**“Eh” is for Adaptation:
Canadian Films and the International Market**

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Abstract

By expanding upon Margaret Atwood's 1972 literature guide *Survival*, Robert McGill suggests that as Canada moves into the 21st Century, the defining trait of Canadiana becomes not survival, but adaptation. Consequently, if one examines the process by which Canadian filmmakers transform works of literature, adaptation offers a textual and meta-textual framework with which one can examine Canada's position in the international film market. If one expands upon McGill's analysis of the narrative infidelities made by Sarah Polley in *Away from Her*, the adaptations of *Barney's Version*, *Incendies*, *The Sweet Hereafter*, and *A History of Violence* demonstrate the various ways in which Canadian films balance the demands of commerce, art, politics, authorship, and industry. By adaptations within the context of their source texts, the study of adaptation on a practical and a meta-textual level demonstrates the adaptive strategies used by Canadian filmmakers as they negotiate both national and international film markets.

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Introduction

“We don’t go to the movies much anymore ... all those multiplexes showing the same American garbage,” quips Fiona (Julie Christie) in *Away from Her*,¹ Sarah Polley’s adaptation of the short story “The Bear Came Over the Mountain” by Alice Munro.² In his article “No Nation but Adaptation,” Robert McGill suggests that this organic piece of dialogue is one example in which Polley obliquely recognizes Canada’s film community by altering Munro’s text.³ McGill offers a meta-textual analysis of *Away from Her* by examining Polley’s infidelity to Munro, for her handling of the relationship of Grant (Gordon Pinsent) and Marian (Olympia Dukakis) deviates greatly from Munro’s prose. McGill’s reading of the infidelities of *Away from Her* – in both a narrative and a meta-textual sense – is essential, for infidelity has long mired adaptation studies due to an overemphasis on literal fidelity at the expense of creativity. Fidelity is also stifling in the national sense, for Canadian films have long been unmarketable internationally due to the element of self-representation that arises when an industry supports itself with state funds.

By probing the passage from source text to film, this thesis argues that contemporary Canadian film adaptations reveal the tri-fold dilemma of art, commerce, and nationhood for filmmakers who must balance the competing demands of national identity and the commercial necessity of international circulation. The journey from page to screen evokes questions of the relationship between art and commerce, and the inevitable political aspect that arises when an industry such as Canada relies heavily upon state funds; moreover, these films reveal adaptive strategies that inspire success both nationally and globally, while also propagating a self-image that progresses beyond an idealized national cinema. As McGill notes of Sarah Polley’s infidelity to the story by Alice Munro, the interval between text and film reveals how filmmakers adapt to the difficult circumstances of filmmaking. Just as Grant and Marian’s infidelity evokes the need

for adapters to cheat on an original, a close examination of contemporary Canadian film adaptations reveals how Canadian filmmakers adapt to resolve the perceived irreconcilable differences among art, commerce, politics and national identity.

McGill makes a brave effort in his analysis of Polley's infidelity, for the subject has long been the downfall of adaptation studies. The emphasis on fidelity, meaning how much the film resembles the source text in terms of narrative, character, style, or ideology, has been burdened upon adaptation ever since the 1957 study *Novels into Film* by George Bluestone. Bluestone, unfortunately, deems film adaptations to be a mere "paraphrase" of their source texts and he argues, "In film criticism, it has always been easy to recognize how a poor film 'destroys' a superior novel. What has not been sufficiently recognized is that such destruction is inevitable."⁴ By calling films a summary or a simplified version of literature, Bluestone suggests that films are lacking in areas in which the novels are not. By introducing the idea of destruction, he suggests that one should evaluate an adaptation based on how closely it mirrors its source text; however, as the dissimilarities between *Away from Her* and Munro's story indicate, acknowledging changes are essential for uncovering the artistic and/or political potential of film.

Despite the flaws in Bluestone's approach, *Novels into Film* remains invaluable. Scholars continue to appreciate Bluestone's study because he conveys how film and literature are vastly dissimilar modes of storytelling and artistic expression. Perhaps the most important claim from Bluestone's study is that which states, "it is insufficiently recognized that the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera, as different from each other as ballet is from architecture."⁵ Bluestone notes the technical and categorical gaps between the two media, and his study acknowledges that "[t]he governing conventions of each medium are further conditioned by different origins, different audiences, different modes of production, and different censorship

requirements.”⁶ By acknowledging the structural, institutional, and discursive variances between the two modes, the textual and contextual differences between film and literature therefore comprise the foundation for studies of film adaptation to serve an academic purpose.

Bluestone, however, undermines such observations through his belief that films are inherently inferior to novels. Robert Stam observes this paradox in Bluestone’s analysis, and he suggests that scholars may remedy it by removing fidelity from the evaluative precepts of their queries; moreover, Stam expresses the complexity of the relationship between conformity to the source and commitment to the medium. Stam writes,

The shift from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel ... to a multitrack medium such as film, which can play not only with words..., but also with theatrical performance, music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood – and I would suggest even the undesirability – of literal fidelity.⁷

Stam’s observation is essential for appreciating why fidelity is a poor evaluative principle for film adaptations: a literal adaptation of a novel would simply be bad cinema. To implore textual fidelity is thus to do a disservice to film.

Stam also explains why one cannot evaluate a film adaptation based on how well it replicates a source text, for a reliance on fidelity obscures the institutional differences that Bluestone himself acknowledges. Stam writes

The demand for fidelity ignores the actual processes of making films, the important differences in modes of production. While a novelist’s choices are relatively unconstrained by the considerations of budget – all the writer needs is time, talent, paper, and pen – films are from the outset immersed in technology and commerce. While novels are relatively unaffected by questions of budget, films are deeply immersed in material and financial contingencies.⁸

Adaptation is a difficult task for filmmakers because they are generally limited to between two and three hours of screen time to tell their story. Novelists, however, can generally tell the same story without restriction. As a result, adapters must inherently choose to condense the narrative

or to omit large passages of prose that illuminate the themes of the novel, but are not immediately crucial to forwarding the plot; furthermore, adaptation frequently requires one to omit elements of both. Thus is the flaw in Bluestone's emphasis on fidelity.

The result of Bluestone's query may be that subsequent adaptation theorists have been fixated on solving an irrelevant riddle. Brian McFarlane playfully debunks fidelity in his discussion of adaptation, saying, "Fidelity is obviously very desirable in marriage; but with film adaptations I suspect that playing around is more effective."⁹ McFarlane's pun with fidelity and marriage nicely mirrors Robert McGill's examination of Sarah Polley's adaptation, for McGill embraces Polley's deviations from Munro's story and he parallels the infidelities of the film's characters with Polley's choice to stray. He writes, "By positioning viewers with Grant as licensed leavers and justified adulterers, *Away from Her* encourages them not just to accept adaptation's infidelities, but to embrace the notion of the necessity certain infidelities within the parameters of a broader loyalty to the original text."¹⁰ McGill thus uses the strength of the unfaithfulness of *Away from Her* to disprove the continual emphasis on fidelity; moreover, he acknowledges that the manipulation of a source text is essential for a film to communicate the themes and desires evoked by the novel, as well as ones that are organic to the film.

McGill also acknowledges the multitrack nature of film put forth by Stam, which suggests that the creative alteration of a source text through the audio-visual tracks of film invests an adaptation within the greater cultural discourse. For example, McGill cites the addition of a Canadian flag magnet in the background of one scene of *Away from Her*.¹¹ There are also many creative embellishments to the audio track: in addition to Fiona's observation of the inundation of Hollywood films in Canadian theatres, McGill mentions Polley's additions of a casual reference to Canadian Tire, as well as the emotionally resonant use of music by Neil

Young and k.d. lang.¹² McGill also sees an array of intertextuality in *Away from Her*, noting that the compositions of the snowy landscape recall Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*¹³ and that the final revolving shot of the film echoes the final 360-degree pan of *Last Night*,¹⁴ two films in which Polley appeared. Incidentally, Polley repeats her indulgence in Canadian content in her sophomore feature *Take This Waltz*.¹⁵ Not only does Polley derive her title from the Leonard Cohen song, but she also offers, for example, a scene in which Margot (Michelle Williams) and Lou (Seth Rogen) see Claude Jutra's *Mon Oncle Antoine* at Toronto's Royal Theatre. While one could argue that Polley's additions serve as appeasement for nationalist representation, one could also suggest that, like McKellar's film, Polley's references to Canadiana may be cynical in-jokes directed towards an overly patriotic cinematic institution. Regardless of how one interprets these additions, Polley's choice to add them implores a deeper probing of Canadian films in general.

McGill does not hesitate to speculate upon the importance of Polley's artistic license. He argues, "By paying homage to and by incorporating into itself the work of established Canadian artists who personally have participated in Polley's artistic coming of age, *Away from Her* does its part in building the artistic prestige and commercial viability of a still-developing tradition of mainstream films by and about Canadians."¹⁶ McGill thus uses the shrewd creativity of Polley's adaptation to draw out the influences by other Canadian artists and by conveying how these artists have presumably assisted in Polley's self-awareness of herself as a Canadian. He reveals how the integration of familiar and popular Canadian arts assists in rendering the film accessible to audiences both local and foreign. While adaptation offers status and prestige to filmmakers who successfully satisfy a literate market, *Away from Her* does so on an exponentially smaller scale in a nation whose inhabitants, as Fiona suggests, rarely see their own films.

Using adaptation as a means through which one can interrogate the larger cultural dynamics of cinema echoes an earlier proposition by Dudley Andrew. In “Adaptation” Andrew suggests, “It is time for adaptation to take a sociological turn. How does the adaptation serve the cinema? What conditions exist in film style and film culture to warrant or demand the use of literary prototypes?”¹⁷ In light of Andrew’s proposal, McGill’s final observation of Polley’s creative license is invaluable. McGill states, “the case of Polley’s film speaks to the significance of adaptation for a country in which many artists and critics have been preoccupied with building a sense of national cultural heritage.”¹⁸ Canadian artists and critics might continually preoccupy themselves with the task of nation-building through the arts because the Canadian ethos is so frequently eclipsed on a historical, social, political, and cultural scale by its mass-producing American neighbour and its Commonwealth heritage. Writing on the relevancy of Canada’s cultural sovereignty, Gilbert Gagné notes, “At the international level, national cultural policies provoke differing responses depending on whether culture is seen primarily as an integral part of a nation’s life and character, as is the case in Canada, or as an economic sector, as in the United States where it has a central role in the national economy.”¹⁹ Canada’s film industry must always reassert its value because American counterparts consistently eclipse Canadian films. Although Canadian filmmakers may seek mainstream success in order to live alongside the monolith of Hollywood exports, Canadian films regularly risk seeming homogenous to American products. As exemplified by *Away from Her*, adaptation therefore provides a valuable stepping-stone from which one can begin to interrogate the overall nature of film production/reception in Canada on both a practical and meta-textual level.

The integration of adaptation within a study of Canadian cinema is useful because adaptations and Canadian films both wrestle with the tension of art versus commerce. An

adaptation is arguably a commercially oriented film because it exploits the success of a previous work in order to enjoy a ready-made audience. The ongoing problem of fidelity, conversely, asks if a filmmaker should impose his or her artistic license upon a pre-existing work and risk the commercial viability of the film during the act of artistic creation. Canadian films, on the other hand, generally depend upon the financial aid of government bodies such as Telefilm Canada or the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO), which administers the Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit (CPTC) if a film meets certain criteria for Canadian Content. Canadian filmmakers must therefore be mindful of the commercial element of cinema so that state loans do not become significant financial losses; conversely, films that veer too far from the mainstream risk criticism that public funds are being used on high-art for clique audiences.

The establishment of a strong national cinema is important for Canadians because the overwhelming majority of films screened in Canadian theatres are American. As noted recently by Telefilm Canada, only 18.6% of films exhibited in Canada from 2001-2009 were Canadian.²⁰ By conflating a study of adaptation with a study of Canadian films, one can discern correlations or dissimilarities between source texts and films, and then use such observations to address the tensions forced upon Canadian filmmakers who risk compromising either the artistic integrity or the commercial viability of their films as they strive to compete in their own market. Adaptation within Canadian cinema is particularly useful because Canadian state-funding bodies place an increasing emphasis on the importance of the international market in order to ensure the survival of Canadian films. For example, despite being financed by Canadian public funds, the mandate of Telefilm Canada does not seek to finance films that appeal exclusively to Canadians; rather, Telefilm defines itself as a body for “telling Canadian stories to Canada and the world.”²¹ Even though Canadian films may receive funds from the Canadian government, the government

includes Canadians as merely one component of a broader audience. The parallels in complexity of film adaptation and national cinema are thus a useful means for furthering McGill's study.

McGill's observation of Polley's choices to deviate from Munro's prose and to add Canadian content to her film is important for negotiating a Canadian identity through the cinema. In this regard, Peter Harcourt's book *Myths and Mythologies* is a valuable reminder for the importance of seeing one's own national culture represented on film. In fact, Harcourt cites the experience of watching Canadian films as triggering his self-awareness of his identity as a Canadian.²² Writing in 1977, Harcourt notes the lack of a discourse on Canadian cinema by Canadian scholars and he suggests, "What Margaret Atwood, in her book *Survival* has done for Canadian literature, someone desperately needs to do for Canadian cinema."²³ Harcourt suggests that, as Atwood did for literature with *Survival*, one can bring both artistic and political urgency to a national cinema by analyzing films made by homegrown talents and by situating such films in the circumstances in which they are produced. Perhaps, then, adaptation encourages a dialogue between cinema and the novel to demonstrate the ongoing evolution of Canadian arts in light of the fact that Canadian culture must constantly reassert its importance when Canadians are more prone to consume American products, especially at the movie theatre.

Margaret Atwood's *Survival* offers a valuable study that one can use as both precursor and parallel to a discussion on Canadian film. Even the Darwinian connotation of adaptation is a precept to survival, and McGill suggests that the term is implicit in the four 'Victim Positions' suggested by Atwood's thematic study of Can Lit.²⁴ Before exploring Atwood's study in relation to Canadian film adaptation, one can denote *Survival* as a relevant example for why a nationally oriented study remains important in light of the growing resistance in recent scholarship to

studies restricted to one nation. In her introduction to the 2003 reprint of *Survival*, Atwood reflects upon the legacy of *Survival* after its 1972 publication. She writes,

Survival, the book, seemed quainter and more out of date as these various years went by, and – incidentally – as some of its wishes were granted and some of its predictions realized. Yet its central concerns remain with us, and must still be confronted. Are we really that different from anybody else? If so, how? And is that *how* something worth preserving?²⁵

Atwood's query suggests that studies of national culture are ongoing and require regular debate and re-evaluation in order to perpetuate their relevancy. This new introduction to *Survival* thus reveals the importance of interrogating the national at a time when nations increasingly find themselves in flux by ever-changing politics, increased migration, and the erosion of physical borders. Much as Atwood did in her 1972 study, one can retain the political agency of cultural artefacts by doing an in-depth study of texts from a single nation. In the case of Canadian films, the political is expressly worth considering, as the Canadian Government generally remains one of the largest investors in the Canadian film industry, if not the top contributor.

Perhaps even more important is the need to use a study of Canadian film as a forum to survey the small but valuable field in Canadian film scholarship. The ongoing dialogue of reception to these cultural productions is equally important for navigating Canadian culture as the production of said culture itself. The dual discussion of adaptation and Canadian cinema is therefore productive because it links both the circumstances of the films' production and the ensuing critical/scholarly discourse. Additionally, this discussion of adaptation connects the thematic drive of the films with the structures and policies that shape Canadian film production, as well as the overall cultural conditions of Canada itself.

Adaptation as a symptom of the generalized Canadian cultural atmosphere is inherent in Atwood's argument of survival as the thematic link within Canadian literature. She writes,

The central symbol for Canada – and this is based on numerous instances of its occurrence in both English and French Canadian literature – is undoubtedly *Survival*, *la Survivance*. Like the Frontier and The Island, it is a multifaceted and adaptable idea. ... But the word can also suggest survival of a crisis or disaster... And in English Canada now while the Americans are taking over it is acquiring a similar meaning.²⁶

While identifying instances of survival within the narratives/tropes of novels/poems written by Canadians, Atwood's study assists in the survival of Canadian literature by stating its complexity and distinctiveness, and therefore emphasizes why one should preserve it when Canadians can access American culture just as easily or must access it due to a lack of choice. Using the Darwinian connotation of adaptation as invited through Atwood's reading of *Survival*, adaptation therefore acknowledges the indebtedness of Canadian culture to the novel, but it also harkens the need to move beyond the novel as a signifier of cultural identity because films have arguably replaced novels as the more widely circulated and celebrated means of cultural expression. Adaptation, moreover, connotes the need to rewrite the idea of "Canadian" into one that is more representative and inclusive than that of the 1970s cultural attitude from which *Survival* emerged. Atwood's premise still provides a grain of experiential proof nevertheless, for films produced by Canadians often fall victim to strong foreign competition and institutionalized ambivalence from domestic audiences.²⁷

McGill grasps this argument in his reading of *Away from Her*. Polley makes the film more accessible by revealing Grant's infidelity, but she also brands it as uniquely Canadian through her distinct signifiers. McGill finds the addition of Canadian references significant and notes that, "Given that *Away from Her* is a text in a medium that has usually been thought to require revenues associated with American audiences in order to flourish, the question of why the film should add Canadian content is worth consideration."²⁸ Perhaps, then, Canadian filmmakers must open their films up to international audiences, yet they safeguard their

Canadian identity by inscribing Canadian content into the audio-visual components of the film. In this regard, *Away from Her* reflects the final of Margaret Atwood's four "Victim Positions" in *Survival*. By not capitulating to facile economics and by not hiding the Canadian identity of her film, Polley exhibits the act of "repudiating the Victim role."²⁹ This leads to Atwood's fourth victim position, which is "*To be a creative non-victim*."³⁰ This role-playing suggests that as a Canadian actress and filmmaker, Polley recognizes the propagation of Hollywood success at the expense of Canadian films; therefore, she makes a film that is distinctly and characteristically Canadian, and she does so in a manner that encourages a successful reception both at home and abroad. *Away from Her*, moreover, casts prominent foreign actresses Julie Christie and Olympia Dukakis in leading roles to appeal to Anglo-American audiences. If one considers that Polley casts foreign talents even though she is a Canadian actress herself, the strategies in *Away from Her* illustrate the dilemma of Canadian films in general and adaptations in particular: namely, the struggle to balance between striving to match the cultural prestige given to literature, meeting nationalist requirements for familiarity, and being mindful of foreign capital for marketability.

This balancing act is not exclusive to *Away from Her*. Many recent films by Canadian directors – and many recent film adaptations, specifically – exhibit the meta-adaptive quality of Canadian film. Polley's adaptation of "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" is much like the adaptation of Mordecai Richler's 1997 novel *Barney's Version* into the 2010 film directed by Richard J. Lewis.³¹ The novel for *Barney's Version* is saturated with Canadiana; however, the screenplay by Michael Konyves removes much of what makes Richler's novel prototypically Canadian: the political backdrop of the 1995 Quebec Referendum is largely muted, as are the plethora of regional jokes regarding Montreal, Toronto, and the tensions that arise between the two. The references to the political and cultural climate, as well as the historical development of

Canada, are examples of the kind of representation that one expects in films that invite a reading of nation building through art. Nevertheless, these culturally specific references might be lost on international audiences who are ignorant of Canada's idiosyncrasies, for a two-hour film simply cannot be as exhaustive in offering contextual information as a four-hundred-page novel can be.

The film *Barney's Version* is nevertheless equally self-aware of its Canadian identity. For example, the film emphasizes the role of hockey within the romance of Barney (Paul Giamatti) and Miriam (Rosamund Pike), which is a noteworthy loyalty to the novel given the prominence of hockey within the perceived Canadian identity on both a national and an international scale. The inclusion of a hockey score as the emotional crux of the relationship between Barney and Miriam exploits the common trope of Hollywood romance, and it adds a taste of Canadiana to this Canuck production that, like *Away from Her*, is peppered with foreign actors.

In addition to *Barney's Version*, a second Canadian film that debuted in 2010 demonstrates the character of adaptation in Canadian cinema. Denis Villeneuve's *Incendies*³² recently became a hallmark of Canadian cinema as a highly acclaimed Oscar-nominee for Best Foreign Language Film. *Incendies* is a film adaptation of Wajdi Mouawad's 2003 play *Incendies* (published in translation by Linda Gaboriau as *Scorched*). Stage-dramas are equally important as film adaptations, yet as André Loiselle notes in *Stage-Bound: Feature Film Adaptations of Canadian and Québécois Drama*, "feature film adaptations of drama represent only a small fraction of the hundreds of movies produced in Canada."³³ Loiselle, however, also notes that the Canadian film industry witnessed a resurgence of stage-to-screen adaptations during the 1990s.³⁴ Also noteworthy is the triumph of *Incendies* as Canada's official submission for the 2011 Academy Awards after winning Best Canadian Film at the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival, while another stage-to-screen effort, *Monsieur Lazhar*,³⁵ not only followed such a prize pattern, but

also tells of a migrant character struggling with identity in the adopted homeland of Canada.

Incendies therefore represents an emerging trend in Canadian film production, as well as Canada's strategy to represent itself internationally. Consequently, by including *Incendies* with the study of *Barney's Version*, this thesis aims to demonstrate that the creative strategies of Canadian adaptations are not exclusive to the novel, but are often complementary to adaptations of different forms despite the differences in form and content between literary sources.

Like the adaptation of *Barney's Version*, the film *Incendies* features dissimilarities in key sequences of the film. The most striking additions to *Incendies* are the accentuation of the pivotal "bus sequence" and the alteration of a clown nose into a tri-spotted tattoo on the foot of Nawal's son. The variations in *Incendies* demonstrate an opening up of the play through audio-visual embellishments, which helps the film avoid the "stage-bound" dynamic that often befalls many adaptations of drama. As Loiselle notes, stage-bound adaptations are films that fail to "escape their theatrical origins."³⁶ *Incendies* reflects the stage-bound nature of adaptations of Canadian drama through its emphasis on dialogue and monologue; however, Villeneuve benefits by adapting a play that, like many films that avoid such a dynamic, presents "a dialectical composition that pits coercive, centripetal pressures against explosive, centrifugal forces."³⁷ The adaptation of *Incendies* thus illustrates the tension of adaptation by exhibiting its roots in the stage, as well as its fruition upon the screens of movie theatres across the globe.

Equally important is how these changes offer moments of spectacle that speak to audiences without the use of verbal or written language. The use of the tattoo in the film is significant, for it evokes the myth of Oedipus. As Grutman and Ghadie note in their article on Mouawad's play, the name Oedipus signifies someone whose foot is pierced.³⁸ The reference to Greek tragedy facilitates a reading of *Incendies* for international audiences who are familiar with the myth,

much like how Atom Egoyan accentuates his adaptation of Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter* by adding the folkloric subtext of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

In Egoyan's adaptation of Banks's novel, the addition of the Pied Piper motif exemplifies an adaptive strategy that assists in rendering the film accessible for a wide audience. Egoyan inserts a new narrative thread into his adaptation of *The Sweet Hereafter*: the film frequently cuts to Nicole (played by Sarah Polley herself) reading aloud Robert Browning's folk-tale of the Pied Piper. Much like how Polley renders the love triangle between Grant, Fiona, and Marian explicit in order to ensure greater emotional resonance in *Away from Her*, Egoyan's use of the Pied Piper grants coherence to his radical explosion of the timeframe of Banks's novel. The Piper motif universalizes the complexity of the townspeople's need to assign guilt after their children perish in a tragic accident involving the school bus, whereas Banks's novel is set in the small American town of Sam Dent and the characters, especially Billy Ansel, liken the tragedy to America's involvement in the Vietnam War, which enables them to alleviate any sense of culpability. While Egoyan universalizes *The Sweet Hereafter* with the Pied Piper motif, like Polley he also inserts signifiers that render the Canadianness of the film explicit to Canadian audiences.

In spite of Egoyan's renovation of *The Sweet Hereafter* into a Canadian film, the reception of the film does not always reflect its nationality. For example, Jonathan Romney observes Egoyan's meticulous adaptation, but he suggests that the accessibility of the film raises another question. Romney submits that Egoyan's adaptation – his first – is more in the vein of an American tradition of filmmaking.³⁹ Perhaps the shift in discourse occurs because *The Sweet Hereafter* is not based on a Canadian text. Similarly, Peter Dickinson excludes Egoyan from his 2007 study of adaptation and Canadian film, *Screening Gender, Framing Genre*. Dickinson also omits Canadian director David Cronenberg from his analysis. The absence of Egoyan and

Cronenberg from this study is odd because Dickinson uses adaptation to probe discourses of gender in Canadian cinema. In addition to being frequent adapters, the two directors consistently make prominent and provocative use of sexuality in their themes and in their narratives. While their films could provide the most obvious examples to his query, in addition to being among the more widely seen Canadian film adaptations, Dickinson denies their status in the canon of Canadian adaptations since the directors have yet to adapt a work of Can Lit to the screen.⁴⁰

Dickinson's omission of Egoyan and Cronenberg provides a gap in which one can further the characteristics of the adaptations of *Barney's Version* and *Incendies*. Expanding upon Dudley Andrew's propositions on the sociological nature of adaptation, Dickinson writes

Understanding the world from which adaptation comes means paying attention to political, economic, cultural, and ideological issues, including more or less measurable indices such as feature film policy, financing, distribution, and audience and critical reception, but also to more abstract concepts like canonicity and institutionalisation – especially in terms of which texts are deemed representatively 'Canadian' and how that representation necessarily transfers to the screen.⁴¹

While *The Sweet Hereafter* offers one example of the perils of adaptation, nationalism, and canonicity, one can situate David Cronenberg within the discourse of Canadian adaptations through a rather dissimilar example. Cronenberg's 2005 adaptation *A History of Violence*⁴² reveals the problematic state of Canadian film production, as well as the equally troublesome discourse of what constitutes a Canadian film. *A History of Violence* is technically not a Canadian production, for it was financed by American producers and written by American screenwriter Josh Olson, who adapted the graphic novel by John Wagner and Vince Locke. Moreover, in a book that documents and analyzes *A History of Violence*, Bart Beaty notes that Cronenberg admittedly took the project for reasons that were purely financial.⁴³ Cronenberg, however, desired to make *A History of Violence* with many of his familiar collaborators and he

moved the production to Canada. *A History of Violence* is therefore a film that was shot in Canada by Canadians, but is considered American.

A History of Violence thus enjoys one of the recurrent traits of film production in Canada: it is a Hollywood “runaway” production, moved to Canada from America in order to make the production more amenable. In spite of its Hollywood origins, *A History of Violence* is not a film that simply substitutes Toronto for New York (or Pittsburgh, in this case) in order to shave thirty percent off the budget. Although Cronenberg’s interests in the film seem to have been mainly commercial, Beaty suggests that Cronenberg adds a Canadian’s sensibility to the film through his critique of violence in the construction of the mythological American hero.⁴⁴ Crucial to Beaty’s framing of *A History of Violence* is an understanding of Cronenberg’s filmography, especially regarding how traits of his previous films influence the production and the reception of the film.

Following McGill’s reading of *Away from Her*, the adaptations of *Barney’s Version*, *Incendies*, *The Sweet Hereafter*, and *A History of Violence* therefore reveal the complexities of Canadian film production. The changes from page to screen allow one to observe how much Canadianness the filmmakers inject into their productions. Equally important is how much Canadian content disappears in the film adaptation, as this enables one to situate the discussion of Canadian cinema within a field that sees increasing permeability in the borders of national cinemas. In this thesis, adaptation serves as a starting point towards developing arguments that position adaptation as an essential trait of Canadian cinema in both a thematic and industrial context. Adaptation is a useful practice because it enables observations that one cannot produce through the reading of an individual film text; moreover, one sees in Canadian adaptations a philosophical difference between source text and film on both a textual and a meta-textual level.

By using source texts as the root of scholarly inquiry, one observes the correlations and dissimilarities that arise between texts, which reveal the tensions that pull on filmmakers as they endeavour to succeed in an industry in which financial success is precarious at best. Chapter 1 observes the exchanges of art and commerce in Canadian films through a reading of the adaptation of *Barney's Version*. *Barney's Version*, like *Away from Her*, exploits prominent non-Canadian actors for name recognition and marketability; moreover, it is one of many international co-productions, which are an increasing trend in Canadian production. *Barney's Version* deviates from its source material considerably in some regards, yet it retains the send-up to nationalism offered by Richler's novel. The added Canadian content of the film, moreover, offers a provocative reading of the survival tactics of Canadian films.

Chapter 2 delineates the intersections of art and politics in Canadian film through a reading of *Incendies*. The adaptation of *Incendies* from a play by a migrant Canadian to a film by a native French Canadian reveals that Canadian films encourage a dynamic and inclusive portrait of Canadianness; similarly, *Incendies* offers a meta-adaptive reading of Canada disseminating a new articulation of its own multicultural make-up. Villeneuve's effort, though, aligns *Incendies* within his filmography and displays an aim for humanist sympathy.

Chapter 3, finally, interrogates the question of authorship in adaptation using primarily *The Sweet Hereafter* and *A History of Violence*. These two films demonstrate different facets of art, commerce, and ideology seen in the previous chapters, yet their realization raises questions of fidelity to a national cinema, for Egoyan is perceived as making an American film and Cronenberg does so literally. A close reading of the adaptations, however, reveals that the directors remain faithful to the authorial tradition with which they helped fortify the Canadian film industry. While these three chapters focus primarily of the dynamics of commerce, politics,

and authorship in the art of adaptation, respectively, all three remain cognizant of such concerns and allow them to intersect within the context of Canada's publically supported industry.

The adaptations of *Barney's Version*, *Incendies*, *The Sweet Hereafter*, and *A History of Violence* illustrate different facets of transformation and the balancing of commercialism and nationalism. The efforts to adapt are essential, for, as Atwood says, "at some point the failure to survive, or the failure to achieve anything beyond survival, becomes not a necessity imposed by a hostile outside world but a choice made from within. Pushed far enough, the obsession with surviving can become the will *not* to survive."⁴⁵ While Atwood articulated the fickle state of Canadiana through her thematic guide to Can Lit, one can make equally urgent points on the state of Canadian film by studying adaptation. While survival epitomizes Canadian literature, adaptation typifies Canadian films: this adaptation being the shifting and revising of onscreen representation into a film that is accessible and appreciable for foreign audiences. This adaptation, moreover, involves a process of ensuring that these films are characteristically Canadian, and therefore retain a level of national consciousness for Canadian audiences.

Notes

¹ *Away from Her*, directed by Sarah Polley (2006; Canada: Mongrel Media, 2010), DVD.

² Republished as "Away from Her" following the release of the film; additionally, the collection of stories in which "The Bear Came over the Mountain" originally appeared *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, was also retitled as *Away from Her* for the 2007 publication.

³ Robert McGill, "No Nation but Adaptation: 'The Bear Came over the Mountain,' *Away from Her*, and What It Means to Be Faithful," *Canadian Literature* 197 (Summer 2008): 109.

⁴ George Bluestone, *Novels Into Film* (1957; reprint, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), 62.

⁵ Bluestone, *Novels into Film*, 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, viii.

⁷ Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," in *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore, Depth of Field (New Brunswick and New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 56.

⁸ Robert Stam, "Introduction," in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (2005; reprint Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 16.

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- ⁹ Brian McFarlane, "It Wasn't Like That in the Book . . .," in *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*, ed. James M. Welsh and Peter Lev (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 6.
- ¹⁰ McGill, "No Nation but Adaptation," 102.
- ¹¹ Ibid, 109.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ *The Sweet Hereafter*, directed by Atom Egoyan (1997; Canada: Alliance Atlantis, 2004), DVD.
- ¹⁴ *Last Night*, directed by Don McKellar (1998; Canada/France: Alliance Atlantis, 2004), DVD.
- ¹⁵ *Take This Waltz*, directed by Sarah Polley (Canada: Joe's Daughter, 2011).
- ¹⁶ McGill, "No Nation but Adaptation," 109.
- ¹⁷ Andrew, "Adaptation," in *Film Theory & Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 7th ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 378.
- ¹⁸ McGill, "No Nation but Adaptation," 110.
- ¹⁹ Gilbert Gagné, "Cultural Sovereignty, Identity, and North American Integration: on the Relevance of the U.S.-Canada-Quebec Border," *Quebec Studies* 3 (Fall 2003/Winter 2004): 29.
- ²⁰ Telefilm Canada, "Fostering Cultural Success," *Telefilm Canada*, November 23, 2011, accessed January 8, 2012, <http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/document/en/01/17/Telefilm-Canada-corporate-plan-2011-2014.pdf>, 5. It should be emphasized that this figure of 18.6% accounts solely for the percentage of Canadian titles screened in theatres: the study makes no mention of the duration or size of exhibition.
- ²¹ Christopher E. Gittings, *Canadian National Cinema: Ideology, difference, and representation*, National Cinema Series (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 98.
- ²² Peter Harcourt, *Movies and Mythologies: towards a national cinema* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1977): 168.
- ²³ Ibid, 161.
- ²⁴ McGill, "No Nation but Adaptation," 98.
- ²⁵ Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972; reprint, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004), 10.
- ²⁶ Ibid, 42. It should be noted that *la Survivance* is not accurately a literal translation of *Survival*. "Survival" should be understood as Atwood's theme of staying alive in the face of adversity, while "*la Survivance*" is a conservative term used by some French Canadians to express the endurance of Francophone culture in the face of Anglophone hegemony. The political connotations of the two terms are dissimilar.
- ²⁷ It should be noted that the concept of an audience that might be indifferent to Canadian cinema is one that is more a product of circumstance than choice. Canada has a long history of institutional/systemic marginalization that has shaped the conditions of the distribution and exhibition of Canadian films. For an overview of the political economy of Canada's film industry, please see Manjunath Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990); Ted Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); and Michael Dorland, *So Close to the State/s: The Emergence of Canadian Feature Film Policy* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1998).
- ²⁸ McGill, "No Nation but Adaptation," 107.
- ²⁹ Atwood, *Survival*, 41.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ *Barney's Version*, directed by Richard J. Lewis (2010; Canada/Italy: Eone Films, 2011), Blu-ray.
- ³² *Incendies*, directed by Denis Villeneuve (2010; Canada/France: Eone Films, 2011), Blu-ray.
- ³³ André Loiselle, *Stage-Bound: Feature Film Adaptations of Canadian and Québécois Drama* (Montreal : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 4.
- ³⁴ Loiselle, *Stage-Bound*, 5.
- ³⁵ *Monsieur Lazhar*, directed by Philippe Falardeau (Canada: micro_scope, 2011).
- ³⁶ Loiselle, *Stage-Bound*, 3.
- ³⁷ Ibid, 15.
- ³⁸ Rainier Grutman and Heba Alah Ghadie. "Incendies de Wajdi [Wajdi] Mouawad: Les Méandres de la mémoire." *Neohelicon: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* 33.1 (2006): 91-108. *Literature Resources from Gale*, accessed 27 Apr. 2011, 99.
- ³⁹ Jonathan Romney, *Atom Egoyan*, World Directors Series, (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 127.
- ⁴⁰ Peter Dickinson, *Screening Gender, Framing Genre: Canadian Literature into Film* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 37.

⁴¹ Ibid, 41.

⁴² *A History of Violence*, directed by David Cronenberg (USA/Germany: Alliance Atlantis, 2006), DVD.

⁴³ Bart Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, Canadian Cinema Series, (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁵ Atwood, *Survival*, 44.

Chapter 1: “Montreal 2, Boston 1. In Overtime.” – *Barney's Version*

In the opening pages of Mordecai Richler's *Barney's Version*, the curmudgeonly Barney Panofsky outlines his reasons for putting onto paper the truths of his unbridled biography. His nostalgia is triggered when a foe from his past, Terry McIver, publishes a scathing tell-all about Barney's life. The book alleges that Barney is a reckless Svengali who cruelly orchestrated a trifecta of failed marriages. It also calls him a murderer. The book forces Barney to probe his memories and offer his own version of his life's story as a corrective riposte. In spite of all these heinous accusations, however, Barney concedes that he is not an entirely honest man. He says,

Finally, I became a sinner. In the late sixties, I began to produce Canadian-financed films that were never exhibited anywhere for more than an embarrassing week, but which eventually earned me, and on occasion my backers, hundreds of thousands of dollars through a tax loophole since closed. Then I started to churn out Canadian-content TV series sufficiently shlocky to be syndicated in the U.S. and, in the case of our boffo *McIver of the RCMP* series, which is big on bonking scenes in canoes and igloos, in the U.K., and other countries as well.¹

As Barney's remembrance of tax-shelter era productions suggests, Canadian film is a business in which only fools and profit-driven financiers dare to tread. (One should note Barney's careful selection of the phrase “churn out.”) In spite of Canuck kitsch, like “bonking scenes in canoes and igloos,” some Canadians remain ambivalent to Canadian-made productions, partly due to the flaws in exhibition as noted by the “embarrassing week[s]” of Barney's theatrical runs. There is, however, the foreign market. As Barney suggests, it is a lifesaver, albeit one that comes with risks because Canadian production is bound by self-representation.

In demonstrating the tensions that arise between art and commerce, though, *Barney's Version* makes sizeable changes to Richler's prose. The changes are inevitable, for screenwriter Michael Konyves faced the task of adapting all four-hundred and seventeen pages of *Barney's Version* into an agreeable running time. These deviations, however, offer a satisfactory rendering

of the novel as well as a meta-textual reading of adaptation. For example, *Barney's Version* accentuates the love story between Barney and Miriam by preserving their relationship while simultaneously dispensing with the political subtext of the novel. Adding to the commercial viability of the adaptation is the use of foreign actors in key roles. In spite of the casting, *Barney's Version* is still as prototypically Canadian as Richler's novel, or even Don Shebib's canonical 1970 film *Goin' Down the Road*. *Barney's Version* wears its maple leaf on its sleeve, for the Canadianness of the film is as emphasized as it is in *Away from Her*; moreover, the Canadian content of *Barney's Version* enjoys narrative integration and symbolic resonance, and gains an empowering political connotation through its self-awareness. By offering Canadians a tailoring for a global audience, *Barney's Version* ultimately encourages a provocative nationalist reading, which suggests that Canada's adaptation to global trends risks perpetuating Canadian film production in a role of subservience and economic dependency to Hollywood.

Barney's Version reunites director Richard J. Lewis and producer Robert Lantos after the 1994 film adaptation *Whale Music*.² Having already produced Richler's *Joshua Then and Now* into a 1985 film, *Barney's Version* is firstly Lantos's effort to honour Richler with a big screen rendition of his final novel. Lantos's devotion to Richler illustrates adaptation's ability to enrich Canada's position within the international film market. As Linda Hutcheon writes in *A Theory of Adaptation*, "one way to gain respectability or increase cultural capital is for an adaptation to be upwardly mobile. Film historians argue that this motivation explains the many early cinematic adaptations of Dante and Shakespeare."³ While it may seem hyperbolic to compare Richler to such pillars of the literary canon, *Barney's Version* nevertheless represents one of the most acclaimed and widely read Canadian authors both nationally and internationally. Adapting

Barney's Version therefore increases the market potential, for the name-recognition associated with Richler offers both artistic pedigree and commercial prospects to a global audience.

The Barney Panofsky of Richler's novel deviously combines sense of place and sense of character. As Barney ruminates his past, he uses nostalgia to make sense of the present, albeit in his own flawed logic. Since Barney's version of his life occurs in the 1995 setting of Richler's prose, Barney draws heavily upon the cultural divides that erupted during that period. To Barney, these tensions essentially boil down to a divide between the French versus the English. While writing his memoirs, Barney laments of Montreal's past:

I still wasn't ready to contend with my bed without Miriam, so I left my car where it was, turned my coat collar up against the punishing wind, a harbinger of the six months of winter to come, and began to wander the once-vibrant downtown streets of the dying city I still cherished. Past boarded up stores. ... Some lout had spray-painted FUCK YOU, ENGLISH on the window of a second-hand bookshop. Every lamp-post on St. Catherine Street was adorned with both OUI and NON placards.⁴

Barney's mocking of bilingualism, as well as his description of hostility and decay, position Montreal as an equal to his relationship with Miriam: it is past its prime, but still a fond memory. From Barney's many digressions, to casual banter between the characters, Richler's novel notes the anxieties circulating in referendum-era Montreal. For example, in one scene, Barney's Francophone companion Solange says, "I'm seriously thinking of voting Yes this time. There are some in the PQ who are really racist, which is abhorrent to me, but for more than a hundred years this country has exhausted itself, and been held back trying to fit a square peg into a round hole."⁵ Coupled with Barney's previous conflation of his love for Montreal and his love for Miriam, the comment by Solange suggests that Barney's retrospective analysis serves as much to articulate his sense character as it does to meditate upon the convoluted nature of Canada's own identity, as expressed through Richler's satirical fusing of person and place.

As viewers of *Barney's Version* undoubtedly realize, though, the screenplay removes all traces of the sovereignty referendum. Rather than follow convention and open the adaptation with a grand establishing shot of Montreal, with the telephone poles plastered with signs saying 'Oui' or 'Non,' *Barney's Version* opens with a close-up shot of a Monte Cristo cigar and a tumbler of Macallan scotch. Rather than emphasize the Montreal setting, the film opens by putting Barney himself as the central character of the story by using symbols of his flawed character. The opening scene also sees Barney struggle to open a compact cellular telephone, accordingly signalling the temporal shift from 1995 to 2010.

The parting of person and place leads some critics to believe that the adaptation relegates Montreal to a subservient role. For example, in reviewing *Barney's Version* for *The Village Voice*, Ella Taylor writes, "give or take a few moments of televised hockey, the Canadian-born Lewis strips the novel of Richler's rambunctiously Dickensian sense of place and local character, missing a golden opportunity to dispose of tired clichés about milquetoast Canada."⁶ Likewise, Michael Brooke of *Sight & Sound* notes that the film eliminates the socio-political backdrop "almost entirely."⁷ While these two observations lambast *Barney's* sociological character by using problematic evaluative precepts of fidelity criticism, they nevertheless reflect a recurrent surveillance in film adaptations. As Stam argues, "adaptations are inevitably inscribed in **national** settings. Is the adaptation set in the same locale as the novel, or is the locale changed? ... But film also enjoys a resource unavailable to the novel – to wit, real locations."⁸ Among the Montreal locations used in *Barney's Version* are a seedy St. Catherine Street alley where Boogie, the long-time friend to whom Barney is greatly devoted, buys drugs while en route to Barney's cottage. The film also uses two sites from Richler's own life. As Lewis and Lantos note in the commentary for the Blu-ray release of the film, the exterior of Barney's apartment is the same

building in which Richler resided, while Grumpy's, Barney's favourite pub, was a local watering hole Richler favoured. Following Stam's argument, the Montreal locations are signifiers of a specific setting; however, these locales may simply be unapparent to outsiders of Montreal.

The film also evokes a sense of place quite strongly, and rather cinematically, through the differences in *mise-en-scène* between the urban setting of Montreal and Barney's cottage in the Laurentians. While referendum-era Montreal appears to be an essential referent for Barney to make sense of himself, a close reading of the novel suggests that Barney's cottage is the setting most vital to his character. In the novel, Barney first recalls the cottage, saying, "I stumbled on my Yasnaya Polyana by accident. ... I was smitten on first sight, and acquired it, and the surrounding ten acres of meadow and woods, for an astonishingly cheap ten thousand dollars."⁹ In a reference that goes undetected by Barney's son Michael as he edits his father's memoirs, Barney equates his country home with Leo Tolstoy's famed camp of inspiration. The adaptation captures the serenity of Canadian country living by offering many shots in which Barney and his family relax at their waterfront estate. In a film that excised considerable narrative content from Richler's text, Barney's cottage offers an idealized and uncorrupted picturesque setting of Canada, which is frequently accented by the soothing sounds of loons added to the soundtrack.

The motif of the cottage as an escape echoes Ted Kotcheff's 1974 adaptation of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*.¹⁰ The focus of this equally condensed adaptation is Duddy's unrelenting effort to acquire the undeveloped land surrounding a small lake, following his grandfather's advice that "a man without land is nobody." Both *Barney's Version* and *Duddy Kravitz* feature memorable shots in which the lovers – Barney and Miriam, and Duddy (Richard Dreyfuss) and Yvette (Micheline Lanctôt) – embrace by the lake as the sun sets. The use of place to heighten the romantic tone of the scene, through the soft light and the mellow score, is notable

in *Barney's Version*, since the shot appears during the wedding of Barney and Miriam, which is a scene unique to the film. The cottage as a Canadian signifier has roots in the novel itself, for while Margaret Atwood suggests that Richler's *Apprenticeship* follows the American mode of storytelling, she writes, "Duddy's symbol of success is Canadian – a piece of land, not a block of stocks."¹¹ The use of a cottage setting in these adaptations suggests that the filmmakers value the Canadian landscape in order to make the characters familiar. Barney and Duddy are not hotshot Hollywood producers; rather, as Atwood suggests, the cottage figuratively marks the protagonists as average Canadians who find solace in the escape from busy urban living. The retention of the cottage, and the integration of it as a setting within new scenes of *Barney's Version*, demonstrates the film's desire to assert a markedly Canadian sense of place.

That the cottage takes a place of prominence within the adaptation instead of the referendum is significant for increasing the accessibility of the film. As Douglas Coupland says in *Souvenir of Canada*, the 2005 adaptation of his non-fiction book, referenda are largely "untranslatable" to outsiders of Canada.¹² That *Barney's Version* omits the referendum hints at its aim for greater commercial potential. For example, the 2011 Canadian adaptation *Good Neighbours*, directed by Jacob Tierney, employs the 1995 referendum as a backdrop for the follies of a slasher-comedy hybrid.¹³ The problematic use of the referendum was not overlooked, with *Variety* critic John Anderson giving the film a harsh review, saying, "There's no real reason for pic to be set on the eve of a 1995 Quebec sovereignty vote, other than to evoke a sense of national discord that's reflected in the weird goings-on at home."¹⁴ Although *Good Neighbors* altered the spelling of its title to avoid alienating American viewers, it grossed only \$7,072 at the American box-office,¹⁵ versus the \$4,439,201 grossed by *Barney's Version*.¹⁶ The difference in

success suggests that *Barney's Version* ultimately does a service to the Canadian industry by omitting a politically charged subject that does not translate adequately from Richler's prose.

The exclusion of the referendum, however, does not diminish the distinction of *Barney's Version* as a Canadian film. As Yan Hamel suggests, while Richler's novel is an example of English-language Québécois literature, it is not the time or place of *Barney's Version* that best articulates its firm handling of a Canadian identity. Hamel suggests that *Barney's Version* is a Canadian/Québécois novel not because its action occurs in Montreal and the Laurentians during the referendum; rather, *Barney's Version* captures a sense of belonging as well as an appreciation of Canada through its depiction of the fraught relations between Anglophones and Francophones. What most strongly establishes the novel as both Québécois and Canadian, however, are Barney's musings on Canadiana and his references to national and international cultural texts.¹⁷

The Canadian identity of *Barney's Version* emerges from overt references to Canadiana. For example, when Michael observes a water-bomber plane and subsequently realizes that the plane was the cause of Boogie's death, not his father (as many people suspected), he describes it as a "truly Canadian sight."¹⁸ The quintessential Canadianness of the bomber plane translates easily to the screen, especially in the sequence in the final act of the film in which a computer-animated plane dips into the lake and flies above the autumn-toned foliage in slow motion. Likewise goes for Barney's droll remark about Solange, who stars on *McIver of the North*:

The intense, hennaed Solange Renault, who once played Catherine in *Henry V* at our Stratford, was obliged to settle long ago for the continuing role of the French-Canadian settlement nurse in my *McIver of the RCMP* series. (Private joke. I often request the weekly script that's to be sent to Solange, and rewrite some of her lines for her amusement.

NURSE SIMARD: By Gar, de wind she low lak 'ell out dere tonight. Be careful de h' ice, everybody.

Or, NURSE SIMARD: Look dere, h'it's Fadder St-Pierre 'oo comes 'ere. Better lock up de alcool and mind your h'arses, guys.)¹⁹

The film adaptation easily transcribes the overemphasis of Solange's accent, especially through the droll pronunciation by actress Macha Grenon during the scenes in which Solange appears, and thus delivers a clever mockery of the role of bilingualism in Canadian self-representation.

Other elements of Richler's in-text referents are harder to adapt. In one of the novel's flashback scenes, Barney recalls, "Posters of the usual suspects hung on the walls. Lenin. Fidel. Che. Rosa Luxemburg. Louis Riel. Dr. Norman Bethune. FUCK PIERRE TRUDEAU was spray-painted on one wall and VIVE LE QUÉBEC LIBRE on another."²⁰ In this recollection, Barney aligns Canadian historical figures within the legacy of international icons like Castro or Guevara. By adding them to the list, Richler suggests that Canada does in fact have a history, despite its relatively young age. This notion seems contrary to Barney's statement only a few pages later in which he recalls, "I wrangled an invitation to Club Saint-Denis, where I cornered the provincial minister of justice and argued passionately that Canada had no culture to speak of that wasn't French Canadian."²¹ The absence of Barney's narration in the film renders such retrospective musings impossible, yet the film follows an act of branding akin to *Away from Her* by using aural and visual clues to prove that Canada does in fact have a rich cultural heritage.

Barney's Version integrates several elements of Canadiana into its narrative. Firstly, the film follows the trend of adding Canadian literary referents. While Grant and Fiona read Michael Ondaatje's poem "The Cinnamon Peeler" and Alistair MacLeod's novel *No Great Mischief* in *Away from Her*, which are two intertexts that do not appear in Munro's story,²² *Barney's Version* switches the novel that Miriam reads on her fateful train ride the night she and Barney meet. In the novel, Miriam reads Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus*.²³ In the film, however, she reads Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, the cover of which she flashes prominently at the camera several times during her conversation with Barney. As A. O. Scott notes in his review for *The New York*

Times, many viewers may wonder what Miriam sees in a drunken lout who pursues her on his wedding night. As Scott explains, however, “The answer to this riddle comes obliquely later that same evening, when Barney chases Miriam down aboard a train about to leave Montreal for New York, where she lives. In her hands is a paperback copy of Saul Bellow’s ‘Herzog,’ possession of which surely signals, at the very least, a high tolerance for vain, verbose and vulgar Jewish men.”²⁴ By switching the nationality of the author whom Miriam reads, *Barney's Version* begs viewers to mine their knowledge of American literature to unearth its roots in Canadian culture. The dissimilarity between the film and the novel suggests that the threat to Barney is not the fragmentation of Canada by the 1995 referendum, but rather the binary distinction between Canada and the U.S. While viewers may recall that both Bellow and his protagonist are Canadian-born, the reference is the first of many to signal the success of Canadians on American soil, which conveniently occurs in a scene where the film switches the city of Miriam’s residence from Toronto to New York. This scene, moreover, also celebrates the victory of the Montreal Canadiens over the Boston Bruins, to which this discussion will return below. This win is another revision of the novel that signals the tensions between Canada and America, but also suggests the potential for the former to succeed over its powerful neighbour. Through its play on Canada-US culture, *Barney's Version* hints that with the right blend of artistic, commercial and ideological ingredients, Canadian cinema might also be able to make inroads on American soil.

While *Barney's Version* guides the audience through visual cues, the prominent use of Canadian music on the soundtrack amplifies the local character of the film. For example, the film integrates Leonard Cohen songs within the narrative, such as Barney’s requests to hear “Dance Me to the End of Love” and “I’m Your Man” on Miriam’s *By Special Request* programme. These two songs are noteworthy additions to the film, since the Barney of Richler’s text requests

“The Bluebird of Happiness” by Jan Peerce²⁵ and any song from “*Mozart's Greatest Hits*.”²⁶ As Robert Lantos notes in the commentary, he wished to use Cohen on the soundtrack since Cohen and Richler are pillars of Canadian culture and of Montreal’s Jewish culture more specifically, arguing that Cohen’s place on the soundtrack is “not only fitting, but essential.” Much as *Goin’ Down the Road* uses songs by Bruce Cockburn, or *Away from Her* does with Neil Young and k.d. lang, the use of Leonard Cohen in *Barney's Version* evokes a sense of place through music.

The audio-visual embellishments further reveal the triple bind in which Canadian films find themselves. While serving to mark the Canadianness of the film, these additions risk alienating viewers who find the self-referentiality amateurish. For example, in his assessment of *Barney's Version* as “The quintessential Canadian film,” *Ottawa Citizen* critic Jay Stone notes, “we don’t really need Leonard Cohen on the radio to remind us that we’re in the Eastern provinces, although it is amusing that the song is on an American station.”²⁷ Stone’s backhanded compliment suggests that the songs’ function merely to offer Canadian content is both jejune and superfluous, but appreciated by a Canadian viewer such as himself; additionally, Stone sees that Cohen sings to Canada from America. As Eugen Banach notes of the confluence of Canadian and American music of the 1960s, Cohen “has always recorded with US labels.”²⁸ Preceding the comment on Cohen’s American affiliation, Banach observes that Cohen moved to America out of necessity, as the Canadian music industry was economically and culturally dependent on America, and, because of the Massey Report, assistance was largely provided for increasing Canadian content; however, folk musicians such as Cohen were perceived as counter-cultural and therefore less susceptible to aid.²⁹ The use of the Cohen song via the American radio station in *Barney's Version* therefore recalls previous efforts in which an overemphasis on nationalism

resulted in a draining of Canadian talent, forcing Canadians to produce culture elsewhere and for like-minded Canadians to define themselves culturally via their American neighbour.

Stone's article also reveals Canada's economic dependency upon the United States for the proliferation of cultural products, for he calls *Barney's Version* "a Canadian movie that is at once specific and universal."³⁰ The use of cultural signifiers that may be enjoyed by both the national and international audience, but perhaps more uniquely so by Canadians who recognize the local idiosyncrasies of said references, consequently demonstrates a key facet of adapting literature from both within and without a national character. As Peter Dickinson writes,

In the new global economy... if we are to move our cultural products as easily as we do our wheat, they must be truly 'borderless'; they must often play as well internationally as they do domestically. In the case of adaptation, this often means de-emphasizing the gender, cultural, regional, and historical specificity of the source texts.³¹

While *Barney's Version* doubtlessly appeals to an international audience by downplaying the socio-political climate of its source, as well as by employing recognizable cultural cues, it is worth recalling that said recognisability varies upon context. A sound bite of a familiar Leonard Cohen song might merely provide an emotionally evocative cue for foreign audiences, but for the few Canadian moviegoers who see *Barney's Version*, the ballads might also provide a not-so-subtle reminder that one is watching a Canadian film.

In this regard, the added Canadian contents reveal the art/commerce/nationhood tension of Canadian film adaptation because they may both heighten or cheapen the artistic quality, depending on how cynically or patriotically a viewer interprets them. The tensions of art and commerce make the Canadianness of these films expressly worth considering, since *No Great Mischief*, "The Cinnamon Peeler," *Herzog*, and the Leonard Cohen ballads do not appear in the source texts. As McGill writes in his assessment of *Away from Her*, the use of Canadian citations "goes far beyond what the content rules of government funding bodies might require. Moreover,

the film was hardly obliged by promotional interests, the details of Munro's story, or the demands of verisimilitude to be as explicitly Canadian as it is. Instead, the film seems intent on honouring what it declares to be its national cultural context."³² Perhaps, then, the films invest so much effort in asserting "their national cultural context" as a means of satisfying both sides of the art/commerce debate. In the case of *Barney's Version*, the added Canadian content therefore helps the film elide potential criticism that the filmmakers are simply using government funds to make a generic Hollywood love story. Conversely, the overabundance of Canadian content might work to lampoon said content regulations, suggesting that the Canadian government's desire for self-representation is what prevents Canadian films from reaching a wider audience.

There is, however, one crucial piece of Canadiana that appropriates the love story of Barney and Miriam and links the artistic, commercial, and nationalist characters of the film. In the final act of *Barney's Version*, screenwriter Michael Konyves adapts Richler's novel so that the emotional crux of the film rests on a truly Canadian love-letter. In the novel, the romance between Barney and Miriam begins with a hockey score. During the sequence detailing Barney's marriage to The Second Mrs. Panofsky, Barney displays the epitome of Canadian masculinity in a conversation with Boogie. As Barney narrates, "with a heavy heart, I went on to show him my two-tickets in the reds for the next game in Montreal. *The game that was being played on my wedding night.*"³³ As the italics of Richler's prose suggest, Barney's true love is not The Second Mrs. Panofsky, but his beloved Montreal Canadiens, or so it seems until he meets Miriam at his wedding. The two first brush into one another while Barney dances with his second wife, who chides him for checking the hockey scores during their reception.³⁴ Following a brief chat with Miriam, Barney receives a crib note after she leaves the wedding. The note reads, "Final score. Canadiens 5, Toronto 3. Congratulations."³⁵ Recognizing that the joke celebrates his victory with

the Canadiens, rather than his marriage, Barney realizes his love for Miriam and pursues her as she leaves Montreal amidst the revellers celebrating Montreal's victory of the Stanley Cup.

The film adaptation retains the hockey score to celebrate the love between Barney and Miriam. However, the film accommodates the time-shift to the 1977 Stanley Cup, changing the note to read, "Montreal 2, Boston 1. In Overtime." The film also adds a brief snippet to the conversation between Barney and Miriam in which Barney mentions the game, and Miriam enthusiastically replies, "Who's winning?" More importantly, though, the hockey score returns within the film, whereas in Richler's novel, it remains isolated in the wedding scene.

During the final lunch date between Barney and Miriam, in which Miriam meets Barney upon learning that he has developed Alzheimer's during the years since their separation, Barney absentmindedly wanders away from the table while Miriam uses the restroom. Miriam then receives Barney's wallet from the maître d'. She opens it and finds a small piece of paper containing the hockey score, which Barney has carried with him for over thirty years despite their divorce. Miriam's discovery of the note, as well as the tearful reaction shot of Rosamund Pike as Miriam recalls it, offers a purely cinematic moment that uses the hockey score to symbolize the enduring love between Barney and Miriam, and does so visually to allow viewers to discern for themselves the bond between the two.

The final reference to the hockey score is organic to the film and it demonstrates how added Canadian indicators render the nationality of *Barney's Version* explicit to audiences at home and abroad. More importantly, while these references have different modes of reception in different nations, the Canadian reception is most important in adaptation. For example, Canadian hockey scholar Jason Blake notes that a British reviewer of Richler's novel dismissed the chance that the culturally savvy Barney would enjoy hockey; however, Blake notes, "Even the harshest

Canadian reviews of the novel did not find Barney's 'cultural omniscience' suspect. ... This minor difference in viewpoints reflects the varying ways in which hockey literature is received outside the North American context (as well as Europe's snobbier view of sports fans)."³⁶

Blake's observation of the variable reception to *Barney's Version* suggests that Canadians have a mutual acceptance of hockey. While a passion for hockey might not be shared among Canadians, Canadians generally accept that hockey serves as a quintessential cliché to signify an idealized national identity. Even *Maclean's Magazine* named Sidney Crosby "newsmaker of the year" in a special issue for 2010 – ranking the player above prominent figures like Aung San Suu Kyi – for his feat of scoring the winning goal in the Olympic Gold Medal game that 22 million Canadians watched on television.³⁷ One could argue that using hockey as a national signifier perpetuates an essentialist portrait of the white, middle to upper class demographic as the ideal Canadian; however, such a claim elides hockey's ability to reveal that what unites a nation is not race, class, or creed, but shared passions, past times, and experiences. On the other hand, *Hockey Night in Canada* is accessible to far more Canadians than a night spent at the ballet or the opera. Ditto a hike in the Rocky Mountains or a trip to Barney and/or Duddy Kravitz's lakeside cottage.

The importance of the clichéd love for hockey within *Barney's Version* demonstrates adaptation's ability to engage the audience through "intertextual dialogue." As Robert Stam explains, intertextual dialogisms are "the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, which reach the text not only through recognizable influences, but also through subtle processes of dissemination."³⁸ One could read the hockey score as such an act because it draws upon the emphasis placed on the hockey score in Richler's text. During the wedding scene, as Barney worries about the score and interacts with Miriam, the explanatory

notes by Michael Panofsky show the influence of hockey within the Canadian cultural mindset. Michael's notes serve the novel in two ways. First, they work on a meta-fictional level because Michael acts as editor for Barney's memoir (which is *Barney's Version* itself), so his remarks fill in any gaps created by Barney's battle with Alzheimer's. Secondly, the annotations offer Richler a meta-meta-fictional role, as he uses them to reveal Michael's ignorance of the artistic texts that Barney treasures, as well as to debunk the myth that Canada lacks a cultural tradition by having Michael cite bits of Canadiana alongside canonical works of European and American culture.

While Michael fastidiously cites Barney's many literary references, the scene with the hockey score is the most heavily annotated. When Barney reads Miriam's note, for example, Richler supplies Michael's ninth footnote of the chapter, which reads, "⁹Toronto scored twice in the third period. Mahovlich, at 12:07, assisted by Harris and Ehman, and Olmstead, at 16:19, on a power play, assisted by Ehman."³⁹ Michael's own love for hockey blinds him to other references in the chapter, such as Barney's plea to Miriam, "Come with me and be my love."⁴⁰ Michael's fixation on the game, in place of recognizing the words of Christopher Marlowe,⁴¹ offers one case in which the novel exploits the hyperbole of hockey as a Canadian passion.

The use of the hockey score also provides the film another moment in which it uses the reference to draw attention to Canada's role as a producer of culture alongside its monolith neighbour, Hollywood. Blake reads the use of hockey within Richler's novel to convey nostalgia for a corrupted tradition. Blake writes, "Barney longs for a time when commercial interests did not dominate the game, when the live game did not have to be stopped for the sake of television, and when there was no sense that fans had to be stimulated by extraneous entertainment."⁴² Crucial to exposing the complex political dimension of the adaptation is the implication that the commercialization of hockey had upon Canada's cultural complex. As Hyatt and Stevens write

of the commercial expansion of the National Hockey League, “the Americanization of professional hockey was part of broader trends that threatened the distinct Canadian national culture.”⁴³ That the film adaptation transports Miriam’s love letter from one that sees a win for Montreal over Toronto to one that celebrates the triumph of Canada over America therefore suggests that such perceived threats to Canadian culture are not insurmountable. While Canada might lose some profits in the NHL, and even more at the box office, the overtime loss of the Bruins to the Canadiens on Barney’s wedding night suggests that Canadian films might soon be able to face-off against Hollywood. The insertion of the hockey score within this Canadian made, but perceptibly Hollywoodized, fairy-tale of happily ever after suggests a bid for progress.

The playful appropriation of Hollywood convention in *Barney's Version* recalls Mort Ransen’s 1995 film *Margaret's Museum*,⁴⁴ which adapts Sheldon Currie’s short story “The Glace Bay Miner’s Museum.”⁴⁵ Currie’s story describes the plight of Nova Scotia miners by using the family of Margaret MacNeil as a microcosm for the inequity between the working and upper class. As Christopher Gittings writes in *Canadian National Cinema*, though, some scholars suggest that the film dilutes politics and “privileges the love story between Neil and Margaret over labour issues.”⁴⁶ Much as some critics perceive *Barney's Version* to mute the politics of Richler’s novel in favour of the love story of Barney and Miriam, *Margaret's Museum* allegedly chooses romance over social issues. One could also see the adaptation’s effort to mute a sense place by changing the specificity of Currie’s title to the more universal title *Margaret's Museum*.

Gittings defends *Margaret's Museum* against pandering to mainstream audiences. He suggests that the film appropriates the format of melodrama to convey the politics of Currie’s story in a means appropriate to cinema. As Gittings writes, “Through the actions of Neil and Margaret which denaturalize the inequitable and exploitative relationship between capital and

labour, between Canada and Atlantic Canada, Ransen's film reveals one of the hidden foundations of Canadian social relations, the inequities of social class structuring belonging to and produced by the Canadian nation."⁴⁷ By masking its social commentary within the accessible genre conventions of a Hollywood love story, *Margaret's Museum* reveals the meta-adaptive nature of Canadian film. The competitive global film market, as Gittings argues,

disciplines Canadian directors who wish to represent Canadian experiences to a wide audience of Canadians to take a detour through the American industrial Other. These directors seek to divert the Canadian spectator's gaze from the US to Canada by using codes of the Hollywood industry that are familiar to Canadian audiences whose expectations of cinema are shaped by Hollywood genres.⁴⁸

The integration of labour issues within generic elements enables *Margaret's Museum* to reach a wider audience. The film disseminates Canadian representation via mainstream codes, much as *Barney's Version* uses the hockey score as an objective correlative to guide the emotional climax, which consequently offers an accessible route into the film's portrayal of Canada's subservience to the American system.

The nationalist references, moreover, help safeguard the Canadian identity of the film because *Barney's Version* is not an exclusively Canadian film under current funding and definitional criteria. *Barney's Version* is not a wholly Canadian film, but rather a co-production between Canada and Italy. Telefilm Canada cites *Barney's Version* as a co-production whose investment is approximately 80% Canadian and 20% Italian.⁴⁹

The Italian involvement further demonstrates the art/commerce/nationhood tension of adaptation. Further exemplifying Stam's argument that adaptation connotes a national character through the retention or alteration of location settings, the film transports the scenes of Barney's first marriage to Clara (Rachelle Lefevre) from Paris to Rome. Likewise, Richler's novel uses the Parisian setting to offer a comical episode between Barney and The Second Mrs. Panofsky.

During their honeymoon, Richler conveys the haughty verbosity of Barney's second wife by offering a four-page conversation in which she calls her mother on the telephone and makes vulgar, shallow observations on the lifestyle Barney so enjoys.⁵⁰ In the film, however, Barney and The Second Mrs. Panofsky (played by Minnie Driver) revisit the haunts of Barney's past during their honeymoon in Rome. The film conveys the arrogance and ignorance of The Second Mrs. Panofsky with a quick snippet that Barney overhears of her phone call: "We went to the Vatican... *Eh*, it was old." Not wanting to detract from the beauties of Rome, however, Lantos observes in the commentary that Barney and The Second Mrs. Panofsky spend their honeymoon in a famous posh hotel that offers "the best view of Rome that money can buy." As the new Vatican joke and the postcard-perfect view of Rome suggest, the self-representation of Rome enables the use of Italian state-funds to finance a film, thus further showing how the dynamics of finance, art, and nationhood intersect in the process of adaptation.

These changes from the novel, moreover, convey how the Canadian film industry itself adapts to the currents in international film production, yet produces unmistakably Canadian films. As an international co-production, *Barney's Version* represents a venture that, as Telefilm Canada notes, "enable[s] Canadian and foreign producers to pool their resources in order to coproduce projects that enjoy national production status in their respective countries."⁵¹ If the Canadian industry attempts to produce films that are commercially feasible and artistically credible, then co-production offers a viable option, since both Canada and the co-producing country share financial investment and, therefore, are less prone to the risks posed by releasing a small film like *Barney's Version* against more mainstream fare. There are, however, considerable risks in co-productions, for as Canada decreases its investment in its own productions, fewer Canadians in the filmmaking community will be involved in the process of production.

The elusive nature of navigating Canadian feature film policy makes it especially difficult to measure this trend in filmmaking, yet even a cursory glance at contemporary Canadian film titles reveals neglect for Canadian actors. In the case of *Barney's Version*, Barney is not played by a Montreal-based actor, but rather Hollywood star Paul Giamatti. Likewise, Hollywood legend Dustin Hoffman plays Barney's father, Izzy, despite the relatively small size of the role. Adding to the absence of Canadian faces are Barney's three wives. While Montreal-born actress Rachelle Lefevre plays Barney's first wife, Clara, it is the role reduced most sizably from the novel; Barney's other wives, The Second Mrs. Panofsky and Miriam, are comparably larger roles inhabited by British actresses Minnie Driver and Rosamund Pike, both of whom also appeared in the Canadian co-produced adaptations *Owning Mahoney*⁵² and *Fugitive Pieces*,⁵³ respectively.

The casting caused *Barney's Version* to be one of many films cited by *The Hollywood Reporter* in an article noting the absence of Canadian films at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. As Etan Vessing observes, "Like Europeans and most everyone else these days looking beyond their borders for financing, the Canucks realize they can now dangle local tax credits and government subsidies to help fund a co-production with A-list talent in lead roles as if they were making a 'Canadian' film."⁵⁴ Vessing's notation of 'Canadian' is surely ironic, for Canadian films are frequently vehicles for foreign stars. In addition to *Barney's Version*, other recently co-produced Canadian films use Hollywood talent in hopes of securing box-office profits, such as *Winnie*,⁵⁵ the Winnie Mandela biopic starring Jennifer Hudson; the true-life thriller *The Whistleblower*,⁵⁶ starring Rachel Weisz; and David Cronenberg's *A Dangerous Method*,⁵⁷ which not only stars Keira Knightley, Viggo Mortensen, and Michael Fassbender, but also represents a minority stakeholder position for Canada, as Telefilm Canada notes its investment at only 30%.⁵⁸

The use of A-list foreign talent appears to be a necessity for Canadian producers, for the name recognition and profile of a film's lead actors arguably remains the top-draw for box-office potential. By securing bankable Hollywood talent, as opposed to Canadian actors who offer less lucrative financial returns, Canadian film producers can presumably secure more financing from private investors. As Mort Ransen defends the casting of British actress Helena Bonham Carter, a hot commodity after her success in adaptations like *Howards End*,⁵⁹ in the title role of *Margaret's Museum*, "It really isn't a level playing field in Canada and the only way you can draw attention to your film is to hire a high-profile cast. It's almost impossible to score at the box office without stars."⁶⁰ The use of popular actors therefore helps the commercial viability of the film through their star status; moreover, the prestige as an adaptation appropriates the stars within the film's artistic pedigree, for potential viewers will ideally presume that such a small film attracted such big names due to the quality of its script, rather than the size of its payout.

While a Canadian-content purist might object to the use of foreign stars in films that receive funding from the Canadian government, one should note that if the producer is successful in casting the right actor for a part, the nationality of the star does not override the essential traits of a character. For example, Robert Lantos chose Paul Giamatti for the role of Barney, for, as he explains in the commentary for *Barney's Version*, seeing Giamatti's performance in *Sideways*⁶¹ led him to believe that Giamatti was the perfect actor to incarnate the Barney of Richler's prose. Lantos's casting is not in vain, for as film critic Betsy Sharky notes in her review for *The Los Angeles Times*, Giamatti plays Barney as "an uncomfortable member of Montreal's tightly knit Jewish enclave – that is to say, an outsider among outsiders."⁶² Giamatti's advanced thespian skill, and perhaps the distant memory of his performance as a sophisticated yet boorish drunkard in *Sideways*, serves both the character and the culturally specific themes that Richler celebrates.

Barney's Version also adapts its source within the trend of previous adaptations of Richler's work. The use of Hollywood stars to increase the profile of a Canadian film is nothing new, for the 1974 adaptation of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* exploited the emerging success of American actor Richard Dreyfuss, who proved both an amiable and bankable choice to play Duddy Kravitz following the success of George Lucas's 1973 hit *American Graffiti*. In fact, while *Toronto Star* critic Peter Howell cites Giamatti's performance as the main reason to recommend *Barney's Version*, he notes, "The Barney in my mind's eye, while reading the book, was more like Richard Dreyfuss's title striver from *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*."⁶³ The casting of Giamatti as Barney and Dreyfuss as Duddy demonstrates that even for a Canadian moviegoer like Howell, the best casting does not necessarily entail finding the best Canadian for the job, but rather the actor who fits the role best. Much as McGill notes of Sarah Polley's deviations from Munro's prose, *Barney's Version* adapts its source most successfully by being unfaithful to the sensitive rules of Canadian film policy, which reveal themselves to be inadequate when so many talented, attractive, and bankable Canadian actors frequently opt for the roles and paycheques of Hollywood productions.

The casting, however, offers one final act of self-conscious Canadiana within the adaptation of *Barney's Version*. While the lead performers are all non-Canadian actors, Canadians play the supporting and minor roles. Most notably, though, the Canadian actors with the largest supporting roles – Rachelle Lefevre as Clara, Scott Speedman as Boogie, Bruce Greenwood as Blair, and Saul Rubinek as Clara's father – all play American characters. The nationality of these characters, moreover, adheres to the traits of the characters of Richler's novel. Clara, for example, sardonically reminisces to Barney about her youth spent in "Gramercy Park brownstone and New Port Mansions."⁶⁴ While the film omits such references to New York

in its abbreviated transposition of Clara from page to screen, the scene in which her father visits Barney sees him recall to his son-in-law the days of Clara's youth in Brighton Beach. Likewise, in the novel, Barney informs readers that Blair "came to Canada from Boston in the sixties, a draft-dodger."⁶⁵ Blair remains an American, for in the scene that introduces Greenwood's character, he tells Barney and Miriam that he is from New York. Finally, during one of The Second Mrs. Panofsky's long-winded telephone conversations, she tells readers that Boogie is American by reminding her mother, "No, not a Canadian. He's a real writer."⁶⁶ In spite of Richler's joke, Boogie is the only major character whose nationality goes unannounced in the adaptation. The only Canadian star playing a Canadian in a notable role is Macha Grenon as Solange, but the film adds a running joke in which Solange constantly thrusts press clippings at Barney in order to assert her worth to the foreign market. The punch line of the joke, however, is that Barney himself is fabricating the material, thus suggesting that a Canadian actor is inherently worthless to the foreign market.

One can read the casting of the supporting actors in *Barney's Version* in a few ways. Firstly, the producers may simply have used Canadians in secondary roles to help meet criteria for Canadian content in order to ensure funding. Secondly, in moving beyond questions of intentionality, the casting of Canadians in American roles versus the casting of American/British actors in the Canadian roles demonstrates the redundancy of including such in front of the camera criteria to ensure government funding. If nationality is an essential quality of Canadian film policy, then the producers inadvertently demonstrated that their ideal casting for a role is not necessarily an actor who matches a character's nationality, but one who best sells the appearance and spirit of a character. Lastly, and most crucially, the subordination of Canadian actors in order to capitalize on foreign talent confesses the liminal space that Canadian films, and Canadian

cultural texts more generally, hold in the international market. The avoidance of casting problems through the relaxed guidelines of international coproduction reveals that Canadian filmmakers are adapting to a competitive market by using the lucrative allure of foreign stars in order to find success that might not be achieved if Canadian actors have top billing.

As with the other deviations in the adaptation of *Barney's Version*, the casting of the film draws attention to Canadiana via several tongue-in-cheek references. Most notable among the casting are the cameo appearances of several iconic Canadian filmmakers. Appearing as O'Malley in Barney's *O'Malley of the North* is actor/director Paul Gross, whom Canadian viewers will recognize for playing a Mountie on *Due South*. The directors of *O'Malley of the North* are played by internationally renowned Canadian film directors Atom Egoyan and David Cronenberg, while Denys Arcand appears twice in the film as Jean, the maître d' at the Ritz Carlton. Additionally, Ted Kotcheff appears as the conductor of a VIA Rail train – perhaps as a nod to the rail-line follies of *Duddy Kravitz*. Richard J. Lewis also appears at the end of the film as a pathologist who explains the cause of Boogie's death. As with the casting of Gross, Lewis's appearance mocks his role as a producer/director of the American TV show *CSI*. Finally, Lewis's collaborators from *Whale Music*, actor Maury Chaykin and producer Robert Lantos, appear as a wedding guest and a friend of The Second Mrs. Panofsky, respectively. Viewers and reviewers cannot miss the cameos, for, as Michael Brooke notes in *Sight & Sound*, they serve as “an in-joke aimed at Canadian film buffs.”⁶⁷ As Brooke suggests, the cameos are a self-conscious claim of the origins of the production, which makes the Canadianness explicit to Canadian viewers.

The ironic tone of the casting further reflects the meta-adaptive nature of *Barney's Version*. In an article examining the use of Jewish Canadian humour in the novel, Fabienne

Quennet cites the self-deprecating humour of Richler's prose as the component that most strongly links the elements of his identity both as a Jew and as a Canadian. Quennet writes,

As much as self-deprecating humour is a feature of Jewish humour in *Barney's Version*, it is also inevitably linked to the development of a distinct Canadian identity. ... Since humour in Richler's last novel is informed by his double identity, it allows him to turn against Jews and Canadians alike, always questioning the prerequisites for being the one or the other, the very basis of their different sense of identity.⁶⁸

The cameos and the casting of Canadians as Americans offer a meta-adaptive trend through which the film celebrates Richler's self-effacing, yet self-congratulating portrait of Canadian culture. The adaptation draws attention to the incongruence in the casting of the lead roles.

Perhaps, then, the self-deprecating use of Canadian actors in *Barney's Version* allows the film to subliminally challenge the practices with which it was made. As Quennet suggests:

To find something to laugh at, even in the face of adversity, is part of the strength of such ethnic humour. Bordering on 'black' or gallows humour, it also possesses the potential to challenge and to deconstruct dominant discourse and imagery, thereby undermining ethnic stereotypes. Due to its transgressive and subversive quality, Jewish humour attacks dominant power structures by presenting the comic consequences of social role reversals, thus symbolically and metaphorically turning the tables on the dominant majority society.⁶⁹

For a film that adapts one of the most celebrated and successful Canadian novels, which took thirteen years to adapt to the screen,⁷⁰ the only way that Lantos could realize the project was to step outside the nationalist framework of Canadian film production and use the appeal and status of foreign stars. The darkly comedic tone of the Canadian casting therefore entails a political dimension to the adaptation. By drawing attention to the Canadianness of the Canadians who appear in the supporting roles of the film, the self-mocking quality of the casting in *Barney's Version* subverts the notion that casting non-Canadians in Canadian roles diminishes the Canadian identity of a film. In doing so, the film guides viewers to acknowledge the casting of Canadians by actively recognizing them through inside-jokes and self-referentiality.

The self-conscious and self-ironic nature of the casting of *Barney's Version* – in roles both major and minor – begs one to evaluate Canada's relationship to its neighbour, Hollywood. The film relies on foreign talent to accrue funds for production, as well as to gain exposure, but also to help deliver the film to both Canadian and foreign audiences. While *Barney's Version* grossed nearly 4.5 million dollars at the American box-office, it grossed a total 15 million dollars at the worldwide box-office, only 3 million of which came from Canadian cinemas.⁷¹ While this figure is impressive for a Canadian release of a Canadian film, it also reveals that American receipts entail a high percentage of the returns for a Canadian film: almost one third, in this case. Conversely, Canadian films account for only 3.1% of box office receipts in Canada, versus the 92.7% enjoyed by American films.⁷² These figures show that Canadian films have an economic dependency on American audiences; therefore, it is essential for Canadian films to encourage foreign enjoyment because Canadian audiences offer comparatively modest support for their own films. Despite support from the Canadian state, Canadians are losing control of their own culture. Through the casting of foreign talent in major roles and Canadian talent in supporting roles (or even makeshift actors in the form of the director cameos), *Barney's Version* recognizes the exodus of Canadian talent as well as the infiltration of Hollywood into Canadian cinemas.

Since little has changed in the 37 years since Richard Dreyfuss played Duddy Kravitz, however, *Barney's Version* ultimately suggests that Canada's reliance on Hollywood stars positions the industry as a minor league in which actors are primed in state-funded supporting roles before moving on to the major leagues of Hollywood. This paradox suggests that the Canadian film industry is slowly adapting its status as a victim to American production. The self-ironic casting in *Barney's Version*, then, positions Canadian film within the precarious third of Margaret Atwood's four 'Victim Positions', which is, as she describes, "*To acknowledge the fact*

that you are a victim but to refuse to accept that the role is inevitable.”⁷³ *Barney's Version* shows that the Canadian film industry's adaptation to and adoption of American conventions and ‘successes’ reveal the extent to which film production is depoliticized and depersonalized through the need to erode borders in order to ensure success. The film acknowledges the necessity of using state funding to appropriate stars and practices from Hollywood, but as the discernible absence of Canadians in the lead roles of this otherwise quintessential Canadian film suggests, the Canadian industry cannot become self-sufficient if the top roles continue to be assumed by foreign stars. The casting exemplifies the risk in such an adaptive step, for Atwood writes, “This is a dynamic position, rather than a static one; from it you can move on to Position Four [that of the non-victim], but if you become locked into your anger and fail to change your situation, you might well find yourself back in Position Two.”⁷⁴ The self-conscious humour of *Barney's Version* suggests that the Canadian industry is in the process of actively changing its situation to move beyond the kitschy Canadian content films that Barney lampoons in Richler's novel. As the ongoing reliance on foreign stars suggests, though, Canadian films are balancing upon the edge of accepting a Victim role; conversely, the film and the Canadian film industry are *re-politicized* through their self-ironic bid for agency.

Notes

¹ Mordecai Richler, *Barney's Version* (1997; reprint, Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada, 1998), 5.

² *Whale Music*, directed by Richard J. Lewis (1994; Canada: Alliance Atlantis, 2005), DVD. Based on the novel by Paul Quarrington.

³ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 91.

⁴ Richler, *Barney's Version*, 172.

⁵ *Ibid*, 169.

⁶ Ella Taylor, “Lesser Version: Mordecai Richler gets a downgrade,” *The Village Voice*, January 12, 2011, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-01-12/film/lesser-version/>.

⁷ Michael Brooke, “Barney's Version.” *Sight & Sound* XXI.4 (Apr. 2011), accessed August 14, 2011, *FIAT* (F201113423177).

- ⁸ Robert Stam, "Introduction," in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (2005; reprint, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 44. Emphasis in original.
- ⁹ Richler, *Barney's Version*, 109.
- ¹⁰ *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, directed by Ted Kotcheff (1974; Canada: Alliance, 2007), DVD.
- ¹¹ Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972; reprint, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004), 180.
- ¹² *Souvenir of Canada*, directed by Robin Neinstein (2005; Canada: Maple Pictures Corp, 2006), DVD.
- ¹³ *Good Neighbours*, directed by Jacob Tierney (Canada: Alliance Films, 2011), film.
- ¹⁴ John Anderson, "Good Neighbors," *Variety*, September 30, 2011, accessed October 14, 2011, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117943764?refcatid=31>.
- ¹⁵ Box Office Mojo, "Good Neighbors," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed October 4, 2011, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=goodneighbors.htm>.
- ¹⁶ Box Office Mojo, "Barney's Version (U.S. Only)," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed October 4, 2011, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=barneysversion.htm>.
- ¹⁷ Yan Hamel, "Y a-t-il des romans québécois en Anglais? L'exemple de *Barney's Version* de Mordecai Richler," *Québec Studies* 32 (Fall 2001/Winter 2002): 58. (The passage as in its original French reads, "Ce n'est cependant pas parce qu'il représente la ville de Montreal et les Laurentides, ni parce que la situation d'écriture qu'il met en place se déroule au moment du referendum de 1995 sur la souveraineté politique du Québec que ce texte nous permet de saisir quelques-uns des points de convergence qui rallient les littératures québécoises francophone et anglophone. Plutôt que le décor spatio-temporel, qui incite habituellement les lecteurs à remarquer plus les différences que de ressemblances, ce sont la structure narrative et les propos tenus par le narrateur à l'encontre de la littérature du Québec et du Canada qui font du texte de Richler un pendant anglophone à un ensemble de questionnements à propos de la situation contemporaine que nous retrouvons dans un courant relativement important de la critique québécoise actuelle.")
- ¹⁸ Richler, *Barney's Version*, 417.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, 121.
- ²⁰ Ibid, 68.
- ²¹ Ibid, 74.
- ²² Robert McGill, "No Nation but Adaptation: 'The Bear Came over the Mountain,' *Away from Her*, and What It Means to Be Faithful," *Canadian Literature* 197 (Summer 2008): 108.
- ²³ Richler, *Barney's Version*, 214.
- ²⁴ A. O. Scott, "Maybe a Dinosaur, Just Not Purple," *The New York Times*, December 2, 2010, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://movies.nytimes.com/2010/12/03/movies/03barney.html?ref=movies>.
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Chapter 2: The Boy with the Tri-spotted Tattoo – *Incendies*

Whereas *Barney's Version* offers a progressive balance of art and commerce in Canadian film, one can further the notion that Canada embodies Atwood's role of the dynamic victim by approaching adaptation from an alternate reading. Whereas the element of public funding complicates resolution of art and commerce, it also implores one to interrogate how Canadian adaptations engage with Canadian politics. One could situate this discussion within the scene of contemporary films and Canadiana via author Mordecai Richler and his ambivalence to his identity as a Canadian. In a 1961 interview with the CBC performed shortly after the publication of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Richler speaks from his new home in London, England. In the interview, Richler suggests that Canadians are already Americans, simply without the benefits one receives from living south of the 49th Parallel. Richler finds assertions for Canadian nationalism redundant, as he feels that he has more in common with New Yorkers or Chicagoans than his countrymen in the prairies and western provinces.¹ If one looks to the publicity for the 1974 film of *Duddy Kravitz*, however, one sees a revision in how Richler perceives Canada. In a second CBC documentary, which sees Richler return to Montreal, Richler acknowledges the evolving multicultural make-up of his old neighbourhood. His comments reveal the growing diversity of Montreal's population. Richler acknowledges that such diversity is enriching, which allows one to infer that this multiplicity is part of what makes a Canadian a "Canadian."²

One finds a counterpart to Mordecai Richler circa 2012 in the "enfant terrible" of Quebec's dramatic scene, Wajdi Mouawad. Mouawad, like Richler, is a renowned writer whose work attests to an ineffable facet of Canadiana and is embraced by the international community. As with Richler, Mouawad shrouds himself in ambivalence towards a Canadian identity. Mouawad was born in Deir El-Kamal, Lebanon in 1968, but he left during the civil war in 1977,

moving to France before settling in Canada in 1983.³ As a result, Mouawad's biography frequently encourages scholars to categorize him as an "exilic" or "migrant writer."⁴ Mouawad, however, hesitates to accept such definitions and prefers simply to identify himself as a writer. He even answers so elusively as to call himself a Polish Jew when asked to state his origins.⁵

Most famous for his tetralogy of *Littoral* (1997), *Incendies* (2003), *Forêts* (2006), and *Ciels* (2009), Mouawad has, throughout these four plays, probed the "question of origins."⁶ All four plays received wide acclaim and various awards during their productions; this success on the national and international scene resulted in a film adaptation of the first instalment, *Littoral*, directed by the playwright himself in 2004.⁷ More recently, filmmaker Denis Villeneuve brought Mouawad's second play, *Incendies*, to the screen. As with *Barney's Version*, *Incendies* reveals the ongoing adaptation of the Canadian films in light of the ever-changing face of Canada itself via globalisation. While *Barney's Version* reveals the tensions of art and commerce that arise in Canadian feature filmmaking, the adaptation of *Incendies* demonstrates the dynamics of art and politics that arise in Canada's publically funded film industry. One sees in *Incendies* a positive portrayal of Canada as a multicultural society. This film complements Atwood's definition of a dynamic victim adapting to survive, for one sees a more progressive and realistic reflection of Canada's increasingly diverse populace; however, like *Barney's Version*, *Incendies* risks perpetuating the victim role because its portrayal of multiculturalism arguably dilutes the elements of resistance evident in the source text.

A reading of Mouawad's play *Incendies*, published in translation by Linda Gaboriau as *Scorched*,^{*} draws out the author's study of the question of origins, as he offers distinct indicators of the Lebanese roots of the play, even though the drama occurs in an unnamed country.

^{*}For purposes of clarity, all references to the play will use the title *Scorched*, as all lines quoted are from the translation. All references to *Incendies* refer to the film, which played as *Incendies* even in English speaking Canada.

Scorched intertwines the specificity of the Lebanese civil war with more commonly perceptible elements of Greek tragedy. By combining the political and the mythical, *Scorched* acknowledges the civil unrest that forced Mouawad to leave his birthplace, but it also universalizes the drama.

The film adaptation heavily reworks the political specificity of the drama. As with *Barney's Version*, the correlations and dissimilarities between *Scorched* and *Incendies* relate to the inevitable tensions of adaptation. Having its origins in the theatre, *Incendies* overcomes the "stage-bound" dynamic that André Loiselle suggests befalls many adaptations of stage drama. This act of adaptation is most striking in Villeneuve's wholly cinematic rendering of the bus sequence that acts as the centrepiece of the film. Loiselle also notes that while adaptations of stage drama frequently labour to move beyond the confinements of the stage, "the most intriguing instances of film-mediated drama in the Canadian corpus are those works that have leaned towards 'hyperawareness' of the theatrical origins of the scenario."⁸ *Incendies* refers to drama quite consciously, most notably in its accentuation of the overtones of Greek Tragedy that arise in *Scorched*, particularly in the play's references to Sophocles' tale of Oedipus. Villeneuve conveys the Oedipal tones of the play visually, complementing the play's appeal to universality through myth by rejecting language and by speaking to audiences through the visual tracks.

As *Incendies* undertakes the question of origins, a study of the film should therefore look to its source as the root of its inquiry. *Scorched* continues the thematic meditations offered by its predecessor *Littoral*. Whereas *Littoral* propels its protagonist, Wilfrid, into an unnamed Middle Eastern country so that he can bury his father in his native land, *Scorched* puts two Canadians on a return journey to discover the unspoken mysteries of their roots. The quest begins when twins Janine and Simon listen to the reading of their mother's will shortly after her death. During the reading, their notary and friend Alphonse Lebel reads their mother's final testament that their

father is alive and that they have another brother. Their late mother, Nawal, submits as her final request that each of the twins deliver a letter from her to the absent family members – Janine to the father and Simon to the brother – and only afterwards will Nawal consent to a proper burial because, as she says in her will, “The silence will be broken.”⁹ Angry at his mother’s posthumous news, Simon refuses to acknowledge her final wishes. Janine, however, sympathizes with Nawal’s situation and she embarks on a quest for her father, which brings her to her birthplace.

Mouawad complements the present efforts of Janine and Simon by offering flashback scenes that explain the mystery of Nawal’s son, as well as reveal the forces that brought Nawal to Canada. Nawal’s first son is a love child with Wahab, the boyfriend with whom she was enamoured at age fourteen. When Nawal tells Wahab that she is pregnant, they are both fearful, but Mouawad ensures that they do not articulate their exact reasons for fear.¹⁰ Whether their fear stems from cultural or religious differences, or from bringing shame to their families, remains unsaid; however, after Nawal’s family sequesters her until she gives birth, Wahab appears and informs her that people are taking him away. His parting request is simply for Nawal to tell the baby how much he loves it and how much he loves its mother.¹¹ Nawal agrees, saying, “I’ll tell him, I promise you I’ll tell him. For you and for me, I’ll tell him. I’ll whisper in his ear: ‘No matter what happens, I will always love you.’ I’ll tell him for you and for me.”¹²

In the subsequent scene, Nawal gives birth. To emphasize the solemnity of her promise to Wahab, her first lines spoken to the child are “No matter what happens, I will always love you. No matter what happens, I will always love you.”¹³ Nawal’s family then takes the baby and puts him in an orphanage in an undisclosed town in the south. In a quest that mirrors the task assigned to Janine and Simon, Nawal’s narrative in *Scorched* focuses primarily on her search for her son.

As with the parent/child drama of *Littoral*, the action of *Scorched* unfurls in a nameless country in the Middle East. As F. Elizabeth Dahab notes of Mouawad's work, *Scorched* resembles its predecessor in that both plays put at their dramatic locus "the preoccupation with the ravages of war on individuals and collectivities alike (the mark of the political), the grafting of individual quests onto personal histories (the collective value of utterances), and the search for redemption through love and solidarity."¹⁴ The plays differ, though, in that *Scorched* "is the one which most clearly refers to incidents pertaining to the Lebanese civil war."¹⁵ If one combines these two observations, Mouawad's play evokes references to the Lebanese civil war through the presence of the past via the parallel quests of Nawal and her offspring; accordingly, *Scorched* suggests that such haunting pasts result in a fragmented sense of location and belonging in the adopted homeland of Canada.

Chief to unlocking the dense thematic tapestry of the play are the references to Arab and Middle Eastern heritages. First, *Scorched* differs from *Littoral* in that the protagonist of the latter play goes by the name Wilfrid, which connotes his nature as a second-generation Canadian; however, the characters in *Scorched* have names both Arab and Western. The names of Nawal and Wahab help signify a return to the Middle East during the flashback sequences. Nawal's children also switch between Western and Arabic names upon their return to the Middle East.

When Janine's quest leads her to Malak, the man who cared for the twins during their infancy, he informs Janine of her identity by answering that Nawal gave birth in prison and once again had her children taken from her. The scene plays out in a dual connection in which Malak speaks to Janine in the present and to Nawal in the past:

MALAK [to Nawal]: The boy's name is Sarwane and the girl is Jannaane. Sarwane and Jannaane. Take them and remember me.

MALAK gives the children to NAWAL

JANINE: No! No, that can't be us. That's not true. My name is Janine and my brother is Simon.

MALAK: Jannaane and Sarwane.

JANINE: No! We were born in the hospital. We have our birth certificates! And we were born in the summer, not in the winter, and the child born in Kfar Ryat was born in the winter because the river was frozen, Fahim told me, that's why he couldn't throw the pail into the deep water.¹⁶

While Janine's misunderstanding stems from her ignorance of the Arabic names assigned to her and Simon, the confusion of the names is essential in Mouawad's disclosure of the importance of knowing one's origins in order to understand one's identity. Unaware of her birth name and only knowing herself by the Anglicized "Janine" (or "Jeanne" in original French version of the play), Janine is content to know herself in an identity that does not integrate her mother's past life. By renaming the children, Nawal erases any reference to their origins, an act she undoes by writing her last will and testament. Mouawad acknowledges the power that names play in the recognition of an ethnic identity in the multicultural character of Canada. As Alessandra Ferraro notes, Mouawad and his brothers are the only members of their family who have Arab given names; consequently, Mouawad says that his name serves as a constant reminder that he is not native to Canada.¹⁷ The play between Janine's Canadian identity (Janine) and her masked native identity (Jannaane) suggest that one is subsumed within a new identity upon arriving in a new nation.

Equally important in this regard is the scene between Simon and Nawal that occurs when Simon agrees to travel to Nawal's homeland and assist Janine in their quest. As with the scene with Malak, Mouawad tells of the cyclical nature of warped origins by interlacing the present and the past. Simon speaks to his mother, who appears from beyond the grave:

NAWAL: Why are you crying, Simon?

SIMON: It feels like a wolf... it's coming closer. He's red. And there's blood on his jaws. ... Where are you taking me, Mama?

NAWAL: I need your fists to break the silence. Sarwane is your real name. Jannaane is your sister's real name. Nawal is your mother's real name. Abou Tarek is your father's name. Now you must discover your brother's name.

SIMON: My brother?

NAWAL: Your blood brother.¹⁸

Nawal fell into silence upon discovering that her son is Abou Tarek, the man who raped her in Kfar Ryat prison, and by whom she became pregnant with Janine and Simon. In her reading of Mouawad's connection of the personal and the global in *Scorched*, and of redemption through love and solidarity, Dahab reads this passage as an essential expression of the collective need to break the silence that haunts writers, such as Mouawad, whom she deems exilic. Dahab writes,

for our purpose here an *explicit connection* is established between war, blood, red wolves, fear, fists, finding out, and *breaking the silence*, a lexical field suggesting semantically that forcefully breaking the silence and unveiling the truth, a way of bearing witness on more than one level, *personal and collective*, may free one of one's fears and provide the courage to confront those fears, real and imagined; the courage to look horror in the face and to *start a new thread* thereafter.¹⁹

The red wolves in *Scorched* therefore symbolize the fear of the unknown. In the specific case of Simon, the unknown variable is the father; however, if read more broadly, the red wolves suggest a cruel cycle of violence – both literal and figurative – that preys upon those who, like Simon (or Mouawad), are haunted by the unknown and unexplained features of their origins. Consequently, Simon's use of his fists to “break the silence” is important, for one could therefore read Simon allegorically. Debra Hawhee notes that heroes in classic myth often gained an identity through outward acts of valor or heroism.²⁰ As Simon is a boxer and needs his fists to “break the silence,” one could align him with figures like Apollo and Heracles who gained a legacy through battle.

Reading Simon as an Apollo figure is invited through the commonplace associations drawn between Mouawad's plays and elements of Greek drama. While Simon's boxing skills might lead one to read him as an Apollo figure, there is another figure from Greek tragedy to which Nawal's son is more frequently compared. Scholars suggest that the key narrative of Greek drama within *Scorched* is the tragedy of Oedipus. As Rainier Grutman and Heba Alah

Ghadie suggest, the journey by Janine and Simon acquires distinctly Oedipal resonances, which, as they further state, reads like *Oedipus Rex*, the play by Sophocles that Mouawad presented in Montreal prior to writing *Scorched*. In both dramas, incest plays a central, albeit different role. In Sophocles, it is as a sign of gratitude that the people of Thebes elect Oedipus and ask him to share the bed of their queen, which he accepts without knowing that Jocasta is his mother.²¹ The Oedipal myth thus permeates *Scorched* because Abou Tarek, the absent father whose name Nawal utters to Simon, is revealed to be Nihad, the missing brother of the twins; therefore, Abou Tarek/Nihad unknowingly spawned his own siblings by raping his mother in Kfar Ryat prison.

Perhaps, then, one can read an advanced Oedipal quality into the birth of the twins. All three children are, like Oedipus, unaware of their birthright. The rape of Nawal by Nihad suggests the element of parricide that permeates lands that, like Mouawad's native Lebanon, are torn apart by civil unrest.²² The rape connotes the lateral violence that ripples through civil war, and reverberates in Simon's boxing and his repressed aggression towards his mother, itself an Oedipal dynamic due to his ignorance of his father. The use of the Oedipal myth to complement the quest of Janine/Simon is, as Grutman and Ghadie suggest, a way in which Mouawad writes classical literature palimpsestuously.²³ Mouawad transcribes the Greek myth in both the past and present narratives of *Scorched*, casting classical drama in the role of collective memory.²⁴ The proliferation of intertextual references creates a heritage that is universal and outweighs any questioning of identity.²⁵ *Scorched* consequently employs the Lebanese civil war less frequently than it borrows from Sophocles, so the prioritization of the Greek myth overpowers the voice of history, which is sidelined during the comfortable existence that caused the characters to forget their culture in Canada.²⁶ Mouawad counterpoints this amnesia, though, by having the twins learn of their past during a return journey to their ancestral country.

By setting the drama within the Middle East, Mouawad interlocks references to actual historical events with the tragic elements of Sophocles. The mythic and historical narratives converge in the three figures that Janine/Simon meet during their quest: Fahim, Malak, and Chamseddine, who evoke Sophocles' characters of the shepherd, the messenger, and Tiresias, respectively.²⁷ Fahim, the prison guard who saved the children when asked to destroy them after their birth at Kfar Ryat prison, recalls the old shepherd of the Oedipus myth, who tells that he was to destroy Oedipus as a child, but did not.²⁸ Malak reveals to Janine the truth of her origins by sharing her birth name and is therefore similar to the messenger who informs Oedipus, "Your ankles were rivetted, and I set you free."²⁹ Chamseddine, the man who sends Nawal to Canada and later informs Simon that his father and brother are one and the same, resembles Tiresias, who says to Oedipus, "I say that the killer you are seeking is yourself."³⁰ In addition to noting the Sophoclean connection of Chamseddine, Grutman and Ghadie write that Chamseddine shares his name with the Ayatollah who chaired the Shiite High Council in Lebanon until his death in 2002.³¹ The latter's name and role shows how Mouawad reworks the Oedipal myth in reference to his own past: Chamseddine does not function to connect explicitly the drama of *Scorched* to the Lebanese civil war, but rather to suggest that past traumas are subjective and malleable. By rewriting the myth, Mouawad shows the empowering nature of engaging with the past.

In this homecoming, moreover, Mouawad references events that forced him to leave Lebanon as a child. Likewise, *Scorched* outlines the turning point that led Nawal to take an active role in the civil war, which began the series of events that brought her to Canada. Central to creating a sense of rupture in *Scorched* is the monologue in which Nawal describes to her friend Sawda the horror of witnessing a militia attack on a busload of refugees:

Long sequence of jackhammer noise that entirely drowns the sound of ALPHONSE LEBEL's voice. The sprinklers spray blood and flood everything. JANINE exits.

NAWAL: I was in the bus, Sawda, I was with them! When they doused us with the gas, I screamed: "I'm not from the camp, I'm not one of the refugees from the camp, I'm one of you, I'm looking for my child, one of the children they kidnapped." So they let me off the bus, and then, then they opened fire, and in a flash, the bus went up in flames... One woman tried to escape through a window, but the soldiers shot her, and she died there, straddling the window with her child in her arms in the middle of the blaze, her skin melted, her child's skin melted... There is no time left, Sawda. Time is like a chicken with its head cut off, racing around madly, every which way. Blood is flowing from its decapitated neck, and we're drowning in blood, Sawda, drowning.³²

Nawal's speech conveys the combination of past and present trauma that Mouawad uses to speak to spectators both in Canada and abroad. The jackhammers in the stage directions add subjective sound to match Nawal's description of the soldiers firing upon the civilians. The parallel of the monologue and the soundscape connects the present and the past, showing how psychological trauma migrates, as subsequent generations must make sense of the actions of their predecessors.

One could suggest that as Nawal's children make sense of her past, so too does Mouawad use the bus sequence to decode the events that tore apart his native Lebanon. Nawal's motivation to become an active member in the war can be analogous to Mouawad's departure, for Edgar O'Ballance cites that it was the attack of 13 April 1975, in which a busload of Palestinians were killed in the south of Lebanon, that is generally regarded as the inciting event to the civil war.³³ O'Ballance, moreover, suggests that two accounts of the events exist: one version submits that Falangists fired upon armed Palestinian militia who were planning an attack; however, the Palestinian Liberation Organization asserts that the victims were unarmed refugees from a nearby camp.³⁴ Likewise indicating an investment in the personal and the collective in *Scorched*, Dahab notes that Mouawad himself was a witness to the massacre, saying, "The bus incident is equally mentioned in *Architecture d'un Marcheur* (2005) by the playwright himself as an event he witnessed from his parents' balcony in Beirut, when he was seven years of age."³⁵ Dahab notes that the events of history differ slightly from the events of Nawal's testimony. She writes,

“[T]he bus is filled not with workers but with Palestinian refugees and the incident is set in 1978, three years later than its historical counterpart. Apart from that discrepancy, however, the core of that sorry incident is transposed into the play accurately enough to be identified by whomsoever is at all familiar with that somber [*sic*] page of Lebanese history.”³⁶

One could therefore read Mouawad’s alteration of the event as an effort to evoke a general sense of chaos, rather than as a mere citation of a specific event. His varied version of the attack conveys the need to challenge master narratives and to acknowledge competing histories. Nawal’s monologue likewise offers a universalized account of the event, for one could interpret the stylized stage directions and her evocation of a headless chicken as cues for the audience to read the event allegorically, and potentially use their own memories to appreciate her perplexity. Likewise, Mouawad does not have Nawal explicitly mention the political/religious affiliation of the militia, but rather opts to have her convey how the event affected her personally.

While the bus scene offers one of the more powerful moments in the play, it is arguably the centrepiece of the film. Occurring at the midpoint of *Incendies*, Villeneuve’s realization of the bus scene offers a defining moment in Nawal’s journey and the film itself. *Incendies* differs in that Villeneuve eschews Nawal’s monologue and instead portrays the attack literally. Whereas *Scorched* has Nawal give a subjective monologue, *Incendies* plays out the event as it unfolds. As Nawal (played by Belgian actress Lubna Azabal) walks along the highway to Daressa, she spies the oncoming bus. She unclasps the cross that hangs around her neck – Villeneuve uses a close-up to ensure that viewers notice – and she wraps a scarf around her head before hailing the bus to stop. After boarding, Nawal falls asleep and awakens to see that militia have stopped the bus.

The militia then open fire on the bus, slaughtering all the occupants except for Nawal and a mother and daughter. Unlike the secular events of the play, though, Nawal saves herself by

asserting that she is a Christian and by revealing her cross as a sign of her faith. As the soldiers escort Nawal from the bullet-ridden bus, the film again differs from the play by showing Nawal try to save the child, claiming it as her own. The act evokes Nawal's quest to save her absent son.

The child is taken from her, though, and, as the melancholic chords by Grégoire Hetzel rise on the soundtrack and drown out the diegetic sound, the soldiers shoot the girl's mother as they drag Nawal away from the carnage. The soundtrack switches back to realistic sound with an amplified crack of a gun as the soldiers murder the young girl. Villeneuve uses a match cut to catch Nawal as she falls on her knees after the gunshot. As the bus smolders in the background, Nawal remains fixed in place, silenced and scorched.

Although the chronology of the bus sequence differs strongly from the play, Villeneuve's exploitation of cinematographic freedom moves the film beyond the stagy and dialogue heavy nature of dramatic adaptations, opting not to express the drama in words. Instead, *Incendies* finds a visual equivalent and expresses the traumatic attack through the potent realism enabled by the alternate use of close-ups and longshots, as well as through offscreen action and quick editing. *Incendies* accentuates the cinematic nature of the bus scene through the "selectively unrealistic use of sound."³⁷ Villeneuve's embellishment of this scene speaks to many adaptive tensions discussed in the previous chapter on *Barney's Version*, namely investing the adaptation with some commercially oriented moments. In *Incendies*, this tension appears specifically in the visceral action and spectacle afforded by the bus sequence. This elaborate moment in *Incendies* also reveals the film's concerns with art and politics, since the film accentuates the prototypical act of sensational terrorism, which exists as a prevalent yet essentialist perception of Middle Eastern warfare, as well as an act that is rooted in a real, albeit significantly altered, event.

One could read the change from stage to screen as reflective of the meta-adaptive nature of Canadian film. In the course of adaptation, *Incendies* goes from being the work of a Lebanese-born Canadian, to a film by a native French Canadian. For the play, one could infer that Mouawad's personal connection to the event confesses its sensitivity and, therefore, suggests why he depicts the bus incident through an after-the-fact monologue and surreal imagery.

Villeneuve, however, while presumably cognizant of the events of 13 August 1975 through his preparation of the film, met the similar problem that Konyves and Lewis faced while adapting the referendum in *Barney's Version*. Namely, how does one translate national trauma to a global audience. Using the by-now iconic media image of a burning bus to signify generically Middle-Eastern warfare, Villeneuve taps into a Western collective imagination with which he is presumably familiar. His North American and European peers can thus immediately recognize and be affected by the depiction of well-known historical events while not being mired in complex political specificities. Like Mouawad, Villeneuve encourages universality by withholding the name of the country. Villeneuve also shot *Incendies* in Jordan, rather than Mouawad's native Lebanon, thus avoiding an easy conflation of Mouawad's story with that of the Marwans. Villeneuve omits the motivation for the attack on the bus as well: the bus driver tries to reason with the soldiers preceding the attack, but for this dialogue, Villeneuve withholds the subtitles, which otherwise translate the Arabic dialogue for French/English speaking viewers. The specifics of the attack are not of primary concern and the film omits a simplified rationale, thus leaving the larger implications of the attack incomprehensible for a western audience. As with Mouawad's play, Villeneuve's film seeks not to explain the event, for no explanation could ever justify such an attack.

Despite being a foreigner to Middle Eastern conflicts, Villeneuve's skills as a filmmaker qualify him to tell this story. Villeneuve's film prior to *Incendies* was *Polytechnique*,³⁸ which dramatizes the events of the 1989 massacre at Montreal's École Polytechnique, in which a lone gunman entered the campus and fired upon students, targeting women in a violent hate crime. In *Polytechnique*, Villeneuve focuses on the psychology and fears of the victims, rather than the fanatical motivation of the nameless killer (played by Maxim Gaudette, who plays Simon in *Incendies*). As Roger Clarke observes in *Sight & Sound*, "*Polytechnique* proved Villeneuve had a steady hand when it came to national trauma; he consulted those bereaved by the massacre and specifically excluded the mention of the gunman's name. This sensitivity is probably the reason why he's so well regarded in Francophone countries, and why he was seen as the right man for the job by playwright Wajdi Mouawad."³⁹ The tragedy of *Polytechnique* plays out in black and white, avoiding the sensationalism of the bloodshed without denying it; moreover, *Polytechnique* features a striking moment in which Jean-François (Sébastien Huberdeau) stops amidst the massacre and observes a print of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*, allowing the iconic painting to convey visually the chaos and confusion of national trauma. In *Incendies*, then, Villeneuve plays upon expectations of action and he conveys the scene as a visceral experience, but he then turns the dramatic realism of the event back on the viewer via the formalist manipulation of the soundtrack. Villeneuve uses the explosive moment to invest in Nawal's psychology, encouraging viewers to identify with the character rather than focus on the politics of the situation.

The scene of the bus incident is also noteworthy in that it cuts to a shot of Janine (Mélima Désormeaux-Poulin) travelling on a bus. To emphasize the multigenerational nature of Nawal's suffering, Janine's costume matches her mother's – both travel in jeans and a black shirt. More important, however, is that while the pleas of the bus driver awake Nawal, the audio during

Janine's journey is the song "You and Whose Army?" by Radiohead, which plays on Janine's iPod before bridging to a louder, non-diegetic auxiliary as Janine walks through the south. This scene marks the second appearance of the Radiohead song.

"You and Whose Army?" first arrives during the opening shot of the film. In a scene that does not appear in *Scorched*, *Incendies* begins with a wide exterior shot of an arid landscape. The camera zooms out, revealing a window frame, showing that this is someone's framed view. The song "You and Whose Army?" fades in gradually, at first sounding distant and thin. As the shot pans to the interior of the room from which the viewer sees the panoramic scenery, the volume and the acoustics of the song rise dramatically as the camera captures a procession of young boys. They are bleeding, scarred by war; they wait in line to have their heads shaved by an adult, turning them into child soldiers. The shot then cuts to a low angle, which tracks along their feet. Men's boots become children's bare feet. At the end of the line is the foot of one boy, branded differently than the others. The shot cuts in tighter to reveal an extreme close-up of a tri-spotted tattoo: three dotted piercings form a line on the boy's heel. As the song continues, the film cuts to a medium shot of the boy as the soldier shaves his head. The boy stares intently and directly at the camera with a look of anger and defiance to match the lyrics. The scene ends, with a sound bridge carrying "You and Whose Army?" to Montreal, where notary Jean Lebel (Rémy Girard) grabs the last will and testament of Nawal Marwan to read to her children. The drama begins.

By adding a new scene to the adaptation, Villeneuve creates an audio-visual prologue that emphasizes cinema over stage drama. In this regard, *Incendies* recalls the 1992 stage-to-screen adaptation *Being at Home with Claude*, directed by Jean Beaudin.⁴⁰ The film *Being at Home with Claude* also begins with an organic and wholly cinematic prologue before moving to the drama of the play. The film, which chronicles the interrogation of Yves (Roy Dupuis) by a detective

(Jacques Godin), opens with a depiction of the murder of Claude (Jean-François Pichette) for which Yves is charged. Beaudin presents the opening scene in stark black and white, as opposed to rest of the film, which appears in colour, and it depicts Yves and Claude in an act of fervent lovemaking before Yves slashes Claude's throat with a knife. Beaudin matches the pace of the bodily action with a series of frenetic crosscuts between the lovers and shots of the hustle-bustle of the Montreal streets. The scene climaxes with the end of the lovemaking, and a splatter of Claude's blood, whose red hue stands out provocatively against the desaturated composition.

In *Stage-Bound*, André Loiselle argues that this opening prologue serves as a visual aid to the ensuing mystery. Loiselle argues that the introduction "is central to the audience's comprehension of the film, as it abstracts all the main episodes of the drama to follow and offers a visual key to the enciphered verbal discourse that ensues."⁴¹ Loiselle further argues,

Through this initial arrangement of sounds and images, Beaudin manages to summarize the main contention at the core of the subsequent dramatic discourse: that is, a dialectical opposition between a threatening open space peopled with brutal or, at best, indifferent individuals and a closed, comfortable realm where lovers can enjoy intimacy. This dialectical structure is not readily perceivable in the play, for Dubois's work harbours an uncommon complexity that parallels the intricate psychology of its central character, whose voluntary surrender to the police seems to contradict his absolute refusal to explain why he murdered Claude.⁴²

By using this account of the prologue's function in the later drama of *Claude*, one can therefore use the opening scene of *Incendies* as a guide to read the plight of the Nawal and her children.

The repeated use of "You and Whose Army?" – in the opening shot of the boy, who is later revealed to be Nawal's son, Nihad, and in the scene of Janine's travel to the south – tags Villeneuve's effort to implicate *Incendies* in the personal rather than the political. In an interview with *Moving Pictures* magazine, Villeneuve states his intent for using the Radiohead song,

[T]his idea came by the fact that I knew I would be an imposter, doing a movie about something I don't know, which is war in Middle East. The only way I can relate it to this story was by intimacy and family, but the context will be something that I don't know. It

was just a kind of artistic statement to just say right at the beginning that what the audience will see is the view of a Westerner on the Middle East situation.⁴³

One can therefore read the opening scene as Villeneuve's acknowledgement that the film deals with sensitive social issues that he knows only from a distance; however, the prologue conveys that the director signals his outsider status and does not presume an authoritative stance on the situation in which Nawal et al find themselves. As Beaudin does in *Being at Home with Claude*, Villeneuve offers a visual key. This clue is the tri-spotted tattoo on Nihad's foot, which marks him as an Oedipal figure. Grutman and Ghadie note that Oedipus's name derives from the fact that his feet were pierced shortly after birth.⁴⁴ The prologue thus indicates that Greek tragedy, something that requires no politics to explain or appreciate, is the underlying vehicle for the film.

That prioritization of the Oedipal myth over politics is important, for one must recognize the tri-spotted tattoo as a stylistic and narrative choice by Villeneuve. In the play, Nawal marks her son by slipping a clown nose into his swaddling clothes before he is taken from her.⁴⁵ In the film, however, Nihad meets the same fate as Oedipus, whose feet are riveted and whose soul knows not his birth parents. Nawal's mother tattoos the baby by marking it three times on the heel and she shows the tattoo to Nawal so that Nawal knows the brand that distinguishes Nihad from the other children. The tattoo and the clown nose play a crucial role in both the film and the play, as each item returns to accentuate the dramatic pull of the Oedipal tragedy.

In each case, the marker of Nihad's origins appears and signals to Nawal – and to the audience – that she was raped by her son. In the play, the revelation occurs during Nihad's testimony to a war crimes tribunal. He says,

This trial has been such a bore! No beat, no sense of showbiz. That's where I find my dignity. And always have. I was born with it. The people who watched me grow up always said this object was a sign of my origins, of my dignity, since, according to the story they tell, it was given to me by my mother. A little red nose. A little clown nose. What does it mean? My personal dignity is a funny face left by the woman who gave

birth to me. This funny face has never left me. So let me wear it now and sing one of my songs, to save dignity from the horror of boredom.⁴⁶

As with the bus sequence, Villeneuve brings out this revelation through an act of showing, rather than telling, and breaks the stagy dynamic that often befalls adapted drama. In the film, Nawal's betrayal occurs at a Montreal swimming pool as she pauses at the edge of the pool. Her hand rests by a man's foot and she sees the tattoo for which has been searching for years. She then goes to meet the man, but is instantly rendered mute, visibly overwhelmed by her discovery.

By ending the tragedy via the Oedipal tattoo, rather than through the tribunal, which links the mother-son conflict to the civil war, Villeneuve reasserts the story on the level of myth, rather than through historical events. The film speaks to viewers more broadly, rather than to a specific audience who understands the complex politics, which do not easily translate into reliable cinema. While one might argue that mythologizing an immigrant experience renders Villeneuve's effort essentialist, one could counter argue that his portrayal of the trauma resonates with Mouawad's play. Writing on Mouawad's blending of myth and the history in *Scorched*, Stéphane Lépine argues that "there is no nostalgia of the lost country in this writer; there is, rather, a nostalgia of ourselves who never *are* sufficiently."⁴⁷ Dahab furthers this case, saying, "All the while admitting the presence of Lebanon and the Lebanese civil war in the background of Mouawad's plays, Lépine likes to point out that this background actually stands for the internal rifts and moral struggles characteristic of the human condition."⁴⁸ The avoidance of specific origins, therefore, does not categorically deny connections to one place or experience. As with the Sophoclean tragedy in *Incendies*, Mouawad uses the Lebanese civil war symbolically in order to speak to generalized human emotions and experiences.

The transmission of *Incendies* through myth also accentuates the meta-adaptive character of Canadian film. *Incendies* follows the trend of many other cases of Canadian film-mediated

drama. As Loiselles argues, many Canadian stage adaptations, “rather than erasing theatre, make reference to it, using the tension between the two art forms to sharpen the drama’s meaning.”⁴⁹ Perhaps, then, Villeneuve uses the tattoo-mediated encounter between Nawal and her son to accentuate the theatrical artifice of the situation, for the reveal comes in a convoluted encounter, as it asks audiences to accept that mother and son would both migrate from the Middle East to Montreal and arrive at the same community pool at the same time. Similarly, the emphasis on coincidence and chance suggests that these could be any two Canadians or any two human beings more broadly. Unlike the highly specific reveal of the play, the contrivance of the pool scene universalizes the moment and suggests that Nawal and Nihad could be any two citizens who comprise Canada’s multicultural make-up. By stressing its theatrical origins through the message of shared experiences and histories evoked by the reference to Greek tragedy, *Incendies* sharpens the film’s thematic concerns with migration and belonging.

In the final moments, as Janine and Simon fulfill their quest and deliver Nawal’s letters to the father and the son, so too does Nawal fulfill her promise to Nihad that she will always love him, no matter what happens. One could read Nawal’s pardoning of Nihad as a sign of gaining a sense of closure by speaking out against the trauma that has rendered her mute. As Katherine Monk says in her reading of *Incendies*, “The people in this film - even the worst among them - are transformed, even redeemed, by their experience in the Canadian mosaic. Canada becomes a place where Old World trespasses can be forgiven, and ancient villains can be embraced.”⁵⁰ Monk continues her argument, saying, “*Incendies* affirms Canada’s unique place in the current world order, as a collection of deeply compassionate individuals who believe in social justice, without the arrogance of ideological one-upsmanship.”⁵¹ By combining Monk’s interpretations of *Incendies* with the aforementioned observations of the film/play, one could argue that the

adaptation rewrites Canada's perception of itself as a nation that is diverse and inclusive. As with *Barney's Version*, the silence that Nawal et al face positions them as outsiders among outsiders, namely members of a minority group living within the larger Francophone minority within a country whose ethnicity is historically Anglo-Saxon and remains predominantly so today.

That *Incendies* encourages a favourable reading of belonging within Canada's multicultural society is not surprising, considering that the Canadian government heavily financed the film. Ever since the Canadian government passed the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1988, Canadians have witnessed an increased effort by the government to promote itself as tolerant and inclusive. One of Canada's aims with the *Multiculturalism Act* is to "recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future."⁵² One could therefore situate adaptations such as *Incendies* as demonstrating film's role as an "ideological state apparatus" (to borrow Althusser's term) in disseminating Canadian stories both to Canada and to the world.⁵³

Like *Incendies*, other Canadian films use stories of migrants becoming incorporated into Canada's heterogeneous identity. For example, Denis Chouinard's 2001 film *The Tar Angel* (*L'ange de goudron*)⁵⁴ offers a story of the Algerian Kasmi family (played by Zinedine Soualem and Hiam Abbas) settling in Montreal and painstakingly working to attain Canadian citizenship. The film ends with a bittersweet victory for the Kasmis, as their son, Hafid (Raba Aït Ouyahhia), is beaten to death by the police when he commits a perceived act of terrorism by destroying the passports of migrants being deported from Canada; however, the parents and the younger children – including one born on Canadian soil – gain Canadian citizenship. The film concludes with a citizenship ceremony, which Chouinard captures in a long take, tracking along rows of

new Canadians singing “O, Canada” in broken English. The shot ends with the Kasmis, who do not sing, but rather offer a sombre look that is incongruous with the words “we stand on guard for thee” as sung by their fellow Canadians. The Kasmis accept their fate, though, with Ahmed saying to his son in voiceover, “your voice seals our belonging in the country.” *The Tar Angel*, like *Incendies*, ends with recognition of gaining a voice in multicultural Canada, and likewise suggests that the hardships one faced elsewhere can be reconciled and transformed in Canada.

The Tar Angel differs, though, in that it is an original screenplay. With *Incendies*, however, one can use the act of rewriting as further evidence of Canada’s attempt to reflect a positive self-image through film. By having Villeneuve, a native French Canadian, adapt the work of Lebanese-Canadian Mouawad, *Incendies* ultimately encourages a reading that all Canadians share such experiences. One could look at Villeneuve’s handling of *Polytechnique* similarly. That a male director delivers a film based on the events of a massacre against women encourages empathy between genders, just as the convergence of cultures in *Incendies* celebrates a Canadian identity other than that of the hockey-playing Caucasian male perpetuated in earlier popular culture as the idealized Canadian citizen. While *Polytechnique* encourages affinity between genders, it offers its message at the expense of an active and distinct female voice; similarly, *Incendies* celebrates multiculturalism through the inadvertent subordination of a minority voice to one that speaks at a remove from experiences that, as the scholarship on the play suggests, come from a peripheral sphere of Canadian voices.

While *Incendies* and *The Tar Angel* arguably reflect a more inclusive representation of Canadians, as well as one that is more realistic, one could also suggest that the self-reflexivity of the endings offers an ironic reading of Canadian multiculturalism. *Incendies*’ status as an adaptation is especially helpful in this regard because the universalization of the Marwans’ story

occurs when Villeneuve most heavily invests the play in Greek drama. *Incendies* thus conjures a link between ethnic identity and performance because the scenes that introduce and define the characters most strongly are those that refer most clearly to theatre via the references to Oedipus.

Incendies recalls the 2003 stage-to-screen adaptation *Mambo Italiano* by Émile Gaudreault.⁵⁵ *Mambo Italiano* transpires in Montreal's Little Italy where Angelo Barberini (Luke Kirby) tells his parents (Paul Sorvino and Ginette Reno) that he is gay. His parents, who left Italy before starting their family, brought with them traditional Italian values that explode when Angelo reveals himself to them. Unlike the Barney of Richler's prose or the Nawal of Mouawad's play, the Angelo of Steve Galluccio's play is an outsider among outsiders *among outsiders*. As Angelo says, "there is no fate worse than being gay and Italian."⁵⁶

The adaptation of *Mambo Italiano*, like *Incendies*, draws attention to its theatricality. The film changes Angelo's profession from accountant to aspiring writer and Angelo finally succeeds when he draws inspiration from the cultural clash between his Italian roots and the rest of Canada. Angelo scripts a sitcom that depicts the Barberini family sitting around the dinner table eating meatballs and arguing with one another. As with the use of the burning bus in *Incendies*, *Mambo Italiano* plays into cultural perceptions and stereotypes that the dominant majority imposes on minority groups. Likewise, while Angelo uses the performance of culture to celebrate the situation of his heritage within the larger Canadian populace, *Mambo Italiano* shares the morale proffered by *Incendies* of overcoming one's sense of exile by speaking out. The adaptation of *Mambo Italiano* adds a subplot in which Angelo volunteers at the Gay Help Line, a call-in service where closeted homosexuals can seek advice in accepting and admitting their sexuality. The film encourages the confrontation of plural identities, rather than the suppression of them that one sees in the ending of *The Tar Angel*. *Mambo Italiano* ultimately

ends with a rejection of essentialist identities and a negotiation of multigenerational conflict by offering a celebratory scene in which Angelo dances the mambo with his late aunt Yolanda (Tara Nicodermo), who committed suicide due to her sense of isolation produced by the family's inability to accept her differences, which motivates him to write the hit show. While the play ends with Angelo dancing solo, the film celebrates cultural blending by having Angelo and Yolanda dance the mambo together; it also offers as the final scene a shot of the family walking hand in hand through Little Italy with Angelo and his new boyfriend (Tim Post). Once again, the tensions of adaptation reveal the film's larger ambitions.

In both *Incendies* and *Mambo Italiano*, it seems that all the world's a stage to act out what it means to be Canadian. Perhaps, then, *Incendies* acknowledges the importance of using tools like publically funded films to disseminate a more inclusive and diverse view of Canadians, but it also suggests that such representations often exist in the performance of an ethnic identity and an erasure of the socio-political aspects of cultural heritage. *Scorched* draws attention to this aspect of identity quite explicitly, not only through Nihad's clown nose, but particularly through one scene in which he performs for the audience an interview, basking in his celebrity as an assassin and ending with a solo performance of "Roxane" by The Police, singing the words to the popular song in broken English.⁵⁷ This scene suggests that the seepage of culture via mass media imposes identities and warps them, as evident in Nihad's broken English. The film introduces Nihad the assassin in a much different scene, offering a dizzying scene in which he shoots and kills a group of boys navigating the war-torn streets. The film once again introduces the boy with the tri-spotted tattoo via a close-up on his birthmark, evoking the dramatic origins of the play while offering a character akin to the mercenaries propagated by western media. The performative nature of Nihad's appearance offers a western stereotype, yet it also uses the visual

key to stress the artificiality of such stereotypes by emphasizing the constructedness of his character via the stamp of the Oedipal tattoo.

Such an effort to incorporate a plurality of identities within an idealized Canadian one inadvertently renders mixed Canadian identities essentialist. This act results in what Natasha Bakht calls the “song and dance” of multiculturalism. Bakht argues, “While multiculturalism encourages cultural diversity, it correspondingly seeks to contain it.”⁵⁸ Christopher Gittings, however, sees many recent Canadian films using meta-performances in order to draw attention to the stereotypes associated with these performed identities.⁵⁹ As films such as *Incendies* and *Mambo Italiano* suggest, “official multiculturalism [contributes] to a culture of resistance through the support it provides to minoritarian cultural projects.”⁶⁰ Since directors who are not visible minorities adapt both plays to the screen, however, the films reject essentialism and disseminate a positive perspective of Canadian multiculturalism without actively encouraging resistance to it. The films therefore demonstrate that mainstream Canada rewrites texts that were previously read as exilic or resistant and, intentionally or not, encourages a favourable view of multicultural Canada where identity is a constant site of convergence and negotiation.

As Robert Lantos uses *Barney's Version* to make a bid for art and commerce, so too does *Incendies* ameliorate Canada's conception of itself by adapting a text that fuses person and place. *Incendies* shows the tension between source (a populace of diverse origins) and product (an idea of “Canadianness”). Like the revaluation of Canadian identities, the adaptation of drama involves an opening up beyond fixity. *Incendies* accepts a concomitant relationship between the present and the past, as well as between myth and reality. As the efforts of state-funded films that solicit a more inclusive representation further suggest, Canadian films find themselves in a process of adapting past works into present narratives of belonging.

Notes

¹ "Mordecai Richler and the great Canadian wasteland." Online video clip. The CBC Digital Archives Website, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, last updated: June 30, 2009, accessed March 7, 2011.
http://archives.cbc.ca/arts_entertainment/literature/clips/4594/

² "Mordecai Richler's Homecoming." Online video clip. The CBC Digital Archives Website, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, last updated June 30, 2009, accessed November 16, 2011.
http://archives.cbc.ca/arts_entertainment/literature/clips/4598/

³ Alessandra Ferraro. "Le Cycle théâtral de Wajdi Mouawad (Littoral, Incendies, Forêts) ou comment détourner le mythe d'Oedipe." *Ponts* 7 (2007): 41.

⁴ F. Elizabeth Dahab, "Of Broken Promises and Mended Lives: The War-Ravaged World of Wajdi Mouawad," in *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature*. After the Empire: The Francophone World and Postcolonial France (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 138.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Wajdi Mouawad, "A Ruthless Consolation," in *Scorched*, 2003, trans Linda Gaboriau, (Toronto: Playrights Canada Press, 2009), iii.

⁷ *Littoral*, directed by Wajdi Mouawad (2004; Canada/France: TVA Films, 2005), DVD.

⁸ Loisel, *Stage-Bound*, 28-29.

⁹ Mouawad, *Scorched*, 9.

¹⁰ Ibid, 25.

¹¹ Ibid, 29-30.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, 31.

¹⁴ Dahab, "Of Broken Promises and Mended Lives," 138.

¹⁵ Ibid, 143.

¹⁶ Mouawad, *Scorched*, 98.

¹⁷ Ferraro. "Le Cycle théâtral de Wajdi Mouawad," 42.

¹⁸ Mouawad, *Scorched*, 104-105.

¹⁹ Dahab, "Of Broken Promises and Mended Lives," 151. Emphasis in original.

²⁰ Debra Hawhee, "Agonism and Arete," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35, no. 3 (17/01/2002), accessed December 2, 2011, *Scholars Portal*, doi: 10.1353/par.2003.0004, 187-188.

²¹ Rainier Grutman and Heba Alah Ghadie. "Incendies de Wajdi [Wajdi] Mouawad: Les Méandres de la mémoire." *Neohelicon: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* 33.1 (2006): 91-108. *Literature Resources from Gale*, accessed 27 Apr. 2011, 98. My translation. The original French reads : « Au fil des péripéties, leur aventure acquiert des résonances résolument oedippiennes. C'est comme si l'Œdipe roi qu'il avait présenté quelques années plus tôt au public montréalais, avait laissé des traces dans l'écriture de Mouawad. Dans l'une et l'autre pièce, par exemple, l'inceste joue un rôle central, encore que de manière fort différente. Chez Sophocle, c'est en signe de gratitude que les habitants de Thèbes élisent Œdipe (qui vient de les délivrer du sphinx) et lui proposent de partager la couche de leur reine, ce qu'il accepte de bonne grâce sans savoir que Jocaste est sa mère. »

²² Ferraro, "Le Cycle théâtral de Wajdi Mouawad," 49.

²³ Grutman and Ghadie, "Les Méandres de la mémoire," 91.

²⁴ Ibid, 101.

²⁵ Ibid, 106.

²⁶ Ibid, 101.

²⁷ Ibid, 100.

²⁸ Sophocles, "King Oedipus," in *The Theban Plays: King Oedipus: Oedipus at Colonus: Antigone: Translated by E.F. Watling* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), *Literature Online*, accessed November 15, 2011, http://gateway.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:dr:Z001600391:0, 1084.

²⁹ Ibid, 944.

³⁰ Ibid, 323.

³¹ Grutman and Ghadie, "Les Méandres de la mémoire," 100.

³² Mouawad, *Scorched*, 67-8.

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- ³³ Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK.: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 1.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Dahab, "Of Broken Promises and Mended Lives," 151.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Michael Philips, "A lesson in adaptation, a treatise on survival," *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 2011, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/movies/ct-mov-0429-incendies-20110428,0,668011.column>.
- ³⁸ *Polytechnique*, directed by Denis Villeneuve (Canada: Alliance, 2009), DVD.
- ³⁹ Roger Clarke, "Film of the month: *Incendies*". *Sight & Sound*, July 2011, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/review/6296>.
- ⁴⁰ *Being at Home with Claude*, directed by Jean Beaudin (1992; Canada: Alliance, 1993), VHS. Based on the play by René-Daniel Dubois.
- ⁴¹ Loiselle, *Stage-Bound*, 165
- ⁴² Ibid, 167.
- ⁴³ Elliot V. Kotek, "Victims face war's scars in Villeneuve's 'Incendies,'" *Moving Pictures* (Winter 2011), accessed 27 June 2011, *Film & Television Literature Index with Full Text*, EBSCOhost, 59902628, 30.
- ⁴⁴ Grutman and Ghadie, "Les Méandres de la mémoire," 99.
- ⁴⁵ Mouawad, *Scorched*, 31.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, 128.
- ⁴⁷ In Dahab, "Of Broken Promises and Mended Lives," 162.
- ⁴⁸ Dahab, "Of Broken Promises and Mended Lives," 162-3.
- ⁴⁹ Loiselle, *Stage-Bound*, 29.
- ⁵⁰ Katherine Monk, "Why *Incendies* should Win the Genie." *Postmedia News*, Mar 09, 2011. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/856619321?accountid=9894>. (accessed November 1, 2011).
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Canadian Multiculturalism Act, R.S.C., c. 31, s. 3 (1) (b), (1988), Department of Justice, accessed November 30, 2011. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-18.7/FullText.html>.
- ⁵³ It should be noted that the concept of an ideological state apparatus is not exclusive to publically supported films. Films that are financed privately are equally likely to participate in the creation of myth and ideology.
- ⁵⁴ *The Tar Angel*, directed by Denis Chouinard, (2001; Canada: Alliance, 2002) VHS.
- ⁵⁵ *Mambo Italiano*, directed by Émile Gaudreault, (2003; Canada: Equinoxe Films, 2004) DVD.
- ⁵⁶ Steve Galluccio, *Mambo Italiano*, (2004; reprint, Vancouver: Talon Books, 2007), 14.
- ⁵⁷ Mouawad, *Scorched*, 112-113.
- ⁵⁸ Natasha Bakht, "Mere 'song and dance': Complicating the multicultural imperative in the arts," in *Home and Native Land: Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada*, ed. May Chazan, Lisa Helps, Anna Stanley, & Sonali Thakkar, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2011), 176.
- ⁵⁹ Gittings, *Canadian National Cinema*, 240.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid, 262.

Chapter 3: “Strange and New” – *The Sweet Hereafter & A History of Violence*

The integration of myth in *Incendies* is not without precedent. Before Denis Villeneuve made his film more accessible by accentuating the Sophoclean overtones of the source text, Atom Egoyan inserted a radical element into his 1997 adaptation of *The Sweet Hereafter*. In adapting the 1991 novel by Russell Banks, Egoyan adds a voiceover in which Nicole (Sarah Polley) reads aloud Robert Browning’s folk tale “The Pied Piper of Hamelin.” The thread of the Pied Piper enables Egoyan to explode the timeframe of Banks’s novel and the subjectivity of the characters. The idyllic tone of “The Pied Piper” magnifies a subplot of Banks’s novel, which describes Nicole as the victim of sexual abuse by her father.¹ The film invites broad readings within Egoyan’s body of work, which, much like that of Wajdi Mouawad, is frequently read through lenses of exile and migration.² *The Sweet Hereafter*, however, shows a philosophical difference between the source text and the adaptation, which reveals an adaptive strategy that arises through the role of authorship and enables directors like Egoyan to succeed while still aligning their work within the identifiable tradition they developed in Canada.

Egoyan’s use of the Pied Piper and his treatment of the incest between Nicole and Sam Burnell (played by Tom McCamus) allow *The Sweet Hereafter* to exemplify the reception of his recent films and the circulation of Canadian films more broadly. Representations of gender and sexuality in Canadian film adaptations recently became the focus of Peter Dickinson’s *Screening Gender, Framing Genre*, which surveys the circulation of gender in adaptation. Despite the rich case study in gender and adaptation offered by *The Sweet Hereafter*, Egoyan’s film does not receive consideration. In fact, none of his adaptations appears in Dickinson’s study.

In a similarly curious vein, so too does Dickinson omit Egoyan’s contemporary, David Cronenberg. As with Egoyan’s filmography, the films of David Cronenberg regularly meditate

upon gender and sexuality; moreover, Cronenberg deals with such representations explicitly and generates controversy from audiences, scholars, and policymakers alike. Cronenberg also draws comparison to Egoyan since both filmmakers marked a shift in their careers by making a series of adaptations after delivering films made from original screenplays. Following *The Sweet Hereafter*, all but two of Egoyan's films have been adaptations: *Felicia's Journey*,³ based on the novel by William Trevor; *Where the Truth Lies*,⁴ based on the novel by Rupert Holmes; and *Chloe*,⁵ a remake of the French film *Nathalie...* by Anne Fontaine. Cronenberg made the switch to adaptations earlier in his career, beginning with his 1983 adaptation of Stephen King's *The Dead Zone*.⁶ Cronenberg then made several other adaptations that raise questions of gender and sexuality including: *Dead Ringers*⁷, based on the book *Twins* by Bari Wood and Jack Geasland; *Naked Lunch*⁸, based on the novel by William S. Burroughs; *M. Butterfly*,⁹ based on the play by David Henry Hwang; *Crash*¹⁰, which is so controversial an adaptation of J.G. Ballard's novel that it was rated NC-17 in the USA and banned elsewhere; *Spider*,¹¹ based on a novel by Patrick McGrath; and *A Dangerous Method*, based on *The Talking Cure* by Christopher Hampton. Despite the filmography of Egoyan and Cronenberg, not to mention their greater resonance with audiences over other Canadian adaptations, Dickinson omits them because the texts they adapt are not Canadian.¹² Dickinson's choice is fair because all studies must inevitably include some texts at the expense of others. The exclusion of these adaptations, though, risks perpetuating the authority of a source text over a film; conversely, the absence of Egoyan and Cronenberg in his study raises an important issue in the relationship between Canadian film and film adaptations.

In the case of *The Sweet Hereafter*, for example, one could problematize its status as a wholly Canadian film because the source text is American. The film, however, represents itself as explicitly Canadian. Egoyan makes surface layer changes to *The Sweet Hereafter*, such as

setting the action in British Columbia, versus the New England setting of Banks's novel. More important, however, is his use of the Pied Piper as the film's mise-en-abyme, for the novel makes no reference to the Browning poem. Instead, Banks's characters use their disillusionment with the Vietnam War as a metaphor for trauma. Egoyan thus erases the element of Banks's novel that most strongly connects it to American culture and instead offers a more universally accessible thread; however, despite Egoyan's effort to de-Americanize and then Canadianize *The Sweet Hereafter*, some scholars are not convinced. Jonathan Romney, for example, equates the style and accessibility of *The Sweet Hereafter* to the characteristics of films made by American directors.¹³ Romney's comment on Egoyan's work, much like Dickinson's exclusion of it, suggests that there are continuities between Canadian and American films. The definition of what constitutes a Canadian film, therefore, seems both fluid and fixed.

While *The Sweet Hereafter* offers an example of Egoyan's work regarding Canadian adaptations, one can place David Cronenberg within this discussion through a much different example. In addition to the aforementioned films, Cronenberg made another adaptation, 2005's *A History of Violence*, which troubles the status, circulation, and reception of Canadian films. Based on the graphic novel by John Wagner and Vince Locke, *A History of Violence* was Cronenberg's comeback after the financially disastrous *eXistenZ*¹⁴ and *Spider*, for, as Bart Beaty notes for the latter film, the director deferred his fee in order to get the film made.¹⁵ As a result, Cronenberg took a job as director-for-hire for New Line Cinema. Cronenberg, however, convinced the studio to let him film in Brampton, Ontario, with his regular collaborators. *A History of Violence*, therefore, is an American film that was made in Canada by Canadians.

Bart Beaty, however, maintains that *A History of Violence* is a Canadian film. In fact, Beaty's work on *A History of Violence* begins a series of books on Canadian Cinema. By reading

the film within Cronenberg's oeuvre, Beaty argues that the film offers a covertly Canadian subtext. *A History of Violence* is, according to Beaty, "a Canadian story about the violence that we seek to displace on our American neighbours."¹⁶ Beaty reads the film as offering a second play on Canada-US relations. In what he refers to as the film's "most important constitution to Canadian cinema," Beaty suggests that the film is Canadian because it "allows us, through the ironizing of American film genres, to come to terms with a model of spectatorship of American cinema."¹⁷ Beaty's reading infers that the mark of a director can make a film Canadian.

As Egoyan and Cronenberg emerged as two of the most prominent English Canadian directors of the 1980s and 1990s, their foray into adaptation brings into question the role of authorship. Adaptation is a practice that risks limiting the authority of a director if it is perceived that he or she simply repeats the work of another; conversely, directors may reveal their defining stylistic traits by how they choose to refashion a text. Like adaptation, Canadian film policy questions the role of the author. Cronenberg's choice to adapt *A History of Violence* is a product of circumstance in an industry in which policies emphasized that "past performance will be rewarded in distributing the funds."¹⁸ Peter Urquhart articulates the flaw in this policy, saying, "Some have complained this emphasis on rewarding commercial success will undermine the strong tradition of personal auteur filmmaking in Canada."¹⁹ Considering the limited potential for the financial success of Canadian films, given their poor distribution and low attendance in Canada, Urquhart seems correct in light of Cronenberg's career path.

A close reading of the adaptations of *The Sweet Hereafter* and *A History of Violence*, as well as the subsequent reactions to them, demonstrates the importance of the scholarly discourse in authorship both in adaptation and in a national context. These two adaptations benefit from being situated within the filmographies of their directors, and the continuities between these

adaptations and the directors' other films exhibit the strength of Canada's authorial tradition, despite some observations that Egoyan/Cronenberg are aligning themselves with mainstream America. Although Egoyan and Cronenberg emerged making films with original screenplays, it is through their adaptations that one sees their signature style, for they rewrite the work of another author. Their distance from the national origins of the source text enables a critical detachment, and the philosophical incongruity between source text and adaptation reveals the attitudes of the directors, which are shaped not only by their peripheral position as Canadian filmmakers, but by their historical and political marginality to Britain and America as Canadians. The critical attitudes exemplified by Egoyan, Cronenberg, and other Canadian directors like, say, Patricia Rozema, are attitudes of creative non-victims who take the texts of those in positions of power, refashion them in their own imagination, and assert their voices through an act of creative appropriation. The attitudes of these directors demonstrate the strength of Canada's author-based tradition, which, as will be seen with the recent corrections to measure the success of a Canadian film, has the potential to sustain Canada's film industry both commercially and culturally.

Beginning with *The Sweet Hereafter*, Atom Egoyan adapted a series of films that were increasingly described as American, despite the efforts of the director to portray the national character of his films as Canadian. With each adaptation, some might say that the art-house director took a step away from his audacious and independent roots. As Emma Wilson notes, however, with each adaptation Egoyan "locates source material that corresponds to the questions – about innocence, knowledge, betrayal, narrative variation, and interpretation – that infiltrate his work."²⁰ That *The Sweet Hereafter* connects with Egoyan's previous film, *Exotica*,²¹ is clear, as both films depict the trauma wrought upon a young girl through abuse by her father. Egoyan himself links the films, noting, "*Exotica* ended with a young woman walking towards her house.

With this film, we go inside.”²² Egoyan’s film expands upon the thematic concerns of Banks’s novel. Most notable is how the novel creates a sense of before and after, a temporal rupture in the town that is marked by the accident of the school bus, in which most of the town’s children died.

The theme of temporality arises early in the novel, which, unlike Egoyan’s film, appears in five sections. Each part offers the perspective of one of the main parties involved in a lawsuit resulting from the accident: Dolores, the bus driver; Billy Ansel, a parent of two victims and the only eyewitness to the accident; Mitchell Stephens, the lawyer suing the town; and Nicole Burnell, the eldest surviving child. All four tell a chapter from their viewpoint, although Banks grants Dolores two opportunities to speak by giving her the first and fifth chapters. Dolores’s first section notes the fragmentation of the community following the accident. She reflects, “I keep saying ‘was,’ as if they are no longer with us, like the Lamstons, who have moved to Plattsburgh.”²³ Dolores’s alternate use of tense, as well as her reflection on temporal difference, shows both a literal and a figurative dissolution in the community. Some people have moved away following the trauma, but those people who have stayed are like strangers, or as she later says, “citizens of a wholly different town now, as if we were a town of solitaires living in a sweet hereafter.”²⁴ As expressed by Dolores, the survivors of the accident return to a false, idyllic time and live in willful blindness of what they lost. Sam Dent is a town without purpose, choosing to stay frozen in time rather than work together to build the community anew.

The effect of the accident is grimmer for Billy and Nicole. Billy uses his history as a veteran of the Vietnam War as a metaphor for his suffering and as a coping mechanism to escape the pain of losing his children. Billy raises Vietnam immediately within his testimony when he states that he was not fearful of the chance of an accident: “I would be now, of course, because the accident has changed everything, but back then, even though I expected death in a general

way as much as the next person – probably even more so, since I am a widower and a Vietnam vet.”²⁵ One can see the loss of the children of Sam Dent as a metaphor for the generation of Americans who were lost to the Vietnam War, whether by dying in action, by undergoing injury or other post-traumatic syndromes, or simply by losing faith in the systems they believed to be the strength of America. More often, though, Banks uses Vietnam to symbolize the citizens’ attempt to avoid blame and lessen responsibility. Billy, for example, offers an anecdote that describes a trip to Jamaica in which he and his wife were high on marijuana and realized their daughter was missing. Billy recalls,

I was afraid, terrified, and did not yet believe that such a thing could happen to you in America or even while on vacation from America. My wife had not yet died, and my two children had not yet been taken from me in the accident, so all I had to go on was what had happened to me in Vietnam when I was a nineteen-year-old kid, and by some necessary logic, I believed that because terrible things had happened to me then and there, it was impossible for them to happen here and now. I did not want to give up that logic; it was like my childhood: if I admitted that my daughter had been kidnapped or had fallen from the car or had simply been lost in a foreign country, then the whole world for the rest of my life would be Vietnam.²⁶

In this passage, Banks most clearly employs the Vietnam War as a motif for multigenerational trauma. It connects Billy’s current trauma (the loss of his twins) as a counterpoint of past trauma (Vietnam). Either way, Billy lives in a place of psychological annihilation, except that he simply becomes aware of it post-accident as opposed to his blindness to it post-Vietnam.

Nicole’s narrative is also marked by a before and after in consciousness. Banks first portrays the Burnells as an ideal American family; however, Nicole reveals a secret that her family hides from the town. She first states it in a remark about her father acting as her caregiver, saying, “No way anybody was going to lift me up and set me down. Especially him.”²⁷ Nicole’s sharp, fragmented expression of revulsion over allowing her father touch her, even in a non-sexual manner, demonstrates a shift in awareness regarding his improper behaviour towards her.

As with the other testimonies in *The Sweet Hereafter*, Nicole conveys that the shift is collective. She narrates, “I was glad that we could never go back to being the family we had been before the accident.”²⁸ Nicole’s acknowledgement is a bit more troubling than that of the others, for she views the accident as an end to the abuse by her father. This return to normalcy, albeit an imposed false normalcy, comes at the expense of her youth and innocence, marked by the literal trauma wrought upon her body by the accident. Nicole thus mirrors the psychologically damaged or wounded soldiers who, like Billy, returned to America and were required to return to routine. As the surviving child, Nicole casts *The Sweet Hereafter* as a meditation on America post-Vietnam. Like the townspeople, Billy and Nicole use the past to fuel anger in the present, yet they both stand out from their community by interrogating the past to correct the present.

In the film adaptation, Egoyan makes several major changes from the source material. Firstly, the film disrupts the five narratives of the novel to offer a shattered timeline within which Egoyan seemingly crosscuts at random. The temporality of the film is quite complex, with over thirty timeframes noted by Emma Wilson.²⁹ The film develops the novel’s sense of before and after by deftly alternating from past to present, and generates a sense of timelessness to the story.

Secondly, Egoyan removes all references to the Vietnam War. This partly comes from the practical element of setting the action in Canada, as Canada’s involvement in the war was neutral. Egoyan consequently transforms an American text into a Canadian one by removing the aspects of *The Sweet Hereafter* that deal with an American psyche. As with the exclusion of the referendum in *Barney’s Version*, Egoyan universalizes the adaptation by omitting nationally specific politics. Instead, one of the threads of *The Sweet Hereafter* depicts Nicole as she reads Robert Browning’s poem “The Pied Piper of Hamelin” aloud to Billy Ansel’s children. The reading precedes the accident, but by how much is unclear. Throughout the film, the editing by

Susan Shipton crosscuts to Nicole as she reads the poem. Some shots depict Nicole with the children, while others offer close-ups of the poem's illustrations by Kate Greenway.

The integration of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," a suggestion made to Egoyan by his story editor Allen Bell,³⁰ offers a subtext with a resonance similar to the trauma of the Vietnam War. Much like the characters of the novel use the war as a mechanism to elide guilt and assign blame, the Browning poem offers a metaphor for reading the characters anew and for discerning how each party plays a role in the dissolution of their community. As Romney argues,

the Piper's promised 'joyous land' is the future that no longer exists either for the dead children or their parents. But Egoyan's story has several possible pipers. One is Dolores, who has the benevolent power to charm children but drives them to their doom; another is Stephens, who seduces the townspeople with a promise to assuage their guilt; another, the town's true saviour, is Nicole, who starves off the law suits that multiply like rats.³¹

The Pied Piper motif makes the film malleable, for it enables a playful shifting of character identity and audience allegiance. The familiarity of the poem makes the film accessible to a wider audience, especially when coupled with Egoyan's effort to capture the action in sweeping shots by Paul Sarossy, and by blending ethereal daylight with the dark interiors that frequent his films. As Romney says, "The film's look helped make it accessible to a wide new public."³²

Although the climax of the film privileges Nicole's catharsis, versus the novel, which treats each character uniquely, Egoyan remains true to *The Sweet Hereafter's* conveyance of the fragmentation of the community. This effect comes via the linkage of trauma through the overlay of the Browning poem. Nicole's voiceover signals shifts where other non-diegetic tools would do so otherwise; moreover, as Acevedo-Muñoz notes, "The lack of direct transitional devices or clarifying intertitles... suggests not only a sense of simultaneity but of the urgency of these events. The emotions are universal, the experience human yet inexpressible."³³ In addition to the Pied Piper voiceover, the score by Mychael Danna employs many pipes and woodwinds, and

subtly guides the viewer through the manifold readings afforded by the film. Romney echoes Acevedo-Muñoz's reading and describes the adaptation by saying, "In its emotional directness, *The Sweet Hereafter* is certainly the closest Egoyan had yet come to mainstream American filmmaking, albeit of an independent rather than Hollywood strain."³⁴ In spite of the correlations with American films, however, *The Sweet Hereafter* continues the provocative nature of Egoyan's *oeuvre*, rather than pander to mainstream simplicity.

Central to the enhanced openness of *The Sweet Hereafter* is the ease with which Egoyan explores the relationship of Nicole and Sam Burnell. The novel contains only quick hints, such as Nicole's remark that her father made her do "things like [she] knew [her] girlfriends did with their boyfriends after school dances."³⁵ Egoyan makes their relationship clear. In a scene that follows Nicole's departure from the Ansels' home (presumably on the night she reads the poem, as implied by the continuity in costuming), Nicole goes home with her father. He leads her into a barn. The scene cuts to a shot of father and daughter lying in the hay, with Sam stroking Nicole. Egoyan offers a ghostly atmosphere of soft candlelight, and he shoots the scene from a third-person point of view, craning upwards and out of the barn just as soon as the Burnells lock lips.

Nicole continues the Browning poem in voiceover throughout the scene. As Sam leads Nicole into the barn, her recitation of the poem mirrors the action, "When, lo, as they reached the mountainside, / a wondrous portal opened wide, / as if a cavern were suddenly hollowed, / and the piper advanced and the children followed." The poem continues with Nicole describing the one lame child who did not follow the piper, much as Nicole herself becomes disabled when the other children perish. As the shot cuts to the interior of the barn, the camera moves upward in a crane shot, gradually revealing the candlelit barn as Nicole continues, "'It's dull in our town since my playmates left. / I can't forget that I'm bereft / of all the pleasant sights they see, /

which the piper also promised me.” The Burnells then enter the shot, with Sam caressing his daughter as she continues, “For he led us, he said, to a joyous land / joining the town and just at hand.” Sam then pulls Nicole into a kiss, and the camera cranes upward as Nicole completes the final lines versed within this scene, “where waters gushed and fruit trees grew / and flowers put forth a fairer hue / and everything was strange and new.” The crane shot then cuts to an aerial shot, which offers a panoramic view of the Rocky Mountain countryside before pulling in for a closer view of the bus as Dolores drives the children to their doom.

The poem therefore assists in revealing that the trauma for Nicole is not necessarily the accident, but the incest. Acevedo-Muñoz suggests that the accident acts as a belated realization of the hurt imposed on Nicole’s body. He advises that the poem is central to this trauma, saying, “Through the process of understanding death, grief, and pain, the narrative analogously reveals other ‘ineffable’ topics, specifically the trauma of incest and sexual abuse.”³⁶ Browning’s images of gushing waters and blooming flora evoke Nicole’s sexual awakening, which, as the final lines of the scene suggest, is a perverted one. The childishness of the poem sharpens the perverseness of Sam’s actions, and Egoyan uses the poem to express Nicole’s confusion. The intermingling of the poem with the incest and the accident allows *The Sweet Hereafter* to say the unsayable for Nicole, conveying her distress through the juxtaposition of idyllic audio and illicit visual.

The poem returns at the end of the film. Nicole repeats the passage about the lame boy as Sam wheels her into the town hall so that she may testify for Mitchell (Ian Holm). In voiceover once again, Nicole repeats, “Did I say all? *No. One was lame*, and could not dance the whole of the way.” Nicole then defies Sam and Mitchell. She lies, saying that Dolores was speeding at the time of the accident. *The Sweet Hereafter* then offers a close-up of Sam as he is stunned by the lie. In what Atom Egoyan identifies as a stanza that is unique to the film, Nicole narrates, “And

why I lied he only knew, / But from my lie this did come true. / Those lips from which he drew his tune / were frozen as the winter moon.”³⁷ By evoking the Browning poem during turning points and then creating new material that mirrors its cadence and tone, this scene of the film makes clear motivations that are obscured in the novel. The creative conclusion strengthens the director’s portrait of a girl who, like Christina in *Exotica*, was abused by her father.

The Sweet Hereafter therefore aligns itself within Egoyan’s body of work, despite being his first adaptation and despite being perceived as less intimately “Canadian” than his previous works. Romney’s aforementioned evaluation is crucial for situating *The Sweet Hereafter* within the place of Canadian films in the international market. Romney suggests that Egoyan’s work resembles an American film, despite the removal of threads that deal with American ideology; however, Egoyan adds elements that, regardless of intent, signal to Canadians the Canadian production of the film. Like *Barney’s Version*, *The Sweet Hereafter* makes many references to hockey: it even mocks the relationship between hockey and masculinity, as seen in scenes such as that in which Billy (Bruce Greenwood) meets with Risa Walker (Alberta Watson) at a motel, only to stall their lovemaking in order to watch the game. Similarly, Egoyan introduces Wendell Walker (Maury Chaykin) by having him watch a hockey game, although Banks’s novel describes Risa walking her son to the bus “while Wendell stayed inside and watched baseball on TV.”³⁸ The change in programming may seem superficial, but it suggests an effort to alter national past-times to accommodate audience. Egoyan makes other additions, such as the use of the song “Courage” by The Tragically Hip, which appears twice on the soundtrack: during the first cut to Nicole on the bus and again at the end of the film before she lies to Mitchell. Polley also performs a cover version of the song for the end credits. Romney’s view of the film as American is therefore odd, seeing how strongly – ironically or not – the film displays its Canadianness.

The examples above do not aim to propose that there is a fundamental thread of audio-visual tags that make a film irrefutably Canadian. The discussion of hockey in *Barney's Version*, for example, suggests that any all-inclusive means of representation are fundamentally flawed and essentialist. The addition of Canadiana, however, in conjunction with Romney's perception of the Americanness of the film and Dickinson's dismissal of it as categorically un-Canadian, suggests that although Canadian films might not be readily dissimilar to American films, there may be creative differences between national cinemas. While Romney finds the "emotional directness" of *The Sweet Hereafter* as un-Canadian, Katherine Monk sees a form of emotional detachedness, and argues that the active viewership Egoyan creates is central to the importance of seeing the film as distinct from a Hollywood import. She argues,

Without this solid notion of 'us,' we tend to look at the entire world as a series of 'others' who define us through a process of elimination. It takes time to sift through these images of other, and as a result, identity is built through layers of awareness. This explains the popularity of layered narrative structures, broken linear time, and the perpetual alienation we see in Canadian film. It also explains the recurring theme in Canadian film that things will somehow be better elsewhere.³⁹

While non-linear films are not exclusive to Canada, Monk seems to advocate that an artistically strong and intellectually stimulating art-house cinema illustrates a difference between Canadian and American film production and reception. Although all nations have independent cinemas, few can sustain themselves with a large commercial industry like Hollywood. The difference in outlook between Romney and Monk, however, positions the presumed greater accessibility of Hollywood as a perceived aspect to the valuation of Hollywood over Canadian films.

The Sweet Hereafter, though, exemplifies Canada's history of art-house films that have excited relatively small audiences and have sustained themselves on reception, rather than on box-office receipts. In the case of *The Sweet Hereafter*, one should note that the film still lost money despite its consistently noted accessibility, not to mention its unprecedented three wins at

the Cannes Film Festival, two Oscar nominations (Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay), and seven Genie wins. Romney cites that *The Sweet Hereafter* was made for a budget of CDN \$5 million, but grossed \$4.3 million at the North American box office.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, this financial loss is minor if compared to recent Canadian films such as *Passchendaele*, which as Liam Lacey notes in *The Globe and Mail*, regained only \$4.5 million of its \$20 million budget.⁴¹

The comparative difference in *The Sweet Hereafter* versus *Passchendaele* suggests that the Canadian industry can sustain itself better by relying on a strong author-based tradition. One could argue that the higher budget of *Passchendaele* (or even *Barney's Version*) aligns the film more with the mainstream American tradition than Egoyan's adaptation. *The Sweet Hereafter* is more accessible emotionally to international audiences in contrast to the unabashedly nationalist representation of Canada in *Passchendaele*, which, as *Barney's Version* shows in light of the failure of *Good Neighbours*, makes a Canadian film less marketable to the foreign receipts on which it relies. One could see Romney's reading of Egoyan's mainstream-bent as a version of "selling out," but it is rather a case of a filmmaker adapting his style to be financially stable while still remaining faithful to the concerns of his art.

Another surprising reading of *The Sweet Hereafter* comes from Margarete Johanna Landwehr. As with virtually all analyses of the adaptation, Landwehr inspects Egoyan's use of the Browning poem. Landwehr, however, argues that the film is characteristically Canadian by how it represents death. She writes, "It is significant that the 'Pied Piper' constitutes the only depiction of death (albeit in symbolic form and as an oral narrative) in the film."⁴² Landwehr continues, expanding upon Gillian Roberts' comparison of *The Sweet Hereafter* and *Titanic*,⁴³ arguing, "Thus, death itself is unrepresented in the film, which distinguishes Canadian film from Hollywood. If death constitutes an 'event' in Hollywood film, then it is a 'rare spectacle' in

Canadian cinema.”⁴⁴ Landwehr’s comment merits some consideration. As does Romney, she suggests that visible dissimilarities arise when comparing texts from Canada and America; moreover, Landwehr draws a similar conclusion to Geoff Pevere in his discussion of death in *The Sweet Hereafter*. Pevere argues, “in restoring the sting – whether it be emotional or erotic – to the cinematic hereafter, Canadian filmmakers have found yet another way of marking oppositional territory against the splat-and-chuckle mayhem of Hollywood.”⁴⁵ To these scholars, Canada and America both offer disparate products because they treat death differently in terms of spectacle and brains. The arguments differ, however, for both scholars analyse *The Sweet Hereafter*, yet Pevere extends his discussion to the treatment of sex and death as depicted in *Crash* and *Kissed*.⁴⁶ Landwehr’s argument is somewhat flawed, though, for although she draws her conclusion from two different national cinemas, as opposed to Pevere who offers a reading based solely on Canadian films, both films in her study were made by Canadians. Like Egoyan, *Titanic*’s James Cameron is Canadian; however, Cameron has always worked in Hollywood, the perceived centre of production, while Egoyan works on the margins in Canada. Lastly, although Landwehr argues that Hollywood treats death as an event, her comment that Canadian films offer death as a “rare spectacle” seems to be made in ignorance of the films by David Cronenberg.

Although Landwehr draws a muddled conclusion, the concept of the rare spectacle of death in Canadian cinema facilitates a reading of *A History of Violence* as a Canadian film. As with Cameron’s foray into spectacle, Cronenberg’s return to Hollywood was marked by financial motives. As Beaty notes, “Cronenberg had personally produced his last two money-losing films, and on *Spider* he deferred his own salary to get the film made. These decisions placed the director in a precarious financial situation, opening the door for a film like *A History of Violence*.”⁴⁷ Both films, *eXistenZ* and *Spider*, performed poorly at the box office, with the former

film having a domestic gross of \$2,840,417 USD, which proved a considerable loss from its budget of \$31,000,000 CDN⁴⁸ and the latter film posing a more modest loss, grossing \$5,808,941 USD worldwide from its budget of \$10,000,000⁴⁹ including Cronenberg's deferred fee. This financial failure put Cronenberg in a predicament for making another feature in Canada because of the emphasis placed on box office performance as a guarantor for financial assistance.

Cash poor and unable to rely on public funds, Cronenberg took the work for hire offer to direct *A History of Violence*. When asked why he took the job, Cronenberg has stated bluntly, "I needed the money."⁵⁰ Following the assumed financial benefit offered by adaptation, the graphic novel *A History of Violence* posed a fine chance for Cronenberg to reassert himself. He did, as the film grossed \$60 million USD worldwide, almost double its budget of \$32 million USD.⁵¹

Scripted by Josh Olson, with whom Cronenberg collaborated on an uncredited rewrite,⁵² *A History of Violence* is a loose adaptation of its source material. Both the film and the graphic novel depict a small town American family that is tormented by the mafia when the father, Tom (played by Viggo Mortensen), kills two assailants during a stick-up at his diner. In both cases, the mobsters see news footage proclaiming Tom "an American hero" and they appear in town soon thereafter suggesting that Tom had a past life as a mobster named Joey Cusack.

The similarities between the two texts end there. The graphic novel offers a full second act that explains Tom/Joey's backstory, and it offers motivations for his actions that essentially assuage him of guilt. The film, however, elides explanation of Tom's past and it suggests that violence is a repressed yet inextricable aspect of one's identity. For example, the novel reveals that Tom is Joey by having him state the fact directly to his wife, Edie, and she forgives him, dismissing the event as "just a shock."⁵³ In the film, however, Cronenberg confirms the existence of Joey via the bodily motions of Viggo Mortensen, who mutates from Tom to Joey when called

to violence. Edie (Maria Bello) witnesses this shift by observing her husband move swiftly and execute the mobsters. While it resembles a mere commercial thriller, as with many a Cronenberg film, *A History of Violence* offers a dextrous play of the dichotomy of body and mind.

A History of Violence is therefore a film very much about identity; consequently, the search for an identity situates it within the discourse of Canadian culture. The identity of the film is as troublesome as that of its antihero Tom Stall. The film was co-financed by an American studio and a German one; it has American producers, an American screenwriter, and Hollywood stars; however, a Canadian shot it in Canada. As Cronenberg himself suggests, the film is a “true Canada-U.S. co-production ... if we’re talking creative categories.”⁵⁴ Joining Cronenberg in this Canadian-made runaway production are his frequent collaborators Peter Suschitzky as director of photography, Howard Shore as composer, Ronald Sanders as editor, and Cronenberg’s sister, Denise, as costume designer. Although the abundance of CAVCO points fails to classify *A History of Violence* as Canadian, the filmography of its director enables one to read it as such.

The identity masquerade of *A History of Violence* is meta-textual. Beaty proposes that, like Tom, Cronenberg pretends to be someone that he is not:

This is not simply a film about a man who is masquerading as a respectable Midwestern family man, repressing his violent heritage to live the life he wants. This is a film by a man who is masquerading as a respectable American commercial filmmaker, repressing his violent heritage to make the film he wants. And what is masked other than his Canadian identity? ... Of course, he has also delivered much more than mere gunplay, suffusing the film with traces of his Canadian identity. To this end, it seems not so much a commentary on America, or on American film violence as it is a reflection on a specifically Canadian detachedness about its relationship to the United States.⁵⁵

Beaty suggests that Cronenberg poses as a paycheck-hungry director in order to make the kind of provocative film he usually makes in Canada, but to be paid in the process. By reading the film through the lens of Cronenberg’s previous films, which have highlighted explicit violence and sex in Canadian cinema for decades, Beaty uncovers uniquely Cronenbergian elements in *A*

History of Violence. These distinct flairs are marks of an artist who works outside the Hollywood system.

Whereas the graphic novel sensationalizes violence through its clichéd one-liners and stylized frames, *A History of Violence* emphasizes the consequences of the violence wrought by men like Tom/Joey. As Beaty says, “In a film that relentlessly demonstrates how violence begets further violence, Cronenberg is also at pains to illustrate how easily we can be led to embrace violence and immorality to protect what we cherish. In the end, Tom is not a hero in this film, nor is his cause just, and Cronenberg leaves us with the question: just who are we rooting for?”⁵⁶ For example, although the shootout scenes in Stall’s diner unfurl with near perfect fidelity to the source, the film differs in that Cronenberg offers seemingly gratuitous reaction shots of the fallen men. A close-up frames the exploded face of Leland (Stephen McHattie) as blood gurgles while the shot lingers. The emphasis on brutal death undercuts the heroism attributed to Tom’s actions.

Cronenberg therefore offers scepticism to the valorization of Tom as an all-American hero. Whereas men like Billy Ansel in Banks’ *The Sweet Hereafter* become national heroes for surviving acts of violence, Cronenberg questions a national myth that builds heroes through the bloodshed of others. Central to the success of the mythological underpinning of *A History of Violence* is the film’s generic semblance to the most American of film products: the western. Set in a small town that seems frozen in time – or literally so as some scholars note of the clock in Millbrook square that is set perpetually at 1:15⁵⁷ – and depicting a lone hero who defends his family from villains who ride into town with big guns and black suits, *A History of Violence* is arguably a western. Moreover, as the myths of Manifest Destiny and American expansionism are central to the ideological drive of the western, which one can read in the film’s warped depiction of the family, the western is the genre most strongly linked to American mythology. As Beaty

says, “to make a western film, or even a partial pseudo-western, as Cronenberg has done here, is to make a film that has something to say about the American dream and American national values.”⁵⁸ Cronenberg engages with the western through his signature as Canada’s blood baron. Using graphic violence, he deconstructs national myths because westerns use violence to create an image of America “as a nation defined by conflict.”⁵⁹ With *A History of Violence*, Cronenberg therefore re-establishes himself through the commercial advantage of American cinema while using his detached viewpoint as a Canadian to debunk the myths perpetrated by Hollywood.

Critics and scholars alike noted the indictment of American society upon the film’s release. A chief clue to decoding the subtext of Cronenberg’s film is invited by the tangible Canadianness of the production. Beaty suggests that the ultimate masquerade of *A History of Violence* is “the way Canada stands in for the United States.”⁶⁰ Beaty also notes the near unanimity of critics recognizing the falsity of the American setting, as is the case for many previous Canadian-made Cronenberg films in which Canada plays the role of America.⁶¹

Beaty even suggests that Cronenberg explicitly draws attention to the Canadianness of the film. In the final act of the film, which is unique to the adaptation, Tom drives to confront his brother Richie (William Hurt) in Philadelphia, which is really Toronto acting as the city of brotherly love. Beaty notes that during Tom’s journey, Cronenberg offers an intercut to a road sign that notes a speed limit of 90 km/h, rather than the American limit in miles.⁶² With this addition, Beaty says, “there is a part of Cronenberg that wants to be found out, that toys with this mask in the hope that his true identity will be freed to rise to the surface.”⁶³ Beaty correctly assumes that Cronenberg’s identity resonates from this American film. Cronenberg’s name guides many analyses of the film. For example, *New York Times* critic Manohla Dargis writes,

While transparently set in small-town America (Ontario passing for Indiana), the sheer unreality of the hamlet initially makes it clear that this story is not taking place in the here

and now, but in a copy of the world that looks – wouldn't you know it – a lot like a movie. Mr. Cronenberg, a Canadian, is taking aim at this country to be sure. But he is also taking aim at our violence-addicted cinema, self-heroicizing self-justifications we sell to the world.⁶⁴

Dargis's review offers some valuable insight. Firstly, her view of the unreality of Millbrook complements Beaty's allegorical reading; secondly, Dargis links Cronenberg's attitude to the subject matter with his nationality – note how she emphasizes that he is “a Canadian.” The readings by Dargis and Beaty suggest a perceived difference in ideology between Canadians and Americans. Landwehr's conclusion about the difference in the depiction of death between Canadian and Hollywood films thus has merit, as Cronenberg's scepticism remains as he crosses the figurative border, using the spectacle of death to indict America's love for violence.

In spite of the semblance to Hollywood commercialism by this Canadian *auteur*, *A History of Violence* is not necessarily Cronenberg's criticism of America, or his attempt to succeed in a more lucrative film market. In the 1993 essay “The Canadianness of Cronenberg,” William Beard describes the meaning of Cronenberg's play on Canada/Hollywood convention. Beard argues, “The relation of his films to Hollywood models is not imitative but dialectical, and the result of this dialectic is amongst other things a simulacrum of the Canadian-American cultural configuration.”⁶⁵ By dialectical, Beard means that while Cronenberg may exploit tropes and conventions of Hollywood films for financial benefit, he also uses them to interrogate the relationship between Canada and America, especially as it relates to culture. One sees such an example in his sci-fi film *Videodrome*, which engages with the threat of foreign invasion on television screens and uses sensational visual effects to offer a rallying call for a new Canadian cinema as Max Renn (James Woods) cries, “Long live the new flesh!”⁶⁶

Beard argues that Cronenberg's films should be read as Canadian in spite of their façade as American films, given the director's persistence to producing films in Canada that offer

themes consistent with other Canadian culture, such as the early models of literature posed by Northrop Frye in *The Bush Garden* or Margaret Atwood's *Survival*.⁶⁷ Beard, for example, sees Cronenberg's tortured male protagonists as characteristically Canadian. He says, "Only the camouflage of genre and commerciality in Cronenberg's films can disguise, for example, the way that the Cronenberg male protagonist resembles the long line of Canadian cinematic and literary un-heroes and their pattern of failure, powerlessness and hopeless waste."⁶⁸ Scholarship such as Beard's is therefore useful for interpreting Cronenberg's ambiguous career, for one can see continuity in artistic concern, despite the commercial American origins of the production. This is not to say that all thematic concerns of a director are uniquely Canadian or that all Canadian filmmakers and Canadian filmgoers share the kind of settler mentality as outlined by Atwood and as used by Beard. Such discourse is, however, useful for demonstrating that, as Egoyan did in adapting *The Sweet Hereafter*, Cronenberg remained true to his filmography while adapting *A History of Violence* for New Line Cinema. Cronenberg's Canadian/American play demonstrates a continuation of Canada's authorial tradition, albeit in a non-Canadian film.

Bart Beaty's active engagement with *A History of Violence* exemplifies the headway made by Beard twelve years before Cronenberg's runaway production. Beaty concludes that although *A History of Violence* appears to deconstruct American mythology and America's circulation of violence in the media, the film actually offers a damning portrait of Canadians and Canadian viewing habits. Beaty argues that one can read Canada as akin to Edie, who, although Tom's history of violence initially repulses her, it ultimately attracts her, as seen in the quasi-rape scene that follows the revelation of Tom/Joey's identity. Beaty argues,

there is something specific to this most American of Cronenberg's films that highlights Canadian filmmaking and film-viewing practices. Canadians often draw distinctions between themselves and the cultural behemoth to the south, while simultaneously deriving pleasure from its domination. Like Edie, they are wracked with guilt by their

awareness that what they want is not what they think might be best ... *A History of Violence* may seem at first to be a history of American cinematic violence, a story ... of American culture that is almost too easy to critique. However, I want to suggest that such a reading ultimately masks a deeper, more pernicious story about Canada's visceral relationship to American culture and its desire to consume even as it is consumed by it. The last words Edie speaks in *A History of Violence* may be the defiant 'Fuck you, Joey!' but it is she who pulls him into her erotic embrace.⁶⁹

Beaty's provocative reading of *A History of Violence* suggests that the film is consistent with Beard's observation that Cronenberg's relationship to American cinema is dialectical, for the film suggests consistency between Canadian and American viewing habits. Although scholars like Pevere and Landwehr champion a difference in the treatment of death by Canadian artists, Beaty's reading of Cronenberg's film suggests that Canadian audiences are actually thrilled by the spectacle of death in Hollywood products. The film shows the Canada/US simulacrum, for the characters of Cronenberg's film embody both the American dream and the Canadian nightmare. The latter point being that Canadians crave mindless junk and explosive violence as much as American audiences do; moreover, the film suggests that no matter how vehemently they deny it, Canadians ultimately want to be like their neighbours.

Scott Wilson offers a similarly urgent reading of *A History of Violence*. Expanding upon Slavoj Žižek's concept of the 'unduped spectator,' Wilson likens Cronenberg's allegory to the child in the fable of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Wilson argues,

What the child's actions do, in commenting loudly that the Emperor is naked, is to draw attention not to the fact that of his nakedness, but to the disciplinary structures that work to prevent comment on this (obvious) fact. By dissolving the mechanism that links the community together in their ability to avoid commenting, the child forces the population into action, mobilizes them, not against the person of the emperor (who, in his nakedness, requires the support and complicity of the population to remain powerful), but against the mechanism that maintains their docility before the structural position of 'emperor'.⁷⁰

With *A History of Violence*, David Cronenberg uses the process of making a commercial film in Canada to reveal to audiences that Canadian films can indeed be violent, sexual, and, above all,

entertaining, but without forgoing the substance on which Canadian directors like himself have built their reputations. The film shows that commercial films can also be culturally relevant. As shown by Cronenberg's figurative exodus to the United States – figurative because he was still making a film about Canada in Canada – *A History of Violence* implores Canadian audiences to overcome their victim status to America, and, like Edie, indulge in their horrific hidden desires.

Cronenberg is hardly the only Canadian director to work for a foreign studio. Atom Egoyan, too, made a runaway production in Canada: the 2009 remake *Chloe*, which was shot on location in Yorkville, yet financed by the French company Studio-Canal.⁷¹ *Chloe*, though, retains much of Egoyan's fascination with the interplay of media, sexuality, and identity.⁷² Looking beyond Egoyan and Cronenberg, one sees the flow of Canadians elsewhere, much like the exodus of talent noted in Chapter 1. While Egoyan and Cronenberg were celebrated as Canadian revolutionaries of the 1980s, so too, for example, was filmmaker Patricia Rozema. Perhaps best known for her 1987 film *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*,⁷³ Rozema left Canada in 1999 after signing with Miramax to adapt the Jane Austen classic *Mansfield Park*.

Rozema's *Mansfield Park*⁷⁴ is a curious case. As an adaptation of Austen, it acts as a heritage film by showing the social norms of Britain's upper class circa the 1800s. Linda V. Troost identifies *Mansfield Park*, a US/UK co-production, as one of many films within the category of "Fusion Films" that emerged in Britain in the 1990s. Troost describes Fusion Films, saying, "What mattered now was an ability to connect with a broad range of viewers, tell a good story and show compelling images. In short, Hollywood style and British heritage style fused."⁷⁵ Also important is how such films invite re-readings of a novel. A Fusion Film, Troost says, "integrates a larger and more complex picture of a novel's world than even the novelist may have

considered and thereby allows modern viewers a safe arena in which to explore difficult ideas that still have relevance.”⁷⁶ In her Fusion Film, Rozema stresses what Austen mutes.

Mansfield Park offers a stronger articulation of the post-colonial tones of the novel. Ever since the 1993 publication of *Culture and Imperialism* by Edward Saïd, readers of Austen have been more attune to how Fanny’s uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram, generates wealth by exploiting Antiguan slaves. Austen’s novel introduces the means of the Bertrams, noting that Sir Thomas provides his family “with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income.”⁷⁷ Austen reveals the source of the Bertrams’ income shortly thereafter, simply noting Sir Thomas and “concerns of his West Indian property.”⁷⁸ The Bertrams live a privileged life in blissful ignorance of the means by which Sir Thomas provides. The novel admits his interest in Antigua, yet Austen makes the note in passing, avoiding indecency by not questioning the conditions that enable high society.

By contrast, Rozema’s film acknowledges the slave trade immediately. The opening sequence of the film depicts Fanny Price travelling to Mansfield Park by carriage. In this scene, which does not appear in Austen’s novel, the carriage stops by the coast. Fanny sees a large ship in the distance and she hears intelligible chanting. She inquires to her driver the contents of the ship, and he casually replies that it holds “some darkies bought for the missus.” Rozema often uses the Bertrams’ exploitation of the West Indies as a parallel for how Fanny is commodified by her family. In one scene, Fanny (played by Frances O’Connor) debates a return to Mansfield Park from her portside home in order to marry Henry Crawford, a man whom she abhors. Fanny’s relapse to Mansfield is marked by the return of the slave ship, albeit in a nightmare.

In the final act of the film, Fanny discovers a book of drawings by Edward Bertram. As Fanny flips through the book, the first sketches are the expected observational recordings of an

explorer: some exotic plants and people. As she continues, though, Edward's drawings depict the rape, torture, and murder of Antiguan slaves at the hand of Sir Thomas. The film makes explicit what is nearly imperceptible in the novel. As Rozema says, she "felt morally obligated to explain that the extraordinary amount of leisure time these people enjoyed was purchased with the sweat and blood of slaves in the West Indies."⁷⁹ Rozema appraises British national mythology through a reassertion of Fanny's agency, having Fanny address the camera directly like Polly does in *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, although Fanny does so whilst satirically rewriting British history.

Using the strong feminist voice of her previous work, Rozema's British-made adaptation is therefore much more than a well-dressed heritage film. The modern sensibility that Rozema infuses into the novel offers what she refers to as a "collective re-awakening."⁸⁰ As a Canadian working two centuries after Austen, Rozema is afforded the luxury of spatial and temporal distance from the culture depicted in the novel. *Mansfield Park*, the film, instead offers a critical re-evaluation of Britain's class system: whereas Austen satirizes British high society in terms of manners, Rozema challenges the conditions on which such a culture was based.

As was the case with *A History of Violence*, *Mansfield Park* offers a tale of cultural relevance to Canada as told by a Canadian, yet the profits that put such productions in perpetuity go elsewhere. Rozema, for example, describes her experience on working for hire on *Mansfield Park*, calling Canada "an unbelievably excellent training ground for working within a budget."⁸¹ Her reference to Canada as a "training ground" exemplifies Urquart's aforementioned concern that the emphasis on box office and business will cause Canadian auteurs to venture elsewhere. Nevertheless, Egoyan, Cronenberg, and Rozema all remain auteurs despite working for non-Canadian productions, as evidenced by the consistencies in style and meaning of their films.

Fortunately, though, Telefilm Canada agrees that an emphasis on domestic gross as the sole indicator of performance is ineffectual in a country that lacks the competitive edge at its own box office. Telefilm recently changed the success index to include industry and critical acclaim as new barometers of success. As the Crown Corporation writes in its 2011 publication,

Under our previous corporate plan, Telefilm's success, and that of the industry, was measured by our share of the Canadian feature film box office. Today, this purely commercial definition of success has become unrealistically narrow not only in Canada, but also around the world. It is, therefore, Telefilm's belief that the definition of success must be expanded to include cultural, industrial, and commercial considerations.⁸²

Telefilm's new measure allows films like *The Sweet Hereafter*, *A History of Violence*, and even *Mansfield Park* to encourage the continuation of strong filmmaking in Canada, both author-based and commercial. Such a strategy, moreover, mirrors Margaret's Atwood's opinion on Canadian literature that helped ensure its survival in the cultural sphere: "Canadian literature is not equivalent with 'Canadian Content.' Boy wearing Mountie suit meets Rose Marie with a maple-leaf in her hair is more likely to be an American musical comedy than a Canadian novel... It's not necessarily the 'subject matter' ... that constitutes the Canadian signature, but the attitudes to that subject matter, and through the attitudes the kinds of images and the outcomes of stories."⁸³ Atwood's equation of Canadian content with the attitude one enlivens in culture grants a link with which to show the importance of authorship in adaptation and in Canadian cinema.

Egoyan, Cronenberg, and Rozema all have an attitude that differs philosophically from the authors of their source texts. Although their adaptations may be made elsewhere, or for an audience different from that of their niche market, or may seem "American," their attitudes, be they humanist, deconstructionist, or feminist, demonstrate an outlook consistent with those that helped established them as innovative Canadian voices. This is not to say these directors typify an essential Canadian attitude or that an essential Canadian attitude even exists. (The politics of

Incendies, for example, suggest that Canada is too diverse a country for any singular attitude.)

Rather, the fact that Egoyan, Cronenberg, and Rozema retain their respective attitudes while working elsewhere endows their films with a Canadian signature, namely, the signature of a director who forged an innovative approach to the form and content of cinema, which is required to survive in an industry that has long been at the margins, even in its own culture.

The importance of adaptation in Canada, on both a practical and meta-textual level, is that it emphasizes art and industry, acknowledging that both culture and economics are essential factors in the perpetuation of a strong field. The recent change to the success index likewise mirrors adaptation's need to satisfy both factors, for the new index proposes to weigh success as 60% commercial, 30% cultural, and 10% industrial.⁸⁴ One sees the industrial benefits in runaway productions like *A History of Violence*, which employ Canadian behind-the-camera personnel, or in co-productions like, for example, *Blindness*,⁸⁵ which received co-financing from Brazil/Japan, features Hollywood stars and was directed by Brazil's Fernando Meirelles, but also credits many Canadians including Don McKellar, Sandra Oh, Tracy Wright, and Martha Burns. An adaptation itself, *Blindness* exemplifies how a film can serve economic industrial benefits despite having a non-Canadian author. The role of authorship, moreover, encourages dollars and sense. As the commercial aspect of adaptation encourages filmmakers to be mindful of audiences, so does this new index. Whereas Katherine Monk and Geoff Pevere's praise of auteurist Canadian films is important, one risks regressing into the kind of production that weakened the National Film Board in the 1960s, where "the insistence on the artistic creativity of the filmmaker was at the expense of 'audience.'"⁸⁶ As adaptation encourages a filmmaker to balance creative and commercial concerns, so does Telefilm's new index balance the relationship between state control and artistic license by rewarding success both commercial and cultural.

As with adaptations, Canadian films are in constant dialogue of art and commerce and art and politics. This new means of measuring success acknowledges that both art and commerce are essential factors in the political economy of film; moreover, this new measure suggests that there is equal incentive for quality and quantity. The new era of mixed performance measurement encourages the continuation of the strong auteurist tradition in Canada, which was in jeopardy under the previous structure. The three cases of Egoyan, Cronenberg, and Rozema demonstrate consistency in adaptation by Canadian filmmakers akin to Lewis and Villeneuve in *Barney's Version* and *Incendies*, respectively. The cases differ, however, because *The Sweet Hereafter* adds Canadian content, yet the film is perceived otherwise; conversely, *A History of Violence* is categorically not Canadian due to financing. *Mansfield Park* also sees a Canadian working for non-Canadian financiers, but unlike *A History of Violence*, it is not a runaway production, for Rozema is the chief Canadian connection in this mostly British affair. All three films, however, receive consistent interpretation with a varying degree of Canadianness, as critics and scholars alike consistently read the films through the nationality of the filmmaker and use the critical lens of the adaptations as indicators of successful Canadian cinema.

Notes

¹ The spelling of the character's name in Banks's novel is 'Nichole', but for clarity's sake, all references to Nicole Burnell will use the spelling of the character in the film adaptation.

² For example, see Hamid Naficy, "The Accented Style of the Independent Transnational Cinema: *A Conversation with Atom Egoyan*," in *Atom Egoyan: Interviews*, ed. T.J. Morris, Conversations with Filmmakers Series (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010): 21-76.

³ *Felicia's Journey*, directed by Atom Egoyan (1999; Canada/UK: Alliance Atlantis, 2000), DVD.

⁴ *Where the Truth Lies*, directed by Atom Egoyan (2005; Canada/UK: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2006), DVD.

⁵ *Chloe*, directed by Atom Egoyan (2009; France/Canada/USA: E1 Films Canada, 2010), DVD.

⁶ *The Dead Zone*, directed by David Cronenberg (USA: Paramount, 1983).

⁷ *Dead Ringers*, directed by David Cronenberg (1988; Canada/USA: Warner Home Video Inc., 2005), DVD.

⁸ *Naked Lunch*, directed by David Cronenberg (1991; Canada/UK/Japan: Criterion, 2003), DVD.

⁹ *M. Butterfly*, directed by David Cronenberg (1993; USA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

¹⁰ *Crash*, directed by David Cronenberg (1996; Canada/UK: Alliance Atlantis, 2005) DVD.

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- ¹¹ *Spider*, directed by David Cronenberg (2002; Canada/UK: Alliance Atlantis, 2003) DVD.
- ¹² Peter Dickinson, *Screening Gender, Framing Genre: Canadian Literature into Film* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 37.
- ¹³ Jonathan Romney, *Atom Egoyan*, World Directors Series, (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 127.
- ¹⁴ *eXistenZ*, directed by David Cronenberg, (Canada/UK: Dimension Home Video, 1999), DVD.
- ¹⁵ Bart Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, Canadian Cinema Series, (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 19.
- ¹⁶ Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, 14.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Peter Urquart, "Film Policy/Film History: From The Canadian Film Development Corp to Telefilm Canada," in *Self Portraits: The Cinemas of Canadian Since Telefilm*, ed. André Loiselle & Tom McSorley (Ottawa: The Canadian Film Institute/Institut canadien du film, 2006): 49.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Emma Wilson, *Atom Egoyan*, Contemporary Film Directors Series, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 89.
- ²¹ *Exotica*, directed by Atom Egoyan (1994; Canada: Alliance Atlantis, 2003), DVD.
- ²² Qtd in Romney, *Atom Egoyan*, 135.
- ²³ Russell Banks, *The Sweet Hereafter* (1992; reprint, New York: Vintage Canada, 1997), 14.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 254.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.
- ²⁹ Emma Wilson, *Atom Egoyan*, 94.
- ³⁰ Susan Bullington Katz, 1998, "A Conversation with Atom Egoyan," in *Atom Egoyan: Interviews*, ed. T.J. Morris, Conversations with Filmmakers Series (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010): 100.
- ³¹ Romney, *Atom Egoyan*, 136.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 127.
- ³³ Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz, "'Strange and New...': Subjectivity and the Ineffable in *The Sweet Hereafter*" in *Authorship in Film Adaptation*, ed. Jack Boozer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008): 138.
- ³⁴ Romney, *Atom Egoyan*, 127.
- ³⁵ Banks, *The Sweet Hereafter*, 174.
- ³⁶ Acevedo-Muñoz, "Strange and New," 131.
- ³⁷ Egoyan in interview with Bullington Katz, 100.
- ³⁸ Banks, *The Sweet Hereafter*, 21.
- ³⁹ Katherine Monk, *Weird Sex & Snowshoes*, (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2001), 95.
- ⁴⁰ Jonathan Romney, *Atom Egoyan*, 127.
- ⁴¹ Liam Lacey, "Telefilm gets it right with 'Success Index' for Canadian Films, *The Globe and Mail*, November 25, 2011, accessed November 26, 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/movies/liam-lacey/telefilm-gets-it-right-with-success-index-for-canadian-films/article2247945/>.
- ⁴² Margarete Johanna Landwehr, "Egoyan's Film Adaptation of Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter*: 'The Pied Piper' as Trauma Narrative and *Mise-en-abyme*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* XXXVI.3 (2008), accessed August 17, 2011, *ProQuest Direct Complete* (F200896902848), 218.
- ⁴³ *Titanic*, directed by James Cameron (USA: Paramount, 1997).
- ⁴⁴ Landwehr, "Egoyan's Film Adaptation of Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter*..." 218.
- ⁴⁵ Geoff Pevere, "Death, Canadian Style: Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*," *Take One* VI:17 (Fall 1997), accessed January 28, 2012, *ProQuest Direct Complete* (F199836496), 12.
- ⁴⁶ *Kissed*, directed by Lynne Stopkewich (1997; Canada: Entertainment One, 2010), DVD. Based on the short story "We So Seldom Look on Love" by Barbara Gowdy.
- ⁴⁷ Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, 19.
- ⁴⁸ The Numbers, "Existenz," *The Numbers*, accessed February 6, 2012, <http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/1999/EXSTN.php>.
- ⁴⁹ Box Office Mojo, "Spider," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed February 6, 2012, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=spider.htm>.

- ⁵⁰ Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, 19.
- ⁵¹ M. Keith Booker, *May Contain Graphic Material: Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and Film*, (Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 174.
- ⁵² Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, 20.
- ⁵³ John Wagner and Vince Locke, *A History of Violence*, (New York: Vertigo, 1997): 187.
- ⁵⁴ Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, 118. Ellipsis in original.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid, 119.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid, 87.
- ⁵⁷ Ernest Mathijs, *The Cinema of David Cronenberg: From Blood Baron to Cultural Hero*, Directors' Cuts series, (London: Wallflower Press, 2008), 229.
- ⁵⁸ Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, 85.
- ⁵⁹ Booker, *May Contain Graphic Material*, 181.
- ⁶⁰ Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, 115.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Manohla Dargis, "Once Disaster Hits, It Never Seems to End," in *American Movie Critics: An Anthology From the Silents Until Now* ed. Phillip Lopate (New York: The Library of America, 2006): 713.
- ⁶⁵ William Beard, "The Canadianness of David Cronenberg," *Mosaic* 27:2 (June 1994): 118.
- ⁶⁶ *Videodrome*, directed by David Cronenberg (1983; Canada: Criterion, 2004), DVD.
- ⁶⁷ Beard, "The Canadianness of David Cronenberg," 115.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid, 120-121.
- ⁶⁹ Beaty, *David Cronenberg's A History of Violence*, 123
- ⁷⁰ Scott Wilson, *The Politics of Insects: David Cronenberg's Cinema of Confrontation* (New York: Continuum, 2011): 211-212.
- ⁷¹ Swart, Sharon. "Sony swoons over 'Chloe'." *Daily Variety* 305, no. 5 (October 9, 2009), accessed January 14, 2012, *Film & Television Literature Index with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (45078494); 1, 26.
- ⁷² Emma Wilson, "Desire and Technology: An Interview with Atom Egoyan," *Film Quarterly* 64.1 (Fall 2010), accessed January 14, 2012, *FIAT* (F201067400652): 29.
- ⁷³ *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, directed by Patricia Rozema (1987; Canada: Miramax, 2004), DVD.
- ⁷⁴ *Mansfield Park*, directed by Patricia Rozema (1999; UK/USA: Miramax Home Entertainment, 2000), DVD.
- ⁷⁵ Linda V. Troost, "The nineteenth-century novel on film: Jane Austen," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, eds. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge UP, New York, 2007): 82.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid. 87-88.
- ⁷⁷ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*. Ed. John Wiltshire. (Cambridge, England ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005), *MyLibrary*, accessed February 2, 2012, <<http://lib.mylibrary.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca?ID=30890>>, 3.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, 5.
- ⁷⁹ Hiba Moussa, "Mansfield Park and film: an interview with Patricia Rozema," *Literature/Film Quarterly* XXXII:4 (2004), accessed January 30, 2012, *FIAT* (F200511734): 255.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid, 256.
- ⁸¹ Barbara Goslawski, "Patricia Rozema's Mansfield Park," *Take One* VIII:26 (Winter 2000), accessed January 30, 2012, *FIAT* (F200312722).
- ⁸² Telefilm Canada, "Fostering Cultural Success," *Telefilm Canada*, November 23, 2011, accessed January 8, 2012, <http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/document/en/01/17/Telefilm-Canada-corporate-plan-2011-2014.pdf>, 15.
- ⁸³ Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972; reprint, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004), 281.
- ⁸⁴ Telefilm Canada, "Telefilm Canada launches new Success Index at Annual Public Meeting in Winnipeg," *Telefilm Canada*, November 23, 2011, accessed November 26, 2011, <http://www.telefilm.ca/en/news/releases/2011/11/23/telefilm-canada-launches-new-success-index-annual-public-meeting-winnipeg>.
- ⁸⁵ *Blindness*, directed by Fernando Meirelles (2008; Canada/Brazil/Japan: Alliance Films, 2009), DVD. Based on the novel of the same name by José Saramago.
- ⁸⁶ Michael Dorland, *So Close to the State/s: The Emergence of Canadian Feature Film Policy* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 121.

Conclusion

As one sees from a close analysis of *Barney's Version*, *Incendies*, *The Sweet Hereafter* and *A History of Violence*, contemporary Canadian films employ several adaptive strategies to succeed in both the national and global markets. These strategies involve exchanges in the expansion towards an international audience and equilibrium between national and international production. Such strategies involve, but are not restricted to, an increase in international co-production and a reliance on foreign talent; the rewriting of Canadian representation to use the inherent facet of self-representation in national cinema; and a negotiation by the filmmaker between the centre and the margins of production. Adaptation reveals the triple-bound dynamic of Canadian film production, for the act of rewriting a source text demonstrates a balancing of the elements of art, finance, and politics. Just as adaptation regularly evokes fraught expectations of fidelity from audiences, critics, and scholars alike, so too does the issue of fidelity arise when an industry such as Canada supports itself with state funds.

The survival tactics exemplified by these films, moreover, are highly dynamic. Although the films largely suggest progress for Canada's industry, the intervals between text and film also demonstrate a struggle between adaptation and survival. *Barney's Version*, for example, reveals how one might need to be unfaithful to a text in order to make it more marketable internationally, such as *Barney's Version* does in forgoing Richler's subtext with the 1995 referendum. Such an infidelity, though, is just as symptomatic of the act of condensing 417 pages of prose into 132 minutes of screen time as it is of negotiating both the national and international markets. The film, however, refuses to submit to the anxiety of influence and it appropriates the self-irony of Richler's novel into the film by stressing the nationality of the actors and characters through a humorous contrast between foreign stars posing as Canadian characters, Canadian actors posing

as foreign characters, and familiar Canadian faces filling the minor roles. *Barney's Version* thus adopts the infidelity to a national cinema within its meta-textual commentary, for a Canadian content purist can hardly object to the film's aim at commercial viability by favouring foreign names over local talent when the impetus rings true to the tone and attitude of the source text.

The politics of Canada's film industry demand another adaptive strategy from Canadian filmmakers. While the identity play in *Incendies* puts the film as work of an ideological state apparatus, the adaptation of a play by a Lebanese-born Canadian into a film by a native French Canadian offers different facets of cultural identity. The use of myth in *Incendies*, moreover, exposes how the tensions of adaptation ultimately reveal such adaptive strategies. In the case of *Incendies*, such a method is the effort to disseminate a positive portrait of Canada as a haven for multiculturalism, where any two Canadians, such as Nawal and Nihad, can reunite and reconcile old ghosts. Such a humanist message, which is not outside the morale of Mouawad's play, comes at the cost of the specific politics that might force one to migrate to Canada. By universalizing the story of the Marwans via the myth of Oedipus, *Incendies* advances Canada's position both nationally and globally in the film circuit, although Villeneuve's film inadvertently reveals the performative, if not simplified, nature of multiculturalism in Canada. *Incendies*, like *Barney's Version*, shows Canada teetering on the edge of moving beyond an idealized national cinema.

Lastly, the politics of the author entail another facet of adaptation. One can yield authority to the author of a source text and risk succumbing to fidelity, or one can assert one's own voice by reworking such material anew. As proven by Canadian *auteurs* like Atom Egoyan, David Cronenberg, and Patricia Rozema in their respective adaptations of *The Sweet Hereafter*, *A History of Violence*, and *Mansfield Park*, an authorial stamp allows alternate readings of texts. The infidelities of these adaptations, moreover, enable texts and authors to travel and reveal acts

of intersection and convergence between national cultures; however, the new reading that a film invites permits one to see the influences of a nation or differences in attitudes and ideology. By comparing source text and film, these adaptations show that Canada's industry produces valuable alternative voices that are products of its social, political, and cultural marginality.

All the adaptations described within this thesis, moreover, display a clear engagement with the levels of art, commerce, politics, industry, and authorship, which are equally imperative to film in the context of adaptation and nationalism. If one turns the metaphor of adaptation back on the Canadian context, as Robert McGill does with *Away from Her*, adaptation incorporates all these facets within a national cinema. These adaptations show that a film can be, if not must be, both national and global, for a Canadian film cannot survive on the domestic market alone. Canada's film industry, moreover, is adapting its own measure of success and survival, and its new emphasis on both culture and capital encourages the industry to sustain itself via relatively inexpensive films whose potential losses are minor if one factors in their cultural benefits. By using quality as a sign of success, Canada may even be able to create new adaptations within the realms of distribution and exhibition and allow its films a more comfortable reach at home.

As film production sees increasing permeability through its borders due to ongoing globalization and change, questions of national cinema are more relevant than ever. So too are past texts with which critics and scholars attributed value to underappreciated tools of cultural expression. As the ongoing evolution of Canada's film industry demonstrates, however, past theories and practices within the national context must be adapted to the present situation in which exchanges with the international sphere are both inevitable and essential. Since many Canadian filmmakers strongly display such strategies, Canada's film industry looks to be adapting not only to survive, but also to succeed.

Filmography

- The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Dir. Ted Kotcheff. 1974; Canada: Alliance Films.
- Away from Her*. Dir. Sarah Polley. 2006; Canada: Mongrel Media.
- Barney's Version*. Dir. Richard J. Lewis. 2010; Canada/Italy: Entertainment One.
- Being at Home with Claude*. Dir. Jean Beaudin. 1992; Canada: Alliance.
- Blindness*. Dir. Fernando Meirelles. 2008; Canada/Brazil/Japan: Alliance Films.
- Chloe*. Dir. Atom Egoyan. 2009; France/USA/Canada: Entertainment One.
- Crash*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 1996; Canada/UK: Alliance Atlantis.
- A Dangerous Method*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 2011; Canada/Germany: Entertainment One.
- Dead Ringers*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 1988; Canada/USA: Warner Home Video.
- The Dead Zone*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 1983; USA: Paramount.
- eXistenZ*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 1999; Canada/UK: Dimension Home Video.
- Exotica*. Dir. Atom Egoyan. 1994; Canada: Alliance Atlantis.
- Felicia's Journey*. Dir. Atom Egoyan. 1999; Canada/UK: Alliance Atlantis.
- Fugitive Pieces*. Dir. Jeremy Podeswa. 2007; Canada/Greece: Paradox.
- Goin' Down the Road*. Dir. Don Shebib. 1970; Canada: Seville.
- Good Neighbours*. Dir. Jacob Tierney. 2011; Canada: Alliance Films.
- A History of Violence*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 2005; USA/Germany: Alliance Atlantis.
- Incendies*. Dir. Denis Villeneuve. 2010; Canada/France: Entertainment One.
- I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*. Dir. Patricia Rozema. 1987; Canada: Miramax.
- Joshua Then and Now*. Dir. Ted Kotcheff. 1985; Canada: Twentieth Century Fox Home Ent.
- Kissed*. Dir. Lynne Stopkewich. 1997; Canada: Entertainment One.
- Last Night*. Dir. Don McKellar. 1998; Canada/France: Alliance Atlantis.

- Littoral*. Dir. Wajdi Mouawad. 2004; Canada/France: TVA Films.
- M. Butterfly*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 1993; USA: Warner Home Video.
- Mambo Italiano*. Dir. Émile Gaudreault. 2003; Canada: Equinoxe Films.
- Mansfield Park*. Dir. Patricia Rozema. 1999; UK/USA: Miramax Home Entertainment.
- Margaret's Museum*. Dir. Mort Ransen. 1995; Canada: Seville Pictures.
- Monsieur Lazhar*. Dir. Philippe Falardeau. 2011; Canada: micro_scope.
- Naked Lunch*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 1991; Canada/UK/Japan: Criterion.
- Nathalie...* Dir. Anne Fontaine. 2003; France/Spain : Les films Séville.
- Owning Mahoney*. Dir. Richard Kwietniowski. 2003; Canada/UK: Alliance Atlantis.
- Passchendaele*. Dir. Paul Gross. 2008; Canada: Alliance Films.
- Polytechnique*. Dir. Denis Villeneuve. 2009; Canada: Alliance Films.
- Sideways*. Dir. Alexander Payne. 2004; USA: Fox Searchlight Pictures.
- Souvenir of Canada*. Dir. Robin Neinstein. 2005; Canada: Maple Pictures Corp.
- Spider*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 2002; Canada/UK: Alliance Atlantis.
- The Sweet Hereafter*. Dir. Atom Egoyan. 1997; Canada: Alliance Atlantis.
- Take This Waltz*. Dir. Sarah Polley. 2011; Canada: Joe's Daughter.
- The Tar Angel (L'ange de goudron)*. Dir. Denis Chouinard. 2001; Canada: Alliance.
- Titanic*. Dir. James Cameron. 1997; USA: Paramount.
- Videodrome*. Dir. David Cronenberg. 1983; Canada: Criterion.
- Whale Music*. Dir. Richard J. Lewis. 1994; Canada: Alliance Atlantis.
- Where the Truth Lies*. Atom Egoyan. 2005; Canada/UK: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.
- The Whistleblower*. Dir. Larysa Kondracki. 2010; Canada/Germany: Entertainment One.
- Winnie*. Dir. Darrell Roodt. 2011; South Africa/Canada: D Films.

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