Between Industry and Culture." **The Screening of Australia: Anatomy of a Film Industry**. Vol. 1. Sydney: Currency, 1987. 15-47.
- Dopp, Jamie. "Ideologeme." *Makaryk* 556-557.
- Dorland, Michael. "A Thoroughly Hidden Country: Ressentiment, Canadian Nationalism, Canadian Culture." **Sightlines: Reading Contemporary Canadian Art**. Ed. Jessica Bradley and Lesley Johnstone. Montreal: Artextes, 1994. 40-65.
- . "Richard Hancox: Archaeologist of the Canadian Unmodern." **Richard Hancox**. Ed. Catherine Jonasson. Toronto: AGO, 1990. 5-10
- Eco, Umberto. **The Open Work**. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.
- Elder, Bruce. "The Cinema We Need." *Fetherling* 260-271.
- . **Image and Identity**. Waterloo: WLP, 1991.

Evans, Gary. **In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of**

Canada from 1949 to 1989. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991.

Feldman, Seth. "*The Silent Subject in English Canadian Film.*" Feldman, **Take Two** 48-57.

---, ed. **Take Two: A Tribute to Film in Canada.** Toronto: Irwin, 1984.

Fetherling, Douglas, ed. **Documents in Canadian Film.** Peterborough: Broadview, 1988.

Franklin, Ursula. **The Real World of Technology.** CBC Massy Lecture Series. Toronto: Anansi, 1990.

Frye, Northrop. **The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination.** Toronto: Anansi, 1971.

---. "*Canada: New World Without Revolution.*" Frye, **Divisions on a Ground: Essays on Canadian Culture.** Ed. James Polk. Toronto: Anansi, 1982: 167-180.

---. "*Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada.*" Frye, **The Bush Garden** 213-251.

---. "*The Narrative Tradition in English-Canadian Poetry.*" Frye, **The Bush Garden** 145-155.

---. Preface. **The Bush Garden.** By Frye. i-x.

---. "*Silence in the Sea.*" Frye, **The Bush Garden** 181-197.

Gasher, Mike. "*Decolonizing the Imagination: Cultural Expressions as Vehicle of Self-Discovery.*" **Canadian Journal of Film Studies** 2.2-3 (1993): 95-105.

Gellner, Ernest. **Thought and Change.** London: Weidenfeld, 1964.

Grant, George. **Technology and Empire.** Toronto: Anansi, 1969.

- Hall, Stuart. "*Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation.*" **Framework**. No. 36, 1989, 68-81.
- Harcourt, Peter. "*1964: The Beginning of a Beginning.*" Veronneau, **Self Portrait** 64-76.
- . "*The Canadian Nation - An Unfinished Text.*" **Canadian Journal of Film Studies**. 2.2-3 (1993): 5-26.
- . "*Imaginary Images: An Examination of Atom Egoyan's Films.*" **Film Quarterly** Fall 1995: 2-14.
- . "*The Invisible Cinema.*" **CineTracts** Spring/Summer 1978: 48-49.
- . **Movies and Mythologies: Towards a National Cinema**. Toronto: CBC, 1977.
- . "*Pierre Perrault and Le cinema vécu.*" Feldman, **Take Two** 125-135.
- . "*Reflections on the Real: R. Bruce Elder and the Canadian Empirical Cinematic Tradition.*" Unpublished manuscript, April 1993.
- Havercroft, Barbara. "*Enonciation / énoncé.*" Makaryk 540-543.
- Hayes, Carlton J. H. "*Nationalism: A Religion.*" Snyder 371.
- Hedley, Tom. "*Colossus From the North.*" Fetherling 204-214.
- Johnson, Brian D. "*The Canadian Patient.*" **Maclean's** 24 Mar. 1997: 42-46.
- Kermode, Frank. **The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction**. New York: Oxford UP, 1967.
- Laurence, Margaret. **The Diviners**. Toronto: McClelland, 1974.

- Lee, Dennis. *"Writing in Colonial Space."* Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds. **The Post-Colonial Studies Reader**. London: Routledge, 1995: 397-401.
- Lefebvre, Jean Pierre. *"Snapshots from Quebec."* Trans. Barbara Easto. **Essays on Quebec Cinema**. Ed. Joseph I. Donohoe, Jr. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1991. 75-88.
- Lightfoot, Gordon. *"The Canadian Railroad Trilogy."* © Warner Brothers 1969.
- Makaryk, Irena R., ed. **Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms**. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993.
- Marks, Laura U. *"A Deleuzian politics of hybrid cinema."* **Screen** Autumn 1994: 244-264.
- Pevere, Geoff. *"The Rites (and wrongs) of the Elder or The Cinema We Got: The Critics We Need."* Fetherling, 323-336.
- Pratley, Gerald. **Torn Sprockets: The Uncertain Projection of the Canadian Film**. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1987.
- Renan, Ernest. *"Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?"* Snyder 9-10.
- Rockburn, Barbara. *"Cinema Direct: History, Poetry and the Construction of Capture."* **Media International Australia** 82 (1996): 19-29.
- . "Maintaining Canadian Alienation: National Spectatorship as Postmodern Cultural Strategy." **ACS Bulletin AEC** 19.1 (1997): 14-15.
- Schiller, Herbert I. **Culture Inc. : The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression**. New York: Oxford UP, 1989.

Scott, F. R. "*Bonne Entente*." David, Jack, and Robert Lecker. **Canadian Poetry:**

Volume One. Toronto: General, 1982: 152.

Shafer, Boyd C. **Nationalism: Myth and Reality.** New York: Harcourt, 1955.

Smith, Anthony D. **Theories of Nationalism.** London: Camelot 1971.

Snyder, Louis L., ed. **The Dynamics of Nationalism.** New York: Van Nostrand , 1964.

Solecki, Sam. "*Ideology*." Makaryk, 558-560.

Veronneau, Pierre, ed. **Self Portrait: Essays on the Canadian and Quebec Cinemas.**

English Ed. Piers Handling. Trans. Marie-Claude Hecquet and Antoinette Vidal.

Ottawa: CFI, 1980.

Wollen, Peter. **Signs and Meaning in the Cinema.** London: Secker, 1972.

Žižek, Slavoj. "*In His Bold Gaze My Ruin Is Writ Large*." **Everything You Always**

Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock). Ed.

Slavoj Žižek. London: Verso, 1992.

FILMS CITED

- Isabel** (Paul Almond, 1968)
- The Decline of the American Empire** (Denys Arcand, 1986)
- Jesus of Montreal** (Denys Arcand, 1989)
- Love and Human Remains** (Denys Arcand, 1994)
- On est au coton** (Denys Arcand, 1970)
- L'hiver bleu** (André Blanchard, 1979)
- Les raquetteurs** (Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx, 1958)
- Peep Show** (Atom Egoyan, 1981)
- Open House** (Atom Egoyan, 1982)
- Next of Kin** (Atom Egoyan, 1984)
- Family Viewing** (Atom Egoyan, 1987)
- Speaking Parts** (Atom Egoyan, 1989)
- The Adjuster** (Atom Egoyan, 1991)
- Gross Misconduct** (Atom Egoyan, 1992)
- Calendar** (Atom Egoyan, 1993)
- Exotica** (Atom Egoyan, 1994)
- The Battleship Potemkin** (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)
- A bout de souffle** (Jean Luc Godard, 1960)
- Le chat dans le sac** (Gilles Groulx, 1964)
- ?O, Zoo! The Making of a Feature Film** (Philip Hoffman, 1986)

Mon Oncle Antoine (Claude Jutra, 1971)

La tendresse ordinaire (Jacques Leduc, 1973)

Chronique de la vie quotidienne (Jacques Leduc, 1977)

Mon Amie Pierrette (Jean Pierre Lefebvre, 1967)

Stations (William D. MacGillivray, 1983)

Life Classes (William D. MacGillivray, 1987)

Understanding Bliss (William D. MacGillivray, 1991)

Sam and Me (Deepa Mehta, 1990)

Picture of Light (Peter Mettler, 1994)

Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance (Alanis Obomsawin, 1993)

Nobody Waved Goodbye (Don Owen, 1964)

Runner (Don Owen, 1962)

Crime Wave (John Paisz, 1985)

Pour la suite du monde (Pierre Perrault, 1963)

La règle du jeu (Jean Renoir, 1939)

Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976)

Goin' Down the Road (Don Shebib, 1969)

Inside/Out (Lori Spring, 1988)

Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941)

I Love a Man in Uniform (David Wellington, 1993)

The Seven Year Itch (Billy Wilder, 1955)

APPENDIX

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved