IMPLICIT RELIGION IN CANADIAN FILM: A NEW FRONTIER

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Implicit Religion in Canadian Film: A New Frontier

by

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Abstract

The present work examines the presence of religious themes in Canadian film, and attempts to relate these themes on a broad level to issues of Canadian identity. As a specific field of research, "Religion in Canadian Film" has not yet been introduced into academic departments; the intent here is to provide an initial justification for further study in the area, and for the establishment of a scholarly sub-discipline within departments of Religious Studies. Toward these goals, the thesis begins by placing this new subject within the context of existing studies on implicit religion, religion and popular culture, and religion in film. The primary question of Canadian religious identity in our national cinema will ultimately draw on links to Canadian literature and history. It is also argued here that this religious identity as portrayed in Canadian film focuses on the notions of family and community relations.

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And most importantly, to my family, who must have wondered if I'd make it this far,
but who never lost faith: seventy times seven thank you's.

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Introduction

The present thesis examines the generally unexplored subject of Religion in Canadian Film. There are currently no academic treatments specifically devoted to the topic, although there are several precursors, as well as works dealing with many of the important and preparatory elements. A fair number of scholars have written on the diverse cultural phenomena of Canadian film, as well as on the subject of religion in Canadian life. A small handful of Canadian films with explicit religious themes, such as *Jesus of Montreal* (1989) or *Black Robe* (1991)[1] have enjoyed thoughtful analyses, but seldom within the context of a directed and sustained academic framework. A *call for papers* towards a conference at Laval in 2001[2] lists "Religion and Film in Canada" as one potential option for research, but no resulting articles are recorded. The suggestion of Canadian cinema *as* religion has been neatly put forward by authors such as Margaret Miles, and is likewise implied in an advertisement for a panel discussion at the 2005 Canadian Heritage Film Festival, with the theme of "Cinema as Sacred Site."[3] The respective keynote address by Colin Browne, "Preserving Canada's Film Heritage" hints at the idea that Canadian film as a singular phenomenon should be held as sacred *an sich,* if not necessarily religious in *content*. Significantly, during final corrections of this thesis, the *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* released a special edition on religion in Canadian popular culture. While

[1] All citation information for Canadian films is provided in the Appendix. Other films listed in Biblography.

[2] "A proposed joint panel at the Congress of the Humanities and the Social Sciences," Université Laval, Québec, 23-26 May 2001," https://lists.bethel.edu/pipermail/christlit/2000-December/006502.html Internet: Accessed Feb 20 2009.

[3] "Cinema as Sacred Site: A Panel Discussion," *Canadian Heritage Film Festival, Feb. 18-25, 2005,* http://www.scfs.ca/chff/program/events/sacredsite.html Internet: Accessed Feb 20, 2009

none of the included articles pertain to Canadian film, Chris Klassen's introduction to the volume contains important arguments regarding the larger discipline.[4]

These as well as other relevant themes and ideas are collected and synthesized here, with the desired result being a relatively unique contribution to the wider field. A secondary goal is to promote the idea of a new sub-discipline, or perhaps more humbly, a regular course to be titled, "Religion in Canadian Film." The process begins with the general, in order to show both the richness of the existing academic traditions that have informed the study, and to consider current research in the wider contexts of Canadian Religion, Religion in Popular Culture, Canadian Cultural Identity, and of course, Religion and Film. Under the wide umbrella thus erected, there is no shortage of directions that might be taken up in future research. The particular themes playing out in the ongoing studies of religion and film, such as liberation theology, gender-construction, pilgrimage, and theodicy, if now inserted into the Canadian context, become all the more fascinating to explore. One might approach minute details or grand vistas; examining the religious symbolism of the hockey rink,[5] or searching for broader, more expansive religious and cinematic themes that shed some light on the diverse national identities. There is also no lack of

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[4] Chris Klassen, "Religion and Popular Culture in Canada: Introducing the Theme," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture, Special Edition: Religion and Popular Culture in Canada: Introducing the Theme* Internet: Retrieved August 19, 2009.

[5] Not necessarily a facetious idea; While analyses of such works as Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1979) are now common, Guy Maddin's experimental film, *Cowards Bend the Knee/The Blue Hands* (2003) may offer more potential. The film is a tragic account of a hockey player's life, reminiscent of both the psychological and religious aspects of the Oedipus story, and may likely have been inspired in part by John Barth's *Night Sea Journey* [in John Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969)]. The first episode of Maddin's film is entitled "The Sperm Players," and the struggle of life and death, against fellow humans and apparently against the divine, seems to be a key message. Many of the same themes, although in a lighter tone, are contained in *The Rhino Brothers* (2001). *Cowards* also invites a more general Freudian critique, perhaps "Canadian Civilization and its Discontents."

C.f. also Tracy Trothen, "Holy Acceptable Violence? Violence in Hockey and Christian Atonement Theories," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture, Special Edition: Religion and Popular Culture in Canada* Internet: Retrieved August 19, 2009.

source material. The writings and theories of Pierre Berton and Northrop Frye, the thoughts of Canadian Prime Ministers and Governor Generals (and their husbands), the political correspondence of religious institutions such as the United Church of Canada, the contributions of Canadian musicians, and undoubtedly the vast and intricate world of CanLit in general: these are all avenues lined with promises of deep insights into how religion and Canadian film engage in dialogue. The present thesis lightly touches on some of these, but also considers angles in the opposite correlative direction: the ways in which the interaction of film and religion informs Canadian notions of family and community relations.

The original intention upon beginning research for this project was to pursue evidence for a far more ambitious theme. It was first hypothesized that there were essential characteristics of thought and behaviour common to Canadians as a general population, that these characteristics were commonly reflected in the general body of Canadian cinema, and furthermore, that the general sentiments behind these characteristics were fundamentally of a religious nature. A subsequent idea was that if one could structurally locate in Canadian film a national *civil* religion, one that was a synthesis of politics, culture, philosophy and spirituality, then one might be able to pronounce a sweeping and singular statement about Canadian identity as reflected in national cinema. Such a pursuit is certainly worthy, but to make the kind of connections suggested, and to justify each step along the way, would require more space than is feasible for the purposes here. It was also discouraging to confront the possibility that, while there *may* be certain sentiments felt in common between Indigenous, English and French Canadians, not to mention Canadians descended from numerous other cultures, it may nevertheless be impossible to *name* these sentiments in a mutually agreeable way. One might discuss the common religious themes in films that portray hockey, the beaver, or maple syrup, and still be able to engage the

largest segments of the Canadian population in the discourse, but as soon as one probes deeper than ritual and material symbolism, such unity becomes much more elusive.[6]

The first chapter begins with a discussion of how the word "religion" is to be defined, and includes perspectives on why the issues surrounding the definition matter. The options suggested here are not conclusive, but are put forward in order to provide the reader with an appreciation for a set of arguments supporting a broad rather than narrow definition of the word. While acknowledging the legitimacy of some countering arguments, narrower definitions are often unnecessary obstacles to a recognition of religious elements in non-traditional sites. These definitional issues also take place within the context of theories on the social and political roles of religion and film. Hermeneutical questions in particular, such as the means by which religious themes can be located in popular, or "secular" culture will also be confronted. The second part of this chapter will examine the history of dialogue between religion and film, and the evolution of how scholarship has been engaged as a third partner in the conversation. Dispersed throughout the chapter are some thoughts on the diverse relationships between Religious Studies and its extended family of academic and theological kin. The contributions of apologetic/confessional discourse, while bracketed, cannot be completely dismissed. All of these elements form a circle that "concludes" with a suggested definition.

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[6] For more pessimistic views, c.f. William Stahl, "Symbols of Canada: Civil Religion, Nationality, and the Search for Meaning," Ph.D. Dissertation (Berkeley, CA: Graduate Theological Union, 1981); Seymour Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Andrew Kim, "The Absence of a Pan-Canadian Civil Religion: Plurality, Duality, Conflict in Symbols of Canadian Culture," *Sociology of Religion* Autumn, 1993: 257-275.

The last title is reflective of an issue of syntax by which many studies of religion/film can be categorized. The usage of "in" and "of", not to mention "and", when set between "religion" and "film" may not ultimately be of consequence, but as will be noted below, category issues themselves are problematic. The particles in Kim's subtitle could be reversed, for instance, and it is not always clear if the authors are always conscious of the subtleties and their side-effects. C.f. below for more on categories. The issue of particle-usage in relation to religion/film is tackled by May in John R. May and Michael Bird, *Religion in Film* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982).

The second chapter narrows the focus to Canadian film, beginning with its political and cultural history, and continuing with an introduction and examination of the ways in which religious discourse occurs in Canadian film, both implicitly and explicitly. The interplay between this discourse and the larger context suggests that there is a necessary continuity between previous forms of Canadian culture, such as the literary, and the content and style of Canadian film. The evidence seems to belie any real dichotomy between literature and cinema – in part because of the nature of Canada's overall relationship with literature, but also because of the continuity of the primary themes involved.[7] At the same time, the existing scholarship on general themes in Canadian film provides a framework through which one may discuss the films, along with their directors and their potential meanings.

The third chapter consists of a detailed analysis of three Canadian films, each demonstrating a variety of religious themes as presented in the earlier chapters. Their status as exemplars of what is meant by "Canadian film" may seem at first to depend on a circular form of reasoning, but the more objective factor in their selection is that each film demarks a new epoch in our national cinema. The final chapter presents thoughts on the widest context, and attempts are made to tease out some of the possible directions open to further pursuit, including some themes that were

[7] Bruce Sweeney's *Last Wedding* (2001) deserves special mention here, with Tom Scholte giving a successfully painful and truthful performance as a CanLit professor. As well, Sweeney's production log in the special features section of the DVD describes his struggles with Telefilm Canada and the BC Film Commission; the new point system for funding favoured films based on CanLit, but excluded original screenplays written by Canadian directors. Sweeney notes that despite Canadian actors filling three of the lead roles, despite other qualifications as being Canadian, and despite the film having "more references to Canadian literature" than Canadian literature itself...funding was initially denied. The CanLit references were not token insertions, however, but were essential to the character portrayals, suggesting an expectation of a "Can-literate" audience. For example, as the professor advises a student (in his office, à la Clinton) on the kind of Canadian literature she should explore, he tells her "What you want is, you want stories of alcoholic, spinster virgins, good-natured paedophiles, repressed Christians who go psychotic." The line would fall flat among audiences even of a most progressive sense of humour, were they not familiar with CanLit.

regrettably neglected here. Many such themes will be suggested throughout the thesis in footnotes; it is hoped the general content will inspire new vistas.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework, Methodology and Scope

One of the primary tasks of the thesis involves a quest for religious events, symbols and themes within the body of Canadian film, the next step being to identify any underlying patterns of religious perspective. In the process, the significance of such patterns, whether to scholarship or to contemporary civic and religious theory, is also discussed. With the exception of the Canadian-based focus, each element of the quest has been performed under the oversight of numerous disciplines, and through any number of diverse theoretical constructs. The major dialogues on the interaction of religion and film from within a self-identified Religious Studies perspective have only recently begun to take methodological shape, but are still firmly rooted in the wider theoretical contexts of "Implicit Religion" and "Religion and Popular Culture".[8] There are other academic tributaries involved: the larger discipline of Film Studies, for example, along with more remote precursors such as Theology and Comparative Religion, has also notably informed the current study. The various disciplines within the Social Sciences and Humanities in general have likewise made contributions, just as they have to the larger field of Religious Studies. Within this thesis, the merits of all of the above will be acknowledged where relevant.

With respect to these contributions, it is worth suggesting how interdisciplinary methodologies will be appropriate here.[9] The meta-theoretical perspective in which the present study is located is, loosely speaking, holistic and post-modern. "Holistic" refers here to a

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[8] In its most elementary stages, the study of religion and film predates the establishment of "Religious Studies" as an academic field in the 1960s, as do the first stages of the studies in Implicit and Pop Culture Religion. There does seem to be an initial period of time, however, during which these three modern pursuits had to wait while departments of Religious Studies sought to establish themselves as legitimate through a focus on more traditional objects of consideration. Our chronology may seem somewhat inscrutable in this regard, but the key factor in the evolution is the marriage of insight and framework.

[9] One of the more interesting discussions of the epistemological issues involved is Isaiah Berlin, *The Fox and the Hedgehog* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953).

philosophy behind the quest for a comprehensive view of a given phenomena, a view that incorporates the religious, cultural, historical, socio-political and the anthropological, believing that each is not properly understood except in relation to the others.[10] "Post-modernism" is more elusive of attempts at definition; here it describes both a vague "mindset" behind the particular *flavour* of holism practiced. It is presumed that mutual understanding between disciplines is most effectively *constructed* when the various forms of knowledge are first *deconstructed.*[11] Post-modernism also refers to a particular approach to the problem of *subject-object* relations in academia. Anthropology has been one of the disciplines on the cutting edges of both holism and post-modernism, but other departments, including Religious Studies, have lately demonstrated an eagerness to follow suit. Most importantly for the context of the thesis, the early history of commentary on religion and film precedes by a few decades the essentially *modernist* (i.e. pre-post-modern) notions of disciplinary specialization. While there is obviously some debate on this last assertion, the imposition of disciplinary categories on the discussion of religion and film seems somewhat counterproductive. Finally, along the lines of what has been said about post-modernism, the conjunction of "interdisciplinary" with the above explanations of holism and post-modernism presents a possible contradiction in thought. The ideal here is to move "beyond" disciplines, and accordingly, an interdisciplinary approach is to this ideal as modernism is to

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[10] While this selection of disciplines is not meant to be comprehensive, one sees that the scientific fields are notably absent. A larger thesis could likely demonstrate the relevance of science to the questions at hand. In general, "holism" should not be seen as an approach restricted to the humanities and the social sciences. Occasional suggestions will be made below about what has in fact been borrowed from the sciences.

[11] Any discussions of post-modernism, or indeed deconstruction, will be contentious, as was discovered during the review process. "Deconstruction", not unlike Rudolf Bultmann's idea of "demythologizing", carries with it some connotations that are unduly negative, and that result from an over-literal understanding of what the words "should" mean. Holism and post-modernism are not the same, but they are also not opposed to each other. A similar issue of post-modernism's relationship with the meta-narrative might have been appropriate towards understanding these points, but this would be all too likely to further complicate the point. Challenges to this position are thus acknowledged with respect and gratitude.

post-modernism: it is only a first step. What is demonstrated throughout this thesis, then, will hopefully be a *movement towards* the ideal, rather than a perfect representative of it.

Some of the common fears of treading a razor's edge between apologetics and scholarship are reproduced surrounding the attempts to confront the socio-political, especially as it relates to current events. The contemporary and popular forms of Canadian art – music, literature and film – are, among other things, inherently and boldly political in content; there is rarely evidence of any hesitance to address the structural foundations of current social concerns, or to express a director's viewpoints through means that are realist enough to be unavoidably recognizable. Instead of being a tool to reframe a political issue in a lighter, more entertaining format, metaphor is primarily used by Canadian filmmakers to encourage audiences to work *outward* from the specific problem addressed in the film. Metaphor enhances the audiences understanding of an issue rather than obscuring it, as is sometimes the case in American or European films. Therefore, in order to remain true to the language with which Canadian films communicate, a high degree of engagement with the sociopolitical is essential here.

In terms of application to the current topic, an ideal balance between the academic and the sociopolitical (and on a few levels, the theological) is found in Mario DeGiglio-Bellemare's review[12] of Caelum Vatnsdal's book[13] on the history and content of the Canadian *horror* genre. The reviewer asks rhetorically, "What is a book review on Canadian horror cinema doing in the *Journal of Film and Religion*?" His answer offers insight into the wisdom of loosening the restrictions of disciplinary domain; his idea is to take us "beyond the conventional apolitical

[12] Mario DeGiglio-Bellemare, "Review of *They Came From Within*," *Journal of Religion and Film Online*, http://www.unomaha.edu/~jrf/BookReviews/CameWithin.htm Internet: Accessed April 12, 2009.

[13] Caelum Vatnsdal, They Came From Within: A History of Canadian Horror Cinema (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2004). Vatnsdal is also a prolific producer, cinematographer and screenwriter.

method, which seeks to identify religious themes and symbols, toward a more politicized perspective related to issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, and neocolonial relations." DeGiglio-Bellemare writes as both a cinematographer and an academic, with a deep, personal interest in liberation theology and post-colonial hermeneutics. For him, the content of horror cinema is directly related to the political and the religious concerns in modern life; Canadian identity and culture are also intrinsically linked in the subtext of these films through their mutual relation to historical events such as the *Quiet Revolution* and the *October Crisis*. More specifically, as DeGiglio-Bellemare seeks to show how God is "in the marginalized", he also suggests that horror films, in addition to assigning a kind of martyrdom to the already-marginalized, is in turn marginalized as an art form. In academic terms, the issue is one of advocacy – the reviewer is concurrently advocating on behalf of the art form, the victims portrayed within the art, and also on behalf of the *issue* of advocacy in exegesis. This last example of advocacy is not accidental, but rather all three are essential to each other.

If the framework and methodology used here is somehow to be given a nominal designation, the closest match might be "sociopolitical literary criticism," as it can be applied to the current subject. This should include an understanding that the sociopolitical and the literary necessarily entail an historical perspective; perhaps most forms of criticism, in any case, require a manner of thinking that is both historical as well as literary. The perspective is historical in the sense that one must give up a pretension to anything new under the sun, and literary in the sense that communication in the Western world is primarily about words.[14] In a narrow sense, the sociopolitical might refer only to the fact that social and political issues are a necessary context for understanding even the literary aspects of the topic at hand, but here, the usage of the term is

[14] The silent nature of the early films discussed below should not necessarily detract from the method.

somewhat expanded. There are also particular methodologies within Communication and Media Studies, such as social discourse theory, which might also be enthusiastically applied. Rather than delve, however, into the esoteric nature of such an approach, the films will be primarily interpreted in terms of the structure, style and content of what is being communicated.

Films communicate on several levels simultaneously: techniques of cinematography, whether through light filtering, styles of panning, or jump shots, for instance, can successfully be used to prime an audience to hear spoken messages in the intended manner – such as in a literal or an ironic fashion. This is likewise the case with soundtracks or with the pacing of dialogue and silence. There is thus a legitimate argument put forth by scholars that film should be exclusively analyzed in the *language* of film, and that one should avoid overwriting one's analyses of film with potentially discordant methods, such as the Biblical or the literary.[15] Given the attention in many branches of Canadian Studies to Marshall McLuhan, one can appreciate the need for an awareness of how the medium has a message of its own,[16] and to respect the language and the art of that medium in its own right, rather than treating it as a step-child of literature. An answer, or at least a compromise, can be given in the Canadian case with an application of the holistic approach as defined above. Patrons of Canadian film are often equally devoted to Canadian literature and to Canadian music. It would be rare, and perhaps nearly impossible, for an

[15] Prime examples are Ernest Ferlita and John May, *Film Odyssey: The Art of Film as Search for Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), and May and Bird (1982), both further discussed below. The latter collection of essays is put together as an "antidote to the anxieties created by an expanding universe of approaches", namely by "cultists", "auteurists", and "[literary] theme- and symbol-hunting critics" (Preface by May, viif). The solution, or "antidote" to these anxieties as suggested by May *et al*, however, seems far too dismissive of these other individual approaches, rather than merely targeting the "proliferation of critical views" (viii) in itself.

[16] McLuhan's formulation, that the medium *is* the message, is admittedly different from the formulation here, and is obviously far more complex than is really appropriate for the context in which it is placed here. However, the intention in this case is that the 'popular' understanding of McLuhan is often mistakenly used (as may be the case with May *et al*) to assert the ultimate *primacy* of the medium. [Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1965)].

audience to interpret any one of these art forms without their appreciation having been informed by the other arts. Likewise, it would be strange to presume that a director, cast or crew could do so either. Moreover, there appear to be clear manifestations of camaraderie[17] between Canadian directors, authors, musicians and other artists who already speak a common language. What is unique in the case of Canadian film, as opposed to some of the other arts and other national cultures, is that it invites the general public to share in that language.

The scope of Canadian film under consideration has been altered relative to the beginning stages of research for the thesis. As opposed to the original intention to focus on the modern era, the hidden treasures of the early period were since discovered, particularly as they inform subsequent films. Space is thus also devoted here to the larger context in which the early films arose. It is unfortunate that many of these films only exist in written memory, in trade journals and such. The most significant film from the early era of Canadian filmmaking, *Back to God's Country* (1919), has been not only preserved but also restored, and will be the subject of an in-depth critique later in the thesis. However, an analysis of religion in additional films from that time-period would only be feasible through second hand information. The final choice, then, has been treat Canadian film as an ultimately unified body, but to focus on presenting representative examples from each of the three major eras of Canadian film, and to discuss the evolution from the beginning of the early period to the beginning of the current one. The conclusion regarding

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[17] The "alternate" spelling, comraderie, may be more suggestive of the nature of the community implied. A future exploration of Canada's place, politically and socio-religiously, in the Cold War from the late '40s to the early '80s, would certainly be in order. A Canadian-produced film that has not received much treatment in the history below, *The Great Shadow* (1919) demonstrates the very early reactions to the "Bolshevik Menace," or the post-WWI "red scare." This was the year of the "Winnipeg General Strike," and for this reason alone, the film was of sufficient current relevance to be relatively successful. The Canadian reactions during this first period of confrontation were to be on the side of unions but against the interference of the "Bolsheviks." The film was also sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, however, and as explained below, the motives should be questioned in terms of how they relate to "Canadian" values. As well, the lead actor was Tyrone Power, Sr., an established British/American stage actor (and father of the later Hollywood star).

the coherence of Canadian film as an art form has depended on an extensive viewing of films from all of these periods up until the present, and the ones chosen here are those that demonstrate Canadian film's stages of life.

A second attempt at defining "Canadian film" will provide an additional set of boundaries, followed by some restrictions on genre. This definition is less complicated than are the government and industry guidelines. For the purpose of the thesis, the director must be a self-declared Canadian, and the film must either take place in a Canadian setting, or explicitly portray the main characters as being Canadian. The determination of eligibility for government funding, or for the *Juno* awards, for instance, are based on a complex and evolving point-system, which rewards the various stages and levels of Canadian involvement. One of many factors is the percentage of financing by Canadian interests. The definition used here may thus be charged with leniency or exclusivity, depending on one's perspective. It necessarily excludes many works of prominent Canadian directors such as Cronenburg, Jewison and Haggis; their respective films deserve credit in terms of both quality and of stimulating pride in the talent that Canada exports, but they do not say anything about Canadians, or about life in Canada. Any religious sensibilities in their films are meant to appeal to multinational audiences, rather than to speak directly to those in the home country.

On the other hand, there would have been no risk under the present definition of excluding Bruce Sweeney's *Last Wedding* (c.f. n. 7). From the start, then, a major premise is betrayed here, namely that to be called "Canadian," an art form must truly originate from Canada, and should express something *about* Canadian life or people. In comparison to other national cinemas, this may seem either isolationist or elitist; as is discussed below, *Casablanca* would be considered an American film by many, regardless of the details of its production. Rather than try to counter the

objections to these restrictions, it may be merely noted that the intention of the thesis is to discuss films that represent the home-grown and "home-remaining" talent, and the respective products that are meant to speak to Canadians. It is to be assumed that future research can and should stray from these boundaries.

The scope of films has also been narrowed to include only full-length, fictional feature films that were intended for box-office release. The historical continuity that will be suggested, and the continuity between the psychology of a general Canadian populace and the meanings of Canadian film, requires a focus on what can be considered sufficiently "mainstream." The use of this term may represent somewhat of a dichotomy of purpose, but it might nevertheless be understood in the relative context of the previous qualifications. The differences between "art films", for instance, and those destined for box-office release seem to lie on an evolving spectrum within the opus of Canadian film, certainly more so than is the case elsewhere. The success of European or American films frequently depends either on the esoteric nature of its message, or on its ability to entertain, respectively. One result of the Canadian approach is that the marketing of Canadian film *within* Canada is somewhat less dependent on genre categorization.[18] As well, there is ideally no recognizably genetic distinction between the commercial and the artistic; in practice, the line is drawn but in rather fluid ways. Thus, the present definition of "mainstream" is applied only secondarily, and at the most would only exclude those rare films intended mainly for the most "fringe" of fringe festivals. Also countered here are some of the common assumptions that "Canadian mainstream" is an oxymoron, apparently with the exception of cases where Canadian directors such as Cronenberg and Haggis produce films for American consumption. The depth of Canadian film history as described

[18] The obvious remark about the marketing of *any* Canadian film, and about the Canadian definition of "commercial", has been anticipated, but these will be addressed below.

below, along with decades of cultural education in Canadian schools, has made it much easier for modern Canadian films to draw fair-sized and sympathetic audiences – albeit in the sometimes-small number of cities where they are distributed. In happily frequent circumstances, though, the artistic, social, religious and/or entertainment values of Canadian films have at the same time appealed to international audiences.

In general, any further and extraneous distinctions have been avoided, since they are mostly by-products of the above. The original intention was to exclude the horror and the teen-comedy genres; however, the former have shown remarkable ties to the larger corpus, and the latter were unlikely to have been made *inside* of Canada anyway. Animated works were not included in the research; this does unfortunately exclude the films of Norman McLaren, who was certainly a normative figure in Canadian film history. It was felt, though, that such films and directors deserved a whole other level of comprehension and comparison. When it comes to the experimental filmmakers such as Guy Maddin, it would be presumptuous to assume that he did *not* intend his films for wide release, rather than just for fringe festivals. More importantly, it may be fair to say that Maddin tends less to obscurity for its own sake, and more towards a desire to bring the public along with him on his journeys. His use of metaphor appeals directly to the collective unconscious of Canadians; it is then not a matter of working to "solve" the metaphors, but of allowing oneself to stop blocking them. His films are therefore part of the larger corpus considered throughout the research.

For the sake of clarity, a distinction is made here between three major epochs of Canadian film history. The first extends from 1895 to 1939, when the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) was founded, although the years between 1925 and 1939 are somewhat void of activity. The "Film Board" years are usually taken as extending to the 1960s, although their dominance

waxed and waned at times. By the time the NFB started to produce feature films in the '60s, the newly emerging commercial market was already becoming a major source of competition – and this would be even more so the case when the newly-formed Canadian Film Development Corporation (later Telefilm Canada) was now funding the commercial market. The period after 1939, therefore, may be considered a kind of "Renaissance" for Canadian film, but mainly on the level of documentaries and what would now be called "Edutainment." The "modern period" of Canadian film basically spans from roughly 1964 to the present. Many scholars mark 1970/71 as the beginning of the modern era; representing our two official languages, the films commonly recognized as the first "modern classics" within the Canadian industry are *Goin' Down the Road* (1970), and *Mon Oncle Antoine* (1971). However, a number of films from the 1960s presage and belong thematically with the modern era, and cannot be excluded from consideration: *Amanita Pestilens* (René Bonnière, 1963) – the first colour feature film in Canada,[19] and *Winter Kept Us Warm* (David Secter, 1965) – the first English Canadian film to be screened at Cannes, and probably the first Canadian quasi-gay drama, were among the first independent productions at the time. A special mention should be made of the documentary *Warrendale* (Allen King, 1967) for its influence on the social aspects of later feature films. Earlier, *A Dangerous Age* (Sidney J. Furie, 1957) [20] was a prelude of sorts to *Nobody Waved Goodbye* and other upcoming Canadian versions of the *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955) narrative. One might also make note of three

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[19] Also the first to be shot separately in both French and English, with the same set of actors, most notably starring Genevieve Bujold.

[20] According to the Northern Stars website, Furie's film:

> ...was well received outside of Canada, but with no real infrastructure for distribution of independent films virtually no one in Canada saw his debut effort. He quickly followed this with *A Cool Sound from Hell*, also focusing on teenagers and their rejection and then ultimate acceptance of the "system." It is pure conjecture, but the film might stand as a metaphor for what he was trying to accomplish in his own life. ["Sidney J. Furie," Northern Stars, http://www.northernstars.ca/directorsal/furie_bio.html Internet: Accessed July 16, 2009].

important NFB films from the period, as they are formative in their own right: *Le Chat Dans le Sac* (Gilles Groux, 1964); *Nobody Waved Goodbye* (Don Owens, 1964); and *Don't Let the Angels Fall* (George Kaczender, 1969). The last film, with novel and screenplay by Timothy Findley, reestablishes the greater Canadian literature-film connection. At this late period in NFB history, the directors had sufficient freedom to distinguish their films from the earlier philosophy of the film board.

These three epochs each have unique characteristics, but may also be considered together. Certainly, the last two cannot be appreciated or understood except in the context of the first. There are as many hints of a post-modern Canadian outlook in the earliest films as there are in those of the current century. The connections and themes involved should become clear below.

1.1: Defining Religion

The initial task is to work through the process of defining the word "religion"; while the results of the process will be presented, the present concern is to demonstrate the methods used. It will be discovered, both in this section and in the chapter on Canadian film, how the principles inherent in the process of defining religion are parallel to some of the foundational elements of the resulting definitions. This may easily be interpreted in terms of the tendency to find precisely that which one seeks, but a deeper source of the parallels is also to be sought. Particularly in the case of the religious elements that are observed in Canadian film, there are matters of epistemology at the core of how we view our place within our communities and institutions: what are the means by which we can *know*, for instance, the nature of any reality that is external to our own imagination? Our answers to this question will on occasion affect how we treat those

around us.[21] The question also mirrors one's speculations about a reality that is beyond sensual, or even imaginative, perception; while such speculations should not be considered as *necessary* qualifications for religion itself, they are likely *sufficient*. Finally, the intellectual structures by which we organize our communication with others –friends, family, or colleagues – and by which we in turn create systems of *semantic* meaning, cannot be separated from the structures through which we designate philosophical or religious meaning in such relationships. In other words, the primary obstacles to a consensus on a definition of "religion" are parallel to the obstacles faced by a person who wishes to live out the principles described by her own religion, as well as to the obstacles she faces in forming bonds with those who surround her.

Many of the specific threads out of which these parallels are woven can be extrapolated from some of the comments above regarding holism and post-modernism. There are matters such as orthodoxy and heresy[22], inclusivity vs. exclusivity[23], conflicts of interest that arise from both apologetic and disciplinary loyalties, and the recurring tendencies towards Orientalism[24]. More specifically, there is a paradox linked to the matter of "small-c" catholicism: does an all-embracing system, theory, or definition necessarily lead to the assimilation of everything that can be assimilated, to the exclusion of any particular thing that cannot? Or, should we rather avoid the opposite problem, that of denominationalism, which allows for independence but still

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[21] For instance, if we believe that the knowledge of others can be derived by extrapolation from or association with our own feelings and experience? A positive answer here would seem to make more facile the following of the Golden Rule.

[22] C.f. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Robert A. Kraft, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), and H.E.W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study of the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: Mowbray, 1954).

[23] R.D. Laing's discussion of the "Us vs. Them" mentality could also provide insight into the motivations behind this aspect of definitions. [R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise* (Hammondsworth, UK: 1967, *passim*)].

[24] C.f. Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

precludes effective communication between the different parties? A related issue, to be confronted later in the film analyses, is that of "authority": the authority to define words, or the authority, either personal or structural, that defines one's attitude towards religion. Again, these questions apply not just to religious affiliations and sentiments but to the academic interests who study them. The politics and the procedures of academia are not easily disentangled.

The search for a resolution to these problems begins with the principle that any definition necessarily does – by definition – involve boundaries. To start with an obvious set of limits to the meaning of the word "religion", geared towards deciding what it "should" mean, we might first consider tracing its etymology. It is usually agreed that the word descends from the Latin *religio*, in turn deriving either from *religare*, meaning to reconnect, or *religāre*, to bind or to tie fast. If one imagines a mental flow chart, we can proceed with the idea that any phenomena which can be described in terms of a line of descent on this chart, should be included in the definition of "religion". For example, what particular entities or phenomena are to be "reconnected"? Does the idea refer to connections between humans, between humans and the divine, or between humans and nature? Each of these choices in turn then branches off into the various possible *agents* of the reconnection – whether they must necessarily be personified deities, or if humans may instead act as agents who plug into a pre-existing collective unconscious.

On the opposite side of the chart, taking *religāre* as "to bind" might refer to one of the most frequent connotations, that of a moral obligation: one is "bound" to perform a particular act, for instance.[25] However, the religious obligation here might rather be, "to one's own self be true." This same verb *religāre* might also be interpreted as another form of connection, albeit one that may of necessity be externally imposed; here, the sense is that if one is religiously bound, she or

[25] This use of "bound" may of course also give the sense of "destiny" rather than a moral choice.

he cannot undo that bond without outside assistance. The obvious analogue is that of being "wed" to God; the two partners have sworn oaths (or covenants) to each other, but the "duty' arises because the partners have become "as one": one can no longer choose not to fulfill the requirements of the other half of his being.

Progressing one level further down, on both sides of the chart, we arrive at the hypothetical line separating theory and practice: each of the possibilities already placed on the chart must be tested for consistency against various circumstances. Any given theological doctrine, for instance, should either withstand the test of application to a real life situation, or at the very least, be consistent across the set of all possible implications. It is feasible to conclude that any failure to meet such a test would be cause for removing the given phenomenon from the chart; a more flexible view might suggest that it remain on the chart in parentheses[26] until such a time as it is found to correlate with an existing phenomenon.

As one continues the search for a working definition, it is useful to analyze a different set of premises behind the system of classification. In the process, many of the issues described above will reappear, in altered or even unique forms. Catherine Albanese, for instance, describes in a different fashion the *types* of definition involved:

> [I]t is assumed that definitions of religion can be divided into three types: substantive, functional, and formal. *Substantive* definitions of religion focus on the inner core, essence, or nature of religion …they tend to emphasize a relationship with a higher being or beings…and to be favored by theologians and philosophers. *Functional* definitions of religion emphasize the effects of religion in actual life. They stress the systems of meaning-making that religion provides and how it helps people deal with the ills, insecurities, and catastrophes of living. Functional definitions are favored by scholars in the social sciences. Lastly, *formal* definitions of religion look for typically religious forms gleamed from the comparative study of religions and find the presence of religion where such forms can be identified. Religious forms include sacred stories,

[26] Or with an asterisk, as is the case in Sport Halls of Fame.

rituals, moral codes, and communities; and formal definitions of religion tend to be favored by historians of religion.[27]

These distinctions speak to the heart of some of the major challenges faced by scholars, such as the degree to which preferred methods of organizing perceptions are to be challenged or critiqued, and the question of whether it is at all possible to be free of typological bias.[28] One might speculate, though, against the implications of the associations made by Albanese between perspective and profession,[29] that it is legitimate for an academic to take a substantive approach to religion, and that the practice can be of considerable value. One of the obstacles in this regard

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[27] Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999), xvii.

[28] A primary issue taken up by Kitzberger [Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, *The Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 1999)] is the deceptiveness of "objectivity" in scholarship. The lack of a personal voice in writing is taken by the reader as a sign of ultimate authority, and represents a kind of dishonesty: while the scholar knows that the removal of first-person pronouns from an essay does not actually erase the presence of the first-person, there is nevertheless a pretence of disinterest, still mentally associated with the missing pronouns, which blinds not only the reader but also the scholar to the existence of personal bias. This problem is akin to, but not completely the same as, the above problem of advocacy. The literal meaning of "bias" is morally neutral. In referring to the presence of any degree of lean or slant, the word does imply that there is an ideal position from which a line of perspective deviates, or that there is a perfect angle from which one's line of sight is level or parallel with the physical or ideological lines of the object under observation. A line forming any other angle in relation to the ideal is thus "biased". The ultimate wisdom might be to accept the presence of bias and merely make note of its angular relationship to the ideal – which begs the question, because if one could make such a calculation of relationship, then one would be able to "correct" the bias.

If we assume that all these forms or levels of bias as described above are inevitable, then all that should be of critical importance is to declare it openly. However, it does seem strange to make a virtue out of owning one's bias, and thus many draw the conclusion that it is a virtue to *dis*own it. However, consider Albanese's categories in this sense: seeing "religion", or any other phenomena of life, as being formal, functional, or substantive, is an act of bias. In addition, though, there are secondary and tertiary forms of bias that are linked to the primary. First, in pronouncing judgments (morally neutral or otherwise) as to whether an "undocumented" phenomenon can be defined as a religion, the functionalist asks, does it serve an observable *purpose*? She then looks at the officially existing religions and makes comparisons and contrasts based on their *success* in performing the respective functions.

This much is likely understood, as it probably is when the principle is applied from within formal and substantive perspectives. There is a related matter, that of the link between doctrine and interpretation. The multiple and intricate levels involved are discussed in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007). The general principle is of course reflected in Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), but we will see below that there is probably no real "beginning" to the concept.

[29] It is not always recognized that the preference is permitted to be situational. Members of various professions might each claim that their perspectives are more "level", in the sense of having no personal bias. Applying a different category-set to the problem, however, is added the idea that in each of these professions, there are different situations allowing for the different types of approach.

has to do with would normally be a difference between defining the *word* "religion" in substantive terms, and simply describing or otherwise discussing the appearance of substance within a given religion or phenomena. The first, as described by Albanese, means that a phenomenon must contain this substance in order to fall within the definition of "religion". The second would treat the substance of each phenomenon in its own right.[30] These are two different practices, but are frequently conflated – both within the practice and in the critiques of the practice. The example given by Albanese of the *tendency* to "emphasize a relationship with a higher being or beings" represents the first practice, in that the emphasis is applied to "religion" as a whole, and thus it is most often practiced by theologians. However, as is seen below, the academic avoidance of this practice does not just have to do with not wishing to be discriminatory, but also involves the fear of discussing substance itself. The point at which the conflation occurs is unclear, but it is argued here that it is nevertheless frequent. While only the first practice would entail implications of the theological, there is an attribution of similar leanings to the second, "by association."[31]

Considering the conflation from another perspective, one common occurrence in relation to popular or modern phenomena is a *denial* of substance: for instance, the phenomenon is either too new and has not withstood the test of time, or it is considered to be too easily understood by

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[30] With thanks to Chris Klassen for this explanation in the course of reviewing the thesis. See also the following note.

[31] This section of the thesis, along with some corresponding thoughts and conclusions throughout, has proven to be another example of contention, beyond the contentions that have been directly referred to and debated within the text. The difference between "substantive" and "substance", and the conflation thereof as explained above, is certainly one factor that arose during the review process. Another problem may arise from a disagreement about what the tendencies of many scholars has actually been. A resulting misunderstanding would regard the difference between what the reviewer and the author agree *can* be done by the academic, and what *is* being done. Ultimately, the choice has been made here to largely let the arguments stand as they are, with the exception of some clarification of the issue. Much of what follows in the text, especially in the remainder of this chapter, therefore, will either seem redundant or contradictory, depending on one's thoughts on the foregoing.

the masses, and so cannot possibly be substantial.[32] On the one hand, this should not be a habit of the academic who wishes to distance her- or himself from the discussion of substance, and yet in the process, this other form of bias creeps in. Thus, the conscious approach is that it is safe, from an academic point of view, to propose that the phenomena of Baseball, Coca Cola, Rock & Roll, Star Trek, or Buffy the Vampire Slayer[33], serve the functions, and display the forms, of religious experience, but that a suggestion of substance should be left to theologians. The undertone, however, is along the lines of, "no one, *surely*, would grant substance to such a phenomenon." It may be due to the fact that academic Religious Studies departments have grown out of the Western theological tradition, that this form of bias is still ubiquitous.

The most frequent solution to the problem of substance is indeed avoidance; an academic might grant to the phenomenon in question all the characteristics of a religion, without actually making a final judgment. This method often involves a line that is drawn between the literal and the non-literal, through the use of the word "like". In cases where this word is *not* used, readers are guided either by subsequent scholars or professors to assume that the primary author was "only using a metaphor" (as opposed to a simile?), and are thus chided for "mistaking the finger for the moon". In a forthcoming article,[34] Jennifer Porter describes and debunks such distinctions, as well as the many other criteria by which contemporary or otherwise popular

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[32] Here the word may be translated as "deep." While there is clearly some equivocation on the meaning of "substance" in the above, it is unfortunate that there is most often an attitude, conjoined to all connotations of the word, regarding what should be taken "seriously."

[33] For examples, c.f. David Chidester, "The Church of Baseball, the Fetish of Coca-Cola, and the Potlatch of Rock 'n Roll" in Bruce David Forbes and Jeffery H. Mahan, *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 213-232; Jennifer E. Porter and Darcee L. Mclaren, *Star Trek and Sacred Ground: Explorations of Star Trek, Religion, and American Culture* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999); Jana Riess, *What Would Buffy Do? The Vampire Slayer as Spiritual Guide*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

[34] Jennifer Porter, "Implicit Religion in Popular Culture: The Religious Dimensions of Fan Communities," *Implicit Religion* Nov. 2009 [Page numbers are also forthcoming].

movements are delegitimized, by reorienting the mirror to face the traditional. According to the common principles of this delegitimizing, a religion, in order to be truly "real", would have to be *unconstructed*, *non-referential*, *overtly intentional*, display *no consumerist tendencies*, and also must not expose any hints of sympathy for the individual.[35] Not only are these criteria "unwarranted", says Porter, they would also likely exclude most of the larger world religions.

All of this does raise a question of whether one may attribute substance to *any* given religious experience, or if we must otherwise accept that even the recognized religious institutions are only form and function. This would be a common Marxist critique of religion; it also seems to suggest an "all or nothing" philosophy: if the form or function of a phenomenon can be demonstrated, then the insubstantiality of religion is thus "proven." On the other hand, a similar all-or-nothing argument might be made regarding, or even from within, an apologetic perspective, for example from a Hindu theologian: either everything is *maya* ("illusion"), or everything is sacred at its core – *tat tvam asi* ("thou art that").[36] In Albanese's distinguishing of the three types, it may be the case that formal and functional definitions are not necessarily disclaiming substance, but are only avoiding it. However, it seems that the order of her list mirrors what many positivists see as an "evolutionary process": the theological attribution of substance behind a metaphor belongs to the "primitives"; functionalism is then seen as regressive as compared to formalism. We have not yet come full circle to the post-modern perception that the mountain, or substance, both *is* and *is not* there, as it were.

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[35] *ibid.*

[36] In this case, I must defer to the experts who have challenged my original interpretation, which excluded the words "at heart". I do not pretend that the addition of these words will solve the problem. I am letting the example stand in the text, but not as challenge to other interpretations. Rather, the point of the example is not to suggest how the saying should be interpreted, but to show how the all-or-nothing approach is not true to reality. The suggested interpretation of "thou are that" is "everything other than 'that' is maya" [Patricia Dold, correspondence *via* examination of thesis].

Bruce Forbes also discusses the typology in terms of the complexity of its possibilities:

> Personally, I find the applications of the term religion increasingly more interesting as we move through the kinds of definitions in reverse order from the outline in Albanese's summary: formal, functional, and substantive.[37]

In the background is Forbes' desire to justify the delineation of an "essence" to a *Disney* religion. Here, this essence or substance is that which underlies the means by which a particular event, culture or community deals with the deep or substantial questions of our existence – for instance, those regarding good and evil, life and death, and the codification of lifestyles that are appropriate for humans as they strive to fulfill their purpose. Any given answers, if they are not to be called trivial, must grow out of, or maintain roots in, some *thing* or *entity* that has an existence unto itself. This is a common premise behind substantive definitions of religion, although it is not always the case that a scholar will attempt to actually *name* the substance in question; in turn, the task of validating the phenomenon as religious is thus left unfulfilled.[38]

For Gary Laderman, one's confrontations with death, evil, grief, and the "loving, transcendent family unit,"[39] in *Disney* films and in the wider American cultural religion are also of a substantial nature. Laderman teases out the implications of the idea of authenticity[40] by noting that "the potencies of family relations and the desire to perpetuate the ties that bind individuals to a family unit" are "realities." Also real are "the evil forces in the cosmos that conspire to destroy

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[37] Bruce Forbes, "And a Mouse Shall Lead Them: An Essay on the Disney Phenomenon as Religion," Paper presented at the Disney Conference at Florida Atlantic University (Ft. Lauderdale, FL, 2000), 4.

[38] Forbes himself limits his conclusion to saying that Disney is "possibly" a substantial religion, but his caution here may have less to do with any discomfort with the association, than with a desire not to impose the definition from without.

[39] Gary Laderman, "The Disney Way of Death," *JAAR* March 2000: 27-46 (43).

[40] C.f. also Russell T. McCutcheon, "The Jargon of Authenticity and the Study of Religion," *Religion and Theology* 2001: 229-252.

families."[41] Their reality is in part due to their causal power in affecting lives and circumstance, but also because the powers and forces signified by the films' metaphors were *historically* real: "the national and international conflicts" in which America was engaged.[42] Laderman is being both descriptive and normative: his advocacy is on behalf of healthier social relationships as well as for the substantive definition of religion. There is probably also a personal involvement on the part of the author, if only implicit in his switch of the focus of religiosity to the relative autonomy of humans in forming the relationships. The denial of substance by conventional religion and scholarship to such an autonomy betrays the realization that *Disney* films do in fact offer substantial answers to the deep questions of worldly, and otherworldly, realities, and are thus a significant threat to the hegemonic institutions.

It may be argued that to designate a given phenomenon as "functional", in order to distinguish it from the substantial, is counterproductive. It is implied that function without substance ultimately fails to fill deeper needs or to answer questions by way of ultimate truths(s). And yet, *success* is also implicit in the attribution of function, and can thus no longer be valid as a point of distinction. In a similar vein, the substance of a belief, the deeper essence which provides the motivation for an act or function, may be located paradoxically *within*, or *as* that act or function. There are various manifestations of this idea throughout religious history, such as in the dictum *solvitur ambulando* ("solve it by walking"), or conversely in the Taoist notion of *wu wei* (literally "without action"): rather than being parallel to an act of devotion in other religions, in which the act is means to an end, the Taoist (non)-action here is an end in itself.

[41] Laderman, 43.

[42] Laderman, 44. This is very much parallel to the comments above from DeGiglio-Bellemare.

This has been more recently expressed as the concept of the *performative*[43]: within the performances of storytelling and other ritual actions can be seen that which has a causal effect over people's lives. On the most simplified level, one could say that the claim to substance is meaningless unless witnessed in the act – to practice what one preaches; while this phrase is common among observers or critics of religious leaders, it is also from the outside when speaking of a lingering divide between thought and action. What is meant here instead is that the thought or other form of substance becomes religious when it undergoes a literal metamorphosis – or better yet, a transubstantiation.[44] Thus, such instances as pilgrimage to sites of popular inspiration, for example fan conventions, are as legitimately substantial as religious events, both through bringing people together for a common purpose, and through taking those people outside of the otherwise "mundane" parts of their lives. It is the fact of the pilgrimage as end in itself that in this instance defines religion.[45]

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[43] This term has been used in the context of analyses of Zen *kōans*, [for one recent example, c.f. Barry Stephenson, "The Kōan as Ritual Performance," *JAAR* 73 No. 2, 2005:475-496], and is related to the idea that rituals, as they were based on the imitation of the animal/natural world, preceded myth as aetiological explanations. Examples have included prayer – the *praying mantis* would thus have been perceived by shamans as a way to understand the mind of nature, before there were mythical exhortations to prayer. In martial arts, the roots of the "animal forms" would also be more ancient than the philosophy.

[44] James Mackey, *Modern Theology: A Sense of Direction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), speaks of something similar regarding *Christian* religiosity, in two particular ways: first, he says that the post-crucifixion *appearance* of Jesus to the disciples was what primarily constituted the original resurrection, rather than the latter being something that occurred separately and prior to the appearances. Second, he says that Eucharist, each time that it is served/shared/performed, in turn constitutes a recurring resurrection of Christ. Mackey's theology does not necessarily dismiss a historical Jesus, but rather only that if the life, death and resurrection of Christ are the true substance of Christianity, then Christianity can only have true substance if Christians *perform* or *re-enact* these events. It is not difficult for Christians to take this metaphorically; what is difficult for many to accept is that it is the current performance, rather than the history or theology of an earlier performance, that is the literal substance.

[45] C.f. also Jennifer E. Porter, "Pilgrimage and the IDIC Ethic: Negotiating the Sacred in a Secular Context," in *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, S. Roseman and E. Badone, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Alexander Moore, "Walt Disney World: Bounded Ritual Space and the Playful Pilgrimage Center," *Anthropological Quarterly* 1980: 207-218.

Further perspectives on the *active* aspects of substance are provided in many of the oft-cited definitions of contemporary scholarship. Psychologist William James proposes, for example, in the context of his Gifford lectures that religion is "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine."[46] In relation to its time and place, this definition is also significant in that it highlights the individuality of faith: not only in that it is experienced while alone, but as well in the potential diversity of options available in the two main elements of the last clause. James ultimately concludes that the test of religious value can only be given in terms of its fruits. Whether one performs or is performed upon, the only substance that one is capable of defining is that of the effect; *causal* power may be relevant in doctrine, but may not be of major consequence, as is the nature of what is *caused*, to a definition of "religion."[47]

There are, admittedly, multiple variations on the attempt to locate substance in action, and until one has a concise table of categories, there are limits to the ability to discuss the subtleties

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[46] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, Martin E. Marty, ed. (Harmondsworth, U.K., 1982), 31.

[47] James, 15, *passim*. Martin Marty, in his introduction to *Varieties*, highlights the general point in regards to James' words, "out of religion in the sense that we take it, theologies, philosophies and ecclesiastical organizations may secondarily grow." Marty suggests that "these growths, to [James] are highly secondary", and that "they bore or offend James." [Martin Marty, "Introduction" in James, xxi, citing James, 31].

Other contributions are significant, and although hardly redundant, have not been treated here. For example, Anthropologist Clifford Geertz defines religion as,

> (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods andmotivations seem uniquely realistic. [Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" (1966) in Michael Banton, ed., *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2004)].

We might also consider a similar offering by John Coleman, in reference to *civil religion*:

> [T]he set of beliefs, rites, and symbols which relates a man's role as citizen and his society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning [John A. Coleman, "Civil Religion," *Sociological Analysis* Summer 1970: 76].

While Coleman is defining only one particular manifestation of religion, the only words that would need adaptation to make the definition more general are "citizen" and "society." The primary verb for Coleman is "relates", although "role" and "place" also imply some form of action. The substance, according to his definition, must lie in the act of *relating*.

in any more detail than is attempted here. It may be the active power of symbols to instigate change, for instance, that is the defining substance of religion, rather than the acts themselves, but the subsequent entanglement in problems of faith vs. works, or in the issue of whether we can be "good without God,"[48] is best left for a project devoted to this subtopic. The question cannot be discussed with any sincerity except by focusing on what is observable; without observing whether or not "we" are being "good,' then the question has no meaning.[49]

Another common but also significant path regarding the understanding of religion is the premise that, at the very least, to designate something as religious should mean that it is 'set apart' – whether from our everyday life and concerns, or from what is perceived with the five physical senses. Although the concept seems to run counter to the set of possible etymologies given above, the contrast is crucial. The premise develops from the idea of a distinction between the sacred and the profane. Emile Durkheim proposed two such categories:

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[48] One of the more recent attempts to discuss this issue is Robert Buckman, *Can We Be Good Without God? Biology, Behaviour and the Need to Believe* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002). This is mentioned here due to its recent use in Ethics coursework. Buckman's formulation of the question can and often does lead to uninspired answers, but its application to the present context regards whether or not it matters what motivates a person to act, as long as that action achieves a mutually desirable result. One of the most disturbing of the gaping holes in Ethics courses relates to the dilemma of either preaching to the choir or giving advice to those who are unlikely to take it. It is often assumed (although not necessarily "incorrectly") that each person *wants* to do the right thing and is merely suffering a lack of knowledge.

A more interesting set of questions might regard motivation or persuasion. Based solely on statistics, we know that many Catholics, for instance, do in fact practise birth control. Regardless of whether one feels that the practice is morally permissible or not, and regardless of whether one believes that modern Catholic doctrine is based on moral substance, it would seem to be a source of fascinating research to explain the gap. The gap should not be be reduced to "not practising what one preaches"; rather, it demonstrates the need for more dialogue on the "ethics of persuasion in ethical systems", as it were. This should not be relegated to the obvious field of "meta-ethics", but should perhaps be brought to the forefront of the first days of coursework so that the advice-dilemma does not cause the remainder of the course to be all in vain.

[49] For the sake of providing some contextual clarity, the understanding of this idea within the thesis, along with the general post-modernist tone, is flavoured by a limited understanding of Heisenberg's "Uncertainty Principle" – with the understanding that Heisenberg's Principle itself precludes more than a limited understanding. (The principle generally states that one can measure either the speed or the position of a particle, but not both.)

> All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex present one common characteristic: They presuppose a classification of all the things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words *profane* and *sacred* (profane, sacré). This division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought.[50]

Mircea Eliade, on the other hand, saw the distinction not as two domains, but as "two modes of being", or "existential situations"[51]. One needs not make too much of the difference between the two *means* of viewing the distinction – both Durkheim and Eliade acknowledge a paradox inherent in the attempt to draw a line of separation – but a comparison between the two may still offer some clarity. Eliade writes,

> It is impossible to overemphasize the paradox represented by every hierophany, even the most elementary. By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something else*, yet it continues to remain *itself*, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. A *sacred* stone remains a *stone*; apparently (or, more precisely, from the profane point of view), nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality. In other words, for those who have a religious experience all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality.[52]

In some ways, Durkheim agrees: "Therefore, the sacred character assumed by an object is not implied in the intrinsic properties of this latter: *it is added to them.* The world of religious things is not one particular aspect of empirical nature; *it is superimposed upon it.*"[53]

There are three prominent consequences of the subtleties involved; first, there will be instances, as with Durkheim and Eliade, in which a basic sense of a dualism is evident, even where the authors realize that such dualisms are problematic. It is perhaps natural, to wish for a

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[50] Emile Durkheim, *The Elemental Forms of Religious Life*, Joseph R. Swain, trans. (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1915), 37.

[51] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959), 14

[52] *ibid*, 12

[53] Durkheim, 229.

distinction between what is religious and what is not; although the intention of the thesis is to reveal religious thought and activity in places normally "described" as secular, the policy is not to be indiscriminate and claim that anything at all can be called "religious". In general, though, the goal is to challenge any and all dualisms that appear. For instance, as opposed to the understanding of the religious as something "set apart", one could respond to Durkheim and Eliade by suggesting that the religious is any phenomenon that *unites* the sacred and the profane. This would also be in keeping with both suggested etymologies of *religare* or *religāre*. It is indeed conceivable that religion is that which confronts two and seeks to make one.[54]

The second consequence of the division has to do with the idea of categories, or more specifically, with "category mistakes", as defined by Gilbert Ryle.[55] One might take care to distinguish between claiming that any particular content of a film is *sacred* in itself, and suggesting that the content *refers to* a relationship between the sacred and the profane.

The third result of the sacred-profane complication is of larger consequence, in that it resembles the fact-value distinction. An idea attributed to David Hume, usually in too facile a manner, says that values exist in a domain separate to one of facts. This is often uncritically understood through a consideration of only one of Hume's paragraphs regarding the "is" and the "ought".[56] Both distinctions continue to be problematic when taken as tests for the presence of

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[54] Christian theology can be seen in this way, although with the exception of the mystic view, the union between humans and God can never be complete: the "binding" still implies a moral duty on the part of the lesser party.

[55] Gilbert Ryle, The *Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 17f.

[56] C.f., for instance, David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* Book 3 Part 1 Section 1 http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext03/trthn10.txt Accessed Feb 21, 2009.
Hume's distinction is thus taken to be dualistic in the same way as Descartes' mind-body distinction (which Hume refuted), or as that between the 'real' and the 'perceived' - a separate issue. At the beginning of the section Hume states, "It has been observed, that nothing is ever present to the mind but its perceptions; and that all the actions of seeing, hearing, judging, loving, hating, and thinking, fall under this denomination." Hume places the reliability of moral senses in the same category as that of the

religion; or worse, when they justify the conflation of definitions of morality with the definitions of religion. The idea is that religion motivates people to do what they *ought*, whereas the non-religious leads people away from values and leaves them trapped in the "facts" of life. There are natural enough reasons to come to this conclusion about *particular* theologies or religious philosophies, if one tends to a selective understanding of them, but this does not lead to a justification for a generalized definition of "religion".

There is an additional pair of words that express some of the distinctions touched on above, i.e. that there is a difference between the *transcendent* and the *immanent*. The word "transcendent" may be laid alongside two other common words expressing a similar sense about

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physical senses. The problem with moving from the 'is' to the 'ought', for Hume, is that we have *only* ever had perceptions and ideas of the 'is' in the first place.

This is evident in Hume's closing paragraph, "I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs." Again, the legitimacy of establishing God's existence or of establishing anything at all that we claim to perceive, should not depend on "the ordinary way of reasoning;" if anything, Hume is saying that the 'ought' determines the 'is' – anticipating Thomas Kuhn by quite a few years or so. In any case, Hume seems to suggest that if we cannot reason our way into proving the identity between objects and our perceptions of them, how can we reason about values? Perhaps Hume was reading his Bible after all (c.f. John 3:10ff). Most importantly, Hume has thus far in his treatise used the word 'ought' 51 times. *Almost all* occurrences are connected to the evaluation of a method for determining facts. He is *surely* being ironic.

It may be useful to respond to this idea in a way that bridges the languages of the academic and theological communities, if only to stress that mutual alienation is unnecessary, and to demonstrate that there is essential continuity between the two perspectives. Admitting a broad exegesis here, it may be reasonable to consider a comparison of Plato's tale of the "Cave" with a loose interpretation of what was said by the biblical Jesus. Both spoke of the *is* and the *ought*; in terms of what *is*, they each tried to demonstrate that true reality was something greater than that to which our physical senses could attribute "being".[Plato, *The Republic*, Book 7. The Gospel passages pertaining to this include MT 10:7, 13:10ff; MK 1:15, 4:11; LK 8:10, 10:9f, 11:20, 17:20f]. Both believed that their disciples and readers *ought* to come to see this greater *is*. They also endorsed a related *ought*, namely the establishment of a better world, a world which yet *was not* – although perhaps it *was not* only because people failed to recognize that which truly *is*. If people would only have recognized the truth of what *is*, on the other hand, then the *ought* would have become meaningless. What we might then be tempted to refer to as the "greater" *is* was esteemed as being "of value" – perhaps as being the ultimate value of life itself – because only what "really" *is*, is capable of being.

To separate fact from value, therefore, is a questionable practice. From this view, the standard notions of the *ought* would only be of service to those striving for something which they believed not to exist (as of yet). Ultimately, then, the "greater" *is* is essentially synonymous with what *ought* to be, if one could only perceive it. If religion is that which "binds", then to suggest that religion involves the separation of the "really real" from the ideal is not to recognize either. [C.f. Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964)].

what is religious: "metaphysical" and "supernatural".[57] All three of these might in turn be subject to an etymological flowchart of sorts, at the end of which the implied dualisms might be reduced to their absurdities. For example, it might seem obvious that to transcend oneself or one's own existence is to depart to some degree from self or from life. And yet, as long as the non-mystic is said to be capable of transcending anything at all, it would seem that in order for a person to actually *experience* what is external to one's own physical person, or external to what one can perceive sensually, then it cannot be a matter of departure but of expansion. A person then transcends by increasing the "surface area" and "volume" of one's own existence, until the spatiality of one's own being coincides with that of the external.

We thus come to the ideas of *implicit* or *invisible religion*, as defined by Edward Bailey and Thomas Luckmann respectively. Luckmann begins by asking us to take seriously what has been inherited from Durkheim and from Max Weber, in order to gain "awareness of the central significance of religion for sociological theory."[58] His lament that in the sociology of his time, "the definition of research problems and programs is, typically, determined by the institutional forms of traditional church organization," connects with his desire to avoid the theoretical identification of "church" and "religion".[59] Luckmann argues that the definitions and methods derived from the identification of church and religion cannot free themselves from an implicit

[57] It should be acknowledged that the words "transcendent" and "transcendental" do not necessarily imply the same notion; philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, and Hume, for instance, treat the words differently *within* their own respective works.

[58] Thomas Luckmann, The *Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 18.

[59] *ibid*, 18.

belief that religion is "amenable to scientific analysis only to the extent that it becomes organized and institutionalized."[60]

Luckmann has his own interpretation of transcendence, and reorients the dualism from the linear to the planar: "to transcend" may not necessarily mean to distinguish. Luckmann offers that there are three levels of transcendence, progressing from the "common sense" realization that the world is larger than our individual selves and our awareness, through a recognition that there is an "inner life" of others that we cannot see, to the "great" transcendences, which are "not part of the reality in which things can be seen, touched, handled by ordinary people."[61] The author suggests that the domain of transcendence is "shrinking", somewhat due to the changing role of the institution, but he denies that this is equivalent to "secularization":

> The long-range consequences of institutional specialization of religion have been customarily interpreted as a process of secularization, of the shrinking and eventual disappearance of religion from the modern world. This notion stems from an etiological myth of modernity. In my view, the consequences of institutional specialization of religion are more appropriately described as leading to another profound change in the "location" of religion in society. This process may be described as privatization of religion.[62]

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[60] *ibid*, 22.

[61] Thomas Luckmann, "Shrinking Transcendence, Expanding Religion?" *Sociological Analysis* Summer 1990: 128f. It is legitimate to ask whether anything "substantial" can be found without adding a third dimension to the linear or planar, but then there would no reason to stop at three.

[62] *ibid*, 132. Whether such problems are found in Hegel, Feuerbach, or Joseph Campbell, lay-readers and scholars alike perceive the precise brand of transcendence that they wish to, and therefore attribute a spiritual essence to the authors that may not reflect the original intent. This also happens in reverse. Campbell, for instance, spoke of the dissolving of "horizons" in modern life. In some places "horizons" refers to boundaries between civilizations; elsewhere it refers to boundaries in outer space that are constantly being pushed outwards with the advance of exploration. In both cases, whether with the global village or with the expansion of our consciousness, Campbell seems to relish the dissolution. On the other hand, it is easy to understand why Campbell is often cited as supporting the idea that boundaries are necessary towards the appreciation of mythology – parallel to the idea that religion cannot be practiced outside of a defined structure.

Bill Moyers expresses this common interpretation:

> In my youth I had fixed stars. They comforted me with their permanence. They gave me a known horizon. And they told me there was loving, kind, and just father out there looking down on me, ready to receive me [...] I am today what I am because of those beliefs. I wonder what happens to children who don't have those fixed stars, that known horizon - those myths? [Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1991) Excerpt

This idea of a new location for religion also has more to do with how the experience is constructed and communicated, instead of what the experience *is*: another version of the theory of performatives. One may try to simply *categorize* religious experience into the institutional and the non-institutional, but this would still miss Luckmann's point. Such specification is certainly valid as a signpost in the distinction of worldviews, but instead of the idea of location being a matter of the geography or structure of the institution, it is rather about the *process*; i.e. the means by which one constructs a community and communicates a message. The location of religion (that is, the search for and discovery thereof) in the supposedly secular is thus justified:

> 'Religion' is commonly taken to refer to a particular part of human existence, the part that is concerned with the 'supernatural,' with the 'ultimate meanings' of life, with 'transcendence.' However, no matter into how many different parts one divides human life, it constitutes a single trajectory between birth and death, a trajectory which normally has a certain elementary, pre-reflective, taken-for-granted unity of meaning, an identity. In human life the 'supernatural' is bound up with the 'natural'; 'ultimate' meanings of life make sense only in the context of the significance of common everyday affairs; and the 'transcendent' is only transcendent with respect to something that is 'immanent.'[63]

The last clause certainly allows for the idea of two distinct phenomena which happen to always be linked, instead of necessarily suggesting a complete unity. Luckmann's style also provides an opportunity for opposing interpretations of his specific examples:

> The 'New Age' movement lays stress on the 'spiritual' development of each individual. Sometimes it revives elements of older "religious" traditions which had not been canonized and which it interprets in unorthodox (often far-fetched) ways. It collects abundant psychological, therapeutic, magical, marginally scientific as well as older 'esoteric' materials, repackages them, and offers them for individual consumption and further private reassembly. The 'New Age' programmatically refuses organization in terms of big institutions. Instead, it cultivates the notion of 'networks.' This allows

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from conversation found at "Myths-Dreams-Symbols: The Mythic World of Joseph Campbell," http://www.mythsdreamssymbols.com/functionsofmyth.html Internet: Accessed June 8, 2009].

Campbell acknowledges the risks of having no mythology, but also says that the boundaries must be constantly expanded to fit the expanding worlds of matter and knowledge. [Joseph Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth and Religion* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1986)].

[63] Luckmann, "Shrinking," 128.

> the formation of commercially exploitable 'cultic milieus' which are characterized by varied - generally weak - forms of institutionalization. The 'New Age Movement' may serve as an example of the new social form of an 'invisible' religion. It has no stable organization, canonized dogmas, recruitment system, disciplining apparatus. This may be a structural precondition for the successful maintenance of its vague 'holistic' approach. This approach meets, among other things, the rising demand for a loose overall hierarchy of meaning that 'overcomes' the specialization of those cultural domains, such as science, religion, and art that had found reasonably firm functionally specialized institutional bases. Instead of segmentation, it offers integration. Thus the 'New Age' and similar representatives of a 'holistic,' magical world view supply individual 'searchers' with the bricks, and some straw, for further individual bricolage.[64]

As is frequently the case with usage of words such as "liberal" and "post-modern", the label "New Age" is used as often by adherents as it is by opponents; in any given instance, one needs far more than the immediately surrounding context to be certain as to whether it is being used in a favourable or unfavourable way. Luckmann's abundant use of scare quotes leads, then, to some ambiguity; given what these scare quotes would mean in the writings of a modern cynic, the advocate of New Age philosophy might be insulted. We should probably assume, however, that Luckmann's problematizing of the terms is relatively free of value-judgment: they are simply phrases that may be new to the reader or are used in a new way. For instance, a reader who wished to see all references to the individuality and to construction in a derogatory way will most likely be missing Luckmann's point. The very process of "individual" bricolage is interwoven with the establishment of the community networks; despite assumptions to the contrary, the individuality that is endorsed by these movements depends upon the very establishment of such networks. Unlike the circumstance of depending upon and thus being obligated to institutions,[65] the individual who feels religious, moral, as well as political autonomy, will of necessity only feel obligated to the community in terms of his or her own sense of well-being through the

[64] *ibid*, 136f.

[65] A conventional understanding of social economy that pervades conventional organizations, despite the fact that such economic calculation is opposed by conventional doctrine.

contribution. If this economy of exchange were only in material terms, then two results are commonly predicted: either the members of the community would be continue to live their lives void of "religious" sentiment, or they would find themselves dissatisfied with life and would search for meaning outside of the material.

Luckmann believes instead that there is a third choice, precisely because of what he stated above about the "single trajectory": it is the members of the New Age or other invisible movements who are more likely to feel religiously *bound* to their community. It is worth emphasizing this point, to counter assumptions that the process of establishing "privacy" equates to an endorsement of selfishness in the modern world. One of Luckmann's more general hypotheses, however, is that it is from within the perspective of the institutional religions that the non-institutional aspects of religion are often expressed in a dismissive, if not necessarily derogatory fashion. Of all the particular consequences of confessional and academic subjectivities alike, the habit of being dismissive in this way, usually concealed by institutional authority, is one that is most in need of exposure.[66]

In a similar vein, Edward Bailey's notion of *implicit religion* involves "the emancipation of Western Religious Studies from its inevitable, original model," i.e. from its "monolithic, normative character," and suggests that,

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[66] This may relate to what Luckmann says is the usual alternative to privatization:

> The - relatively - sudden loss of religious legitimations for everyday life seems to lead to anti-modernist reactions among substantial segments of the population of 'modernizing' countries. But even in modern Western societies, Protestant and Catholic versions of fundamentalism have chosen traditional models of 'wholeness' in reaction to the institutional specialization, 'immorality' of economic and political life, lack of obligatory controls for private life, pluralism and thus lack of general cognitive support for one's own world view, disorientation, and mass availability of 'immoral' products and behavior characteristic of 'modernity.' ["Shrinking," 137].

His optimism is apparent, though: "On the whole...'privatized syncretism' rather than fundamentalist options seems to have a better chance to become established as a social form of religion" [*ibid*].

> It is empirically possible (whether or not it is considered desirable) to be thank-full [sic], without necessarily thanking any personalized one or any particularized thing; to pray, without formulating any concept of a being to whom one prays; to be at peace, without even raising the question, let alone suggesting an answer, as to what one is at peace with; to believe, without specific creed, to hope, without schematic soteriology, to be loving, without fixed or focused object.[67]

Bailey opens doors here for the academic acknowledgement of non-formalized religious experience, and also offers the terms of engagement. One of the most important distinctions that Bailey asks us to reconsider is between the objective and the subjective, interestingly enough by linking this distinction to that between the roots of object and subject: paradoxically, again, it is more "objective" in the academic sense to let go of the illusion that comes with subjectively defining an object. The sense in which these words were taken earlier, regarding the ability of the scholar to maintain personal distance from the topic, is not completely unrelated to what they mean here. In a similar way to that of William James, one defines an implicit religion not by the symbols, the rituals, or the object of worship, but by the perspective of the subject who creates or responds to the symbols, performs the rituals, or who acts worshipfully. Furthermore, the motivation of the subject to act is as valid a factor in determining the presence of the religious as is the articulation of that motive.[68]

Bailey's work is in fact drawn from a series of case studies on a cross-section of British society, published a few years before *Implicit Religion*. Upon the analysis of the data from interviews conducted for his first study, Bailey describes three "scenes", or places in a person's existence in which some kind of religious feeling might be located: the "inner", the "outer", and the "other." In each category is a list of the diverse "commitments" by which individuals

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[67] Edward I. Bailey, *Implicit Religion in Contemporary Society* (Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1997), 47.

[68] *ibid*, 47f.

structure their worldview. It is interesting that the development of explicit, conventional expressions of religion occurs not on the "outer" scene, but on that of the "other."[69] The makeup of Bailey's categories mimics in a strange way the psychological categories of Freud (id, ego, superego), or of Eric Berne (child, adult, parent). If we were to extrapolate from this analogue, it might be appropriate to say that the traditional, institutional religions, because they operate primarily on the level of the "other", are themselves at risk of being empty of inner substance.

The second study, conducted in a public house, reveals how powerfully "religious" is the notion of community, apart from the trappings and the rituals. Anticipating a theme which will be central to Canadian cinema, Bailey looks beneath these rituals to discover the significance of community-building. For example, in relation to the rules surrounding closing time,

> [I]t was clear that the regular customers' desire was to out-stay whatever was the legal limit. It is suggested that this was not in order to break the law, but in order to 'prove' the reality of their place within the community.[70]

This suggests a potential link between religious sentiment and transgressiveness;[71] in Bailey's case study, it is apparent that this does not so much occur on Luckmann's privatized or individual level, but instead on the level of the community. The individual establishes an identity within the pub community by participating with it in the (albeit soft) transgression against the official rules of pub life. The pub community as a whole also establishes an identity against the larger society; this involves both transgression against such a society, as well as a sense of corporate privilege in establishing its own set of rules, by which its members measure their existence. Within the sector of English society that Bailey documents, the identity formed is of a

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[69] Edward Bailey, "The Implicit Religion of Contemporary Society: Some Studies and Reflections", *Social Compass* Dec. 1990: 483-497 (489).

[70] *ibid*, 491.

[71] A concept to be discussed below. A footnote was considered on the different usage. The context is hopefully sufficient.

transgressive nature, if only in the polite context of what has been mutually agreed upon. We shall see later that American society commonly abides by similar mores. What makes all of this religious instead of just socio-political or psychological is the degree to which a small act of apparent defiance is involved in relating one's own existence to the larger structures, not just of society but of the meaning of life itself.

Bailey's third study was conducted in his capacity as a parish rector; his conclusions deal with the relationship between implicit and explicit religion within the Anglican church community. We discover anew that for the community in question, "[individualism] is its profoundest solidarity;"[72] and second, that the explicit, or "professed" religion of the populace, i.e. their belief "in Christianity," is only derivative, or secondary to the deeper and implicit commitments:

> This way of life [...] is valued because some model of humanity, some aim in life, some goals and standards, some programme for that part of behaviour which is subject to individual control, is essential, and this is the best one available. That is to say, it is selected according to functional criteria, arising out of the culture itself; not on account of its divine origin, nor on the authority of any kind of divinity, other than its apparent functions and its intrinsic nature as a manifestation of value.[73]

One need not read too much into Bailey's use of the word functional, for it is only the explicit expressions of religion that are defined in functional terms. The substance appears to pre-exist the *formulated* "way of life", and the latter serves the function of a "programme", the content of which is developed to suit the substantial religious needs, instead of the other way around. This of course still begs the question of whether the programme, or institutionalized religion is a

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[72] *ibid*, 492. Durkheim's analyses of organic and mechanical solidarity in *The Division of Labor in Society* (Glencoe: The Free Press of Glencoe/MacMillan, 1933, trans. George Simpson) contained many uncomfortable implications, for instance in the context of specialized marriage duties. However, his larger points on diversity vs. homogeneity should not be so hastily discarded.

[73] *ibid*, 492. Bailey's use of the phrase, a belief 'in Christianity' seems deliberate; when the syntax is properly understood by the hypothetical speaker, it should raise questions about the real, as opposed to the explicit, object of faith.

necessary construct, but at least we can still take care to distinguish the programme from the information it reorganizes and interprets through a new code.

Bailey's more concise expression of his theory might appear as rather obvious: "[B]eing human, for the vast majority of human beings, seems to involve both being religious, in a secular sort of way, and being secular, in a religious sort of way."[74] This calls to mind a similar attempt by Michael Ostling to unite the ordinary and the extraordinary, while still trapped in the belief that they are opposites.[75] Ostling's concern was that the *Harry Potter* novels were guilty of portraying the extraordinary as ordinary, rather than discovering the extraordinary in the ordinary. It would seem, though, to be a false distinction, and reveals more about a potential elitism on the part of Ostling. There are two issues, one being the dualism itself; the other is the "us vs. them" mentality that aims to preserve the dualism. Bailey, however, prepares the reader for the hermeneutical understanding that, "[Th]e study of implicit religion, then, takes the *whole of a human context* as its agenda, rather than any pre-determined segment of it."[76] To respond further to Ostling with a paraphrase of Luckmann, *Wizards only make sense in the context of the significance of Muggles.*[77]

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[74] *ibid*, 48.

[75] Michael Ostling, "Harry Potter and the Disenchantment of the World." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* Jan. 2003: 4. For a 'general interest' response to Ostling and to many others, c.f. Christopher Yungblut, "Page One: Muggles," *Itinerarium Mentis In Potterum* (2006), http://www.cs.mun.ca/~christoy/pageone.html Internet: Accessed May 8, 2009.

[76] *ibid*, 49, emphasis added.

[77] See p. 35 above regarding "transcendent" and "immanent". Expressed otherwise, a holy person might not come down from the mountain solely for the sake of tending to the world, but also to make it clear how "ordinary" a person she is – so that other "ordinary" people are inspired to take their turn climbing. Or, as expressed by mystics, "God became man so man could become God." Ostling is not necessarily incorrect in his sentiments, and we can understand what he might be trying to say. Nevertheless, the distinction he makes still rings false.

Working, then, within the full extent of the human (and perhaps meta-human and non-human) context, we cannot be satisfied with definitions that contain even hints of isolationism or of dualistic distinctions. Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance may be appropriate as we canvass and reconstruct the definitions and arguments offered above. There are a number of existential questions continually being asked in secular locations, which may also be recognized as "religious questions"; there are issues of some complexity or controversy that might likewise be dealt with in a "religious manner". There are no particular tokens, or even types, of experience or phenomena that can *commonly* be held as signifiers of religion: the labels "religious" and "secular" may be equally and arbitrarily ascribed to each and any of the particular entities or events in question. However, the existence of a significant number of these individual signifiers will at least justify the proposition that religion is present in the discourse: either something religious is being commented upon by the individual, the community, or the work of art – or these latter are substantially religious entities unto themselves.

Thus, the family of questions and experiences to be considered under the umbrella of "religion" includes, but is not limited to, the following[78]:

1) explanations of why we are here, how we got here, and where we go afterwards;

2) feelings of duty towards one's fellow inhabitants that transcend mere utility;

3) the idea that the meaning of life might likely extend beyond the practical or material (although one is not necessarily obligated to forsake the material);

[78] Two sets of objections have been raised regarding this list. First, that many of them can be as easily treated in a functional or formal manner as in a substantive way. Second, that some of the items on the list imply that something is not religious unless it necessary goes beyond the material. A response to the first objection is that it is not the questions that determine function or substance, but the perspective of the questioner. The response to the second objection is contained in the definition of "family definition" as given in the text. Also in regards to the second objection, it may be impossible to discuss dualisms without seeming to endorse another kind of dualism in the process. However, the discussions in the text, especially regarding Luckmann, Bailey and Durkheim, were also intended to address this issue. Beyond these responses, it is probably only a matter of assertions to the contrary, and no resolution is possible.

4) discussions of the nature of consciousness and its relation to our physical body;

5) the need for or display of ritual, pilgrimage, sacred space, and metaphor;

6) conversations on the relationships between life and death;

7) concepts of divinity or consciousness not contained within a physical body;

8) questions surrounding the relationship between what is and what ought to be;

9) perspectives on salvation or a post-mortal existence.

Discussing *Star Trek* fandom in light of Bailey's theories, Jennifer Porter has a similar list:

> [A]n examination of the things on which fans spend vast amounts of time, creativity, financial resources, and mental and emotional energy reveals a complex picture of the nature of individuality, community, humanity, and destiny that helps shape the lives of, and is shaped by, Star Trek fans. Multiculturalism, tolerance for diversity, evolutionary progress, human potential, political non-interference, sexual equality, free will, scientific and technological progress, and a triumphant human destiny that transcends biological limits are some of the dominant ideological commitments of fans.[79]

The effective results of this time, creativity, and energy, etc., are "support for the United Nations, volunteering at food banks and soup kitchens, giving blood to the Red Cross, donating time and money to children's charities, and supporting political candidates who embody [their] ideals."[80] All of this of course reiterates the debate over whether humanism, let alone "secular humanism" can be considered a religion. However, by the very standards of the conventional religious perspectives on morality, virtues such as charity and compassion cannot, by their very definition as religious values, exist outside of a religious framework. It is not only claimed from this conventional perspective that atheists cannot possibly act morally, but even that to be "spiritual" as opposed to "religious" is also to remove oneself from the framework necessary to foster a moral existence. Hence, if the fruits of individuals or communities demonstrate charity

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[79] Porter, "Implicit Religion."

[80] *ibid.*

or other forms of altruism or moral virtue, then it would not be unreasonable to conclude that these fruits are either motivated by religious sentiment, or are somehow only pretending to – for an undetermined and apparently selfish purpose. However, the arguments here are restricted to the notion that any phenomenon involving the above issues has some *connection* to religiosity, and thus the potential religious aspects of such phenomena can be legitimately discussed.

There are also three questions that arise from what has been said in this chapter, and that can be worked with in relation to the definition of "religion" and to the means of viewing the films. First, how does one define the boundaries, if any, between ourselves and the apparent source of the religious? Second, what is the nature of relations between individuals, such that they are able to empathize as much with a stranger as with a member of their family? Are these relations religious or "merely" psychological? Third, when individuals congregate socially, why do even the many apparently secular groups look to "higher principles" when seeking the common welfare? As the answer to this last question seems necessarily to be a religious one, it is worth reconsidering the distinction between the religious and the secular: this distinction may be, as Bailey seems to suggest in his own words, just another category mistake.

1.2 Religion and Film: The history of Scholarship

The history of commentary on the intersection of religion and film is almost as old as the film industry itself.[81] Two factors make this fact almost inevitable: first, many of the early narratives

[81] For the purposes here, one may denote 1895 as the birth-year of cinema as we know it today, with the understanding that in describing a "birth" as such, the full analogy of early child-development must apply: conception was much earlier, and coming-of-age far later. There had already been at the time multiple public showings of films, in their variant forms, in France, the U.S., and Australia, each using a different type of camera and projection system. As with the history of many inventions, developments also arose simultaneously in various regions of the globe. In December of 1895, however, Auguste and

produced by filmmakers were explicitly religious in content; the sacred, and in particular sacred scriptures, have frequently provided a rich source of material for artists in general. Thus, in 1897, the Parisian filmmaker Albert Kirchner (professionally known as Léar) took still photographs of the landscape in Palestine and Cairo to incorporate into a filmed narrative of the *Passion of Christ*.[82] Other films from the era included *Samson and Delilah* (1903, Ferdinand Zecca); *The Life of Moses* (1909, Charles Kent);[83] *Jerusalem Delivered* (1911, Enrico Guazzoni);[84] *Dante's Inferno* (1911, Bertolini, Liguoro and Padovan); *La Vie de N.S. Jésus-Christ* (1914, Maurice André Maître);[85] and D.W. Griffith's *Judith of Bethulia* in 1914.[86]

Louis Lumiére presented "the first *commercial* exhibition of a projected motion picture to a paying public in the world's first movie theatre - in the *Salon Indien*, at the Grand Cafe on Paris' Boulevard des Capucines". [Simon Popple, Joe Kember. *Early Cinema: From Factory Gate to Dream Factory* (New York: Wallflower, 2004), 7, *emphasis added*]. It was the name of the Lumiéres' projector, the *cinematographe*, from which we derived the shortform "cinema." The combination of paying audience, projection technology allowing for a large audience, and the dedicated space for theatres, are what together define the new cultural phenomenon.

It is also worth noting here what will be further discussed later, i.e. Canada's early contribution to the content and commerce of international cinema. One of the most famous of pre-narrative film scenes was The *Kiss*, starring Canadian-born May Irwin – the scene was taken from a Broadway production in which she performed. It was Ottawa's Holland Brothers who became agents for Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope productions, opening the first Kinetoscope Parlor on Broadway, and rapidly opening others across the continents. As notable "forefathers" of Garth Drabinsky, the Hollands thus affirm one of the great truths of *Ecclesiastes*: nothing is new under the sun. Thomas Edison himself was the great-grandson of a United Empire Loyalist; his first job, at 14, was in Stratford, Ontario [Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema 1895-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978)]. Canadian actress Mary Pickford made her first appearance in D.W. Griffith's *The Violin Maker of Cremona* in 1908. Jack Warner, the youngest of the four Warner Brothers, was born in London, Ontario.

[82] *Bible Lands Films: Recently Found Films Shot in Palestine and Egypt in 1897*, "Filmography of Israeli Films," http://israeli.filmography.co.il/Articles/Entry_9/Bible_Lands_Films.html Internet: Accessed May 9, 2009. Many of the pre-1930 films cited throughout this work have been since lost; their existence is only known through references in trade journals, etc.

[83] Tyler F. Williams, *The Old Testament on Film: In the Beginning: Silent Films to 'Talkies' (1900 to the 1930s)*, "Codex: Resources for Biblical Studies" http://biblicalstudies.ca/pop/OT_on_film1.html Internet: Accessed May 12, 2009.

[84] *The Crusaders, or, Jerusalem Delivered*, "The Film Database: The Complete Index to World Film Since 1895," http://www.citwf.com/film75037.htm Internet: Accessed May 12, 2009.

[85] Kevin Lewis, "Rev. Herbert Jump and the motion picture", *Film History* June 2002: 210.

[86] Williams, "Codex."

A second factor involves the idea that the church community, particularly the North American one, was always more or less bound by the need to respond to any phenomenon arising from the "outside" world. In the more remote past, the ecclesiastical approval or disapproval of works of art had mainly been a matter between the church and the artist. Most art that was to see the light of day in the public forum would have been commissioned by the church, and neither the public nor the audience opinion was consulted: the public only saw what had been approved in the first place. By the time that cinema came into being, the church had already lost exclusive ownership as well as the right of censorship (except among their own flock), and so a battleground of sorts had been re-established for the "souls" of the public. The fact of such a battleground was not new, of course; when the printing press had arrived centuries earlier, the public gained access to secular literature[87] at the same time as they gained access to mass-produced – and translated – Bibles; this was undoubtedly a source of similar unease for the church. The rise of mechanical technology, long prior to the Industrial Revolution itself, as an influence upon Newton and his contemporaries, led to the introduction of Deism as an enemy combatant. This had also likely played out much earlier with dramatic productions.[88]

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[87] Among the first three books to be published in English by William Caxton were *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* (1471, about the tale of Orestes), Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1478/1481) and *Morte d'Arthur* (1485). The English case may perhaps not be the most exemplary of the issue, and within the thesis, this is probably the one account of history most shamelessly reduced to clichés. There is no end, however, to the manners in which one can read the events of the various European Reformations, and in the subsequent chapter, the Canadian connection with Calvinist thought will be discussed; this will have particular bearing on literature as well as cinema, as they relate to the church.

[88] Another view on the background of such conflict between church and culture can be found in the chapter/episode "The Skin of Our Teeth" in Sir Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* (London: BBC Books, 1969). Clark's interpretation of the European Middle Ages is given in terms of how the knowledge, culture and religion inherited from the Greek world was forsaken as the barbarians invaded, but was preserved through two phenomena: the rise of Islam, and the exiled Irish monks who created the documents later known as the Book of Kells. Clark's equation between the barbarians and the failures of the Christian Church to preserve civilization is rather openly expressed throughout. "The early Christian Church had dissipated its strength by theological controversies, carried on for three centuries with

Cinema, however, brought together all of these existential threats and more: drama, mass reproduction, the technology to make visual art *move*, making for a dangerous combination of fantasy and reality[89], and perhaps more importantly, an economic engine behind the art that was almost as powerful as the economy of religion as a whole. The prize at stake in the battle was now over the construction of a new national and international civilization; whether or not a conscious form of spiritual warfare was waged, one can imagine through some of the evidence that the stakes were realized at least subconsciously. The melodramatic tone may be justified, though, by showing on just how large of a scale the new combination of technology and art could compete. According to the musings of a journalist cited in George Anderson's 1910 essay,

> On an island 2000 miles out in the Pacific Ocean, the exiled lepers of Molkai gather daily before the flickering wonders of a screen that shows them the world of life and freedom. Seated in the luxurious saloon of an ocean liner a group of travelers study the lifelike pictures of the countries for which they are bound. In Iceland excited Eskimos applaud the heroism of the cowboy who rescues a captured maiden from the red-skins. Halfway around the world in Northern Russia tearful peasants sorrow over the plight of a forlorn French lover. The correspondents with the battleship fleet tell us that in every corner of the globe they found those dimly lighted rooms where living comedy and tragedy flash across the screen.[90]

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incredible violence and ingenuity" (pg. 4). The Crusades and the burning of Islamic libraries were further instances of grief between western religion and art. Of course the point of Clark's series is not to dwell on these negative aspects of church history, but to celebrate the ultimate tenacity of civilization. His interim message is only that civilization will always be fragile as a result of its own potential for stagnation. Other ways in which civilization becomes an enemy of itself are its production of lack of confidence, cynicism and disillusionment.

[89] In the next chapter, arguments are presented for a particularly Canadian form of realism; the general distinction can be made here between the realism inherent in the *physical* technology of the art form, and the "enhanced" realism resulting from artistic technique.

[90] George Anderson, "The Case for Motion Pictures: Part I," *Congregationalist and Christian World* July 1910. Reprinted in Terry Lindvall, *The Silents of God: Selected Issues and Documents in Silent American Film and Religion*, 1908-1925 (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2001), 33. As a modern parallel of the power of film to bridge *philosophical* distances, the Dalai Lama is said to have enjoyed watching *Tarzan* films. However, this should be taken ironically on the part of this thesis. There is a rather horrendous tone of Orientalism in the journalist's account - which also detracts from its credibility and whether or not the reports of the Dalai Lama are true, he would surely smile at Westerners who express surprise at his taste.

However, this is likely part of Tom Robbins' point in relating this fact about the Dalai Lama. [Tom Robbins, *Another Roadside Attraction* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971)].

While we must wonder if some of this is a futuristic ideal on the part of the journalist, what is notable here are the implications to the church. Anderson himself notes that "the moving picture is rapidly taking its place beside commerce and foreign missions in making for world brotherhood."[91] Anderson's own stance is decidedly in favour of church participation in the new industry, but he may have provoked more concern than interest by including the dramatic account of the journalist. Especially in the case of the third-world flocks, the church could hardly *not* fear a loss of monopoly on bringing culture, and theology, to the underprivileged. Thus, the problem of domain was now becoming a rather existential one for the church, rather than being merely theological or political.

The fact that various members of the church, both lay and professional, recognized these potential dangers and reacted to them negatively, is well documented.[92] The new form of entertainment was a threat to many within the established churches, first as an additional "worldly" distraction, and secondly as a potential sacrilege. It was not always easy for an art form to be ecclesiastically embraced if it did not have explicit precedent in scripture. Thus, films that portrayed Biblical narratives were in particular subject to the censorious eyes of church authorities, perhaps especially because the church knew how philosophically persuasive the films could be. The more superficial arguments put forward as justification for such censorship were the impropriety of having human actors portray sacred personages, or the potential blasphemy of having scripture interpreted by the non-ordained. What was really at stake, though, was the potential for the new industry to develop talent and story-telling skills that would lead people, not necessarily away from the religion, but away from the confines of the church's own 'theatre'.

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[91] Anderson, 33.

[92] Lindvall, *Silents of God*, *passim*.

There were others, though, who like Anderson took a more enthusiastic approach to the budding industry, encouraging the church to embrace the technology both inside and outside of church doors. Terry Lindvall notes in the introduction to his collection of historical documents, "data indicate that many men and women of faith, both in the clergy and in the industry, sought a union of art and religion."[93] Published around the time of Anderson's article was a pamphlet by the Rev. Herbert A. Jump, minister of a Congregational church in New Britain (Connecticut). Jump begins by linking the artistic and moral values of film to those of Biblical parables. Jump exposes a double-standard involved in the common prejudice of both congregants and leaders against motion pictures – the usual suspects of violence and other forms of melodrama, by pointing out that the same complaints could be made against the parable of the Good Samaritan:

> Note some of the details of that sermon-story. It was not taken from the Bible, — the Old Testament used as a Bible by Jesus' auditors, — but from contemporary experience. It was the sort of thing that might have happened any day and to any one in his audience. Secondly, it was an exciting story. Robber-tales always thrill the emotions...Thirdly, this narrative-sermon frankly introduces morally negative elements and leaves them negative to the end of the chapter. Was it not dangerous to the church establishment of that day to have its priest and Levite pictured as failing so utterly in the grace of compassion, held up to ridicule as hypocrites and poseurs? And as for the robbers themselves, not only did the story give a most realistic description of precisely how they perpetrated the cowardly crime of violence, but it leaves them victorious in their wickedness, scurrying off with their booty, unrepentant of their sins...And yet, despite these three dubious characteristics of not being Scriptural to the people who heard it, of being exciting, and of having realistic and morally negative features in it, who dare assert that the story of the Good Samaritan has wrought harm in the world?... Has it not exhibited in complete and convincing fashion the very heart of the Gospel?

[93] Lindvall, *x*. It cannot be stated enough that Lindvall's collection is invaluable to the thesis as a whole; external accounts were given of the writings of Jump *et al*, but prior to discovering *Silents*, it was nearly impossible to access the original documents. In the process, a whole new world was discovered. It is strange, though, that there is not much to add here about Lindvall himself or about his own theories, except to say that he is himself a conservative Congregational minister and former president of Pat Robertson's Regent University, and is now the *C. S. Lewis Chair of Communication and Christian Thought* at Virginia Wesleyan College. Lindvall's research on Lewis is an obvious qualification for discussing the philosophy behind religion and culture; his theological affiliations, on the other hand, are also rather explanatory of many of his statements below. The writings collected by Lindvall were mainly by Protestant Christians, in particular Episcopal, Baptist and Congregational. This would normally be cause to question the sense of balance here, but this account of history is not meant to be definitive.

> Has it not urged more men into lives of ministry and helpfulness than any piece of literature of equal length which the race has ever known?[94]

The import of these comments goes beyond the issue of whether or not the church was to use a given technology as an evangelical accessory. We begin to see here the seeds of a more scholarly approach to the analysis of religion and film. The simplest reason for the difference may be in the decision to embrace a methodology external to his own profession, i.e. in this case, a form of literary or dramatic criticism. This, along with a masterly use of analogy, also allows readers to go beyond the apologetic. In the process, Jump is reasserting a particular interpretation of scripture, challenging the basic authority of the elders, and by the end of his pamphlet, he suggests that many of the films available at that time, whether scriptural or not, would do a better job of spreading the Gospel than most Sunday sermons. If we can bracket Jump's own religious sensibilities,[95] one might still note how he anticipates modern scholarship on religion in popular culture, as well as the notion of finding religion *implicitly*: a recognition that some moral truths and transcendental visions are readily found in secular sources. Some of the films he recommends for his colleagues included *Alice in Wonderland*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *The Night Before Christmas*, in addition to historical and Shakespearean dramas.[96]

Jump also shows the kind of historical thinking necessary for an objective perspective:

> The motion picture is as yet a novelty in religious work. Hence it will be opposed by some. But if there are conscientious scruples against adopting the motion picture as one of the church tools, at least we may comfort ourselves with our reading of church history. The disfavor which is now meted out to the motion picture was aimed at the

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[94] Herbert A. Jump, "The Religious Possibilities of the Motion Picture," *Private pamphlet* (New Britain, CT: 1910). Reprinted in Lindvall, 54-78 (55).

[95] While Jump is hardly disinterested in the outcome of his arguments, there is a heightened objectivity apparent in commentators who are more prone to optimism. One must be wary of "wishful thinking", but pessimism often reveals itself as a chip on the shoulder, and is itself apt to cloud judgment.

[96] Jump, 76. All films in Jump's list are from 1910. The first two were published by Edison and Vitagraph, respectively, the publisher of the third is not specified.

> stereopticon a decade ago, at quartet singing several decades earlier, at the pipe organ before that, and still earlier at the Holy Bible printed in the vernacular; and yet, in God's own time every one of these religious agencies commended itself to the approval of Christian people. So it will be in this case.[97]

Athough the elders of Jump's own congregation turned down his request, and may have pressured him into leaving the charge, Jump was not alone, and seems to have had the support of his larger denomination.[98] Jump cites the following endorsement from the editors of *The Congregationalist*, as they give their corporate reasons for embracing the use of motion pictures:

> Not only because the moving picture has become so widespread an influence is it of interest to us; but also because its possibilities have only begun to be uncovered, and in this undeveloped and unknown future educational and religious agencies seem destined to have a great share. While no one can be blind to the fact of its great possibilities for evil, the moving picture has neither done so much harm nor deserved such imprecations as have been put upon it by well-meaning but uninformed Christian people.[99]

Again, bracketing the talk of good and evil, this paragraph might easily have introduced a scholar's justification for exploring a new phenomenon, one that is outside of the normal canon.

Ten years later, there appeared the article "Motion-Picture as a Handmaid of Religion,"[100] which advocates on behalf of the larger movement by various denominations in the United States and England toward an albeit still-wary acceptance of film as a theological/pedagogical tool, to be used more consciously as a means of evangelization. In the author's words, the church was

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[97] *ibid*, 73.

[98] There are conflicting perspectives on the event, and there is no way to verify precisely how "voluntary" a resignation is in reality. It was, however, to Jump's benefit, as he went on to implement his ideas at the Congregational Church in Oakland, CA. His former church was then apparently "without a settled pastor for two months" [cited in Lewis, 214]. The Connecticut congregation's statement of events was attached as a preface to Jump's article in subsequent publications. Kevin Lewis attempts to mediate between the different accounts.

[99] Jump, 13.

[100] *Anonymous*, "Motion-Picture as a Handmaid of Religion," *Literary Digest* May 1920, reprinted in Lindvall, 235-239.

"wresting another weapon from the devil and converting it to its own purpose."[101] As this movement proceeded, though, there was also a renewal of tense ambivalence: as congregations began showing commercial films on Sunday mornings, theatres moved to jealously guard their income.[102] Presumably it would have been a moral dilemma for the proprietors of the theatres – to extract a license fee from the congregations would not have been an option, and yet charity did not extend to writing off the rental as a donation.

The next wave of scholarship on the subject of religion and film appears in the 1950s. The dialogues on social and religious values during this era would have found their source in much that was occurring in post-war society, most certainly in Britain and in North America. The particular style of self-reflection at the time may have been inevitable, given the crisis of meaning in the face of the fear and the political enthusiasms of the Cold War. Although the semantic ironies of the word "nuclear" had perhaps not arisen – its use in describing the conventional family was not common at the time – the internal conflict among people and nations was nonetheless a result of anxieties over both meanings of the word. In both cases, political and religious institutions would be the shelters of first resort, but there would again be a need for the voice of a *third* party, one that would help citizens relate to religion and politics in ways that were not so accessible from within either of the existing institutions.

This is witnessed in an article by Fred Elkin, reviewing the film *The Next Voice You Hear* (1950).[103] The social context behind the film is, according to Elkin, a growing type of Christianity in America, predictably influenced by recent international affairs, as well as by a

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[101] *ibid*, 237.

[102] *ibid*, 238.

[103] Frederick Elkin, "God, Radio, and the Movies", *Hollywood Quarterly* Winter 1950: 105-114. The film is based on the short story of the same name: George Sumner Albee, "The Next Voice You Hear," *Cosmopolitan* August 1948.

new attitude towards the relationship between values and national culture. Elkin was himself a film scholar and sociologist[104] rather than a theologian. He may thus be one of the first of the "outside" scholars to address the interaction of film and religion, even if his own 1950s morality shows some loose descent from 1950s theology. Elkin notes that Hollywood had already acquired a reputation for godlessness:

> Few who see the picture can remain unaffected by it. Some have been sharply annoyed by the treatment of God and religion, and in England the picture was temporarily banned. But there are tens of thousands who are acclaiming the film as one of the greatest achievements of Hollywood. Many in the audience have felt pangs of conscience and wept; others have been inspired to support their churches with a new vigor; still others, with a somewhat more objective outlook, have suggested that Hollywood has atoned for its sins.[105]

The movie itself seems to be nothing spectacular by today's standards – a non-comedic version of the George Burns *Oh God!* movies,[106] set in America's Midwest, with members of the entire global population hearing God's voice instead of just one unfortunate man forced to defend himself against charges of insanity. In terms of cinematic technique and dramatic style, it takes after the *Disney* movies of the era, through its references to contemporary events and a healthy distaste for government bureaucracy.

Elkin critiques the religion within the movie as being essentially American:

> This is a picture about religion, but it is not the religion of a crusading St. Paul or of a stern and serious Puritan or of a deeply emotional orthodox Jew or of an ascetic monastery monk. Rather, the religion of this picture suggests a friendly, sociable

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[104] Elkin taught for a period at York University in Toronto, and his scholarship was a cornerstone of research during the founding of the Vanier Institute of the Family [Elkin, "The Family in Canada: An Account of Present Knowledge and Gaps in Knowledge about Canadian Families," Ottawa: Canadian Conference on the Family, April 1964. C.f. also "A Short History: How the Vanier Institute of the Family Began," *The Vanier Institute of the Family* http://www.vifamily.ca/about/vif.html Internet: Accessed July 13, 2009]. Elkin also wrote on the "Quiet Revolution" in Canada [Elkin, "Ethnic Revolutions and Occupational Dilemmas," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 1972: 48-54].

[105] Elkin, "God, Radio," 105.

[106] *Oh God!*, dir. Carl Reiner, Warner Bros., 1977. *Oh God! Book II*, dir. Gilbert Cates, Warner Bros., 1980. *Oh God! You Devil*, dir. Paul Bogart, Warner Bros., 1984.

> relationship with God and one's neighbors. Man is not inherently evil; he is good and has infinite possibilities. It is not necessary, or even advisable, to bemoan one's sins, to feel deep pangs of conscience, to proselytize, to worry about salvation and redemption, or to be concerned with tragic aspects of life.[107]

In contrast to the comments above about Luckmann's attitude towards the New Age religions, Elkin does seem to be more dismissive of many of these modern religious sensibilities, although neither does he necessarily appear to have been appreciative of the more conventional religious perspective, which had condemned Hollywood as "godless." He is quick to realize the implications of how a film explicitly about religion is probably more about the depiction of God's endorsement of an American way of life and family-construction, and this is as much of a problem with a traditional religious politics as it is with a modern politicization of religion. Elkin may not be much of a socialist, as he does also seem to maintain some respect for the values hiding behind the American religious illusions, but his reading of the film is essentially a Marxist form of criticism; he exposes the fact that "such expressions of dependency, with such magical solutions of our problems, may be signs of a growing tendency within our society and within ourselves."[108] The target of his critique is not so much religion itself, however; even when discussing the utopian religion of the film, Elkin is far kinder to religion than would be a Marxist. And yet, Elkin is certainly referring in his critique to the various voices intruding on America's collective aural space, including the voices of overt sentimentality that have alike led to overdramatic expressions on all sides.

The reference, prior to introducing Elkin's article, to "the need for the voice of a *third* party": was not originally intended as a pun on the subject of his analysis, although it is possible that Elkin had it in mind. There is little doubt that the voice of God in the film is an analogue for the

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[107] *ibid*, 108.

[108] *ibid*, 113.

voice *of* the film; it replaces the voice of God for the audience as they try to sort through society's ills. The voice of God as portrayed by the film is morally inadequate for Elkin, but he is sympathetic, especially as the audience is likely eager to respond to that voice in its search for a better life. Again, if this is the case, Elkin is remarkably prescient on some of the deepest levels of religion-film commentary. He does certainly anticipate the tone for subsequent scholarship, particularly in his marriage of literary deconstruction with religious sensitivities. This will be what, in the post-modern era, will allow for the marriage of advocacy and scholarship.

There are signs in 1965 that the *organized* church is moving to embrace a more critical perspective on cinema, in a way that, rather than still somewhat confrontational towards the film industry, involves more active participation in the structure of the cinematic world. The National Council of Church's Broadcasting and Film Commission (BFC) would that year establish the *Film Awards Nomination Panel*. The panel was set up as an anticipatory effort to reward the film industry for producing films more conducive to Christian family viewing. F. Thomas Trotter explains the history of the panel and their struggle to be relevant.[109] Two things are interesting here; first, their evolving criteria for what would qualify for a religious film award:

> The Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches may make awards annually to American-produced films of outstanding artistic merit that, within the perspective of the Christian faith and within one or more of the following categories:
>
> 1. Portray with honesty and compassion the human situation in which man is caught in tension between his attempt to realize his full potential of his humanity and his tendency to destroy that humanity.
>
> 2. Portray human society and its cultural environment in such a way as to enhance understanding of the family of man in its richness and variety.

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[109] F. Thomas Trotter, "The Church Moves Toward Film Discrimination," *Religion in Life* Summer 1969. Reprinted online, *ReligionOnline*, http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=3474 Internet: Accessed May 17, 2009.

3. Treat religious subject matter, whether Biblical, historical, or contemporary, with perceptiveness, accuracy, and pertinence.

4. Bring qualities of imagination, beauty, and honesty to subject matter appropriate for children.

5. Provide exceptional entertainment value appropriate for family viewing.[110]

This was an evolution of the previous list, which had included the word "Christian" in each category. The second element to note is the list of films cited in the first years of the awards. For the first two years of the awards, the only explicitly religious film to be considered by the panel was *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965). The movie, however, was in the end not even nominated to the board of directors. Even the panel had to admit that the quality of the movie was sub-par. Whatever their original intentions, then, the result of the panel's establishment was that the church gained in the process an appreciation for artistic discernment, in turn meaning that the quality of artistic vision in films would be rewarded over religious content alone.[111]

In considering these threads of religion/film commentary as they are later taken up by the academic community, we face some difficult dilemmas. The year 1970 seems to be widely recognized as representing a major cusp in the development of dialogue,[112] in terms of that dialogue having evolved through the spectrum from primarily confessional to primarily academic commentary; many of the lines, however, having continued to remain blurred. The

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[110] *ibid.*

[111] Certainly the church did not make this value judgment consciously at first, but it seems fairly significant that the panel members themselves were obviously chosen for their artistic sensibilities as much as, if not more than for, their theological ones. A cynic might see this as a concession to the film industry, but it does not seem a stretch to see it as the coming-of-age of an American church community.

[112] This year was also noted as a widely held beginning of the modern period of Canadian cinema; there is no end to the number of similar parallels to be found at the time, nor an end to the number of connected threads. While it may not be all that likely that Canadian filmmakers were reading the scholarly literature on religion and film, or even the pre-scholarly literature, both the filmmakers and the literature certainly shared a common acceptance of the general zeitgeist at the time. The academic work on film would have at the very least trickled down to the level of film criticism in general (both artistic and journalistic), and there would have been many other common threads between film and academics.

various preludes to modern scholarship have been included above, not only because they are seldom acknowledged in subsequent works, despite their significant influence on later scholars, but also because some of them tend to outdo many later scholars in terms of the conventional notions of "objectivity." In relation to this circumstance, it will seem in the present work that there is a lack of continuity between the different periods of history described above and those which follow, and that in the works of scholars listed below, the degree of apologetics increases rather than decreases. This is partly because little evidence is seen, prior to the 1970s, of communication *between* scholars on the subject; this in turn involves a problem brought to our attention by Steve Nolan: "new writing is often considered to be pioneering."[113]

This tendency of pioneering-bias, though, while it continues in various forms today, is largely set aside by scholars when they, or their disciplines, properly come of age; this may in fact be the only real means of distinguishing the early from the later eras of scholarship in various fields. An adherence to the practice of citations and bibliographies is a signpost for a change in the depth of communication and accountability. The dawn of this kind of adulthood for the academic commentary on religion in film also coincides with the time that self-described Religious Studies departments were being established in universities, which may be one explanatory factor.

Working backwards in time, we can see some revisionism of the history of such academic evolution, but it is worth considering the connections as we try to establish the nature of the "new beginnings" in the 1970s. Terry Lindvall credits Ivan Butler and James Wall as essential founders of a new era of scholarship,[114] but Lindvall's criteria for the distinction are somewhat

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[113] Steve Nolan, "The Books of the Films: Trends in Religious Film-Analysis," *Literature & Theology* March 1998: 2.

[114] Lindvall, *xiv* n. 14. Ivan Butler, *Religion in the Cinema* (New York: Tantivy, 1969); James Wall, *Church and Cinema: A Way of Viewing Film* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdman Publishing Co., 1971).

inscrutable: Ivan Butler's work in 1969, to which Lindvall refers, is still rather apologetic and confessional, thus seeming to represent a somewhat backwards step in relation to Elkin. Wall is also writing primarily as a member of the clergy, but is undoubtedly progressive in his use of a deliberate methodology. To Neil Hurley, Lindvall gives the (negative?) credit for "the secularizing trend of mainline theologians",[115] even though Wall himself had also advocated for an appreciation of secularism, in a chapter[116] written a year previously to the book cited by Lindvall. *Celluloid and Symbols*, the book containing the earlier essay by Wall, is in fact a landmark collection that not only includes contributions from many other theologians embracing this same secular line, but also proves that the "secularizing trend of mainline theologians" itself began several years prior to 1970. Harvard Professor of Divinity Harvey Cox, for instance, had already written elsewhere in 1965 about the religious merits of secularization,[117] and in *Celluloid*, Cox writes about "The Purpose of the Grotesque in Fellini's Films."[118]

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[115] Neil Hurley, *Theology through Film* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970). Lindvall, *xiv* n.14. Part of Lindvall's complaint is that Hurley changed the title of his book to *Towards a Film Humanism* in 1975. Seeming to contradict himself, Lindvall refers to C.P. Snow's discussion of the "competing cultures" of the sciences and humanities, and to Cardinal Newman's further dismay at academic specialization, in bemoaning the kind of disciplinary fragmentation that had previously disallowed commentary on religion and film. He then boasts that it is only in the post-modern era that "the voice of religion is once again able to address multiple issues of knowledge. It can even address film studies." One thus wonders if Lindvall ever really "stepped onto the bus", so to speak, of post-modernism. Many subsequent scholars, though, highlight in some depth the very positive significance of Hurley's breakthrough, although even this discounts many of Hurley's, and Wall's, contemporaries.

[116] James Wall, "Biblical spectaculars and secular man" in John C. Cooper and Carl Skrade (eds), *Celluloid and Symbols* (Philadelphia; Fortress Press, 1970), 55.

[117] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: MacMillan, 1965). Revisiting his book in 1990, Cox writes,

> I argued then that secularization—if it is not permitted to calcify into an ideology (which I called 'secular-*ism*')—is not everywhere and always an evil. It prevents powerful religions from acting on their theocratic pretensions. It allows people to choose among a wider range of worldviews. Today, in parallel fashion, it seems obvious that the resurgence of religion in the world is not everywhere and always a *good* thing. [Harvey Cox, "The Secular City 25 Years Later," *The Christian Century*, Nov. 7 1990, 1025-1029].

Cox's 1965 work of course precedes Luckmann's *Invisible Religion* by two years, and neither of these views was completely unique to modern times. However, from within their specific contexts, each offers

One of the other factors in defining the modern era of scholarship on religion and film is the nature of the methodology. According to Steve Nolan, in his own comparative review of the early scholarship, the criteria for the American shift from apologetic to academic treatment was in the first use of "auture" [*sic*] theory in the 60's, which highlighted the "vision of the director."[119] Modern textbook author Melanie Wright gives credit for this theory to Jean Epstein, the 1920's film critic and director.[120] Wall and Hurley may also both be given credit for their respective contributions to the modern period: Wall offers a definition that can actually be used and worked with in scholarship, and Hurley establishes a constructive methodology. They may also be, in fact, the first writers to primarily *self-identify* as scholars of film and religion. Wall,

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a different manner of viewing the issue. Cox is also widely known for *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer, Stone & Co, 1988), whose protagonist was an advocate of liberation theology.

[118] Cooper, *Celluloid*, 89-106. It is worth noting the other contributors to *Celluloid*, although these other chapters are rather specialized for the purposes. Aside from the editors, the other authors are Robert W. Jenson, William Hamilton, Anthony Schillaci, William F. Lynch and Robert W. Wagner.

[119] Nolan, 1.

[120] Melanie J. Wright, *Religion and Film: An Introduction* (London, UK: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2007), 59. More treatment could be given to Epstein above, although his works were more poetical than prosaic – which is perhaps the reason for his being able to express the substantive from outside of a religious perspective: Epstein described the cinema as "offering spectators an 'essentially supernatural' experience, which reverberated through the entire physique." [in Wright, 59]. Two additional passages from Epstein are worth considering:

> This gilded make-believe, this moving eloquence of the 7th art has not entirely succeeded in hiding from us a few signs which warn us that the phantoms of the screen have something to say besides their tales of laughter and tears: they speak of a new conception of the universe and of new mysteries of the soul. The disapproval of the professionally virtuous, who are somewhat scandalized, merely translates, in terms of current morality, a tremendous anxiety of long standing, but which no longer knows how to express all its meaning. A few of those who represent the present order are nevertheless aware that their instinctive fear and indignation is not simply over a richly sensual image. Their fears spring from something deeper and encompass a great deal more: they see the monster of novelty and creation, carrying with it the whole transformist heresy of continual becoming. [Quoted in René Ludmann, "Cinema as a Means of Evangelization", *Cross Currents* Vol. 8 No. 2 (Spring 1958), 154].

And, from Wright's account:

> Epstein's description at times comes close to classic articulations of the nature of religious experience... 'the memories and emotions, the projects or the regrets which we have attached to these things for a more or less lengthy time...this is the cinematic mystery: an object...reveals anew its moral character, its human and living expression when reproduced cinematically.'" [Wright, 171.]

who also sat on the aforementioned BFC panel for religious film awards, defines a religious film as "that motion picture which manages, through artistic utilization of its medium, to celebrate what it means to be human."[121] In other words, the vision of a film "can be said to be 'religious' in the Christian sense if it celebrates humanity or if it exercises with conviction a strong agony over moments where humanity is actually distorted."[122] Although, as noted above, Wall (along with Butler) still had his apologetic leanings, his definitions as constructed in Christian terms can actually be utilized by scholars outside of Christianity.

Thus, as stated by Robert Johnston,

> [F]or Wall, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was a religious film because it celebrated humanity in a manner compatible with how Wall himself viewed humanity, given his location within the historic Christian community."[123]

Wall also states that a film should not 'mean', but 'be;'[124] this is a distinction between *discursive* religious films, and those which *present*, and "implicitly" so, the director's vision. The discursive film, such as *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, might "instruct," but it cannot be considered art:

> The Biblical spectacular, therefore, is understood best as a discursive film which serves as an audio-visual aid but not as a work of art. An audio-visual aid imparts information, but it does not convince or convict an audience. Art, on the other hand, is interested only incidentally in information, and, by its very nature, is desirous of sharing a vision of life which must be accepted or rejected by its viewer.[125]

It is perhaps here that one sees a point of major significance to Wall's contribution, namely that there is one more justification for scholars to tease out the *implicitly* religious elements in film:

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[121] James Wall, "Biblical spectaculars", 55.

[122] *ibid*, 56. Quoted in Robert Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 55.

[123] Johnston, 55.

[124] Wall, "Biblical Spectaculars," 53.

[125] *ibid*, 54.

the *explicitly* religious film simply "doesn't count", as it were, as an art form to be studied. While this judgment should not be taken too literally, it may yet be a valid means of classification.

Neil Hurley's methodology also sets a standard for future scholarship, in terms of both comprehensiveness and simplicity. His prefacing claim that "movies are for the masses what theology is for an elite,"[126] is thus not merely a judgment about the democratic value of the art form, but as an analogue also forms the premise for comparative evaluation in more neutral terms.[127] Although the analogue itself is rather simple, it is not naïve. Hurley expands on this idea not only to show how films can effectively present religious visions, but also to answer the question of why motion pictures are increasingly relevant to the post-modern world:

> Postmodern man seeks greater understanding. If he is abandoning faith, it is often because the traditional mode of representing religion does not aid understanding in our 'jet-nuclear-space' age. Thus faith no longer seems relevant to many people, even those raised within a religious subculture.[128]

It is worth paying attention here to the category issues (that is, not necessarily category "mistakes" on Hurley's part). We might be tempted to locate substance or content *underneath* "religion", as the word is used by Hurley, especially as it relates to the words "faith" and "understanding." In this case, "religion" would only refer to the form or function. However, it certainly seems that the author is granting something substantial to all of the words involved.[129]

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[126] Hurley, *Theology*, ix.

[127] Of course one could read this statement out of context as a denigration instead of an endorsement of the art form of film, but the problematic nature of both of the words "masses" and "elite" is eternal. In what follows, there is little or no reason to doubt Hurley's intentions. A predisposition to indiscriminately see either word as derogatory, regardless of context, is a separate issue of epistemological and exegetical ethics. One should be open to authors who use the word "elite" as a value-positive term, and the potential for positive value in the word should be recognized. It is not necessary even to presume a value judgment either way on Hurley's part: his attempts may be descriptive rather than normative.

[128] Hurley, ix.

[129] "Faith" may of course either refer to a particular tradition or to a generic sense of hope in "something more", as it were, or somewhere in between. Hurley might be referring to both primary

As well, "religion" according to Hurley is something "represented", and so it might be redundant, in this context, to define the word formally or functionally. This idea of "representation" will also be relevant to some epistemological concerns as they are presented in the chapter on the context and themes of Canadian cinema. Hurley continues with some thoughts on the compatibility of religious message and messenger:

> [F]ilm has become an outlet for transcendental concerns that are rooted in the human spirit: conscience, guilt, freedom, and love [...]; to many people, [our best religious thinkers] give the sense of delivering heady Kierkegaardian wine in musty Cartesian bottles. This is unfortunate because I think that both motion pictures and theology work with transcendence, with the difference that the latter is an elite enterprise and the former oriented to the masses. While seeking recreation, diversion, and understanding, moviegoers are often exercising transcendental faculties of insight, criticism, and wonder that come remarkably close to what religion has traditionally termed faith, prophecy, and reverence.[130]

We still must juggle the various elements of the analogue, namely "bottles," "wine," and "outlet;" this last concept might be imagined as a faucet or tap, from out of which substance flows, but one still does not arrive at perfect clarity. The proverbial wisdom of Jesus regarding the analogue (MT 9:17; MK 2:22; LK 5:37f) can be applied in alternate ways, depending upon how one wishes to map the current questions of substance and vessel onto bottles and wine. Thus, while acknowledging that such analogues are risky, their usefulness will become apparent below when the Canadian mode of using them is discussed. Perhaps it will also become clear that this mode finds a special value in "mixed metaphors." Even what seems to be of primary substance or content according to Hurley, namely "transcendence," is subject to the same dilemmas. If we maintain the idea that this transcendence is something of substance, it is still,

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senses when he talks of something being "abandoned"; the search for "greater understanding", on the other hand, implies in itself the generic kind of faith. According to scholars such as Luckmann and Bailey, as well as others, the abandonment of the particular faith is actually seldom correlated with a loss of the generic.

[130] *ibid*, x.

according to Hurley, "not a static quality in man but the dynamic piston in man's movement toward truth."[131] Referring as well to McLuhan, Hurley potentially affirms that expression *is* substance, not unlike the above theory of performatives.[132]

So how can one be sure that Hurley is not just repeating the earlier idea that the phenomena and inspirations presented in motion pictures are not just "like" religion? Hurley answers:

> Whoever sees through something, even through religious hypocrisy, Puritanism, and pharisaic 'legalism,' is exercising transcendence and, essentially, is borrowing critical light from the same source as organized religions and, we might add, as atheists and agnostics...It is, then, this assumption which gives us hope for a genuine transcredal belief-system free of partisanship and politics.[133]

Hurley's answer here may be that in addition to exercising, or performing transcendence, we might also witness the substance in the "critical light" itself; or, perhaps it is rather the "source" of that light which is of substance. In either case, the genuine nature of the "belief system" defies any singular creed; we can then infer that there *is* no other "real" religion unto which this new phenomena is "like". The new or non-conventional phenomena is religious in its own terms; in particular, it is substantial precisely because it will not be "seen through" in the same way as the transparent "religions" to which the new are sometimes compared.

What is also intriguing here is the idea of how "transcendence" is actually dependent upon the upon the light as substance; the "transparent" conventionality might then not lend itself to transcendence, because in no way does it interact with the substance or the light.[134] In terms of

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[131] Hurley, 8.

[132] *ibid*, 8, 12.

[133] *ibid*, 8.

[134] The risk of making something appear more paradoxical than it may actually be is, can be seen in this comparison: clarity of thought was "clearly" not accomplished here, but perhaps the reader can somehow intuit what was meant here in relation to Hurley's metaphors, and better express the thoughts. Thus, the need for further "reflection" is suggested.

how cinema performs as a vehicle, or even perhaps in terms of how a film is a substantial vision in itself, we might consider the literal implications of the play of light, shadow and transparency as they appear on the screen. Typical charges against cinema include the notion that films are "only" projected images, and are thus of less value even than false idols; parallel concerns have to do with criticisms of celebrity. If we can speculate instead that the images and the actors have even *less* pretense than do conventional icons to sacred substance, the more we can be open to their power to act as truer vehicles of transcendent thought.

Another issue that will arise later regards freedom and authority as applied to community:

> [T]he freedom of individuals to define their own ultimate loyalties 'is beyond any institutional authority's competence', thus allowing people on their earthly pilgrimage to assess their transcendental commitments according as they judge the evidence of the life process.[135]

In part, these general notions of individual freedom in relation to the community and to authority structures belong to a worldview that precedes attempts to define the word "religion"; even so, one may always need to accept the fact of assertions to the contrary, namely that a phenomena is simply not religious unless it is inherently institutional. While there are philosophical justifications for suggesting that religion experienced in a solitary fashion is of a lesser value to the community – a tautology in the most obvious way – there is no scholastic solution in countering such bare assertions. Another consideration in reading Hurley here is that it is precisely by seeing the anti-convention transgressiveness of film *as an art form* that we can successfully engage with the films' religious views, towards questioning not only freedom but also the necessary commitment to authority that allows for social bonding.

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[135] *ibid*, 12. Hurley is approvingly citing William Hocking, and also endorses the latter's belief in an emerging "civilization in the singular."

This larger goal is suggested in Hurley's chapter, "Teaching Theology through Cinema":

> "[P]eople will be in a position to begin to train their imaginations theologically so that in their screen experiences, and hopefully, in real life, they will recognize the grand religious themes of the human spirit."[136]

It seems that the compact nature of Hurley's methodology overcomes any perceptions of eclecticism or naïve syncretism. One manner in which this is achieved according to Hurley is to recognize the common etymologies of "image," "imagination," "magic" and "magician", and hence to understand that multiple manifestations of religious substance are not evidence of shallow or facetious construction, but are all the more proof that transcendence is really possible:

> There is a profound relationship between images and human religious aspirations...As a 'compost of heaven and mire,' man needs to represent in human, palpable ways the numinous, the transcendental, and the holy.[137]

Such representations, as they appear implicitly in many popular art forms, are affirmations rather than denials of religious meaning. As one works in reverse, and attempts to locate the numinous in the image, Hurley recognizes the danger of idolatry, but assures us that his book:

> ...has sought to establish the positive value of the 'image'...If the temptation to idolatry has not been diminished by the advent of the camera, the motion picture's screen and the television set, there is still in these products of man's technical genius a yearning to give witness to the deepest aspirations of the human spirit and the larger scheme of truth after which it thirsts.[138]

Overall, Hurley's process itself may distinguish him most as a scholar who desires that scholarship be taken seriously, in offering a curriculum of study for his readers that includes works on film history, film humanism, and film criticism, along with membership in a film society and a subscription to various journals. The next steps are to "position the major directors

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[136] *ibid*, 177.

[137] *ibid*, 191.

[138] *ibid*, 191f.

of cinema in some philosophical school," and/or to "situate a director's film in the canon of his works [which] also means the ability to recognize a certain consistent outlook consistent to that director." Finally, Hurley's book delineates certain themes as having inherent potential for being expressed as "theologies";[139] these themes range from "Religious Man in Secular Society," to the issues of freedom, conscience, death, evil, grace, love, the future, and even a "Cinematic Theology of Sex."[140] Finally, in addition to his Jesuit training and a PhD in Political Science, Hurley also combines the disciplinary insights of Freudian, Jungian as well as Rogerian and existential psychology, humanist philosophy, and the social sciences. His largest contribution, however, is a basic sense for artistic analysis: recognizing the deeper meaning of cinematic techniques, and of the raw images that are cast onto the screen.

One of the major scholars on the subject to follow Hurley was John May, also a Jesuit priest, whose first publication on the subject of religion and film was *Film Odyssey* (1976) in collaboration with colleague Ernest Ferlita. Resulting from an undergraduate course, their work is an attempt to define the meaning of film in humanist, existential and psychotherapeutical terms, with the broader issue again being that of the individual's sense of self-worth in terms of his or her relationship to the community. This initial search for meaning was nominally in secular terms, examining films such as *Alice's Restaurant*, *Easy Rider*, and *Slaughterhouse-Five*,

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[139] *ibid*, 171-175. The use of the word "theology" obviously seems problematic in light of what has preceded. It is possible that Hurley is hoping to baptize this field as a new kind of 'elite." Or, it may just be more equivocation.

[140] *ibid*, chapter titles. Another suggestive theme is in the title of another book, Neil P. Hurley, *Soul in Suspense: Hitchcock's Fright and Delight* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1993). Hurley followed up in 1978 with a work devoted to the theme of liberation in cinema. While not directly theological, it was very much in line with the general ideas of liberation theology. Focusing in on this theme, Hurley was able to further refine the techniques. [Neil Hurley, *The Reel Revolution: A Film Primer on Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978)]. Hurley also refers to an ominous statement by *Time* magazine in its review of the 1976 remake of *King Kong*: "*Time* described the destructive binge of the forty-foot ape atop Manhattan's World Trade Center 'as a projection of Western fears of what might happen if the Third World should develop its potential power and strike back." (p. xi).

although May's own background was primarily theological, and many of their conclusions are appropriate within the definitions of religiosity given within this thesis. Deriving a significant part of their own thesis from the writings of Viktor Frankl, one of their main concerns was the issue of hope in the face of suffering. Although May's own background perspective is still largely theological, the authors explain their loyalty to critical analysis:

> Our assumption throughout these analyses of films of quest has been that the discussion of meaning is best carried out in terms of the language of the film itself...aside from the question of visual imagery related to journey, we have discussed contemporary cinema's view of man's search for meaning in terms of composition of frame, of movement of the camera and movement within the frame, of types of visual continuity (i.e. narrative), and finally of editing.[141]

Although at first glance it may appear that the authors are using cinema merely as a tool towards expanding on a pre-existing theology,[142] they earlier assert that:

> The director of film like the painter is of course a critic of culture too: He criticizes by creating a whole, though not wholly, new world of the imagination; the cultural commentator analyzes the constituent parts of the artistic whole so that the viewer will be aided in experiencing and evaluating for himself the world of the work. We go directly to the painting or the film, not of course to stay with the artist's world, but to allow his vision to direct ours to discover anew life's meaning, even if we must in Shakespeare's words, 'by indirections find directions out' (*Hamlet* II:i:65).[143]

If their words here are sincere, it is rather impossible to remain within the confines of a prior agenda. The authors divide films into three dimensions of the journey: the personal, the social, and the religious. They note, however, that these are not truly separate domains, but are only aspects that may "predominate" in any given film; what ties all of the films together is that

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[141] Ferlita and May, 151.

[142] Melanie Wright makes the general charge that for scholars with any tendency whatsoever towards an apologetic perspective, "films exist to provide the theologian with yet more grist to his or her mill" [Wright, 14f], despite her own status of being a member of a Faculty of *Divinity*. Many of her statements are similarly subject to caution.

[143] Ferlita and May, 14.

"implicit in every film are the three questions basic to man's quest, rooted in human consciousness: 'Where do I come from? What am I? Where am I going?"[144]

The diversity of May's follow-up, a collection of essays edited with Michael Bird,[145] demonstrates the almost-necessary merging of the fields of Theology and Religious Studies; the book also gathers contributions from scholars in the disciplines of English, Cultural Studies, and Film Criticism.[146] However, it is also worth considering some of the major defects to May's own analyses, perhaps having moved in retrograde from his writings in *Film Odyssey*, in that they present a suitable target for the kind of academic critique that the authors would normally endorse. For example, May restates in his introduction to this volume that analyses of films must use the language of film, and should also be based on the harmony of the whole of structure and content. And yet, there are signs that May as well his colleagues are taking great risks in asserting particular themes that do not, in the end, honour that film language, and some rather careless misunderstandings result. In his analysis of the demon figure in American cinema,[147] May's folly here is in expecting the treatment of the demon in *The Exorcist* to follow a particular theological model, not to mention a conventional one. The horror and comedic genres deserve specialized treatments in the search for their religious meanings, and it seems that May's typology is inadequate for the task.

While the meanings in such films are not always insignificant, a scholar sets himself up for raised eyebrows when making the following kinds of complaints: "[*The Exorcist*] strains

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[144] *ibid*, 13.

[145] May and Bird (1982).

[146] Neil Hurley also contributes chapters on "The Cinematic Transformations of Jesus," and essays on the directors Charlie Chaplin and Lina Wertmüller.

[147] May and Bird, 79-100.

credibility so severely that one need not be particularly attuned to religious sensibility to be offended."[148] May attributes the main theological defect of the film to "the presentation of a personalized demon,"[149] missing the whole point of the artistic usage of personification and other forms of metaphor. While May is not generally blind to these concepts, he is strangely prone in this essay to taking the metaphors literally. His main complaint is that,

> [t]he film's most reprehensible omission from a theological perspective...is its failure to create a world in which there is any evil at all apart from the demon's possession of Regan. The child's mother...curses like a sailor, and Father Karras doubts the existence of his faith. Yet neither qualifies as evil. The former we are asked to accept as reasonable lamentation...and the latter could obviously be taken in the world of film as the understandable penalty for Jesuit addiction to fine Scotch. (Father Karras actually makes the ultimate Christian sacrifice; he gives his troubled life for Regan's freedom: the film's saddest expectation of credulity. Karras' doubt is infinitely more deserving of life than Regan's insipid adolescence.)[150]

May's decision to attempt the critique of an issue with which one is personally involved is not necessarily a bad one, but it seems that he is unaware of the conflict. As well, although the issue is debatable, the author's use of the phrase "deserving of life" seems questionable in the context of Christian theology. May also rather quickly establishes an *assumption* that the mother's cursing, etc., is meant to be taken by the audience as acceptable, rather than as a source for the audience's own critique: in contrast to Hurley, May does not seem eager to give much credit to the reader. The author may also be expecting that bad things *should* more explicitly happen to those who are explicitly "bad people;" perhaps this is one of the more obvious examples of asking a film to provide resolutions for a personal, most likely psychological, need. One hopes,

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[148] *ibid*, 84.

[149] *ibid*, 83.

[150] *ibid*, 83f.

at least, that May did not take the film's portrayal of Jesuits and Scotch as literally descriptive on the director's part.

In the last two decades, studies on religion and film have been abundant. A few of the scholars have achieved continuity with those who came before them, whereas others make either explicit or implicit claims to be "pioneering."[151] Significant contributions of general analyses of religion and film are given by Joel Martin and Conrad Ostwalt, Robert Johnston, Clive Marsh and Gaye Ortiz, John Lyden, and Craig Detweiller. More specialized studies have been conducted by Christopher Deacy, Christopher Gittings, Douglas Brode, Bruce Forbes, and Jennifer Porter. Themes covered by this group include Christologies and other Judeo-Christian issues in film, the apocalyptic imagination, film noir, sexuality and gender-construction, and the larger phenomena of Disney and Star Trek, for instance. These studies are situated variously in relation to the sub-disciplines of Religion and Popular Culture, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Film Studies, as well as to some degree, Theology.

The discussion of what scholarship has had to say specifically about *Canadian* film can now proceed, still within context of the perspectives and methodologies as described above.

[151] Such is Melanie Wright, who in 2007, cites Margaret Miles' work from 1998, yet claims that her (Wright's) book "evolved independently." (Wright, *Religion and Film*, 29).

Chapter 2: The World of Canadian Film: Themes and Historical Context

What follows is an introduction to Canadian film history, essentially focusing on the early period from just before the turn of the 20th century through the mid-1920s. The subsequent eras of film have been more extensively dealt with in the standard literature, particularly as regards the history and influence of the National Film Board of Canada. While the NFB years are hardly insignificant, a large part of the answer to the question of whence Canadian film received its religious/philosophical foundations derives from its earliest history. It may thus be appropriate here to explain some of the ways in which the approach of this thesis diverges from some of the usual paths. A common procedure within this area of scholarship is to mention the first decades of Canadian film history mainly in passing, acknowledging the respective context but still somehow leaving an impression that the NFB developed in an artistic and historical vacuum, and to misunderstand its influence, especially that of its first director, John Grierson. It is indisputable that Grierson's specialization and artistic flair within the documentary industry were formative to many aspects of subsequent Canadian culture, but it is suggested here, somewhat cautiously, that some elements of the feature film industry have developed *in spite of* the NFB, particularly under the leadership of Grierson.[152] The relationship discussed earlier between politics, commerce and culture is frequently on the minds of Canadian artists and of the general public, but also ever-present is some ambivalence, resulting largely from the broader cultural

[152] As much of the large body of commentary on the NFB explains, Grierson remained influential over the industry until and subsequent to his death in 1972 [C.f. for instance Gary Evans, *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991)].

However, as Ted Magder points out, Grierson himself was opposed to the whole idea of Canadian feature film, and ensured that the board would never be "a challenge or antidote to Hollywood's screen dominance in Canada." [Ted Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 50].

confrontations with authority. The intent here is to look first at some of the non-institutional influences on Canadian film, to give a sense of what lies beneath the principles commonly recognized as inherent to Canadian film.

A second departure in this work is that, rather than describing the history of Canadian film in terms of a linear progression from the beginnings to the modern period, it is posited that the characteristics of modern Canadian film descend through a line parallel, rather than subsequent to, the Canadian film's respective period of evolution during the 40s, 50s and 60s. The analogue of descent here is admittedly imperfect; it presumes that there were two lines of descent from the earliest period, and the one that leads to the Canadian films discussed here involves either a delayed or a silent generation. In general, though, the point here is that the development of modern film has arisen in the context of an ongoing tension with institutional authority, and hence involves a slow rebuttal of many of the industrial and cultural premises on which the NFB's productions from the 40s through the 60s were based. Although the Canadian film industry has continued to depend on other government institutions,[153] for funding and for limited promotion, it has also since embraced a set of principles derived from its first few decades, from before there was a need for the Film Board. A fuller account of this assertion will follow below.

[153] A clarification: Telefilm Canada (formerly Canadian Film Development Corporation) is a funding/banking institution established to support the feature film industry. The National Film Board was established as and continues to be a production company. Magder's statement in the note above about the NFB may therefore seem a bit misleading in retrospect, but Magder's point is still valid; Grierson saw a Canadian feature film industry as redundant, believing that Hollywood could do a better job.

2.1 History

Peter Morris, one of the more holistic scholars on early Canadian film, tells us,

> Almost certainly the first Canadian to produce his own films was James S. Freer, a farmer from Brandon, Manitoba, who had purchased an Edison camera and projector [...]. By the Fall of 1897, he was filming scenes of life in Manitoba, including harvesting and the arrival of the CPR trains, and by April 1898 was on tour with his films in Britain [...]. Freer's tour was sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company[,] and his show, 'Ten Years in Manitoba' included not only movies but lectures on 'the value of agricultural pursuits in Canada...the richness of the Canadian soil and the large free grants of land which are given to emigrants by the Canadian government.'[154]

In retrospect, this may have been one of the defining moments in the Canadian intersection between politics, economy, and culture. The CPR had its own long and colourful narrative in becoming a cornerstone in the fulfillment of the goals of Confederation; although the company was a private syndicate, and only officially incorporated under Royal Assent the day after its founders' tender for construction had been approved, its interests as a corporation could not have been more naturally in line with the government's. British Columbia, having joined Confederation in 1871, had now been connected by railway to Manitoba and the other eastern Canadian provinces since 1886, but Alberta and Saskatchewan would not join the union until 1905. The CPR owned significant amounts of land in the latter provinces, and was able to use the natural gas it discovered in the prairies, for instance, to power some of its stations,[155] but in order for larger enterprises to be feasible – and bring revenue to the railway – the prairie provinces also

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[154] Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 30 [citing American film historian and producer Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture Through 1925* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1926), 88].

[155] "A Brief History," *Canadian Pacific*
http://www8.cpr.ca/cms/English/General+Public/Heritage/History/A+Brief+History.htm
Internet: Accessed July 2, 2009.

had to be colonized. With the railway already running coast-to-coast, it was thus financially worthwhile for the CPR to conduct a wide campaign for the purpose of attracting immigrants.

This was certainly of great benefit to government interests, both economically and politically. The colonization of the prairies with immigrants enticed by the CPR – effectively *selected* through the style of the advertising[156] – would almost guarantee a type of population that would later be essential to bringing Alberta and Saskatchewan into Confederation. The CPR had already hired overseas agents to promote Canada as a destination, but both the technology and the art of film gave the promotions a completely new power. In 1901, the Federal government

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[156] According to Christopher Gittings, *Canadian National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2002), one of the major aspects of the films produced for this purpose was a "colonizing gaze" on the part of filmmakers, although inversely to the usual pattern. The unspoken idea was to attract like-minded (essentially meaning, in this context, *white* and *English*) settlers to the parts of Canada that had not already been thus colonized. Gittings suggests that the primary elements of this colonizing gaze have continued, notwithstanding some of the recent attempts by minority filmmakers to "return the gaze" [Gittings, *passim*]. Gittings also remarks upon "the racist and sexist foundations of [the] Canadian nation" (32). There is little evidence for denying the truth of the latter. It may be more significant, however, to recognize the paradox: Canadians, even white ones, have welcomed colonization by others. Although it was "white" British and French settlers who originally displaced the aboriginal Canadian culture at the time, there were always new waves of British, French, as well as others such as German and Ukrainian settlers arriving with the same colonizing gaze upon the 'new' land. (Thanks to Patricia Dold for the addition to the list of the Ukrainians.) This is obviously a sensitive point to make regarding these waves of immigration, but it is generally a part of Canadian pop psychology that our national identity is a blank slate *in perpetuum*. The arguments over a cultural mosaic vs. a melting pot are separate but should also not be decided so quickly. Part of Gittings' point may have to do mainly with how this has played into a political/corporate agenda.

It seems legitimate to say that John Grierson as a Scot himself is a prime example; we might distinguish the colonizing efforts of the "English" from the "Scottish", but we can see a form of self-colonization in the ways and reasons that those such as Alexander Graham Bell are claimed as Canadian. Without taking sides on any of the controversies over the invention of the telephone, it was, for most of his life, only during the summers that Bell lived in Canada – after arriving at the age of 23. For the record, he was never naturalized as a Canadian citizen – as opposed to receiving American citizenship in 1882, subsequent to which he is said – at least in American accounts – to have resisted the label of a "hyphenated American" [Robert V. Bruce, *Bell: Alexander Bell and the Conquest of Solitude*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990]. Bell spent his final years at Baddeck, Cape Breton, naming his estate *Beinn Bhreagh* in memory of his home in the Scottish Highlands. Ironically, Bell should rightfully claim the distinction of being an honorary Canadian for the work he did years before the invention of the telephone in learning and transcribing the Mohawk language at the First Nations reserve south of Brantford. The pattern in general is repeated throughout Canadian culture, as will be demonstrated below.

However, it is perhaps not so much the consistent reception of the "colonizing gaze" that defines Canadian history or culture, but rather the perennial ways in which that gaze has been resisted from the beginning. The ongoing tension is primary as well, but it is to be argued that the this gaze has frequently been granted more power than it deserves, especially if we wish to grant more agency to ourselves.

would get more enthusiastically *on board*, as it were, sponsoring Freer to conduct a second tour of his films in Britain. Other means of selling Canada as a destination might perhaps not have been as persuasive; it would also not have hurt matters that the film tour itself could convince potential immigrants that Canada had well-established systems of commerce and culture.[157]

Thus was born a symbiotic relationship between politics, commerce, and art – a relationship that would in later years be imitated, although rather imperfectly, by the NFB. Throughout the ensuing years, each of the participants in the relationship would maintain iconic status unto themselves, in terms of how Canadian identity would in the future be defined, while simultaneously legitimizing the mythological power of the others. While commerce may be instinctively seen by Canadians as an antagonist to government involvement in the arts, and the Canadian arts themselves are sometimes downgraded to the status of a hobby, one that is only reluctantly subsidized by commerce and government as a make-work project, the nature of the synergetic effort between all three is instructive. It is this synergy itself that defines a great deal of our cinematic history, and the principle has in turn been transformative upon commerce and government. A form of religious attitude, as is noted further below, can also be seen behind the corporate/political/artistic bonds: in terms of the principles further developed below, it is religious in the sense that it is inherently linked to a deeper Canadian way of being with the world and with the community. The ongoing relationship is hardly meant to be underestimated here, despite what seem to be some of the modern efforts to restructure the relationship and to reject some of the self-destructive premises of dependency.

[157] Morris, 32.

Canadian film would from the beginning, though, be an industry interrupted,[158] even as each of its elements laid in waiting for glimpses of spring. As Freer seems to have had no contemporary Canadian peers, nor a group of mentors by which to expand his technique – the major entrepreneurs and artistic adventurers had already begun going south of the border – his second tour, although containing new footage, was largely seen by his British audiences as a rerun. The CPR henceforward began to contract British and American authors and film companies to produce a more diverse, adventurous and therefore enticing collection of films to be shown to potential settlers. It is unclear if much of an effort was made by the CPR to encourage prospective Canadian filmmakers, but their final choice involved an additional bonus, one that would also please the government and other business interests: these foreign companies could guarantee distribution and markets within their respective countries.[159] This specific arrangement regarding distribution would in itself become a model for the subsequent century of relations between filmmakers, corporate sponsors, and the hosting theatres – the guiding economic principles behind it would eventually lead to the kind of deals we see repeated today, giving Canadian theatre-owners an incentive to allow foreign management of distribution.[160] If

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[158] With a handful of exceptions to follow, some fascinating material on the history of the *presentation* of cinema in Canada has not been included; neither were considered various films produced by companies that were Canadian in name and location only. Interspersed throughout history have been the "quota quickies," produced by nominally Canadian companies to fulfill enough requirements in order to screen their own films in Canada. These latter are not unworthy of discussion, but most larger works on Canadian film go into more detail on them. Gordon Sparling's "Canadian Cameo" series in the '30s is also said to have been influential, but as vignettes they averaged 10 minutes apiece and were mainly marketed (again) to potential British immigrants, and so they are not considered here.
["Gordon Sparling," *The Film Reference Library: The Canadian Film Encyclopedia*, http://www.filmreferencelibrary.ca/index.asp?layid=46&csid1=65&navid=46 Internet: Accessed July 19, 2009. C.f. also Morris, 230ff].

[159] Morris, 46. One such American company was James Curwood's (discussed below).

[160] When this form of convenience was transferred to feature films industry, it would be argued that artists would benefit from the arrangement – the usual corporate lack of foresight at best.

we accept the application of the word "religion" to original communal arrangement between the corporate participants, then this kind of deal is clearly the rejection of those religious principles.

In the meantime, as Freer moved towards retirement, the American and British feature-film directors were also given unimpeded – and largely uncompetitive – access to the Canadian landscape in which to set their own narratives. In granting this access, Canada also gifted foreign directors with the proprietary rights to define our mythology. A prime example is the first fictional film to feature the Northwest Mounted Police, an American production titled *Cattle Thieves* in 1909. The extent of such external definition of Canadian symbolism might surprise even the most discerning of patriots. Modern critic Hal Erickson gives the following summary:

> *Cattle Thieves* stars the Northwestern Mounted Police, who are introduced in this Kalem one-reeler. Despite its Canadian setting, the film is essentially a Western, beginning with the clichéd opener: A [M]ountie sergeant saves his girlfriend from a lecherous half-breed, who promptly swears revenge. Gathering together a band of henchmen, the half-breed steals the cattle belonging to the heroine's father. When the sergeant catches them in the act, the villains overpower him and leave him dangling by his wrists from a tree. Meanwhile, the girl alerts the rest of the Mounties, who get their men and save their sergeant.[161]

Morris comments further on the reasons for the popularity and success of such films produced by foreign companies on Canadian soil:

> That the films were made should perhaps not be surprising. The Americans had no 'northwoods,' no French-Canadian lumberjacks and, most importantly, no romantic law-and-order frontier police force comparable to the North West Mounted Police. It was perhaps inevitable that Hollywood would choose to exploit these differences; if

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[161] Hal Erickson, "Review of *The Cattle Thieves* (Kalem, USA: 1909)," *AllMovie*, http://www.allmovie.com/work/cattle-thieves-236562 Internet: Accessed June 8, 2009.

The film's status as "first" of this kind is noted by Morris, 40. If Erickson's summary is accurate, Canadians can at least be glad that these early instances of inherent racism and sexism were not of our own making, although there will obviously be many sad episodes of in own productions in times to come. Other forms of chauvinism were also present, of course, in the early films. The same company (Kalem) also produced *The Girl Scout*, *The Canadian Moonshiners*, and *Fighting the Iroquois in Canada* (Morris, 247), all rife with potential for cliché. In agreement with Gittings, it is acknowledged here that many Canadian filmmakers in subsequent years fell prey, mostly unwittingly, to the same habits of institutionalized bigotries. We might be more optimistic, however, about some Canadian distinctiveness, and it may not be accurate for Gittings to suggest that it is only minority filmmakers who have successfully returned the original colonizing gaze.

there had been also a different perception at work in Canada it might not have mattered. *As it was, Hollywood's image of Canada quickly became the world's image. And, it might be argued, Canada's image of itself.*[162]

Again, not only were the symbols of Canada determined on our behalf from the outside, but Canada also abdicated the right to make manifest those symbols through our own mythologies. Another key word in Morris' statement, one that will continue to be deconstructed below, is "image": the visual image is what apparently instructs the understanding of reality for Canadians and likewise creates their self-identity. While such things as the uniforms of the Northwest Mounted Police were not invented by Hollywood, there have been other subtle ways in which American actors and directors have determined the "composure" of the characters.[163]

One of the major drains on the potential realization of a Canadian film industry, beginning in the earliest years, would be the wholesale export of talent. It cannot be denied that the American film industry, in Hollywood and elsewhere, was already a well-oiled machine, and was creative

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[162] Morris, 41 (emphasis added). The author later elaborates:

> Four pre-World War I companies which produced fiction films were to make somewhat more of an impact on the outside world, even if the films themselves seem hardly distinguishable from those Canadian content films produced by American companies. Though the companies argued for, and announced, 'Canadian production of Canadian stories,' by and large they were to accept without question the American definition of what was a Canadian story. Perhaps this should not be surprising. American personnel were heavily involved in all four of the Canadian companies active in fiction film production before the war: the British American Film Company of Montreal (incorporated in July 1912), the Canadian Bioscope Company of Halifax (incorporated in November 1912), the Conness Till Film Company of Toronto (incorporated in April 1914), and the All-Red Feature Company of Windsor (incorporated in July 1914) [Morris, 47].

[163] The legend that "the Mountie always gets his man" derives from a comment in Montana's *Fort Benton Record*. ["Force's Legacy Endures," *Toronto Star*, March 5, 2005]. Almost all subsequent portrayals of the NWMP/RCMP were American, until the parodies of the American "Sergeant Renfrew" film/radio series by the *Royal Canadian Air Farce*. In the years between the film based on Ralph Connors' novel *Corporal Cameron of the Northwest Mounted Police* (1912) and the television series *Bordertown* (1989-91) and *Due South* (1994-98), non-comedic Canadian representations are scarce.

Carry on Sergeant (1922) is often but dubiously cited as being a Canadian film; it was based on the work of and directed by an Indian-born Englishman, and starred British and American actors. However, the assistant-director was Canadian, and it was filmed at the Trenton, Ontario studio [c.f. n. 171 below], and at Kingston. It is indeed about soldiers from Hamilton, but the protagonist is played by Hugh Buckler, another Brit. ["Carry on Sergeant," *The Film Reference Library: The Canadian Film Encyclopedia*, http://www.filmreferencelibrary.ca/index.asp?layid=46&csid1=65&navid=46 Internet: Accessed July 19, 2009.

enough to deserve the international attention it received. There was nothing unpatriotic about the enthusiastic consumption of American films by Canadian audiences. What is unfortunate, though, is that the talent to which Canada gave birth could not be nurtured, and thus employed, within our own borders. Any Canadian who was interested in an acting or production career would have no choice but to emigrate to the United States. This was of course a circle of self-fulfillment, and there is no shortage of scapegoats in hindsight, from the government to corporate interests, both of whom had much to gain through the policies of regional specialization. Too often a supposed "lack of enterprise" on the part of Canadians is blamed, but the very fact of the evidence itself belies this belief. All levels of participation by Canadians in Hollywood depended upon a remarkable sense of "enterprise" on the part of those Canadians – in fact, the act of emigration itself was demonstrative of a general spirit of adventure that occasionally outshone the biographies of those who had the convenience of being born in California at the time.

In any case, it is worth including here the full list of exports as given by Morris, as it shows the precise gravity of Canada's loss and America's gain:

> It was in these years that Canada lost many of those who might have helped establish and sustain a film industry. Among them were pioneer directors Sidney Olcott (a key contributor to the development of the Kalem Company), Allan Dwan (a major film director in a sixty-year career from 1909, including the classic Douglas Fairbanks films), Mack Sennett, and lesser names such as Del Henderson, Harry Edwards, John Murray Anderson, Joseph De Grasse, John Robertson, Reginald Barker, J. Gordon Edwards, and Henry MacRae. Jack Warner (born London, Ontario), Al Christie (born London, Ontario), and Louis B. Mayer (who emigrated to New Brunswick from Russia with his parents) were three producers who made significant contributions to the growth of Hollywood. The names of actors and actresses are too numerous to list comprehensively, but they include Mary Pickford (and her brother and sister, Jack and Lottie), Marie Dressier, Florence Lawrence, Lew Cody, Fay Wray, Walter Pidgeon, Ruby Keeler, Pauline Garon, Walter Huston [grandfather of Anjelica], Gene Lockhart, Beatrice Lillie, Nell Shipman, Ned Sparks, Berton Churchill, and Norma Shearer. Others include scriptwriters W. Scott Darling, Nell Shipman [deliberately listed twice], and George White, art director Richard Day, photographers James Crosby, Alvin

> Knechtel, and sound engineer Douglas Shearer. Talented Canadians it would seem, made a far greater contribution to Hollywood than they did to Canada's own films.[164]

Canadians can, and should take pride in the knowledge that early Hollywood would not have been what it was without these Canadian contributions, although there are reasons to lament what might have been on our own soil. At the very least, the exploration of our artistic and philosophical contributions, especially in the light of a comparison and contrast to the nature of the Canadian film industry, would be helpful. For instance, it might be a natural assumption that the Canadian artists and directors simply "became" American, as yet another demonstration of reverse-colonization, but this is still an assumption, albeit an admittedly tenacious one.[165]

A cynical view is that the current state of the Canadian film industry has not progressed beyond the pragmatics and tensions of government and commerce, nor have Canadians demonstrated enough faith in their own art, professed enough interest in Canadian culture, nor advertised their films with enough enterprise and vigour to change the situation. Accordingly, what might be called a "sell-out" by multiple parties to American interests has determined subsequent and eternally recurring realities, from which we have been unable or unwilling to escape. We have certainly, albeit grudgingly, accepted the only-sometimes-written trade agreement that Canadian films will be "eligible" for international distribution – in exchange for the American industry's right to manage box-office distribution within our own borders – with the understanding that Canadian films first have to demonstrate an ability to fill the theatres.[166]

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[164] Morris, 28f.

[165] C.f. the latter half of n. 180 below.

[166] C.f. esp. Magder, 4, although these details are widely covered throughout the literature. According to Magder, this was an ongoing process that was solidified by the 1930's, but based on the evidence, the unwritten agreements may have been irrevocable far earlier. This was not only a problem with foreign control, and it should be noted that "vertical integration" in general was another major culprit. According

Such cynicism does not have a monopoly within Canadian culture, however, and an acceptance of reality does not necesssarily lead to the above forms of jaded conclusions. Although it is ultimately up to audiences to vote with their pocketbooks, the efforts of some Canadian directors and producers to bring audiences to the point of being willing to vote in this way should not be dismissed. We might thus proceed by viewing history in a way that acknowledges the moments of Canadian success: despite recurring setbacks, the makings of a Canadian film industry have never been completely dormant. The small but audacious efforts along the way, including the apparent "failures",[167] each managed to contribute in unique ways.

For example, the first Canadian *feature*-film companies began to appear in 1911, but for the most part they were either fronts, or they produced only documentary, educational or wildlife films, or were largely unsuccessful.[168] Still, even the front organizations managed to create a

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to Mary Vipond, the pattern began in the 1920's. [Mary Vipond, *The Mass Media in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1989), 32.].

However, the combination of the control and the vertical integration, according to Vipond, was of profound detriment. In 1923, *Famous Players Canada*, already a subsidiary of an American corporation, "bought out the Allen theatre chain, thus gaining control of the biggest and best movie theatres in the largest cities in Canada" [Vipond, 33; the Allen chain had been founded in 1906 by brothers Jules and Jay, their first theatre being in Brantford, Ont. (Morris, 246)]. The Canadian equivalent of the Anti-Trust department found this sale to be in violation of the law, but the law was nevertheless not enforced (*ibid*).

One might wish to be a bit vehement here in suggesting that as long as we ignore the history of such takeovers, we will be powerless when they recur in the present – precisely because we mistakenly believe that these takeovers are somehow a "new" thing.

[167] A particularly disheartening experience was had with both the agent and the distribution company of one of Canada's most prominent directors. It was desired that some kind of telephone or other form of interview could be secured, as well as permission for a limited, academic screening of his newest Award-winning film; it had already been released in Toronto and Vancouver, but no other Canadian venues were planned, and travel for this sole purpose was not feasible. The film had also already received international attention. The obstacles to an interview would be understandable, but under the circumstances just mentioned, it seems that the request for a viewing might have been granted.

The various commercial realities of the industry were already known to this author, but the experience should nevertheless be considered as a major failure on the part of the "system" – although it is impossible to know exactly where, and in whose office, the system broke down. To receive virtually no response from any of the parties involved, with the exception of one to say "we have forwarded your letters," is disturbing. The author will wait a bit longer before donning the arms and armour of a Don Quixote of CanFilm.

[168] Morris, 45f.

significant kind of buzz that would prime the following generation. At first, the only significant homegrown and successful efforts by Canadian film companies would be in the production of newsreels during the Great War; although the Americans and British were even managing some of these narratives, Canada was at least participating more actively in the process,[169] and the memories of these productions would also be formative in later years. There were certainly reasons for the general public to experience disappointment after each occasion of enthusiasm, especially among those who were providing the funding: it would be as common for the sponsors to lose their money on films honestly as it was for them to be swindled.[170] One of the first Canadian entrepreneurs with both the corporate sincerity and the personal faith to make significant waves was George Brownbridge, who is credited by Morris for establishing, after many false starts and failures, what would be later known as the first "Hollywood North" at Trenton, Ontario[171] in 1916. In the end, Brownbridge too would be financially and artistically beholden to American support, and he finally succumbed to the fatigue of feeling used.[172] And yet, the proverbs dictating that there is no success without prior failure, while perhaps trite, are especially true in Canadian film. If Brownbridge's one apparent weakness was perhaps some professional naïveté, he had a remarkable enthusiasm as well that would leave its mark.

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[169] *ibid*, 57ff.

[170] *ibid*, 63.

[171] *ibid*, 64. Although the location seems an unlikely one, Morris explains:

> Why Trenton was selected over other sites is a mystery. It was reasonably accessible to Toronto. It had a range of scenery including mountains, bush, and lakes within easy reach. But otherwise it had little to offer. The most likely reason is the sheer chance of one company building a studio there in 1916 and the same studio offering convenient facilities to a continuing series of film companies. The same kind of "chance" lay behind the growth of Hollywood: its growth as the movie capital was dependent more on circumstances than on deliberate choice [64].

[172] *ibid*, 78ff.

If Brownbridge had been a complete failure, it would have been several years longer than it was before someone tried again to make a go of the industry. The man who did make such an attempt, having benefited from the Brownbridge's priming of the public, was Ernest Shipman, Canada's first director of both national and international renown and success. Ernest[173] Shipman himself fulfills all of the requirements that critics could demand, in the sense of being Canadian-born, producing feature films in and about Canada, using Canadian talent, and maintaining the correspondence between setting and location. At the same time as also being a financial success in the United States, he was demonstrably patriotic towards his own country.[174] We can see in the promotions for his films that this patriotism was in turn of great value to the marketers, and was indeed capitalized upon: typical posters read, "Another Wonderful All-Canadian Picture."[175]

Along with his wife Nell Shipman, Ernest Shipman would admittedly do much work in conjunction with Hollywood, but even though he too would be eventually "force[d...] out into the cold" by American producers,[176] Ernest Shipman became what many scholars on the subject later refer to as the first of his kind in Canada – even those who nevertheless downplay his significance. The ultimate reason for his being "forced out" of the Hollywood crowd was the very sense of independence that prevented him from wanting to become part of the larger machine, and from "playing nice" with the major studios – who, again, controlled the theatre distribution. This independence, taken to the point of alienation – imposed both by self and by

[173] As per a reviewer's suggestion to compromise between convention and clarity, the names of Ernest and Nell Shipman are written in full on each occasion.

[174] If he had chosen to make it his mission, Ernest Shipman might easily have led a train of ex-patriots back to their homeland, although he did not yet have sufficient support on that home front, in the form of fellow directors, to justify the necessary persuasion. We can imagine him, though, at least in the early stages of his career, to have had the nerve to fulfill the promise through bluff and trickery.

[175] *ibid*, 122.

[176] *ibid*, 99.

others – might also be seen as a very Canadian trait, for better or for worse. Ernest Shipman was no iconoclast, though – he was an image-builder, not an image-breaker; he was not so much out to reject Hollywood values as he was simply confused by them.

It is in Ernest Shipman's work that we see some of the first hints of an actual application of the implicitly religious principles suggested above, regarding corporate/artistic cooperation. There is no real evidence that Ernest Shipman did not "play well with others", but he instead craved for a more organic working relationship, one that would allow room for something "more." The *content* of his films may not satisfy every critic's idea of what should be held as a Canadian ideal – this will be examined below – but his own explicit and verbal expressions of national pride may at least give cause for understanding his films in their appropriate context:

> With me, the making of pictures in Canada first appealed as a business, then it became a hobby, now I might fairly say it is a religion. I welcome the opportunity of addressing myself to the Canadian Clubs, believing that I find here perfect understanding from a movement founded for the purpose of quickening a Canadian national consciousness — the spirit which now finds expression not only in a new and distinctive note in Canadian literature, but in a demand for Canadian-made motion pictures, as real and free and wholesome as is Canadian life at its best.[177]

One can recognize some extravagance in Ernest Shipman's rhetoric – and even reduce its meaning to 'only rhetoric' – and still appreciate how contagious his enthusiasm might have been. While enthusiasm can sometimes have the opposite effect, the combination of Ernest Shipman's enthusiasm and his success would have been hard to argue with.[178] As for his "religion"

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[177] Ernest Shipman, "Address to the Canadian Club, London, Ontario, 1923." Quoted in Morris, 95.

[178] George Melnyk, in referring to the same speech, is far more pessimistic about the result:

> The cultural nationalism of morale-boosting speeches, such as Ernest Shipman's, is one thing; the efficacy of cultural nationalism as a force in a specific historical reality is something else. At this point, cultural nationalism was insufficient to sustain a Canadian feature film industry [George Melnyk, *One Hundred Years of Canadian Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 34f.]

It may be unfair to attack Melnyk's cynicism out of context – he does build up to his arguments – but it seems fair to say that the brightness or darkness of outlook is a *hermeneutical*, and not just personal,

comment, the qualification of "might fairly" can be acknowledged without taking away from the possibility of his earnestness.[179] Ernest Shipman's powerful charisma was tied into his reputation, then as well as posthumously, as a "rogue." Although there are conventional reasons to question the spiritual sincerity of such a character, Ernest Shipman's religion might at least be judged for its *cinematic* fruits. Although it is not necessarily suggested that the "quickening...consciousness", or the virtues of reality, freedom and wholesomeness are significant markers of the religious, the combination of all of them together do seem to signify something more than conventional morality. One of the fruits of Shipman's religion will be reviewed more directly in the following chapter.

The years immediately subsequent to Ernest Shipman's work seem rather barren. In Morris' filmography through 1939, the first Canadian feature film (using the first definition) to deal with themes other than the stereotypes of Canadian identity or landscape seems to be Del Lord's *What Price Vengeance?* in 1936, except that it turns out to have been one of the several "Quota

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choice. This latter may be a tautology in itself, but what is at stake is more than the obvious problem of the rosy/murky tint of one's spectacles. A Hobbesian view of life, when held by those in any kind of authority or leadership, is guaranteed to be self-fulfilling and to bring down upon us the *Leviathan* [*double-entendre* intentional]. In a separate review of two other books on Canadian cinema [see William Beard; Eugene P. Walz in bibliography] Melnyk writes,

> Canada may be a large country physically, but its cinema is a minor player on the international stage. Because Canada's theatrical screens are completely dominated by American film product, Canadian audiences are largely absent from their own cinematic culture. Screen time for Canadian films in Canada varies from a low of one per cent in English Canada to a high of ten per cent in Quebec. During the 1990s the combined figure was about three per cent for the whole country [George Melnyk, "Book Review Essay: Reflections on Canadian Cinema", *American Review of Canadian Studies* March 2005:145].

The facts are certainly "sorry" ones, as he subsequently calls them, but there is a sort of *Borgian* (*Trek*, not Marcus) "Resistance is Futile" tone to Melnyk's *100 Years*; he claims to seek the "critical voice" in Canadian film, but finds it generally lacking. He is not alone, for example, in choosing to see the movie *Black Robe* as a reinforcement instead of a critique of white hegemonic structures, one must wonder about the clarity of his lens. Of course, this same problem is encountered when seeking religious themes or motives in the corporation or cinematic products of Walt Disney. (c.f. Bruce Forbes and Douglas Brode, vs. Schweizer and Mazur). In comparison, Gittings is seen as having been far less bitter, so perhaps it is a difference between pessimism and cynicism, Gittings representing the former.

[179] The "importance" of this word has not gone unnoticed.

Quickies" being produced throughout the era.[180] From one perspective, the movement created by Ernest Shipman ended with his own professional decline around 1926, and then remained more or less dormant (but not at all "comatose") until the 1960s, notwithstanding a handful of exceptions.[181] In 1939 the National Film Board of Canada was established under the essentially exclusive oversight of John Grierson. Between then and the mid-1960s, Grierson perfected the Canadian art of the documentary, which was what would for a long time be held internationally as synonymous with Canadian film in general. As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, Grierson's influence was not inconsequential, but because the focus here is onon *feature* film, we may now look deeper into what was happening culturally and politically in Canada during the first eras of film as described above. It is the belief here that the modern Canadian film industry picks up where Ernest Shipman left off, and that the journey of the intervening years of film production took place on a separate, if parallel, track.

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[180] To clarify, the system of quotas was put in place by the British, but it applied to the current and former colonies as well. Del Lord is essentially another Canadian export, but at least he went to work for fellow ex-pat Mack Sennett's comedy department. Lord is credited with creating the comic style of, and directing, the *Three Stooges* series during those same years. He has over 200 film credits to his name as director alone. ["Del Lord," *The Internet Movie Database*, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0520419/ Internet: Accessed July 10, 2009].

Slapstick comedy is of course an outgrowth of the *Vaudeville* style, which as noted below was apparently scarce in Canada. The fact of the overabundance of Canadian comedians who have gone south to create their own particular niche – starting with Sennett and still continuing long past Akroyd and Levy, deserves its own special study. While there has been no shortage of commentary on the fact of their Canadian status, their influence is truly remarkable in terms of the southward colonization.

[181] In the main body of Morris' work, he says regarding the 1930s, "Only in the documentary did the Canadian approach survive and even then only in an impure form" [Morris 241].

2.2 Themes and Context

In the *Introduction* was provided a technical definition of the Canadian films under consideration: that the director self-identified as a Canadian, and that either the larger setting or the main characters were portrayed as, if not necessarily by, Canadians. A new set of qualifications that might serve as a definition for Canadian film of a different sort may now be considered, a family of characteristics based on a distinct style and content in comparison to the larger corpus of international cinema. When given a framework of such characteristics to watch for, one can speculate that it might not take long for even a lay critic to be able to recognize a film as Canadian, in the same way that someone with a musical ear and some rudimentary training can quickly learn to discern Haydn from Mozart.[182]

The conjecture that the source of any film can be recognized as such through the film's qualities alone is somewhat more difficult to prove than in the case of music, and perhaps must rely mainly on a thought experiment. For the critic to detect a Canadian accent, identify physical landmarks or have prior familiarity with the actors, for instance, would defeat the purpose of the challenge. It would be necessary to imagine that a film could be presented to that critic stripped of such explicit signs of Canadian origin. If one decided to mute the sound, photoshop the landscape throughout, and, needless to say, remove the credits, it is possible that an expert might

[182] The differences between national cinemas are often as subtle, although there are some genres more obvious than others. In classical music there are often technical and aural means of distinguishing the products of French, English, Italian, Russian and German composers, for instance. The risk of category issues in the analogue is also noted; however, apples and oranges *may* legitimately be compared within the category of fruit, and the problem parallel to comparing American apples to Canadian oranges (admittedly unlikely) does not arise as often as one might presume.

Within each of the national corpora, there is also a great range of variation. The works of Atom Egoyan, David Cronenberg, Denys Arcand, and Patricia Rozema are also somewhat discernable from each other, but there is enough holding them together that we can still speak of a unity. The reader should not *assume* that Canadian film is referred to here as the relative *Mozart* of international cinema...

still detect certain traits, whether in the apparent plot, timing, body language, stage direction, lighting, or other such artistic tools, as uniquely Canadian. One might even remove the dialogue and still discern the philosophy of the film as well. This is speculation, of course, and even if the test could feasibly be performed, it would be a rather dry experience. While it might provide the ultimate evidence of a unique Canadian style, we must be content with the attempt to combine an analysis of these non-verbal cues with the higher levels of implicit themes.

An additional *caveat* regarding stereotypes, though, is that they are oft-recurring nuisances even with the realms of criticism and scholarship. The pre-existing clichés about Canadian identity have quite often taken on a new existence as a set of logical premises regarding the styles and morals of Canadian film. These stereotypes will be dealt with in turn, but it is worth offering a warning in the meantime that there is a rather high potential for circular reasoning: "Because we know the director is Canadian, we must assume that this is what he meant for the symbol to represent" – and vice versa. The flip-side of the presence of stereotyping is one's position coming in to the debate on the apparent reinforcement of stereotypes. Irony within the *portrayal* of clichés is not always perceived – a perceptual weakness, perhaps ironically, among many if not most (modern) cynics. There is as well a frequent cynicism which is not only too quick to prosecute films for the perceived offense,[183] but this cynicism also falls prey to the notion that anything that is cliché is necessarily untrue.

What is intended here, rather, is to present the set of characteristics that critics have collectively attributed to Canadian film, and to separately but concurrently discuss the evolution of any lingering stereotypes. The larger implications of how critics as well as filmmakers work with, or react to or against the clichés in general, are worthy of special treatment, but are largely

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[183] The meanings of either offense or offence are options here.

set aside. The task of sorting out issues of Canadian identity, both actual and stereotypical, is necessarily long and winding; it is hoped that the justification for this will be self-evident.

Two of the most prominent traits recognized in Canadian film are given by Bruce Elder:

> It is something of a cliché that Canadian art tends to take on a realistic, often documentary character. We see this in our cinema, for example, in the prevalence of the tendency to formulate social purposes for our films.[184]

As stated, the formulation of social purposes is just one example of the documentary character, but it is also a distinct trait, and it is perceptive of Elder to link the two. Elder takes the "cliché" "seriously", though, relating the realism and the sense of social purpose to a set of philosophical and political and religious traditions which had begun their evolution in pre-Confederation history; namely, to the intellectual and pragmatic relationships that Canadian thinkers, amateur and professional, have maintained with the concepts of dualism, idealism, and Calvinism. The significance of these connections is initially revealed in the fact that what is commonly treated in a "documentary" fashion by Canadian feature film – only sometimes between the lines – is the evolution of the national identity itself – an evolution that involves, and is portrayed by means of, a series of political and cultural events and achievements in Canadian history. If one may speculate that most audiences generally interpret films through the lens of their collective socio-historical development, then it seems all the more true in Canada.

While it would be rash to claim that Canadians audiences are generally more philosophical than elsewhere, what may still be true is that we do tend to view and interpret films rather *self-consciously*.[185] In a broad sense, then, the protagonists and their companions in Canadian film,

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[184] Bruce Elder, *Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1989), 1. Elder's language throughout is suggestive of deeply religious implications, but while Elder discusses religious influence, he focuses more on the implications of that influence to secular interests. Much of what is labeled here as "religious" is only implicit in Elder's work.

whether friend or foe, are far better understood and empathized with if they can be interpreted in the context of the various cultural and historical archetypes of the Canadian collective unconscious.[186] This would be the case even were the archetypes themselves to be exposed as clichés, whether "true" or "false." Clichés are, in any case, not infrequently self-fulfilling.[187]

There are generally close bonds between the acts of thinking historically, religiously, and artistically; a familiarity with one cannot help but to inform one's comfort with the others. The philosophical questions of epistemology, which form a significant aspect of Elder's position, will also link what was said above about "implicit" or "invisible" religion to the various aspects of Canadian identity, and to how all of this plays out in our national cinema. Elder implies a particularly Canadian means by which epistemology is approached by artists, and in the process he suggests an identifiably Canadian exegetical method through which critics and scholars

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[185] Perhaps this is the place to clarify a problem of comparison; it is unfortunately true that audiences of Canadian films are often comprised of a majority of "artsy" and "scholarly" types, and we might want to ensure that when we make comparisons, they are made with equivalent audiences elsewhere. One of the earlier arguments, although it was asserted rather than really justified, was that art and commercial films in Canada are on a spectrum. The belief here is still that even if the Canadian films have as yet only a limited, "critically inclined" audience, this is not because of the nature of the movies but essentially of the distribution system. Canadian films *are* very much accessible to a general public, and are potentially far more effective at communicating to all levels of society without "down-talking" than are American "Art" films. Thus, the basic comparisons throughout are still retained. Canadian films should obviously not be compared to the category of American blockbuster action and adventure movies either.

[186] In this context, "collective" does not necessarily mean "unified", but the debatable nature of using the phrase here is acknowledged. As well, some implications of Jung's idea of the collective unconscious might have been mentioned above in the family definition of religion, but the path necessary in order to take up the correlated idea of the *mystical* is distinct from the intention of the present work.

[187] Thomas King, the renowned aboriginal Canadian author, gave a recent talk at St. Thomas University [John McKendy Memorial Lecture on Narrative, sponsored by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Narrative, October 21, 2009], in which he emphasized the point that for the purposes of what actually affects people's lives, "all stories are true", or that "it doesn't matter whether a story is true or not; what matters is that it is believed". At least two audience members were put off by this, but the larger point may be crucial. King was explaining that it did not matter that the narrative of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was untrue, only that it was believed. The antidote to that untruth would not have been the "true" story, but rather a more effective one.

interpret film. While one can barely scratch the surface of the deeper philosophical and theological traditions engaged in by Elder, a few of his points are worth considering.

The Canadian form of dualism that was originally present among early settlers, according to Elder, was a result of a "Common Sense Philosophy" which not only "dominate[d] the classrooms of our universities around the time of Confederation, but [...] was also widely disseminated from pulpits, through magazines and through newspapers." More specifically, it was held as "common sense" that "reality is made up of mental stuff and physical stuff entirely different from each other." However, the confrontation with this dualism would lead to a conflict for "thoughtful people", namely "how consciousness can really know nature." [188]

The latter question was of course hardly unique to Canadians – just one particular line of response to the theories of Descartes involved the progression of cognitive and material theories from Locke through Berkeley and Hume. Elder suggests, however, that there was an especially Canadian resolution to the question. Instead of addressing the issue in abstract, conceptual terms, as had been attempted by the English philosophers, the art of the image served for Canadians as more of an immediate aid to understanding the relationship between perception and reality. In terms of the kind of image involved, Elder says that the expected quality was to be "as accurate a representation of nature as possible, while still affording some scope for human expression."[189] It may be noted that the play between "accuracy" and "human expression" within the production of the artistic image quite clearly mirrors the play between the elements of the original question, i.e. between the external reality as it exists theoretically, and the conscious interpretation of it.

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[188] Elder, 1.

[189] *ibid*, 2. Elder's thoughts on the image have been anticipated above, and will remain a recurring theme; some repetition and restatement of his ideas are inevitable, although hopefully not redundant. The obvious echoes of McLuhan are acknowledged, but Elder's take on the issue remains somewhat unique.

There is no end to the potential for continuous self-reference in these analogues, and perhaps this is essential to Elder's point. On the surface, the use of image as mediator would beg the question: how is the means by which one can 'know' a representative image, any different from the means by which one can know nature directly, given that both involve not only human perception, but also the human expression thereof? The answer may be that a manufactured image inherently contains a rational dialogue between the artist – who presumably has insights into nature beyond the capacities of ordinary perception – and the product of his artistry and insight. The insertion of "extra material", as it were, into what would otherwise be a mimeograph of the natural world, is the mediator between reality and the untrained perception. A religious perspective might attribute this "extra material" to a muse, to God's grace, or simply to a religious form of Gestalt.[190]

One might also suppose that a cyclical development is involved: art is produced in order to explicate the natural world, and to achieve the desired result the production utilizes a combination of realism and pedagogical metaphor. As the understanding of the natural world further develops, so does one's understanding of the language and other tools of art; one then begins to interpret nature itself through a more sophisticated and informed lens...and so on. The artistic lens through which one sees nature can appear either translucent or opaque, depending on the extent of self-reflection involved – whether on the part of the medium, the message, or the interpreter. According to Elder, this process of interaction between nature, art and audience in turn would lead to a new intellectual tradition, a "philosophy of reconciliation that answered to

[190] It is worth considering, in any case, given the various conundrums involved, the idea that the question of "how do we know" is ultimately a religious one, in that the answers to this question are almost necessarily "faith-based". This too, though, is an argument that cannot be resolved. Epistemology is not necessarily a "religious" field of study; it too can fall within a cognitive science framework of understanding. However, to even pose the question suggests a skepticism about the presumed reliability of empirical knowledge, and thus has at least "hints" of the religious to it.

the dialectical needs of accounting at once for the opposition between human beings and nature and for the truly extraordinary intimacy between the two that developed."[191]

Subsequently citing Canadian philosopher George Blewett, though, Elder describes one of the more advanced conclusions of the new philosophy:

> [W]e 'receive and achieve our spiritual nature,' our very identity, through the series of instructive interactions we have with nature.' Blewett claimed that it is not by introspection that we find out about ourselves; rather, it is by practical experience, by our give-and-take with objective reality, that we discover who we truly are. In the end, Blewett proposed that there is a fundamental unity of mind and nature. There is, Blewett argues, a rational self that reveals itself in both nature and human life. The reason that structures our thought also constitutes the structure of reality.[192]

If it seems that Elder is attributing too much to the ruminations of an audience, his point remains valid, that the growth of this form[193] of understanding in Canadian occurs through encounters with images rather than through conventional tools of philosophy. Granting that this

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[191] *ibid*, 5. Elder makes clear later (47) that the new tradition does not completely displace the old. Also, the word "intimacy" is appropriate as well for its implications of a religious connection that cannot be explained by the physical, as well as for its root meaning from the verb "to intimate." The latter literally means "to make known", very often in a sensitive or indirect fashion. Thus, subject and object enter into intimacy; when the object is an image, then the communication becomes even more "intimate". In marriage counselling, intimacy must involve reciprocity and transparency, among other things, but the opposite may also be true: because intimate knowledge is always privileged, there must be a sense of mystery in protecting boundaries. The tension in the question over opposition and intimacy with nature, or with the image, may be one of the things that is highly pronounced in the interaction between a Canadian film and its Canadian audience. It cannot *help* but be a religious experience.

[192] *ibid*, 5. This seems to imply disagreement with the comments above about self-reflection in the construction of the lens. In relation to a Canadian solution to the problem of subject and object, however, both Blewett and Elder cite the descent of Canadian theory through Hegel, as opposed to the intellectual traditions of Berkeley through Hume – hence the mystical undertones. We can also expect that even the meaning of "self-reflection" is not widely standardized any more than was "transcendence." "Common Sense" philosophies are often taken to imply anti-intellectualist tendencies, but whereas the Canadian use of *image* is apparently contrary to the conceptualization by Berkeley, et al, it would seem that common sense meets up with Hegel as they journey in opposite directions around the circle. Elder (47 *et passim*) also discusses the relationship between the "Common Sense" philosophy and the belief that moral reasoning was superior to that of the intellectual. The argument for the superiority of "image-reasoning", as it were, does not carry quite the same anti-intellectualist or over-apologetic fervour.

[193] We will later see more clearly how our cinema is also viewed through the lens of the experience of CanLit, and so clearly the means of understanding are not an "either-or" issue. It is more accurate to say that CanLit is appreciated because of the understanding of reality through image, and that the growth of cognitive/conceptual powers takes on a new and stronger life.

was a slow evolutionary process, rather than being due to sudden mutations, it is not necessary to discuss what would otherwise be some missing links along the way to Blewett's insights. The democratic accessibility of cinema as an art form would allow such confrontations with the image on the part of the general public, and perhaps this is where Canadian film offers some of its greatest merits. Even were we to assume that it was at first only an artistically sensitive elite who could appreciate the subtleties of image, the integrity of Canadian film artists seems to have remained intact, as they bring the interpretive challenges to the big screen. More obviously, recent Canadian directors who may be familiar either with Elder or with the respective philosophies he described, will be determined to have their films exemplify these pedagogical ideals – precisely because they are now more conscious of being masters of the image. [194]

It is in this Canadian art/philosophy that we might also detect the first roots of a "natural" Canadian religion, as it were, partially reflecting a selective choice of insights from Hume, Durkheim, and Bailey, etc. In contrast to the imported and widely practiced European religions, there are undercurrents in Elder's "philosophy of reconciliation" that might accurately be described as religious or spiritual sentiments, even if highly deconstructed ones. The understanding of and appreciation for this new way of thinking are on the surface to be achieved through art rather than through the intellect, but both of these necessarily participates in the dialectic. In the analyses of Canadian film, then, we can already speak of the presence of religion on two levels: first, Blewett's "instructive interactions" would be more akin to (the legends of?) St. Francis' sermons to the birds than to classroom lectures. On this level, we can locate an

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[194] Elder wrote of what he thought was already the case in Canadian film, but it is apparent that these tendencies have become more frequent even in the last 15 years. Full disclosure requires revealing that Elder has also been a filmmaker in his own right, from 1975 until the present, although almost exclusively producing experimental films. He is currently Research Chair and Director of Communications and Culture at Ryerson. Elder's potential to be influential is thus affirmed, not only on upcoming directors, but on students. Much of what he says, then, may also be somewhat self-fulfilling.

implicit religious pedagogy in film as an art form. Second, if audiences have indeed been trained to glean from the image an explanation of reality, then the visual depiction of human relations with the natural world conveys to the audience a set of conclusions about their own nature. It would not be amiss for a critic or scholar to analyze films with this in mind.

Elder suggests that the photograph, or moving series thereof, is the most effective form of imagery, because of its peculiar blend of being an accurate replica of reality and containing the moral perspective of the artist. The benefit of this use of photographic but expressive and moral realism is that the audience of a film needs not struggle in order to discern the basic reality that is being portrayed; this applies not only to the physical but also to the emotional and intellectual sensibilities, even if sometimes unconsciously. In this kind of thinking we hear echoes of Rev. Jump and George Anderson: the evangelical motives of these writers for screening films for their flocks now receive intellectual affirmation of both purpose and effectiveness.[195] The circle is complete as the principles are applied in Canadian cinema.

There is still work to do on the part of the audience – they are not permitted merely to escape and find meditative solace in the beauty of the art. This requirement may be a key distinction regarding the Canadian relationship between image and intellect: in contrast to some other national cinemas, the Canadian film does not allow the audience to get so lost in the beauty that the conceptual message can only be transmitted by osmosis. If the audience is also relieved, on the other hand, from having to unwind esoteric or otherwise complicated metaphors, they are at more leisure to ruminate on the *implementation* of insights. The art of Canadian film labours to

[195] Elder partially qualifies his theory: "While a realistic image does not have the power to actually solve the epistemological problems inherent in the dualistic position, it does provide a model of the reconciliation of opposition between thought and nature" (47f). Caution is always required in interpreting dualistic theory, let alone in interpreting interpretations of the ramifications and repercussions of dualism – and so on. Although Elder's work is not as rife with Janus-like rhetoric as is that of the philosophers to whom he refers, the understanding of his arguments cannot be pronounced with absolute certainty.

prime the audience for understanding the message, by visually communicating the primary insight of the connection between consciousness and external reality. The audience is thus empowered to believe in the potential application of whatever insights they have gained.

More specifically describing the "social purpose" in Canadian film, Elder turns to evidence of an interaction between Canadians and Calvinism. In referring to both the framework and the content of Calvinist theology, one of the first things Elder considers is the tension in Canadian thought surrounding moral and spiritual attitudes toward the authority of the state.[196] The nature of these attitudes may precede any attempts at reforming politics, society or religion. Underlying the theology of any brand of Protestantism might be found a particular perspective concerning if, or the extent to which, human authority is to be accepted; such a perspective informs a broad spectrum of thinking. In the seeds of reformative thought implicit within the Canadian philosophy and film, one realizes that political and religious institutions are the targets of profound criticism. At the same time, they are criticized in a way that reflects a deep commitment to politics and to religion. It is neither anarchy nor atheism that is at the forefront of the opposition, but rather it is the deconstruction of inward doors and outer limits, as far as possible in either direction, that is apparent on the front lines of Canadian art and philosophy. Both anarchy and atheism are flirted with in Canadian film, but mostly for the sake of establishing a more meaningful dialogue on law, order, and faith. [197]

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[196] Elder, esp. 49ff.

[197] The opposing images of "inward" and "outward" here are intentional. Whether or not one understands this simply in terms of relativity and space-time curvature, there are certainly attempts to extend (mental?) boundaries outwards , perhaps in a civilized fashion, while simultaneously crashing the gates of physical authority, in as "barbarian" a manner as possible. An assault in only one of these directions necessarily leads to vacuums of either thought or power respectively.

An enlightening example of how such tensions have often resolved in Canadian public life is given in the events of the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, April 2001, on the day the perimeter fence was broken. Katherine Dwyer explains:

The larger historical context of the meta-philosophical relations between religion and authority can perhaps be seen in chiastic terms: the absence and advent of political freedoms are bookends to the loss and restoration of religious freedoms.[198] We might thus analogize the inward and outward movements as corresponding to religion and politics respectively, if they remain concurrent actions. In Canada, we can generally acknowledge our good fortune on both

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> The sentiment for mass action to succeed in getting through the perimeter fence was there throughout the demonstrations. But when the fence did come down, at first a few, then two or three hundred walked through to the other side, but many held back, supportive but uncertain. Would the police charge? For about 20 minutes it wasn't clear. And there was an uneasy standoff. In that breach, a determined and organized force-even as small as one or two thousand-could have marched into the no-go zone. But this critical mass was not organized-nor could it be simply marshaled on command. Quebec brought the question of timing, size, and preparation to the fore. As one reporter put it: 'If hundreds of determined militants had rushed past the thin line of cops in the first few minutes after flattening the fence, they wouldn't have been stopped. Independent affinity groups and anarchy are great to prevent the infiltration of dreaded hierarchy, but from a purely military standpoint, some planning would have been useful.' / The presence of the fence ended up unifying protesters on the ground. [Katherine Dwyer, "Lessons of Quebec City," International Socialist Review June/July 2001, reprinted online, Third World Traveler, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Dissent/Lessons_QuebecCity.html Internet: Accessed June 1, 2009.]

It seems more likely to have been the effectiveness of Canadian self-talk, rather than a "lack of planning", that led to the aborted breach. The protestors are clearly repeating internally the stereotypes reinforced by the media. The ambivalence seems also clear in the need for the fence as a unifying factor.

It has been pointed out that an assumption was made in the above paragraph about the Canadian identity of the protestors involved in the reaction to the breach. Admittedly there were international participants, including not-officially sanctioned teams of AFL-CIO workers from the United States. However, as Dwyer explains in her article, there was ambivalence also between the various efforts of Canadian groups to organize. CUPE Ontario as well as several student groups had coordinated prior to the march to consolidate their efforts around the perimeter, while the CAW and the top leadership of the Canadian labour movement marched away from the perimeter, and actively prevented their members from joining the groups at the perimeter. Thus, it is indeed important to acknowledge this major division of philosophy *among* Canadians, and yet the nature of the line of division is clear, separating those on either side of most hegemonic of the institutions. Canadian filmmakers have also chosen their side, and would likely be found at, rather than away from, the perimeter.

The bottom line, perhaps, is that it was those at the perimeter who were most opposed to authority, and yet were therefore the same people who ultimately held back. Those who were away from the perimeter did not have to confront the dilemma in the first place. Based on the identity of the groups directly named by Dwyer, there is no doubt in general that the majority of members at the perimeter were in fact Canadians.

[198] This is likely too broad of a conjecture; however, it seems logical: a tight political authority appears to be a prerequisite to an authoritarian religious institution. As the religious institution, however, is incorporated into the power of the state, the populace must somehow be given permission – through reformative religious figures – to think for themselves religiously before they can feel the permission to confront the authority of the state. Neither event is likely, however, if there is not a deeper religious notion of authority – no matter where it falls on the spectrum of for or against – that justifies one's political or theological stance.

fronts, retaining the luxury of attacking both Church and State simultaneously. Rather than exploiting these opportunities for their own sake, however, Canadian film tends to make the most out of the chance to confront both the political and religious aspects of our identity, always keeping in mind the possibility of a more stable reformation of character.

There is a broad but closeted sense among Canadians, although certainly more openly manifested in Canadian films, that despite one of our Constitutional mottos being "peace, order, and good government",[199] social justice is necessarily in conflict with each of the three in turn. When Elder speaks of the Calvinist influence, he specifies that the form of Calvinism imported into Canada is distinct from the American version. The former is "a pretty immoderate and rough-hewn sort", derived in part from John Knox's Presbyterianism:

> There has not been a significant religious leader more violent, more wilful or more zealous than John Knox[,] whose Presbyterianism had many followers among early settlers. Calvinism emphasized making the most of our natural gifts by industry, it condemned idleness and materialism, it taught that humans are creatures of fellowship. It was probably just the sort of religious belief that could forge a community and provide it with the values it required to sustain itself in a far from generous land.[200]

A fascinating relationship is seen here in the work-oriented yet anti-materialist value system, regarding the need to retain a sufficiently materialist attitude, and to be motivated to harvest the "ungenerous land." The use of the word "forge" may also be indicative of a relationship between

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[199] Department of Justice Canada, "The Constitution Act 1867," *Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982*, http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/c1867_e.html Internet: Accessed July 24 2008.

This phrase begins a section dealing with the different legislative rights of the federal and provincial governments, and the circumstances under which the former may overrule the latter – the general nature of such circumstances being the *stability* of peace, order and good government. Canada's own history of federal-provincial relations is an even stronger reason, especially for non-Upper Canadians, to resent the deeper implications of the motto, attached as the federal laws are to the oppression of the regional.

[200] Elder, 49. The attempt to discern the subtleties of difference *among* Protestant denominations is far more riddled with contradictions than the parallel task regarding Protestantism and Catholicism or between Christianity and other world faiths. There are obvious questions about a Calvinism filtered through Knox and imported into Canada. However, it is also a question of global concern, evidenced by the continued and strong presence of an "Anglican" church in post(?)-colonial Africa: it may not be all that strange to consider the defense of Anglican principles by African Christians, but the attachment to the *name*, at least, is a sufficient cause to examine the apparent *source* of those principles.

what *is* and what is desired. What is interesting here is that work, religion and community are all connected with the idea of authority, and perhaps this is why it is inevitable that there will be at least apparent contradictions.[201] What has been attempted in the history of Canadian philosophy, according to the above account, is a *Grand Unified Theory* of sorts, although unlikely in any coordinated fashion. As such, it will either be incomplete or inconsistent.[202]

More specifically, it is the difference between the American and Canadian interpretations of the separation of Church and State that exemplifies for Elder the distinction between the two modes of Calvinism:

> On the one hand, by claiming that secular authority was mandated to deal only with non-spiritual matters, and by arguing that each person can establish an individual relation to God, Calvin left open the argument that we can challenge the moral authority of the state on the basis of what is revealed in scripture. Furthermore, as the American example shows, the notion of the separation of church and state can be interpreted as lending support to federalism (since federalism has the effect of removing the political sphere from the domain of universal moral principles). Moreover, Calvin's emphasis on Bible-reading demanded a literate population. As a result, in many Calvinist countries, including Scotland and Canada, educational systems open to all were founded. And a literate populace is more likely to question state authority and state edicts.[203]

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[201] The so-called "Protestant work ethic", whatever its original intentions, does not of course necessarily even suggest materialism: the work may be for its own sake, not for its products. Further elaboration on this involves opening a can of worms, however.

[202] This is a pet-interpretation of Gödel's theorem *via* Douglas Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979). Prepare ye the grains of salt...

[203] *ibid*, 49. The sentence from "Furthermore" to "principles" is likely what Elder means by the second mode, although confusion arises from the distinction between secular and religious authority. Elder's account should be qualified with a historical note. Long prior to Thomas Jefferson, Roger Williams first brought the "separation" ideal to the colony of Massachusetts when he founded the first American Baptist church, and was the first to use the phrase "wall of separation." Williams was arguably as zealous as Knox, and the apparent similarity of his views towards authority were responsible for his exile from Massachusetts. He subsequently received a charter to found, with the help of his disciples, the colony of what would become Rhode Island. ["Roger Williams (theologian)", *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Williams_(theologian) Internet: Accessed June 5, 2009].

Thus, while the Canadian interpretation of the separation is valid here, the comparison with the United States in historical terms is risky. On the other hand, another angle to consider would be the particular *flavour* of anti-authoritarianism that is present just prior to a revolution, in relation to subsequent attitude towards authoritarianism on the part of the revolutionaries. Elder's general association of Scotland and

This brings us to the broader conflict of understanding as regards of one of the standard clichés of Canadian identity, one that may strike some as being out of tune with their own experience. It is commonly said that the difference between Canadian and American identities is a matter of the former's regard for law and order. This may more likely be,[204] however, one example of a stereotype originally determined from outside of our borders (more of which are given below). This belief that Canadians do quite often hold about themselves is belied by evidence from within Canadian art and mythology of a profound, if discreet, respect for the social and legal scofflaw[205] – a regard that on some levels far exceeds the reputed American love for underdogs and rebels. This Canadian spirit of antinomianism extends beyond cultural and the civil, to confrontations with all aspects of social existence, very much including the religious.

Canada is of interest regarding what was said above (n. 156) about colonialist attitudes, but relatively speaking, the comparison is probably apt.

[204] "Likely" is used here, because even this element of the larger subject of Canadian identity is widely disputed. In general, the notion of Canadians' love of government is reinforced in modern times by *American* sociologists such as Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1989). Lipset's approach in particular seems rather Orientalist in tone, although the fact that Canadian pundits in turn so willingly embrace the *apparent* flattery should give some cause for concern. Although the subject of the general differences between Canadians and Americans seems to have been beaten to death, there is room for a full length examination of the *legitimacy* of the perceived differences, particularly in terms of discerning the historical etymologies of the clichés, as it were.

[205] A more precise word may perhaps be in order. The term "outlaw", as found in the novelist Tom Robbins' distinction from the word "criminal" [Tom Robbins, *Still Life With Woodpecker* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980)] comes to mind, but it lacks a particularly Canadian undertone of conscious defiance. Robbins' outlaw does not have a political motive except to be anti-political. "Rebel" has too much of a Southern U.S. connotation. A sense of being completely and holistically overtaken by the instinct for rebellion is an essential characteristic of the Canadian personality in question.

Rarely will someone *within* the power structure represent this type, but Trudeau had his moments. The proclamation of his own ultimate authority – "Just watch me" – was obviously antinomian in its own way. The signature "Trudeau Salute" was less of a statement against any other particular authority figure, but was rather an assertion of how he felt about "proper" behaviour. Most significantly, his statement "There is no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation" – when he was as yet only a Justice minister -- was not merely a promotion of civil rights, but due to the content of the bill being introduced into law (dealing with abortion and homosexuality, among other things), was also a statement against the moral authority of his own Catholic faith. The visual and mental imagery in Canadian film, not to mention the above understanding of the "scofflaw", is highly indebted to Trudeau in these ways.

On the deepest levels, however, all of these are linked within Canadian film. If one were to choose three specific antinomian "frontlines" in Canadian life, they would likely regard social welfare, sexual liberties, and the nature of the power and authority of religious institutions. In international, and no less in American films, these battles are frequently waged. Canadian films are especially unique in their manner of dealing with the sexual and religious categories; few national cinemas have confronted homophobia, for instance, or the role of religious institutions, with as much of the necessary irreverence as the Canadian. What most distinguishes Canadian film in this regard, though, is that the battles over social, sexual and religious concerns are linked into a larger and common war. It seems that a protagonist in Canadian cinema, one that is meant to be revolutionary on any front, would not be believable were she or he not to demonstrate personal independence and concern in all three areas.

This is especially true when the protagonist is meant to represent any kind of "redeemer"; although this is not at all restricted to the conventional meaning of that word, the characteristic is remarkably demonstrated in the Canadian cinematic examples of the Christ figure.[206] Whether Daniel Coulombe in *Jesus of Montreal* (1989), or Phil Caracas in *Jesus Christ, Vampire Hunter* (2001), the struggles over sexual freedom[207] (both in terms of gender and orientation, and of freedom of expression) cannot be divorced from the struggles over social welfare (homelessness, marginalization, and the structural problems that create them), and the power abuses of religious

[206] An excellent beginning resource for considering the broader issue of cinematic portrayals of the Christ figure is Christopher Deacy, *Screen Christologies: Redemption and the Medium of Film* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).

[207] *In Jesus of Montreal*, this message is easy to miss, or to subconsciously ignore; one of the hypocrisies most frequently exposed by Canadian film is the tendency on the part of members of the power structure to write laws against obscenity based on some apparent sense of morality, while privately holding the view that victims of rape are "asking for it." Such attitudes are even apparent in the *actual* legal ordeals faced by victims (of all types of crimes), as opposed to what is publicly stated.

Thus, when the character Daniel does battle against pornography in advertising, some viewers will project onto Daniel their own ignorance of the distinctions involved. This despite the fact that one of the prominent Christological themes in the film is the issue of Jesus being both fully God and fully human.

organizations. In both movies, the audience is reminded of how there are structural issues of authority that make all three fronts *necessarily* part of the same war. The idea is driven home by the resemblance of the protagonists to historical figures such as Riel and Trudeau.

There are historical arguments from the Canadian perspective used, sometimes understandably, to legitimize the stereotypes as being based on truth – as acknowledged previously, some of them may be true. Politically speaking, these arguments are largely based on the "textbook"[208] narratives of how Canadians responded to the events of 1776-83 – the American Revolution – and to both the internal and external histories of 1812-14.[209] The dilemma now is between the reality of the way in which we perceive ourselves, and the acceptance of the content of that perception as being *inevitable*, despite evidence to the contrary. In order to understand how this tension plays out within Canadian films, even those which deal with more modern events, it is worth delving into the development of the conventional mythology and the reasons for opposing its legitimacy here. With respect to both of the periods above, Canadians officially prefer to see themselves as having been loyal subjects to a benevolent throne; in both cases, the goals, according to our retrospective understanding, were to preserve the existing law and order, and to live peacefully – which effectively meant to be allowed to mind our own business. While the conventional intent is to preserve these goals and

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[208] The word is used primarily with respect to Kuhn (1962), regarding how the nature of (scientific) revolutions are intrinsically obscured by textbook accounts of history. There is not always a conscious agenda involved in the process. Admittedly, American textbooks would highlight the revolutionary character of early American heroes, but this may apply only because the heroes are translated into legendary rather than living entities.

[209] At least at the level of the textbook stories remembered by citizens on both sides of the border, neither American nor Canadian accounts acquaint students with how significant were the events in Europe during this latter period. For instance, Americans might conveniently ignore that "the British" didn't have much of a navy to spare for the Battle of New Orleans in 1814, and Canadians students are unlikely in general to make the chronological connection between what Tolstoy wrote about in *War and* Peace and what was happening at Queenston Heights. The battle at Queenston Heights began on October 13th, for instance, and Napoleon quit Moscow on the 19th.

virtues as sources of national pride, the apologists for this position often appear to be struggling to convince themselves, in the process of attempting to convince a skeptical populace. Beneath the surface, it might be argued, many Canadians may actually regret, or even resent, such apparent demonstrations of Canadian passive-aggressiveness.

While the actions on the part of Canadians[210] were certainly not passive in 1812, it is quite natural to see our "place in history" as being defenders of the Crown, and of the territory that "rightfully" belonged to that Crown. The usual interpretation of the war's conclusion is that victory belonged to the defense, and so we might imagine celebrations over the maintenance of the status quo. The conflict, then, regarding this war resides between pride at the idea that the Canadians went to battle only reluctantly and for non-self-interested motives – they were drafted specifically for the occasion on behalf of King George III, there being no "Canadian" militia at the time – and a lingering shame over our lack of temerity in failing to conquer and thus possess more American territory. The dilemma continues with accounts of Canada's participation in the two World Wars, and in more recent peacekeeping missions. Especially in the case of the World Wars, these accounts are put in the context of defending England and France, for instance, rather than "defeating the enemy": the desire is to see ourselves as defenders of democracies already established, rather than to overthrow the rule of tyrants.

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[210] The retrospective use of the word – but only in the context of the war – refers to Upper Canadians, other British North Americans, and to a group of native tribes led by Tecumseh. Although Lower Canadians were also under attack by U.S., their loyalties were obviously conflicted, and their efforts to defend themselves were somewhat separate from the main forces. The concurrent European war was to a primary degree between the English and the French, or at least those French who allied themselves with Napoleon. Ultimately, Lower Canada supported the British against the American attacks, although somewhat less actively. ["Peace and Conflict: The War of 1812," *Histor!ca: The Canadian Encylopedia (online),* http://www.histori.ca/peace/page.do?pageID=336], Internet: Accessed June 4, 2009.]

This is perhaps one of the reasons that Canadian *feature* films depicting the Canadian actions in 1812, 1776, or even in the two World Wars, are almost non-existent,[211] even though dramatized and/or educational documentaries are not uncommon at all. It is not because there are no sources, nor is there a lack of Canadian mythology regarding any of the wars in which Canadians have fought. In addition to those mentioned, there are likely numerous narratives arising from Canadian engagement in the Boer[212] or the Korean wars, not to mention the dangers of peacekeeping Bosnia or Somalia. If Canadian filmmakers were so inclined, the various battles such as Queenston Heights or Vimy Ridge would each make for compelling dramas. Neither does there exist reason to think that these stories have faded from the collective memory, nor that Canadians have stopped reading Pierre Berton or reciting Flanders Fields. What seems more likely is that Canadian *feature films* based on these myths would ring false tones.[213]

If films surrounding these events were to be made at all in Canada, the first difficulty would be in the kind of image to create. A limited sector of the television audience might accept a portrait of Sir Isaac Brock as the dashing Canadian/Roman-style hero, as this would fulfill the legends (certainly not all untrue) upon which so many place names and educational institutions

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[211] Reference was made above (n. 163) to *Carry on Sergeant*, and it is suggested again that it does not count (unfortunately so, because some of the themes are appropriate, but not their interpretation by the director).

[212] The training and departure of Canadian troops heading to this war were filmed by Edison and other American companies, mainly to be used as stock footage for promotional exhibitions. (Morris, 256).

[213] It was American filmmakers who would first produce an account of Canadian actions at Vimy Ridge, albeit in a short, documentary form (which, as per the American style, is more dramatic than documentary). Regarding Somalia, *Shake Hands with the Devil* is both an excellent example of a Canadian approach as well as an exception to the rule. Strictly speaking, it was directed (by Roger Spottiswoode) using the standard style and techniques of Canadian television rather than those of feature film. In terms of what is said below, it certainly fulfils the Canadian trait of exposition of the corruption of power, far more so than any American film would do. That is was intended, regardless of the style of production, for the big screen is a testament above all else to a Canadian spirit of determination.

are founded. It is not that Canadian film audiences are expecting accurate historical details,[214] but they do wish to see realistic portrayal of personal character. According to some of Brock's correspondence,[215] at least, he was unhappy in Canada, seeing it as a backwater, and wished instead to be in Europe fighting Napoleon. Canadian film directors would be most likely to exploit this latter fact, not in order to tear down Brock's status as hero, nor for the mere sake of tearing down conventional mythology. What would likely instead be deconstructed is the eternal tendency for Canadians to be ashamed because people we admire do not seem to reciprocate the affection. Canadians have no problem maintaining their self-esteem in relation to foreigners being unable to handle the cold weather, etc., because this is inherently self-congratulatory.

Extrapolating from the trends of Canadian directors, though, we can guess that a film about Brock, or even about Queenston Heights, would be less about the battle and more of a drama with dark-comedic undertones about the reluctance of the hero. It might also deal with Brock's apparent ambivalence towards the colonists themselves, and his preference (in military as well as personal terms) for volunteers from the indigenous and other home-grown communities.[216] The possibility that Brock was in fact merely exploiting these volunteers is not denied here, but there would indeed be rich material for a film on Brock's internal struggles amidst communal relations – almost the very definition of religion in ways. It is in any case through deconstructing, even sometimes demolishing, the structures of Canadian pride itself that a deeper pride will be

[214] Many Canadians first became familiar with the "history" of the Boer war from the tall tales told by the eponymous 'hero' of *Jake and the Kid*. [W.O. Mitchell, *Jake and the Kid* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1961)]. Some level of re-mythologizing is always present in historical accounts, but the Canadian deliberateness is somewhat unique, in terms of the power of Canadian artists to construct national identity. Likewise, Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* and *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* were more formative than the original accounts. [Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996); *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (Toronto: OUP, 1970)].

[215] Ferdinand Brock Tupper, *The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, K.B.* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1845), esp. 46, 63, 75.

[216] *ibid*, 72-74.

founded, one that finds more secure religious underpinnings. This is the goal of Canadian directors; if we can imagine the ultimate link between art, myth, religion and politics, the best summary might be, "we made our gods human so our humans could become gods."[217]

While this summary may refer to a universal principle, Canadian directors have worked with the notion that audiences will be empowered to go out into the world as heroes themselves, if they can be shown in unapologetic terms the warts of the heroes portrayed.[218] There is also the

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[217] The expressions of the historical version of this are variously attributed to St. Athanasius, Clement of Alexandria, and to Origen, with the theological expansion of the more esoteric mystics such as Pseudo-Dionysius. Although some legitimacy is claimed on behalf of this analogue, it is not meant to be taken literally enough (here) to become a source of argument.

[218] There are some philosophical ideas that are likely essential as background but that do not quite fit in the main body of the text; instead of either presuming knowledge on the part of the reader or directing the reader to other material, the following interlude is taken.

There are also many possible variations and elaborations on the question of how a film affects an audience towards action. Linking Elder's themes of image, realism and Calvinism, for instance, we might consider the potential influence of the Calvinist notion of *predestination*. When one interprets nature realistically, one might also tend to take a more fatalistic, deterministic view of the world of the spirit, a view which may, perhaps ironically, erode confidence in the normative formulations of conventional moral and pedagogical authorities. If the doctrine of predestination is taken literally, then here too the *ought* disassociated from the *is* (There is another paradox here, namely that in order to maintain the status quo, i.e. the *is*, the structures of authority must convince their subjects that their moral duties – the *ought* – involve ignoring their real and actual needs).

Finally, when the existential status of the image is put in the context of attitudes towards authority, then we realize that the authority *of* the image is two-fold. First, it uproots the authority of conceptual knowledge to explain nature, whether the conceptuality of the church or of the conventional rules of academia. Second, the image takes on a voice of its own in the direct dialogue with authority. It is the ultimate tool of subversion. Thus, the audience is first converted to a subversive philosophy, and then they find their own particular ways of responding; the Canadian film as a moral influence is a precise attempt to avoid the "we are all individuals" paradox.

There is an additional consequence of the means by which the explanatory nature of the image is exploited in Canadian film. If audiences have been trained at all to expect the overriding "documentary nature" to national cinema, they might then perceive reality to be that which is projected upon the screen. This may in turn contribute to whatever normative effects are achieved by the filmmakers. If audiences believe that what they see is real, there may be less tendency to escapism. This is certainly a risky proposal, for two reasons: first, it might seem to imply a particular gullibility on the part of Canadians; second, it assumes perhaps too much about the psychology of influence and persuasion. It could be more safe to attribute some level of effectiveness to basic stylistic preferences: if Americans, for instance, are less likely to watch documentaries in the first place, then they would thus need to be persuaded through more "fantastic" means. However, it seems feasible that the documentary style of fictional feature films in Canada disallows the audience from escaping the reality of what is happening in the story.

The *potential* for art to have a moral influence at all is a larger debate. Iris Murdoch, examines the particular question of whether "great" art may not be of *less* moral influence on an audience than the

underlying assumption that Canadian audiences, at least in the context of the movie theatre, do not wish to relive the stories in their original form, but to continually find new twists, even at the expense of the conventional sources of national pride. The myths and the biographies of the characters are torn apart for potential signs of roguishness and other anti-social, anti-authoritarian tendencies. In the official accounts of Canadian psychology, endorsed by news media, documentary, and dinner theatre,[219] it is the apparent moral innocence of our Billy Bishops that is to be preserved. There are nevertheless signs within the national psyche and within our contemporary national art forms that Canadians crave the permission to identify instead with Bishop's disregard for "standard operating procedure."

There is no reason not to have pride in the virtues of peacefulness, diplomacy and general goodnaturedness; the international perceptions of Canadians, those that are based either on fact or myth (or both), have for many decades provided for the pleasant and safe experiences of Canadian travellers abroad. However, the general but unofficial Canadian acceptance of

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more pedestrian or "lowbrow" forms of culture. [Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (New York: Penguin, 1994)]. This may be most aptly explained in terms of the ease of being a holy person on a mountaintop: Shakespeare takes its audience to the top of the mountain instead of asking them to move it. Science-fiction also claims for itself, sometimes in less-than-humble terms, a distinctive type of influence, primarily through the fact that it takes the reader out of the restraints of a situation to which she is too closely involved to be able to reason effectively the admittedly positive side of being on the afore-mentioned mountaintop.

Shakespeare and *Star Trek*, then, respectively representing the dueling influences of England and America, are each free to tackle social issues, in the first case by developing the audience's capacity for empathy and the experience of life's deeper emotions, and in the latter case by demonstrating the absurdity of an ongoing, contemporary prejudice. They both avoid the risk of alienating the viewer through too clear of a reminder of current reality. Whether or not these approaches are effective elsewhere, the Canadian form of realism may be far more provocative, in that the risk is openly embraced. Precisely as Elder suggests, the realism is for Canadians as much of a national epistemology as it is an artistic style. Canadians may simply respond better to the documentary style out of preference, but it may also be a legitimate source of pride in terms of cultural identity.

[219] [John MacLachlan Gray and Eric Peterson, music and lyrics, *Billy Bishop Goes to War* (Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Nov. 3 1978)]. There is only so much justice a musical can do for these elements of Bishop's personality. Although his roguishness is not as contingent upon subsequent moral redemption as is the standard case in American productions, he is still subject to the limitations of how much roguishness the usual dinner theatre audiences can "tolerate."

American draft-resisters during the Vietnam War may offer a better model of how Canadians might rather perceive their true colours. The enthusiastic aspects of this acceptance were not likely based on the professed belief in "peace, order, and good government," as we are meant to think, but instead on the subversion of those values. The Canadian government under Trudeau gave no explicit welcome to the war resisters, although he did put an end, in 1969, to their prosecution and deportation. By some estimates, half of the resisters who entered Canada remained for varying lengths of time "officially", if not socially, underground, despite later amnesty on the part of the Canadian government. Canadians who supported them and offered sanctuary still did so contrary to the law of the land;[220] while the resisters themselves might have sincerely pacifist values, it was the more attractive and powerful notion of civil disobedience that allowed Canadians to understand these immigrants on a deeper level. The large number of Canadians who did shelter and support them is a testament not to some dry notion of "peace," but rather of "sticking it to The Man" – an attitude which, although its expression is American in origin, seems to find many Canadian sympathizers. This is an echo as well of Edward Bailey's example on the communal/religious transgressiveness of the English pub-goers at closing time. Canadians, in the circumstances above, took the principle home with them from the pub.

This brings us to the broader questions of how "Canadian heroes" are to be defined in film, and how essential it may be for their heroism to be defined in broadly religious terms. In our understanding of the events during the American Revolution, most Canadians are probably familiar with the United Empire Loyalists, but few could name any leaders of the movement.[221]

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[220] Ninette Kelley and M. J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

[221] Anne Mackenzie mentions "The Reverend Mather Byles [who] mused, 'Which is better - to be ruled by one tyrant three thousand miles away or by three thousand tyrants one mile away?'"

Three persons identified as "Canadian heroes" during the War of 1812 are Laura Secord, Sir Isaac Brock, and Tecumseh, although technically they were only *honorary* Canadians,[222] and are less significant examples of *formative* influence on how Canadians self-identify. The event in Canadian history that seemingly should have done more than anything to define our political identity is of course Confederation. Even here, however, Canadians know less about John A. Macdonald and the other founders of Confederation than Canadians know about George Washington. What Canadians do know, however, that at least shifts attention away from the conventional expectations of mythology, is that MacDonald drank, and that the person having the most cinematic potential in the process, either for heroism or for martyrdom, was Louis Riel. Even the website of the *National Library of Canada* cites Louis Riel as one of the three "Voices of the People" in Canadian history, above Madeleine de Verchères and Poundmaker. [223]

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admittedly a famous textbook phrase, but few could name its source – and Colonel John Butler, who would lead the Butler's Rangers alongside of native soldiers. [Anne Mackenzie, "A Short History of the United Empire Loyalists," *United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada*, http://www.uelac.org/PDF/loyalist.pdf Internet: Accessed June 7, 2009].

[222] Granted, the category of "Canadian", for the purpose of retrospective accuracy, must be both technically narrow as well as more flexible in implications. Comparing notes 147 and 196 above, the potential for contradictions in the present work is apparent. In the case of 1812, when almost all inhabitants were considered as members of one of the colonizing powers anyway, we are at risk of splitting hairs. However, in the context of the whole war, it does seem rather remarkable that no Canadian-born heroes are remembered. In a context of military stature, the issue is somewhat circular, because Britain had the power to determine who would serve as generals in the first place. This reaffirms what has been said above about reverse colonization, etc., but in this case, there is a deeper reason to be cautious about even our own conclusions.

[223] "Heroes of Yore and Lore: Canadian Heroes in Fact and Fiction," *National Library of Canada (online)*, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/nlc-bnc/heroes_lore_yore_can_hero-ef/1998/econtent.htm Internet: Accessed May 28, 2009. Poundmaker was the would-be peacekeeper before and during the Northwest Rebellion, but was nevertheless executed due to his message of peace being unaccepted.

A stunning example of the "who are you trying to convince?" brand of apologetics is Ged Martin, "John A. MacDonald and the Bottle," *Journal of Canadian Studies* Fall 2006: 162-185:

> Many Canadians recall John A. Macdonald as a politician with an alcohol problem. This view of a key architect of Confederation affects perceptions of national identity and inhibits biographical analysis. Macdonald had a serious but intermittent drink problem for 20 years from 1856. It is unhelpful to relate this to the medical concept of "alcoholism," although he was a recurrent binge drinker; however, he was not consistently drunk. Recognition of his problem underlines the ability that enabled him to survive politically. A secure marriage plus growing

It might thus be argued that Canadians do, after all, admire the rebels of history, and it is only a sense of delicacy on the part of the textbook authors that prevents these elements from shining through. Canadian artists generally overcome such scruples, and are more comfortable exposing the symptoms of internal and psychological tensions in the process, weaving them into the message. What is possibly the true crux of what Canadian film heroes must represent has been said above (p. 97), regarding the *believability* of the characters through a holistic union of all aspects of their character. Riel, as we know, was Catholic, and a sincere enough Catholic that he wanted to reform the theology; he anticipated what the name *Métis* would come to mean for Canadian identity; he did not seem to separate his political from his religious beliefs, and was certainly in tune with his community. Regardless of one's value judgments, it is to be believed that Riel actually existed. In the case of a fictional hero, we do not need to believe that there was a historical forerunner, but only that the character is *plausible*. In terms of our historical heroes, it is a stretch to think that someone could identify in those holistic terms with MacDonald or Brock. It is not enough to identify with MacDonald's human weaknesses, because we have no myths or images related to him as a whole person.

> public disapproval of inebriation in the 1870s probably explain his changed behaviour [...] Two incarnations of John A. Macdonald survive in Canadian popular memory: the creative statesman of Confederation, and the politician who could not handle his drink. Impressionistic evidence suggests that, as many Canadians become vague about their history and cynical towards their politics, his achievements are forgotten while his weakness is emphasized. Although a survey of 2001 found that barely half the adult population could name Canada's first prime minister, some of those who identified him highlighted his failings [...] In popular history, the legend of an inebriated architect of Confederation has fed into the self-deprecating insecurity of national identity: 'Canada, like many a child, was conceived under the influence of alcohol' [Martin, 162, citing Will Ferguson, *Bastards and Boneheads: Canada's Glorious Leaders Past and Present* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1999), 82].

It is rather hard to believe that Martin wrote the first few sentences without a sense of irony, but alas he does seem to maintain a straight face throughout, even as the next 14 pages of content are devoted to a detailed analysis of the "drinking problem" and searching for all manner of clues to its source and subsequent "justification." However, Martin's main points are first the repetition of the idea that a drunk Macdonald was at any rate preferable to a sober "anyone else", and more importantly, that MacDonald *must* have been super-human – or even a god – because no other human being could have drank so much and yet maintained his "dignity." It seems that Martin wishes, but cannot bring himself to actually understand the religious implications that in MacDonald's case would have to be of a Faustian degree.

At the same time, Canadian film needs not seek out heroic figures with the legendary stature of the Washingtons or the Ulysses Grants to depict; these latter are likely far more memorable to Canadians than Brock, because there are myths and images relating to their whole personas. Instead, Canadian film achieves the unity of heroism and religion by having the protagonists represent the "not-so-larger-than-life", everyday heroes. They are believable because they are realistically portrayed, but also because the audience can look up to them as complete humans. These everyday heroes, however, are fighting for the same grand goals of freedom as their more spectacular counterparts, and this an additional distinction to Canadian heroes: they are everyday people dealing with extraordinary circumstances. The quests undertaken in America by Susan B. Anthony and Martin Luther King, Jr. are taken on in Canadian film by those whose existence is also far deeper underground in other ways. They are frequently part of larger armies of "unknown soldiers", and their wish to remain unknown is inherently linked to the kind of antinomian activity in which they are engaged. A portrayal of the "Lone Gunmen" from the American *X-Files* series, if it were to involve any real character development, could only occur in a Canadian film, because it is the Canadian audiences who would understand the pathos.

This applies to explicit depictions of religious figures as well: *Jesus of Montreal* is rather consciously set in opposition to the *King of Kings*; not, however, in terms of "gentleness", but in terms of an emotionally and sometimes physically aggressive opposition to both the status quo and to the "powers that be." The "King of Kings" figure, both scripturally and cinematically, cannot logically represent the same spirit of antinomianism: the Christ-as-King figure is meant to have a higher power than earthly kings, but through the very nature of the appellation still legitimizes their existence. Arcand's character, on the other hand, is more true to the Jesus who *rejected* the temptations in the desert regarding a kingly status over all the earth.

There is also evidence in the commonality of language that Canadians are conscious on diverse levels of a link between the state of the Canadian film industry and the Canadian cultural and religious identity. The reasons for the connection may be obvious – there is a stereotyped set of attitudes towards economics, enterprise and self-promotion that is necessarily reflected in the ability of our industries to successfully promote themselves. The perception of Canadian films as "low-budget", "government-funded" – and, in the minds if not on the tongues of many, effectively "non-profit", may or may not be a true reflection of reality, but it nevertheless contributes in the circular reinforcement of identity. In tandem with ongoing resentment to Canadian icons who "sell out", particularly to "corporate American values", it is almost presumed that a film which fulfills the most strict definition of being Canadian cannot possibly be commercially successful or achieve international renown – precisely because the strictest definitions of Canadian film have come to include the terms "low-budget", etc.

In terms of cultural identity, these are not necessarily simplistic or derisive labels, but are suggestive of moral issues, related to if not necessarily agreeing with the philosophies denoted by Elder, and that have been identified above as religious.[224] Within a broad cross-section of Canadian mythologies –economic, political and cultural – there is a spectrum of sympathy for these ideals, in both theory and practice. Interviews with Canadian film directors reveal explicit endorsements of these values, holding forth on the artistic and social liberation that comes with the withdrawal of pressure to compete financially – and the vanity of attempting to compete in

[224] These self-images may be somewhat contrary to Elder's theory about Calvinism, as the latter is often attributed to the promotion of capitalism in Europe, and to such things as the justification of usury. The Canadian traits listed above may be more Presbyterian in nature, which did have some origins in Calvinism, but was perhaps even more anti-establishment. If, on the other hand, these self-images are not ingrained but are instead more recent notions, then it is difficult to determine their origin. It would certainly be to other nations' benefit, though, for Canadians to define themselves in this way. When Americans, for instance, ridicule their "socialist" neighbours to the north, it is understandable but perhaps beside the point for Canadians to take it as a compliment. A fully free-market Canada (acknowledging that the U.S. is also a mixed system) would probably be to America's detriment in the long run.

the first place is accepted with a mix of Solomonic and Stoic resignation. Atom Egoyan, one of Canada's most prominent directors, expresses these sentiments in his *Introduction* to Katherine Monk's thematic survey of Canadian film.[225] These economic and philosophical values are also a significant subject of discourse *within* film, both in earnest and in jest.

The degree of such consciousness on the part of audiences is not as clear. Whether or not the stereotyped element of insecurity in Canadian identity is to blame, audiences are somewhat self-conscious in their need to find statements *about* Canadian identity in the films. It is feasible to thus see Canadians as rather "self-absorbed", compared to other audiences who tend to seek out morals that apply more universally to human nature.[226] However, as long as Canadians define themselves in such terms as given above, then their motivations to act upon any social issue, or the degree of comfort felt in verbally naming the religious source behind the motivations, will be directly dependent on the larger cultural pronouncements on, and affirmations of, their identities as Canadians. If a Canadian struggles between passion for a social issue and her or his own tendency towards non-assertiveness, for instance, then his or her perception of self- and collective identity, particularly as pertains the implicitly religious notions behind economy and politics, will be particularly relevant. A film might thus have an enormous normative influence, if only it first engages the audience in terms of personal and religious identity.

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[225] Katherine Monk, *Weird Sex and Snowshoes and Other Canadian Film Phenomena: A Trek Through the Canadian Cinematic Psyche* (Vancouver, B.C.: Raincoast Books, 2001).

[226] Acknowledging the obvious objection that one should not necessarily grant this trait to American audiences, it can be argued that Americans *do* interpret everything universally, precisely as a result of their belief that other international audiences should subscribe to the universality of what Americans consider to be universal values. This too, though, would be taking gross liberties with our own stereotypes of Americans. On a more justifiable level, though, it is probably true that Americans are educated to be more culturally and politically self-confident (exceptions granted), and thus see no need to seek affirmations of self-identity in their films.

There are more basic yet just as questionable ways in which the Canadian philosophies, and artistic or religious sentiments in film are subject to comparison, primarily to their American or European counterparts. Critics and audiences generally are expected to judge films alternatively in terms of success or of artistic merit. The standards by which artistic value is measured are still overwhelmingly European, while the American definitions of success – whether in terms of profit or mass appeal – are taken for granted in an almost circular fashion. One of the most common criticisms from within Canada's borders is that our culture and identity have not developed a recognizable existence unto themselves, but only consist of negative statements about not being like others. It may be countered, however, that as long as one chooses to use mirrors produced elsewhere and etched with foreign logos, then the image that is reflected will still not be of our own making.

In this sense, the real culprit is the choice not to develop one's own standards. The Canadian poet, pundit and Order of Canada recipient John Robert Colombo famously said,

> *Canada could have enjoyed:*
> *English government,*
> *French culture,*
> *and American know-how.*
>
> *Instead it ended up with:*
> *English know-how,*
> *French government,*
> *and American culture.* "[227]

Thus did one of our own define Canadian identity with foreign standards, and in the implications of stasis and inevitability within his statement, Colombo seems to have been rather traitorous to

[227] John Robert Colombo, "O Canada" (1965) in John Robert Colombo, ed. *The Penguin Treasury of Popular Canadian Poems and Songs* (Toronto: Penguin, 2002). Colombo's merits as a raw anthologist of all aspects of Canadian life are somewhat legendary, but mostly so in the "in his own mind" manner of speaking, according to Robert Fulford, "John Robert Colombo," *Globe and Mail* April 17, 1999. Columbo has since taken up the task of anthologizing all aspects of his own life and work.

our political, cultural and intellectual self-esteem. Not only had we done nothing "right"; we were also been robbed of any sense of agency in the establishment of government, culture and know-how: the verbal phrases "could have enjoyed" and "ended up with" are passive. It is unlikely that Colombo could have inserted "religion" into the formula had he wanted to, but the effect upon the national psyche was undoubtedly of a sacrilegious nature. The good news is that Canadian filmmakers have since reacted by falsifying both Colombo's conclusions as well as his premises, exposing the stereotypes and properly reducing them to their component fallacies.

There are indeed more legitimate means by which national comparisons might be performed, allowing for the import of some scales but insisting that they subsequently be attuned to local realities, employing terms that are more value-neutral and content-based. One method is to explore the nature of the artistic environment in which Canadian film was raised. Peter Morris explains for instance that in the United States and England, there were long-established traditions of "music hall, vaudeville and theatr[e]", traditions that were relatively absent in Canada.[228] The development of the American cinematic art, Morris says, was directly dependent upon these stage traditions. Canadian film, however, descends through other arts; some had indeed been exported from Europe, but they were rapidly establishing roots in the local soil. In terms of performance art, the main stage events were likely classical drama or ballet, and dramas that developed here would themselves have been rather Victorian in tone in comparison to the more liberally modern American productions. Canadian literature especially was rapidly increasing as a source of national identity. By the time Canadians were making their own fictional/feature films, Canada had already given birth to authors of fiction such as Stephen Leacock and Louis Hémon, as well as poets William Henry Drummond, Louis-Honoré Fréchette, Pauline Johnson,

[228] Morris, *Embattled Shadows*, 28. Not *completely* absent, although mainly thriving in places like Saskatoon, Vancouver, and the Yukon.

Bliss Carman, John McCrae, James McIntyre, and Robert Service. Most importantly, although the ancestors were European, we can see before the turn of the 20th century that Canadians are taking on both responsibility and agency for the new cultural identity of their products.

The claim here is not that Canadians were more literate than others, during that or any other era, but only that Canadian literature was a major principal at the time in *expressing* the knowledge and the symbols that had apparently already been determined through the art of the *visual* image. The literary expression itself was indeed more image-based than conceptual, but whether in poetry or in prose, written literature was nevertheless crucial in legitimizing the symbols for a wider public. One of the earliest examples of such influence was Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*;[229] although originally suggested by the publisher as a tool for promoting immigration from Britain, it unwittingly inspired a new trend of self-reflection for the reading public.[230] What is most remarkable about the book, however, in the context of its original purpose is that Moodie laments the false promises given to potential immigrants in previous decades, and her selling points of Canada are precisely the harsh conditions of climate and soil that were concealed from previous travellers. Moodie wishes to attract the kind of person who already recognizes that adversity builds character, but her volumes are also notably persuasive to

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[229] Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush* (London, England: Richard Bentley, 1852. Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co, 1871). Also available online at "Roughing It in the Bush," *University of Pennsylvania Digital Library*, http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/moodie/roughing/roughing.html Internet: Accessed July 18, 2009.

[230] Another literary source of identity came in 1908, of no little significance at the time, and equally formative on other levels. The same year in which Canada would lose Mary Pickford to the American film industry, L.M. Montgomery published the first volume of *Anne of Green Gables* an immediate success throughout North America. Even this, however, would for a long time remain an example of the Canadian export of talent rather than product: Montgomery originally published with L.C. Page of Boston, who would maintain exclusive rights to the first six of the *Anne* books. Montgomery switched to a Canadian publisher in 1917, but it was not until 1942, just after her death, that *Anne of Green Gables* itself was first published by a Canadian company (Ryerson Press). Also of interest are the novels of Canadian author and Presbyterian minister Ralph Connor, which would soon be translated into film by Ernest Shipman's new Canadian production company, after his success with *Back to God's Country*.

those who do not yet recognize the fact. In Moodie's style, this morality reveals its more organically religious roots, as opposed to being of the obligatory type.

Aside from the (perhaps undeterminable) degree of Moodie's influence on Canadian novelists of later years, what is of significance is her prescience; she not only understood that geographical and meteorological conditions provided a backdrop against which to sharpen one's moral teeth, but she also seems to have established that the subsequent moral identity would be organically intertwined with a national, cultural and religious one. She probably also understood the future dilemmas of how this identification would play out: to be identified as people of a northern climate and harsh landscape is a source of chagrin, in part because we must respond to the inevitable punch lines with some of our own – to show that there are no hard feelings. At the same time, Canadians crave to be allowed to embrace the kind of character-building Moodie spoke of, except that after a few centuries of foreign commentary on how someone came to Canada to fish and all they caught was a cold, the attempt to truly identify with the land has become a cliché; if only others could understand how much character we could have built over the years if we did not have to keep responding to jokes.

One contemporary author (among innumerable others) who has understood the tension, the angst, and the dark humour of being caught between religious experience and the feeling of being soiled by clichés, is Canadian author Margaret Atwood. In 1970 Atwood published *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*,[231] a collection of poems inspired by Atwood's dream about an opera she herself had written about Moodie – despite not having read the books until later. Atwood works with a somewhat-imagined biography of Moodie, speculating on the kind of internal psychological struggles that lay beneath the actual content of *Roughing It* and its

[231] Margaret Atwood, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970).

sequel.[232] Atwood's collection *was* a formative influence on subsequent Canadian literature, and in a certain sense, CanLit after 1970 must be read in the context of both Atwood and Moodie.

Atwood resurrects the writings of Moodie again in 1996, through the historical novel *Alias Grace*,[233] but it is two of Atwood's other books that lay out in study-guide form the literary themes originally anticipated by Moodie: *Survival*, and *Strange Things*.[234] These themes, along with those in Katherine Monk's *Weird Sex and Snowshoes*, involve the usual fare that were only touched upon above, such as the character-building of climate and landscape,[235] the specific Canadian attitudes towards sexual freedom (in all of its forms), and more specific aspects of social concern, such as the roots of Canadian healthcare, etc., and issues of self-esteem in relation to Europe and America. Further, the Atwood books listed above may be the ultimate bridge to understanding the links between CanLit and CanFilm, even though they were written exclusively about literature. While it has been important here to discuss the existence of such links, they are also of distinctive interest, and have been capably handled elsewhere.[236] We may thus return to the issue of image and its other sources of inspiration in Canadian art.

Affirming the theories of Elder on "image", there is indirect evidence as well that Canadian film derives some of its character from the visual arts, especially painting. Consider an excerpt from the *Ottawa Citizen* in 1896:

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[232] Susanna Moodie, *Life in the Clearing Versus the Bush* (London: Bentley, 1853).

[233] Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1996). The novel can also be read in the context of the theme of transgressiveness in religion.

[234] Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1972); Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1995).

[235] Guy Maddin's films are also an excellent resource for understanding these themes.

[236] Recommended in particular is Peter Dickinson, *Screening Gender, Framing Genre: Canadian Literature into Film* (Toronto: U of T Press, 2007): "Canadian film narratives in general owed little to Hollywood codes and conventions and more to Canadian literature" [Morris, 240]

REALISM ON CANVAS

Marvellous Exhibition of the Vitascope at West End Park

> Out at West End Park last night was given the first exhibition in Canada of the marvellous production of the Vitascope, Edison's latest creation. With this wonderful invention spectacles of life and occurrences are reproduced in a most vivid and realistic manner, and those who witnessed the views projected last evening were not only pleased with the sight, but were enthused to a high degree over the creative genius which made it possible for life-like movements to be depicted on canvass [sic] with such extraordinary effect. One can imagine just how wonderful the invention is when it is stated that with the Vitascope it is possible to reproduce every movement in a pugilistic encounter where the motions of the combatants, both in attack and defense, are of lightning rapidity. The necessary adjunct to the Vitascope is, of course, the process of instantaneous photography, whereby these motions are faithfully depicted as they occur. Forty-two photographs to the second preserve an accurate record of the most minute detail of every physical movement and even the facial expression. It is the application of this same process which depicts the very movement of the water in their precipitation. And the transfer of these effects to canvass by means of the Vitascope gives a perfect representation of the cataract in its downward course or the billow as it curls into foam and dashes upon the beach. Such were some of the delights spread before the spectators at West End Park at a private view last evening. Public exhibitions of the Vitascope will commence this evening and will be given during the week. The Holland Bros. have the Canadian control of this marvellous invention.[237]

The subtleties of this description are as likely indicative of the talents of the reviewer as those of the filmmaker (whose nationality is not revealed). Nevertheless, the language of the review, if intended to resonate with a broad readership, may indicate the sensibilities of a discerning public. Canada had also been cultivating generations of native-born painters; by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, the seeds for the *Group of Seven* were being sown by the works of Tom Thomson. This idea as well is noted by Bruce Elder, again linking the "image" to the concepts of realism, dualism (opposed, in this case), and social purpose, although here he is speaking of later Canadian painters:

> Sometimes realism is used for metaphysical ends, as it is in the work of Newfoundland artist Christopher Pratt. The harmony of the geometrical structure which

[237] Morris, 1f. The exhibition was sponsored by Canada's Holland brothers, who, again, had already established major ties with the American industry on the level of distribution and theatre-building.

> undergirds the visual forms in works like Memorial Window (1982) conveys a sense of a remembered unity which underlies the appearances the works depict. Sometimes it is used to convey a sense of the elevated importance of quotidian, even domestic, reality, as it is in works by Mary Pratt, for example, Christmas Turkey (1980). And sometimes realism serves social ends, as it does in the work of Claude Breeze. The realism of the films of the National Film Board of Canada generally serves social purposes as well. [238]

All of these arts together – literature, classical drama, and painting – would give Canadian film a unique ground of inspiration; they would not only foster the future styles of filmmakers, but would also inform public taste. Canadians would naturally come to appreciate in, and expect from, the film industry, a more nuanced product than would otherwise be offered. A pronounced and diverse palette of visuals, a creative blend of realism and metaphor, dramatic spectacles arising from nature (landscape, animal and human) rather than from contrived situations; these would become the staples of both technique and content. Adding to all of this the ongoing trends of government involvement, techniques developed from a documentary style of direction, and deliberate confrontation with social issues, we can build a fairly comprehensive understanding of the context in which Canadian film developed.

Some penultimate words are given here to Peter Morris; while many of his conclusions regarding contemporary film are obsolete, his focus on the early period has given him notable insight into the whole. Morris also raises a few other ideas left by the wayside in this thesis, but that may be of interest to the reader; one of these is the issue of "regionalism." Morris had been referring to E.K. Brown's utter distaste for the regionalism in Canadian film, and Brown's thesis that Canadian films did thus not deserve to have an international market.[239] Morris concludes,

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[238] Elder, 48. Elder also highlights the works of Jack Chambers, Michael Snow and Alex Colville. A technical element held in common between these "realists" is that their works are often based on photographs. Elder's use of "metaphysical" has connotations for us of the religious, but it is not always intended this way.

[239] E. K. Brown, *Responses and Evaluations: Essays on Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 21, cited in Morris, 240. Brown seems to ignore the notion that it was precisely the

> Finally, of course, all these factors— liberal economics, regionalism, naturalism— stem from the same roots. These roots are identifiable with the Canadian ethos and represent both its strength and its limitations. If, on the one side, that ethos worked to prevent the Canadian film from capturing international markets, on the other, it may have created a model of what a more democratic film industry might be. If, on the one side, Canadian film makers have rarely made story films that captivated international audiences, on the other, they have offered a reflexive gentleness, a meditative feeling that is often not far removed from the Zen mood of mono-no-aware. In the end, the apparent weaknesses of Canadian film are not inconsistent with its apparent strengths. In the end, they are the dialectic of the Canadian ethos.[240]

Morris's keen perceptions are clear in the first few sentences; the situation with international audiences has now radically changed, and it has also been apparent how the "ethos" has been challenged. The only real alteration one might make is that the "Zen mood", while definitely a major factor in the tone of Canadian films, is at the same time a mask (as Zen usually is) for deeper undercurrents of the tensions and transgressions that result from confronting the implicitly religious in Canadian life. Audiences certainly do engage in Zen-like confrontations with Elder's concept of the "image", perhaps with flower in one hand and sword in the other. Our next chapter will demonstrate these ideas with material examples.

"regionalism" of one of America's greatest *national* poets, Walt Whitman, that made him successful. Perhaps related to the comments above about seeking universal vs. local themes in film, it may be said that all great art is regional, just as "all politics are local."

[240] Morris, 241f.

Chapter 3: Films to Consider

In order to place the film analyses in a more direct context of Canadian thought, we can now consider two ideas from the previous chapter. First, in response to Bruce Elder's theories, it was suggested that "if audiences have indeed been trained to glean from the image an explanation of reality, then the visual depiction of human relations with the natural world conveys to the audience a set of conclusions about their own nature."[241] Adding to this the thoughts of Peter Morris, the last chapter concluded with a picture of "Zen-like confrontations with Elder's concept of the 'image', perhaps with flower in one hand and sword in the other."[242] A pair of more descriptive metaphors for the character traits of Canadian film, ones that apply as aptly to Ernest Shipman's films as they do to those of Egoyan, Maddin, or Stopkewich, for instance, are two phrases used to describe Chopin's music. In the words of Liszt, in the music "is to be heard every sentiment and emotion of a people which had participated in its own funeral." Schumann said that "if the tyrants of the North suspected what dangerous enemies are lurking in the Chopin Mazurkas, they would forbid their being played, for they are cannons concealed by flowers."[243]

Whether politically or culturally, these are perhaps rather dramatic analogues to apply to Canadian realities, although the reader is urged to keep them in mind as they view Canadian films in the future. Both Liszt and Schumann would have been speaking in terms of Poland's recent history as a "kingdom" under Russian rule and effective oppression, and the "funeral"

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[241] p. 95

[242] p. 121.

[243] Both from "Music Here and There," *New York Times* (Drama, Resorts, Music) June 25, 1911 http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D03E3DF1539E333A25756C2A9609C946096D6CF Internet: Accessed July 19, 2009.

likely referred to the unsuccessful outcome of the November Uprising in 1830/31.[244] The political and cultural circumstances in Canada, such as the minority government, or the "greatly exaggerated demise" of Canadian cultural independence, would not quite qualify on the same level of national tragedies or burdens of oppression – even if it might sometimes feel that way. A sense of empathy and kinship with these sentiments of national turmoil is in any case demonstrated in Canadian film; while the degrees of trauma may not be comparable, there are two important elements of the analogues that are nevertheless appropriate.

First, there *has* been a sense of agony felt by Canadians in the last few decades, over what seems at times to be the slow death of national identity. A poll taken last year for the Canadian Dominion Institute, towards compiling a list of "101 Things Canadians Should Know About Canada,"[245] is at once heartening and heart-breaking; while the bulk of the list is both expected and appropriate – the top five are the Maple Leaf, Hockey, the Canadian Flag, the Beaver and the CanadArm – with the obvious redundancy – at one point during the voting (July 25, 2008), Queen Elizabeth was at number four (ahead of hockey), while "Aboriginal Canadians" had to be added to the list as an afterthought, placed as "#102." It is difficult to say whether the *subsequent* and Orwellian erasure of Aborginals from the list is a greater insult than the originally implicit Orientalism. What is most evident beneath the rhetoric of the website, as well as of the various national newspaper articles on the subject, is that the list's creation was likely an attempt at the

[244] "A Brief History of Poland: Part 9: The 19th Century – Polish Wars and Uprisings," *Polonia Today* http://www.poloniatoday.com/history9.htm Internet: Accessed July 18, 2009.

[245] *101 Things Canadians Should Know About Canada*, http://www.101things.ca/ Internet: Accessed June 10, 2009. Also published as Rudyard Griffiths, ed. *101 Things Canadians Should Know About Canada* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2008). C.f. also the poll results themselves, with the unwieldy title, DEFINING CANADA: A NATION CHOOSES THE 101 THINGS THAT BEST DEFINE THEIR COUNTRY: *Unprecedented, Definitive National Survey Identifies Top People, Places, Events, Accomplishments and Symbols that Define Canada As Chosen By Canadians*, June 30, 2008 http://www.101things.ca/101ThingsJune30.pdf Internet: Accessed July 10, 2009.

mollification of critics, whose common target has been the government's increasingly desultory attitudes and policies towards national culture. The larger travesty is that the poll was conducted by what was once a Canadian-owned company (*Angus-Reid*), but that has since been sold to the French *Ipsos* corporation. With these and other travesties in mind, many Canadians feel as if they have been witnessing their own slow death, if not necessarily their funeral.

One aspect related to Schumann's words – *if they only suspected* – is a large degree of transgressiveness in Canadian film, often if not always beautifully concealed by the softness of production styles, described by Morris as a "reflexive gentleness." It is not only the acts of transgression – against authority, against cultural norms or pretenses – that are cannon-like in the films, but it is also the very nature of the Canadian form of artistic realism. The implications of the term "realism" as have been discussed above, involve the predictable meaning, i.e. the artistic portrayal of people, places, things and events in ways that are normally described as "accurate", or "truly reflecting" how we see the above phenomena directly, as opposed to through the frequent distortions of artwork. It is in this sense that the realism in film counters the normative obscurity of religious orthodoxies, and prevents the audience from escapism: the more real, the less likely the audience can deny that something is really happening in the world.[246] If our premises are at least somewhat accurate, then we may discover a paradox within our own conclusions: is the transgressiveness concealed, or is it not? If there were ever a case in Canadian life when freedom of speech would be under attack, and were there a system of authority even capable of effective censorship, then how dangerous to the *status quo* would be the content of Canadian films? It was said above that the essential messages are not obscured by metaphor, so how might one claim that the films are able to hide their suggestions of sedition?

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[246] Again, this premise is rather theoretical, and is to be taken in the larger context of the debate in the latter part of n. 218 above.

The precise content of the Chopin Mazurkas that makes Schumann's statement more than a colourful metaphor is the cultural content. When a people of lesser numbers is threatened by a larger one, whether by military power or by the overwhelming assimilative power of its culture, the most defiant action available is an expression of its own culture. The singing of *La Marseillaise* in *Casablanca* is the most obvious cinematic example, but on a less melodramatic level, Canadian films are filled with such acts of cultural defiance, each time that a Canadian icon is presented to the audience in a non-comedic or non-sarcastic manner. In most films, they are rarely obvious icons such as the maple leaf or the beaver, and just as infrequently are hockey or beer the most significant symbols. Such symbols can and have been subject to dismissal, precisely because they are so obviously recognized. Occasionally it will be a recognizable skyline, a subtle highlighting of accent, a red mailbox, or a provincial license plate, that will first attract the audience's attention. It is enough at first to say, without saying it, that "this movie is Canadian."

Every subsequent statement of moral, cultural, or religious value in a film will be associated for the audience with the initial defiance of "this movie is Canadian."[247] Once this association is made for the audience, then even the most gentle expression of an opinion contrary to social and cultural norms, either those of our southern neighbours, or of a government even less democratically elected than the previous *American* one, becomes a reminder that we do have a unique culture, and that it cannot be claimed except by being defiant enough to name it.

[247] The slogan of the beer commercial seems to have been somewhat counterproductive, as it was too obnoxiously presented. The likely effect was that Canadians would feel even less independent than before; the actors reminded us too much of the elephant that we have been sleeping next to. They were also an anticipatory slap in the Canadian face, given the subsequent buyouts of our breweries.

Another aspect of realism that will apply here is the one that also ironically acts as the bed of flowers – somewhat literally. This is the "naturism" as referred to by Morris. This can be more aptly explained within the following film analyses.[248]

1.1: *Back to God's Country* (1919)

Within studies of the history and character of Canadian film, Ernest Shipman's *Back to God's Country*[249] is most often referred to as the first Canadian feature film. It fulfills the letter of the second but only the spirit of the first definition given above of "Canadian film", but for reasons which will become clear, there is no reason not to conclude that the *effective* director was in fact Canadian. The film is also rather profound in the opportunity it offers for contemplation, through its expressions of both explicit and implicit religious sensibilities. A primary distinction made earlier regarded the naming of the director as *auteur*; in the case of *Back to God's Country*, as with the Shipmans' other Canadian-American co-productions, the role of *auteur* would technically be split between two Americans: director David Hartford, and novelist/short story writer James Oliver Curwood. Curwood had prior Canadian connections, having been the

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[248] In the analyses of this and the other films to follow, there is a great deal of selectivity with the general idea of leaving much room for the reader to further explore.

[249] *Back to God's Country,* dir. David M. Hartford (Canada-U.S., 1919). Ernest Shipman's later films are given more *official* credit for being "Canadian" productions, having been directed by Henry MacRae and authored by the Presbyterian minister Ralph Connor, "then Canada's most widely read and famous author." However, the production values, and to some degree, the content, of *Back to God's Country* are most definitive of the Shipmans' styles, and it was the only significant film Ernest and Nell Shipman did together – in other words, more of a Canadian production than either of them did separately.

As a footnote to the footnote, Ralph Connors was the pen name of Charles William Gordon, born 1860, Indian Lands, Glengarry County, Canada West (est. 1792, Upper Canada, before Confederation; now, easternmost county of Ontario). Gordon was later a moderator the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, and was highly involved in the promotion of what would become the United Church of Canada. ["Ralph Connor", *Literature Network Online*, http://www.online-literature.com/ralph-connor/ Internet: Accessed June 8, 2009].

primary novelist previously commissioned by the CPR to write immigrant-seducing stories about the Canadian north. The resulting narratives were "highly masculinized adventure stories about Canada and Canadians,"[250] and Curwood was thus a key player in establishing the initial mythologies of Canadian life. However, although the author had himself travelled to northern Canada for inspiration, and maintained a degree of geographical and physical accuracy, his stories were directed towards an American and British readership; the action and adventure elements, along with a romanticized geography, were essentially the sole intent. It is unlikely that either Curwood or the CPR had Susanna Moodie's idea of "character-building" in mind.

In what follows, the ways in which the process of mythologizing was co-opted in turn by Nell and Ernest Shipman are revealed, though a significant degree of control of the production of *Back to God's Country*. Ernest Shipman would remain the producer, and because he had a strong and forward personality – albeit one that was not always attuned to Hollywood norms – he insisted on a great deal of oversight. It would also help that he was on personal terms with the lead actress and screenwriter, i.e. Nell Shipman.[251] In having selected Curwood's short story *Wapi the Walrus* for feature-length treatment, Ernest Shipman was necessarily accepting the involvement of Curwood himself, who had been accustomed to producing his own films; as well, the strength of a producer's charisma itself does not always win over the goodwill of everyone else involved. This film was to be Ernest Shipman's "baby", though, and he saw himself as a loving parent. We can thus easily anticipate the kind of tensions that would arise between the parties involved.

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[250] Gittings, 21.

[251] Born Helen Foster-Barnham

Peter Morris suggests that Ernest Shipman's role as entrepreneur was significantly "creative", in that he "brought together the right talents in terms of the author and cast."[252] Ernest Shipman had been under no obligation to choose Curwood's story, although Curwood had already become well-known in Canada; we might guess, then, that Ernest Shipman initially endorsed the Curwood-designed mythologies. Nell Shipman, however, was assigned immediately as screenwriter; it is not clear, therefore, how much of Curwood's interpretation of Canada Ernest might have accepted were it not for Nell's intervention. She herself had already become a producer and director in her own right, and was thus an additional force to be dealt with by the author and director. Born Canadian but having received her training – as was necessary at the time – in the United States, Nell Shipman had previously starred in and co-produced with Curwood the film *God's Country and the Woman* (1915), of which *Back to God's Country* was the sequel. She had also established herself as part-owner of the Shipman-Curwood film company, and was therefore in a unique position to play a major role in the transformation of *Wapi*, from a nominally to an essentially Canadian story. Even amidst the many objections to her alterations of the story, Nell Shipman's effective control over the screenplay was not rescinded, and she subsequently rewrote the plot and dialogue to reflect her own experience and values. By the end of production, the changes so displeased Curwood that he would later sever his ties with both Shipmans, with a year still remaining on the contract.[253]

In addition to having changed Wapi from a walrus to a canine, Nell Shipman also altered the whole framework of the plot, so that her own character Dolores was now the main protagonist[254]

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[252] Morris, 108.

[253] *ibid.*

[254] Kay Armatage, *The Girl from God's Country: Nell Shipman and the Silent Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 78. This book was discovered in the late stages of research, and it is

– the obvious result being that the film became as much Nell Shipman's social statement on female identity as it was a work of entertainment. In addition, the new theme of one woman's struggle against male authority within the film would be a not-very-subtle mirror of Nell Shipman's struggle with her male partners in production.[255] These struggles were obviously intertwined; the audience would hardly be able to avoid seeing further hints that the gender struggle was also parallel to the struggle for control over national identity – not only on the level of the critic privileged with knowledge of the Canadian/American Shipman/Curwood drama,[256] but also on the level of the lay-audience.

While there are times in the film when the contrast between good and evil seems to be put in black and white terms, even a brief glance between the lines shows a remarkable perception on

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highly recommended for further details on and understanding of Nell Shipman's remarkable life. The book has not been done true justice here.

[255] Nell Shipman's position gave her power but also made her quite vulnerable. She was the central object of the personal and professional affections of three parties, affections which were not properly separated by the parties to whom she was not related by marriage. Nell Shipman later writes in her autobiography [she was enough of a Hollywood star by that time to deserve one] about Curwood's abusive behaviour on the set, including his un-subtle advances. It is unclear whether this preceded or proceeded her writing of the screenplay, but even an audience distant in time and place can see that her acting was influenced by these circumstances. We might appreciate the added pathos as an audience, but modern audiences should keep in mind some instances of likely exploitation.

Against her powers as actress and screenwriter, for instance, she apparently had little control of the camera; there is hence an unmistakable tension, surrounding and within the film, between being a pro-female perspective, and conversely an example of male exploitation and "scopophilia" (a form of cinematic voyeurism) [Gittings, 22]. Gitting's Freudian/Feminist analysis of the film directly confronts this tension, but he seems unclear as to the film's ultimate message. Perhaps this is one of the basic problems with trying to combine the critical methods: in choosing to interpret a female character in terms of her suffering under phallic oppression, a critic must work harder to convey whether or not his or her analysis is meant to be descriptive or normative. Of course it would not be "normative" in the usual sense of the word, but there is a subtle way that such critiques can rob its subjects of agency. Hence, it still risks being normative.

Nell and Ernest Shipman would also divorce shortly thereafter; according to most accounts, including Armatage, it was because of Nell Shipman's affair with the third colleague, production manager Bert Van Tuyle. Armatage is uncertain about how discreet were Nell Shipman and Van Tuyle during the production of the film, but they apparently made their relationship clear immediately following the final shoot. [Armatage, 121].

[256] Briefly acknowledging this possibility, Gittings suggests that in the situations of both Dolores the character and Nell Shipman the actress, "the Canadian identifies with the hunted, the American with the hunter." [Gittings, 22].

the part of the film's creators that while good and evil may clearly exist, the usual categories in which they are set are obsolete. To begin with, Wapi the dog had descended, over forty "dog-generations", from a Great Dane named Tao, a companion of the "Chinaman" Shan Tung, who was killed by tavern prospectors/bullies in the Yukon. Tao would then be captured by "white men"; generations of both humans and dogs would ensue until Blake, a white seal-hunter who fiercely abused all of his dogs, was now in possession of Wapi. This information, given in the prologue, confronts the audience immediately with issues of race. Shan Tung is, on the surface, a token in the film as "the Yellow Man"; while on the one hand this is presumably the language of the film's production team, the fact that Shan Tung's murder can in no way be interpreted as an isolated incident leads us to think that, relative to the original tenor of the story, Nell Shipman is making a point with her screenplay.

The immediate segue from the murder, after which Tao runs away, is the naming of Wapi as,

> 'Wapi the Killer', a throw-back of forty dog generations, a white man's dog in a brown man's land. An alien without friends, hating the men who understand nothing of the magic of kindness and love, but whose law is the law of the whip and the club.

Curwood's prose was intermingled with Nell Shipman's in the inter-titles, so he may deserve credit for the idea in his original story, but a point is nevertheless made about whose land it is and who are the intruders. While the "Chinaman" had been a stranger amidst white men in the prologue, it seems that all of the categories are being toyed with, and that there is a reason for the film portraying the white man as current custodian of the North – possibly hoping for the audience to see the consequences of the displacement of aboriginals. While this is all rather speculative, and there is no further evidence in the film of this message, there are hints of other means by which the usual premises will be disrupted. As a descendent of the "Chinaman's" dog,

Wapi is described as "alien" in that he belongs to the White man, and yet it is not the "brown" man whom Wapi learns to hate.

We can also see within the film that Wapi himself is only partly descended from the Great Dane lineage; it may have been guessed by the audience that Wapi was a "mutt", or "half-breed". This would not matter except that later in the film, the companion of the antagonist/villain Rydal is specifically designated by the inter-titles as a "half-breed" – in this case portrayed by the actor as a rather despicable character. When he is in turn killed by Dolores' father Baptiste, his death is exploited by Rydal but otherwise goes un-mourned. On the surface, then, the film appears to have a rather unfortunate viewpoint on race, and yet it is hard to imagine that the coincidence is accidental. One possibility may come from Canadian cultural history. The ethnic identity of Dolores and Baptiste LeBeau is not explicitly discussed in the film's inter-titles, but while many might naturally assume that they were French-Canadian, they may have actually been intended to represent the Métis culture. If this is so, then we have not only a statement on Canadian identity, but also links to aspects of Canada's religious history. It is sometimes suggested that all Canadians are culturally, if not ethnically, Métis: we are all of mixed breed, and are at the same time (not necessarily blank) slates onto which others project their understanding of us. It is also rare that a Canadian can think of the Métis identity without considering the history of Louis Riel – who was not only a political rebel and cultural hero of the Métis nations, but was also a prophet – some might say only in his own mind – devoted to reforming some of the major principles of the Catholic Church. *Jesus of Montreal* owes a great deal to Arcand's understanding of these various facets of our history.

The story of Dolores, with her father and husband playing supporting roles, provides the second set of moral dilemmas. The initial portrayal of Dolores' life, living in a cabin with her

father but obviously a woman of some general independence, shows her as a Mother Nature in human form. Among many other animal companions, for instance, she swims with a bear cub and has a porcupine as a bed companion. While Dolores' nude bathing scene was subsequently exploited to market the movie, the only purpose of the scene *within* the film – in which her nudity was in fact only implicit – was to immediately oppose Dolores' internal blend of innocence and strength to the cowardice and lechery of Rydal as voyeur. Rydal is also shown throughout the film as someone who could have never survived in the North without his weapons or without his "half-breed" guide.[257] Because Dolores is not portrayed as invulnerable, however, she will eventually be held captive by Rydal, and while she is able to outdo Rydal in strength of character – she fends off his advances mostly through exposing him as a moral coward – she is still essentially at his mercy. Fortunately, it does not end this way, as Dolores proves herself to be the only one in control of the outcome. She must eventually gain her own rescue by threatening the villain with his own weapon; she still may not have escaped were it not for the heroism of Wapi. Nevertheless, the ultimate outcome is that Dolores once again becomes Queen of her surroundings, with Wapi as her most trusted companion, and it is rather clear that her love of Peter, now that they are married, will not take away from her subsequent rule over all life.[258] There is no doubt a high degree of potential Orientalism, in its obvious form and in its

[257] As this might have been obvious to the audience, it could be taken as evidence for the theory above. If both the 'good' and the 'evil' characters in the film are "half-breeds", then the audience is forced to confront a deeper source of good and evil – while audiences may not have been so unsophisticated as to attribute evil to a mixed ethnicity, they may have made parallel attributions based on secondary characteristics. This element of the film, then, would be one step towards the dissolution of stereotypes.

[258] The original production of *God's Country and the Woman*, of which *Back to God's Country* was the sequel, is not available, but Curwood's novel can be read online, for instance at James Curwood, "God's Country and the Woman," *The Gutenberg Project*, http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4585 Internet: Accessed July 17, 2009. The novel, at least, is unbearably of the *Harlequin* genre, containing all of the more disturbing gender stereotypes, including a total vulnerability, on all levels, on the part of Dolores. This makes it all the more clear how radically Nell Shipman altered her character for the sequel. Armatage (2003) give a balanced set of perspectives on this and other gender issues.

manifestation in the gender-related equivalent. Wapi would have remained a killer by nature except for "A new miracle of understanding roused by the touch of a woman's hand [...] the white woman - the first friend Wapi the Killer has ever known." In return, Wapi "fight[s] at last the greatest of all his fights - for a woman."

There is a third sub-plot, though, that of Rydal and his companions. Rydal murders and steals the uniform of the NWMP officer who had come to arrest him, and for half of the film pretends to be the officer himself. While the audience knows that he is an imposter, it is inevitable that Peter and Dolores do not, and the audience cannot help but come to a conclusion that even the uniform itself cannot be held sacred. It would be normal for such an event – the impersonation of a trusted official – to induce fear in the audience, a fear that would be carried back into their own lives. The film's transgression here, however, is not to cause the audience to distrust authority in itself, or to wonder if it is deservedly held, but rather to inform the audience that personal identities and moralities ought to be cloven from the uniform that one wears. This is transgressive not because of any actual risk of subsequent insurrection, but because a smooth society depends on uniforms – not only for purposes of authority but for a manageable social psychology. Because religious institutions depend on uniforms for similar reasons, it would not be strange for an audience, at least subconsciously, to transpose the themes from one to the other.

Another religious issue in the film is that of justice. Some crimes in the story will go unpunished; there had been no explicit justice for the killing of Shan Tung, and for much of the film there are crimes, against people and against the natural world, that similarly pass with neither retribution nor reform – hence the only law of the land apparently being of "the whip and club". There is no evidence until the very end that other NWMP officers were "onto the crime" most recently committed by Rydal, had it not been for events set in motion by Dolores. The land

seems not only lawless, but – despite the title of the film – godless as well. At the same time, the foreshadowing of Wapi's "destiny" is clearly of some kind of divine origin – more akin indeed to a native Canadian or to a *Tao*ist[259] religion. Justice seems to be achieved only by one human and by her animal companion; only as an afterthought do the NWMP come to report that they are "on the trail" of Rydal: since it is clear that Rydal is now friendless and without any real survival skills, however, this is a rather moot point.

Considering justice on a higher level, we come to the question of redemption – of the world and of humanity. This too seems to be achieved by Dolores, although possibly through the implicit "grace" of Mother Nature. Thus, while there are encounters and symbols in the film that may described as Christian, there is nevertheless a sense that at least one major premise of the Christian account of creation is meant to be overturned. If we speak in these terms, then when Dolores and Peter do return to "Eden", "Eve" has redeemed humanity from the consequences of "The Fall", and has also made it fairly obvious that it was "Adam's" fault in the first place. This redemption does not, fortunately, occur on a cross but through Dolores' manner of living.

In connection with the theme of paradise or Utopia, it is not difficult to perceive in the film and in its production a potential for an analysis of the struggle for a Canadian *civil* religion – in the sense that one's national pride is incorporated into a complete worldview that explains one's own existence. The first obstacle would be the stereotype of what was meant by "the North"; while the description of the Canadian Northwoods as "God's Country" was primarily common among Americans, there would have been an obvious need felt by Canadians to reclaim for themselves, or at least to prove the accuracy of, the appellation. The earlier film, *God's Country and the Woman*, although apparently *set* in the same locale as the sequel, was filmed entirely in

[259] Many pardons requested. *Yin and Yang* symbolism is quite possibly present in the film, and further exploration thereof is encouraged – perhaps in tandem with a conventional structuralist approach.

California. *Back to God's Country* at least had many of its scenes filmed in Canada (Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta), but these scenes were mainly of the frozen tundra. The cottage and forest scenes were still filmed in California. How would Canadian audiences at the time, then, with or without this prior knowledge, have reacted to the apparent stereotypes?

The promotions for the film – although relying on the deceptive promise of the *risqué* – had also hyped the Canadian elements of its production. While Canadians would have been as aware of Curwood as were the the CPR's American and British targets for immigration in earlier years, they also knew that the Shipmans were Canadian. We can only speculate that the Shipmans' co-opting of Curwood's story might have led to a great deal of public gossip and anticipation on the part of potential Canadian audiences. It may be fair to say, though, that audiences were well-primed to associate the general reclamation of Canadian identity with what they knew about the aspects of a film's production. In the process, if the public did have at least basic awareness of the biographies of author and producer, they might also have realized that the Shipmans' acts of reclamation were an opportunity for the audience itself to look beyond the obvious clichés of Arctic life, to the deeper elements of what it meant to be Canadian. In line with the premises as outlined above, these attempts at reclamation, and the means by which they are performed, may be links in the Canadian consciousness between cultural and religious identity.

A background question on the issue of justice – one that is also inherently religious – is what to make of the consequences of human activity, in terms that cannot be attributed either to the laws of physical nature or to human systems of punishment? When we consider Dolores' need to lead her world towards justice – in the absence of men who are *both* powerful and righteous, and without any obvious presence of an omnipotent God – we are forced to also consider the ineffable and preternatural bonds she has with the natural world. While through much of the

film, Dolores and her kindred are at the mercy of human and other material elements of nature, we get the sense that her ultimate triumph is a result of her ability to communicate with Wapi, and once freed from "the evils that men do", her happiness is an almost guaranteed result of her ability to be in tune with nature. Although an answer to this question here is not attempted here, one can guess that the audience has no choice but to recognize many of the implications.

It is unlikely that the title of the film – chosen by the Shipmans, not Curwood, despite the film being a putative sequel to Curwood's earlier story – was selected without some level of intention to portray the general struggles that humankind experiences. The struggles would be between the moment of error and the moment of truth – sin and redemption, if one must put it that way. It is also possible to see the film as a response to the Hobbesian questions about the state of nature, in which case we would suggest that for Dolores, and for her human and animal kindred spirits, life is only "solitary, poor, nasty, brutal and short"[260] when humans insist on making it so. In either case, all of the struggles humans face are left unsolved unless some higher principles are involved. Dolores' "faith", as it were, that the natural state of existence is inherently good, is translated into actions on her own part, actions that produce goodness in the world.[261]

There is much potential in the film for the more dramatically "grand" themes of religion and mythology; there are reasons to characterize the general conflict between good and evil in terms of the great battles between the personified gods, or between a god and a devil. In both narrative

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[260] Thomas Hobbes, "Leviathan" (1660), Great *Voyages: The History of Western Philosophy from 1492-1776* (Oregon State University) Internet: Accessed June 18, 2009.

[261] As part of Nell Shipman's severance agreement with Curwood, she was allowed to purchase the entire "zoo" of animals that had been used in filming *Back to God's Country*. The animals were tended by their trainer until Nell Shipman and Van Tuyle bought a home in Highland Park in Greater Los Angeles, where the animals subsequently became part of the family and gained free run of the house and grounds. It would become the "largest privately owned collection of wild animals in the United States." (Armatage, 261f). While any form of 'zoo-keeping' is open to critique, Nell Shipman's personal character is of some use in interpreting that of Dolores, and also contributes to the premise of "good" as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

archetypes, the battles are of wits as well as of strength, and even the gods can be fooled. In *Back to God's Country*, we might imagine that the first generation of gods has died off and left chaos in its wake. The fate of existence then rests on the shoulders of the subsequent goddesses, in this case either Mother Nature or a descendent of Athena. In contrast, we can work with a Gnostic myth, perhaps seeing the goddess as preexistent and the gods who allowed evil to slip past their watch as only the foolish children.

These hypotheses would also belatedly, or perhaps redundantly, explain what may be the "cannons" of the film, i.e. the transgressive undertones of challenging the status quo. The presence of "flowers" in the film is at least obvious in terms of Dolores and her connection with nature, but the question of their effects is still an open one.

2.2: *Nobody Waved Goodbye* (1964)

One of the films on the forefront of the first wave of the modern era, *Nobody Waved Goodbye* is also one of the first feature films produced by the National Film Board. It would not, however, have achieved its status were it not for Don Owen's decision to forgo the protocol of his commission;[262] as mentioned above, the NFB was simply not interested in feature films. Even

[262] C.f. esp. Gary Evans, *In the National Interest*. There is actually some dispute about the reality of this account. Most authors take Don Owen at his word, in his statements to the press about the lack of cooperation on the part of the NFB, and about how he had to "pull the wool over their eyes." The claims to the contrary on the part of certain employees on the Board may have had to do with the fact that Owen's statements led to a "Parliamentary fallout" and "tongue lashing" of the NFB (Evans, 102).

Two earlier films officially endorsed by the NFB were *Drylanders* (1963) and *Pour la suite du monde* (1964). Evans (81, 85, 87f) defines these as feature films, but here the classification is complicated. In technical terms, they were examples of *cinéma direct*; *Drylanders*, at least, was scripted and used professional actors. Both were also originally intended for television. They are likely better classified as "docudramas"; while they are both fictionalized accounts, they are essentially meant to portray historical events, focusing more on the accuracy of the events than the meaning of them. In any case, the two sets of films, one endorsed and the other not, were undoubtedly representative of an internal conflict for the

the cross-border success of the film, along with that of *Le Chat Dans le Sac*, was far from "sufficient" to change the minds of the administration. Both films, however, provide answers to the questions of Canadian identity at the same time as they implicitly address the religious issues confronted throughout the thesis. A comparison between the two would also be fruitful for those interested in the question of French/English Canadian identity during the Quiet Revolution, and the existential restlessness in the years leading up to the October Crisis.

In *Nobody Waved Goodbye*, we see some remaining traces of the artistic and philosophical premises on the part of the NFB that would later be rejected by modern Canadian filmmakers; many of these traces, though, are due to the fact that much of the filming was conducted prior to Owen's decision to make it a feature-length film.

The official account tells us,

> [The film was] originally intended as a short documentary on juvenile delinquents but it grew and grew until it was decided to shoot it as a fiction film. Improvised by the actors, it told the story of teen alienation and became a surprise hit in the United States."[263]

John Grierson's attitude towards a competitive Canadian film industry had never yet been subject to rethinking, and in the mid-1960s the somewhat unspoken "policy" was to rely on the techniques of docudrama – techniques that could provide for interesting cinema, but that were

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NFB. *Drylanders* feels like it is trying to be either *Little House* or *Bonanza*. The film is more American than Canadian, except for the scenery, and the music is reminiscent of Aaron Copland.

With the exception of Owens, the directors of the other three films had long subsequent careers. Owens also directed the apparently successful feature-length film, *The Ernie Game* (1969), which was co-produced by the CBC to be shown on television. After Owen repeated his earlier statements to the press, the NFB effectively put an end to his film career.

[263] "Nobody Waved Goodbye," [Summary] *National Film Board*, http://www.nfb.ca/film/nobody-waved-good-bye/ Internet: Accessed July 10, 2009. Peter Kastner, the lead actor, passed away in September of 2008 after a continually successful film and television career.

Note the lack of subject with the verb "decided".

also fairly stale. These policies were a reflection of the older generation's confusions regarding its role in history; the film thus confronts the policies' legitimacy in both production and content.

These challenges are first witnessed through an ongoing confrontation between the art of the film and the apparent content. On its own, the fact that the supposed "delinquent" in the film is more clean-cut, well-dressed and gentle than James Dean would ever be,[264] would normally have given audiences a false impression of Canadian identity, by attributing to Canadians a Beaver Cleaver lifestyle that Americans were already outgrowing.[265] Meanwhile, the audience is subjected to the following set of lyrics that run through the opening credits:

> *Oh love is tender, and love is kind, fair as a jewel when it first is new;*
> *But love grows old, and it waxes cold, and fades away like the Summer's dew.*[266]

In the first few minutes, then, the audience is lulled into (false) expectations of a particular kind of encounter with beauty: the delinquency will be romanticized and poeticized, and will be no more disturbing than the ruffians in the musical version of *Les Miserables*. The film would also appears to be exactly what one would expect from a government film board: it initially has the feel of an after-school special. When the film was shown in tandem with *Lonely Boy*, a documentary about Paul Anka, the opening scenes of *Nobody* would have been a natural segue.

The broken promise of love as portrayed in the opening song, however, is not just about romantic love, but about a larger promise of life, a theme that will be further revealed in pieces throughout the film. The 17th century English ballad actually begins with the verse,

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[264] *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) could not have been unfamiliar to Canadian audiences; the promotions for *Nobody Waved Goodbye* would certainly have given an impression that the same kinds of themes would be presented – which they were, but with an obviously different interpretation.

[265] The final episode of *Leave it to Beaver* was in 1963.

[266] Both the sentiments and the musical production may admittedly seem quaint to sophisticated audiences today.

The water is wide, I can't cross over, but neither have I the wings to fly;
Give me a boat that can carry two, and both shall row, my love and I.

At first glance, the song represents tensions between the hope and despair of love; if we transfer this tension to the level of the religious, we get a more accurate picture of the conflicts that will be involved in the film. The imagery of river and boat frequently have to do with one's approach to death. The idea of a Promised Land, across the River Jordan, for instance, does represent for oppressed populations the hope of a better world during this life, but yet there is a common undertone of resignation; the deeper belief is that it will more likely arrive in the afterlife. In the folk revival of the 1960s, we see a conscious effort to reinterpret the lyrics to reflect a revival of social consciousness. Instead of this meaning that the songs are now interpreted in a secular way, however, the effect is that a sense of religious yearning for a "final" end to human struggles becomes associated with the sense of urgency to fix real-world problems.[267]

Thus, the critic need not choose between a secular or religious interpretation of the song, or of the film, but may seek for the means by which both participate. For the audience, the metaphors will not be consciously apparent. Instead, much of the above is a perfect demonstration of Elder's theories, regarding image, dualism, common sense, and Calvinism. In order for the audience to recognize the deeper angst beneath the surface of the characters' gentility, it must first be confronted on the level of sensual perception. If the film had visually and aurally presented the James Dean typology, then the dualisms held by the audience beforehand would

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[267] The Peter, Paul and Mary version of *River of Jordan* is a good example, in that its religious view is relatively pantheistic (or pan*en*theistic, perhaps); listeners can choose to avoid the religious if they like.

This is not a new connection between art and religion; rather, one often sees Canadian film in the same way that the folk revival is seen: as a sort of secular Marxism. It might be seen instead that the particular dualism between justice in this life and the next is one that Canadian film, like its folk song forebears, tries to overcome. While few Canadians, or even filmmakers, would express this in theological terms, there is a special ease with which Canadian films dissolve the lines between the two realms. Even European films show some awkwardness when trying to make such connections for the audience. This ease may actually be one of the traits inherited from CanLit – Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* is still the best example.

have been preserved. In *Nobody Waved Goodbye*, they cannot be preserved, because the philosophical content of the remainder of the film – a questioning of and confrontation with authority – does not initially gel, on the subconscious or the aesthetic level, with what the audience sees and hears. The more the image and the content are mismatched with each other, the deeper the audience is drawn into each of them separately – and the less the audience is able to maintain an unquestioning relationship with the dualisms it had previously presumed.

The construction of the film's plot is also very much inherited from Canadian literature, in that it is less about what happens than about how the actions affect other people around them. Peter[268] Marks, the film's 17-year old protagonist, does get himself into numerous troubles, and there is often some narrative tension for the audience regarding what decisions he will make. Normally, though, the audience expects there to be some kind of logical relationship involved in the process. Peter's behaviour, however, is unpredictable and he does not conform to type. More than anything, he reminds us of many an Old Testament personality, whose stubbornness and bad behaviour is key to the story, but who is initially incapable of doing otherwise, all of it being part of their god's plan. In some ways, Jonah seems to have as little free will as did the Pharoah – they are both merely tools for some divine game. Likewise, the audience will wonder if Peter is even free to make good choices. However, the question for the audience is not whether or not we have free will, but rather it has to do with how we are to reconcile the concurrent presence and absence of free will; materially as well, Peter has to struggle with how much it is right to reject his parents' lifestyle while still taking responsibility for his own errors.

We might also wonder about how much freedom a filmmaker has while working within the confines of government mandates; the issue was partially addressed above in regards to Don

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[268] The lead characters' first names are eponymous of those of the actors.

Owen, but what is to be considered now is not whether that freedom exists or not, but has to do with the proper attribution of meaning. Owen's production of the film involved open acts of transgression, but in terms of the transgressiveness that is claimed for the content of Canadian film, does the fact that the NFB allowed the film to be shown in theatres negate the power of that transgressiveness?[269] The basic premise here relates again to Schumann's hints of "if they only knew".[270] While Canadian censorship has not been geared towards preventing statements of political ideology, a government-funded agency would normally be expected to obscure the most socio-politically radical of ideas.

On the surface, then, the film might seem to present how emotionally unsustainable is the upper-middle class lifestyle; this message, however, would not have been conceived by an organization that depended on maintaining the relationship between government, commerce and art.[271] We know that the basic intent of that organization was undermined by Owen, but it is not clear how well the organization knew of Owen's ideas. Considering the film's original intention, i.e. a documentary about teenage delinquents, it would ordinarily have been an example of the conventional ("square") culture's perennial attempts to come to terms with, and potentially be "hip to", the struggles of youth. The reason that a critical audience might speculate that film's

[269] A fellow passenger on a bus once suggested that astute authorities allow transgressive films to be shown, precisely because they distract the public's attention from the root causes of inequality and of war. This idea belongs with the discussion above (n. 218) about Murdoch and the influence of art on morals, and may not be resolvable. The argument may not apply to Canadian films if, as is suggested throughout the thesis, the root causes *are* exposed.

[270] C.f. pp. 122, 124 above.

[271] This relationship is, in itself, an essentially middle-class construction, although arguments against this position are acknowledged, especially regarding the complexity of such relationships under a governmental philosophy of a mixed economy. It appears possible that were the administrators of the NFB at any particular time to be of a socialist bent, then a film produced by that institution deriding middle-class values would not involve any apparent contradictions. However, while most government employees in Canada depend on the mixed-economy, they are essentially bound to preserve middle-class values in order to preserve the existence of their institutional employers. Thus, any anti-conventional viewpoints in NFB films exist only in spite of the institution.

whole original purpose was undermined by Owen is that the film itself seems somewhat self-conscious of these social discrepancies. There is almost certainly a great deal of irony on the part of the director and of many of the actors; we get the feeling that everyone involved is toying with the foundational premises of the institution that commissioned the film, and is surreptitiously inserting statements about authority that were assumed to be over the heads of the NFB administration. Absent such ironies, the film could as legitimately be interpreted as an exposé on the follies of youth, as it could be described as an attack on the middle class.

For example, Peter, the male protagonist, outwardly expresses to his girlfriend a desire not to get into the "rut" his parents are in, involving the niceties of "a comfortable house...gold fixtures in the bathroom...a good school, your shoes are good, your pants are always pressed", but without a sense of what is really happening to people in the world, particularly to himself and to his girlfriend. His suspicions of such ignorance on the part of both their sets of parents are later confirmed. This was hardly a radical new outlook for a youth to take; if the director's sole intent was to present this message, then the film might have become indistinguishable from parallel American films. In this case, though, the ironies again cannot be avoided, and so instead of just a socio-political meaning to the film, one must begin to search for something deeper.

Peter himself, despite the content of his speech to Julie, has a rather suave and persuasive personality, unmistakably upper-middle class in his personal presentation. He is also somewhat proud of himself, and the audience may have a hard time completely sympathizing with him. When we place his character in a comparison with that of Dolores in *Back to God's Country*, Peter appears to be another example of someone who is conscious of his power over others, in the context of an otherwise oppressive system of rules and other antagonisms, but without Dolores' sense of control over herself. If there is an archetype that Peter initially fits, it is of an

Anakin Skywalker, so resentful of authority that he wants to be in charge himself. Peter, though, is still walking the line. We see this in an early scene: having answered the door for Ron, his sister's boyfriend and a practicing dentist, Peter begins to interrogate Ron on his goals and personal values in life, under the guise of asking advice from an older, future brother-in-law. Peter resurrects the gist of his earlier dialogue with Julie about wanting something "more" out of life than financial success, except that now Peter's questions appear to be only rhetorical:

> *Peter*: I want to ask you, are you happy with the set-up, like, the way things are going for you now? Have you got what you want, are you satisfied?
> *Ron*: No…no, I'm still working for it.
> *Peter*: Well, I mean what exactly are you working for? You've been through college, you've got a great practice, you're making a lot of money, you're putting teeth in people…is that what you – is that what the whole thing was for?
> *Ron*: I'm doing what I want to do and I'm making a good living at it…what's wrong with that?
> *Peter*: I mean, did you ever stop to look at what kind of life you were leading? Did you ever stop to, sort of consider it, and consider your values and the things you were living for? Did you, really? I mean did you, or did you just sort of live, without any goal or without any reason for it? I bet that's the kind of life you live, isn't it? I mean, why are you going to Cleopatra tonight, and wasting seven bucks on it…just because everyone else is?
> *Ron*: Peter, do you know you're getting a little obnoxious?

Ron had appeared rather bemused at first, but when he starts being put out by Peter's interrogation, we are not sure if it is because he is affected by the truth or is just perturbed at Peter's lack of "respect" for how the world works. Peter persists, though, insisting that he is not trying to insult Ron, but only that he does not "understand guys like you." When Peter goes too far, he seems surprised at Ron's anger, and storms off to his own bedroom; this is the first display of any real emotion, but the contrast between his dispassionate interrogations and the passion of his ultimate frustrations are confusing, and so once again, the audience must look deeper into Peter's character. His questions to Ron get close to the heart of the religious, but

because they are not eventually resolved in the film, they become even more of a sticking point for the audience,[272] and are more likely to provoke religious thoughts in turn.

The fact that Ron is only a few years older than Peter also shows us that it is not a "generation gap" at play here, but a different sort of conflict between Peter and the rest of society.[273] If this is the case, then his parents' behaviour will also have to be further examined: they cannot be written off by the audience as "typical" of their generation or position. One of the first ironies in the film is that the parents themselves had been pleading with Peter to get more out of life than they did. Neither of them had gone to college, and Peter is determined not to either, and has been skipping his classes; it is unclear to the audience, then, whether it is Peter or his parents who are missing the bigger picture. His parents show themselves to be somewhat ineffectual as a team, arguing over what to do about Peter's absenteeism, with the mother accusing the father of avoidance, and both accusing the other of being like Peter. The problems of father and son, at least, are linked: the father goes through life smiling, avoiding all emotional inconveniences, whereas Peter avoids instead the material inconveniences of life, such as jobs or homework. We

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[272] This is somewhat of a psychological premise; an in-depth discussion of the "dreamlike" experience of images in film, even though this would seem to fit well with what has been opposed above to the "conceptual". Precisely because there are no definitive theories of dreams, one favourite is suggested, namely that dreams are not remembered if the respective problems or issues were resolved within the dream. The counter-examples, of those who have "Eureka" moments upon waking from a dream, do not really negate the theory, because the actual resolution in the latter case must occur after the subject awakes. While the majority of a film's moral effects may not be attributed to the subconscious level of learning, there is nevertheless at least a basic level of such, and because some of this occurs in a manner similar to that of dreams, it can be suggested that the audience will remember events that are left unresolved in the film.

[273] Evans' comparison of *Nobody* with its contemporary seems to be amiss:

> Like Gilles Groulx's *Le Chat dans le sac*, it was about adolescent conflict, this time of youth rebelling against middle-class parental morality, conventions, and goals. But here the break was generational (Oedipal), not sociopolitical, as it was in Quebec. [Evans, 102]

Aside from the comparison being backwards, Evans' link between "generational" and "Oedipal" does not make sense in the context of the film. Peter wishes to be accepted into the adult world, whereas the protagonists of *Le Chat* do not; at the same time, Peter is far more unlikely than his counterparts to idolize the parent of the opposite sex. The original Greek drama is of course as complicated as Freud's theories, but Evan's understanding of the word does not seem to fit either interpretation.

do see a mix of motives on Peter's part – he is obviously not rejecting chores for religious reasons, but perhaps what we witness instead is a religious vacuum of sorts behind the avoidances on the parts of both father and son.

It is certainly possible to analyze this religious vacuum in conventional or moralist terms; Peter is then interpreted as rebelling against religion, and his particular questions are only an excuse for being a "smart-aleck". When he later leaves the house in anger, "borrowing" his father's car and taking Julie for a spin, his reckless driving would be a demonstration of his rejection of all authority, including that of the conventional God: death has no meaning for Peter, and likewise, he sees no reason to hold life as sacred. The juxtaposition of the final words of his parents' argument, however – regarding whether or not there is anything "to worry about" – with the subsequent argument between Peter and Julie on the very same subject, is too deliberate for us to take the easy, conventional way out of the conflict. It cannot be a matter of religious vs. non-religious any more than it can be a matter of responsibility vs. carelessness, for the moral of the story has to be gleaned by acknowledging the bad behaviour of authority figures as well, and by sorting out what degree – and what sort – of disobedience is proper. After all, disobedience in regards to the chores proves to be ineffective, and allows his parents to neglect the real problems.

After Peter calms down and is (temporarily) driving at a responsible rate, the audience can now tune into more of the conversation between himself and Julie; Peter is discussing his mother's plan for a "Reformation", involving "taking matters into her own hands." Presumably this refers to the control of the household, but because Peter is not taking this seriously, we might wonder whether the audience is meant to take it seriously either. Peter then asks Julie, however, "Don't you ever get the feeling that your parents are, sort of, working on the opposite team – from you?" Julie's response, "Yes, I know they are!" points more precisely to the distinctive

exegetical options that were touched on above. Julie assumes that the generations are *meant* to be split, but her lighthearted acceptance of this is also an acceptance of the status quo: there is no point in rebelling to a more-than-socially obligatory degree, because the relationship between authority and subject must be preserved. Peter, however, is hoping to escape the status quo; the sincerity with which he follows up on his question, and the premise behind it, are a surprise to Julie; Peter's basic premise is that he and his parents *ought* naturally to be on the same team, and he really means it. It was a disappointment to him that his premise seems to be faulty. Whereas the typical teenage rebellion depends on the determination to be unlike one's parents, no matter whether or not there are areas of agreement, the deeper motives behind Peter's quest for something different have everything to do with human, and family, bonding. Peter's distress is severe because it is religious distress; in this case, it is about re-linking what is separate.

The audience might be able to realize that the husband-wife divide and the parent-child divide are parallel, and that both are unnatural. The issue has been argued before in more conventionally theological terms, such as those involving Luther's "focus on the family"; although this latter phrase was constructed for different purposes today, we might ask if it is not of great benefit to many authoritative institutions *outside* of the home, for *in*-home relationships to be fragile and divisive.[274] Once again, it is tempting to see this matter in terms of the secular vs. the religious aspects of church institutions, and perhaps claim that it is only the *institution* that frames problems in religious terms, so that it can achieve its secular goals. At least in the

[274] For all of his preaching, for instance, the whole existence of James Dobson's organization depends on the perpetually *fractured* nature of families. It is far more of a conundrum than the fact that doctors' careers depend on illness; a doctor at least prescribes agents of healing, whether pharmaceutical or otherwise. If we are to suppose that family life is nurtured by such agents as love, however, then it is hard to see how Dobson is not actively working to keep the members of families in constant fear and distrust of each other. While not suggesting that there is anything intrinsic in this way to any given institutions, there is no doubt that at certain times in history, there are those in charge of the institutions that are acting against the purported aims. Luther's fight was against such management of the institution, not the institution itself.

case of Peter's dissatisfaction with life, however, the religious cannot be separated from the secular, even without the explicit presence of a church in their lives. There is an inevitable connection between a lack of a healthy relationship with his parents, and the lack of such a relationship with any other "source" of existential solace.

Peter tells Julie that he has decided to write his exams, for his parents' sake, but will then start living for himself. If we were to see at the end of the film that he would be finally content with this philosophy, we would be able to conclude that he, and hence the film, was devoid of religion after all. However, when he is trying to persuade Julie to run away with him and look for a job, he explains that he is ok with the chance that she might have to work nights, because she would be working for a higher purpose: for the sake of "us." Peter is charged with rejecting the values of his parents, but what is at stake for him under the surface is that his parents do not share his values on togetherness. His desire for familial bonds is also displayed in a negative fashion; when he becomes careless again with his driving and is eventually arrested, Peter expects that his father will bail him out immediately, and is surprised at his father's refusal to do so. This too cannot be taken as being "obvious", as the conventional view might prefer: the father's actions are not based on any notion of "tough love", but because he considers Peter to be "worthless". His putative motives are to "teach Peter a lesson", but we now learn that when he claimed earlier that there was "nothing to worry about" regarding Peter's behaviour, he meant this literally: it was none of his concern. If any character in the film has shown himself to be "without religion", it is thus the father.

Peter's brief but only superficial transformation into someone far more callous and uncaring may be, in the simplest psychological terms, a reaction based on the perception of being rejected by his father, and he may indeed temporarily be concluding that nothing matters anymore except

survival. And yet, what is the audience to conclude about the nature of authority, or about the discrepancies in the morals of those Peter is meant to look up to? The audience will surely not have expected Peter's father to let him off the hook, and will also be disappointed in Peter's descent into further crime. The reasonableness – and indeed kindness – of the police and parole officers will prevent the audience from labeling all authority figures as enemies, but perhaps the effect is that there is a desire for these authorities to achieve a more effective and more progressive kind of influence. Peter is not yet of age to have a license, and yet is told by his mother to move out of the house; while Canadians will always have some level of ambivalence towards government social programmes, there is nonetheless a desire for those social programmes to effective umbrellas against misfortune. The audience craves for Peter to have a chance to form community bonds, but knows that this chance will not occur without more powerful leaders – if not necessarily authorities – in place in his life.

Peter's next form of "rebellion" is also an attempt at bonding – an all-night party at a friend's house, sitting quietly and singing folk songs, apparently perfectly sober. While we do not know what place these friends held in his larger life, the audience does have to wonder why he could not have been more proactive in forming a community with them, but then considering his situation at home, he would not have normally been able to attend such parties. When he returns home late and is confronted by his mother, she does not believe the truth he tells of where he has been; she cannot be completely blamed for her suspicions, but it becomes all the more apparent that there can be no deep reconciliation between her and Peter.[275] Furthermore, she has at the same time dismissed his need for bonding (with others, not with herself) altogether.

[275] While the Oedipus issue is admittedly complicated, Peter shows far more signs in the film of having rejected his mother from early on. While his relationship with his father has also clearly been unhealthy for some length of time, it is the latter that Peter is doing his best to nurture. If one defines

The case between Julie and her mother is somewhat alike; an earlier conversation between them confirms Peter's initial speculations. Julie's mother confesses, "I just don't know what's happening to you anymore since you started going with Peter." None of the parents understand what the youth are thinking or feeling, and they can only make material attempts to make their children's lives better – attempts that include trying to cut off their love relationships and to alienate them from their friends.

Until the authority figures in the film are willing to transform themselves, and until Peter and Julie can find some source of religious guidance among their community of friends – clearly absent among the official institutions – then they will continue to be "delinquent", and the lack of understanding on the part of the parents will continue to be self-fulfilling. Peter's mother, during her own attempt to break off the youths' relationship, tells him, "I just don't want you getting too involved with anybody, you've got a great deal to do in the next few years…you're going to go to university and you're going to become a lawyer…you're going to fulfill all the things I've ever wanted you to do." This conflict is almost too cliché, but whatever the audience concludes about the sincerity of Peter and Julie's higher aspirations, it is clear that they will not be fulfilled by following the paths of their parents. This will be the real tragedy, as what both of the children want most is to find a way to reconcile their family bonds, and to find some kind of deeper satisfaction behind the material elements of their middle-class lifestyles.

With parental authority effectively absent from Peter's life, and the official authorities only involved in his weekly parole meetings, it seems that any potential redemption for Peter will now come in the form of his relationship with Julie. First, though, the two of them must overcome the

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"Oedipal" in terms of the question "Who Am I?", Peter is still not taking the normal route to answering it; although he is, in a way, exiled, the religious message seems to be that the attempt to answer such questions on your own is inefficient, and the expectation unjustified.

disappointments inherent in the opening ballad, now instrumentally reprised as a serenade overtop of their lovemaking. The audience senses that grief will even come to this relationship if they cannot reconcile their duties to each other and those to their individual futures. As Peter and Julie contemplate their love for each other, the deepest sense of religious despair is revealed in the ballad's second and third verses, the meaning of which comes through for the audience most effectively in the visual sense: it is written across Julie's face as Peter sings,

> *I leaned my back up against an oak, I thought it was a trusty tree*
> *but first it bent and then it broke, and so my love did unto me.*
>
> *A ship there is and she sails the sea, she's loaded deep as deep can be,*
> *But not so deep as the love I'm in, I know not if I sink or swim.*

In terms of Edward Bailey's notions of implicit religion, no element of experience, if genuinely felt, can be separated from the religious. From one perspective, Peter and Julie's love for each other is religious, and their understanding of religion is likewise based on their belief in love. Once this basic equation is made, however, then one realizes that whatever happens to one's love life cannot help but affect one's relationship with whatever one determines the ground of his or her existence to be, and vice versa. If love really is fleeting, as the song implies, then so is the object of one's general faith. It is good to remember at this point, however, that it is up to Peter to determine whether the song that has played throughout is life will have the last word. One conventional interpretation of the situation is that, religiously speaking, it is actually necessary to recognize that love is fleeting but "religion" is not, and perhaps this is also part of Peter's angst.

The Hobbesian issues discussed above in the context of Dolores and her animal kin are also almost inherent to any "coming-of-age" film, certainly in one that deals with the themes of authority. When teenagers are left alone, will they even be capable of surviving?[276] The answer in the film is complicated; the final scene seems to imply a negative answer, but throughout the film we are given the impression that were it not for Peter's bad choices and attitude, he would have not only survived, but together with Julie could have built a happy life. The film introduces us to a single mother of Peter's age, who is making it on her own. In this case, we have to presume that as a teenager she is also making moral choices without an authority figure controlling her. Peter does seem almost fated to make bad choices from the beginning, and when Julie leaves him, it seems that what is being rejected is the possibility of someone their age being prepared for adulthood. The tragedy is not that Peter wanted to fly with the eagles, but that he was consistently left unprepared for the flight. The appropriate partners for Peter's quest are out there, but he is looking in the wrong places.

Finally, another side of the Hobbesian questions about civilization and authority plays out in a conversation between Peter, Julie and a mutual friend. The crux of the problem here is identity – ingeniously framed as well with the analogue of French-Canadian identity in the national context, and thus all of the previous threads are woven together. Julie argues that personal identity can be achieved only when one gives herself to the community; by extension, she is

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[276] The standard interpretation of Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, i.e. that it is an affirmation about the "nasty, brutal and short" state of nature will unlikely concede much ground anytime soon, but perhaps the obvious point is derided precisely for being too obvious. The boys in the novel were never allowed to be in a "state of nature" in the first place, as they had already been touched by "civilization". While not wishing to take sides on Hobbes' question here, it still seems absurd – as well as against the rules of scientific discovery – to claim that *any* kind of statement on the state of nature is being made in the story, with so many factors unaccounted for.

Likewise, in line with the above comments about Dolores, the message of Peter's parents is essentially a variation of "Life isn't fair, my son, get used to it." There must be a better way to prepare a child for the harsh realities of than to endorse the perpetuation of self-fulfilling prophecies.

arguing for the principles of federalism and of catholicism (in the small-c sense of the word). Their friend is a French-Canadian who takes Julie's side on federalism, accusing Peter in the process of an American view of selfishness. The "official" position on Canadian identity – the one most often presented to school children even at the high school age – is that our precise construction of a bilingual federalism is what distinguishes us from the Americans. Peter's contribution to the conversation puts this view in jeopardy, and although he is eventually silenced, the audience can no longer embrace the conventional view without some lingering doubts. Peter's defense against the charge of selfishness is that the orthodoxy's support of federalism, regardless of how proudly we *name* it as Canadian, is in essence no different than a support for the much deeper American value of corporate assimilation; the only true means of Canadian independence is for each Canadian to reject the corporate notion of the nation-state altogether. While this perspective is rightly seen as naïve, Peter is correct about the foundational premises that expose the "special status" of Canadian federalism as being somewhat absurd.

Only one year subsequent to the founding of the FLQ and 6 years prior to the October Crisis, the film's discussion of these issues is both current and prescient, and it is no accident that the conversation takes place in the context of the plot about Peter and Julie. At the moment, Peter has no ultimate response to the question of what his precise values are; Peter, like most Canadians, has argued for a Canada that is not a corporate, assimilative body like the United States. He is at the same time unable to present an argument for a positive philosophy of personal identity and individuality, without repeating the American notions of individual rights and liberties. This is, after all, where Canadians usually stumble, just as the followers of Luther or Calvin must have stumbled, when they argued for independence from the institutional body, and not just from the theologies of the official church.

Peter's isolation at the end of the film is undoubtedly the greatest tragedy, relative to the desires he has expressed – and relative to his demonstrated personal ability to have fulfilled those desires, if he had learned to know himself better.[277] He wished to form human bonds that went deeper than the levels of convenience and economic transactions, but this was the only language of interaction he had learned. The tragedy can obviously be moralized as being a result of his youth and foolishness, and it can also be attributed to the lack of officially recognized religion in his life. However, what has been intended here was to reveal the ways in which the religious was very much present, if primarily in the form of yearning instead of fulfillment.

2.3: *Next of Kin* (1984)

During the period between *Nobody Waved Goodbye* and the early 1980s, there is a plethora of contributing voices to Canadian cinema; there seems to be no one film that breaks new ground on its own. There were some major contributions during the 1970s; in addition to *Goin' Down the Road* (1970) and *Mon Oncle Antoine* (1971), *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1974) was the first major film since *Don't Let the Angels Fall* (1969) to be directly taken from a prominent Canadian novel. The larger trends of Canadian film during this era were geared towards the comedy, horror and science fiction genres; the talents of David Cronenberg and of Ivan Reitman were already in their early bloom, but again are best discussed in the context of the kind of specialized findings such as those of Caelum Vatnsdal.[278] The modern trends of

[277] This failure to know oneself is certainly a big part of the Oedipus story, and Peter's failure to do so is also implicit here. However, the point of the film is the *community*'s failure in this regard; Peter is shown to have been making the attempt from the beginning; any provocation from the Sphinx would have already occurred.

[278] C.f. n. 13 above.

Canadian film may be better picked up where *Nobody* left off, by considering the first of Atom Egoyan's feature films. Egoyan himself has long been comfortable on both sides of the hypothetical line between the mainstream and experimental modes of Canadian film, and there is no doubt that he has been a major influence, in diverse ways, on many of the most prominent Canadian directors to come.[279]

Next of Kin has a special kind of boldness about it; Egoyan had only produced four short/experimental films between 1979 and 1982, and he was 24 when this first feature film was released. Egoyan chose actors for the lead parts who had never acted in any films that can now be discovered – and aside from Patrick Tierney and Arsinée Khanjian,[280] none of them went on to subsequent film careers. Egoyan also chose his production team for their talents more than for their experience – *Next of Kin* was a first for them as well – but most of these also went on to highly successful careers in the Canadian and international industry: a testament to Egoyan's vision, not only of his art but of the people surrounding him.[281] Aside from all of the film's artistic and technical accomplishments, one of the challenges was to take its plot and develop it into a film that, albeit somewhat comedic, had an abundance of serious dramatic moments. Much of the humour was dark, but darkness itself turns out to have been one of Egoyan's trademark

[279] There really are too many too mention; the following names are listed merely as somewhere for the future critic to start: directors such as Guy Maddin, Patricia Rozema, Anne Wheeler, Lynne Stopkewich, Camelia Frieberg, Bruce Sweeney, Carl Bessai, Denis Arcand, Thom Fitzgerald, Bruce MacDonald, and Sarah Polley. For a few of these, *Next of Kin* was their first real experience; the film itself was not their "big break", but did obviously set a chain of events in motion.

[280] Tierney went on to do *Speaking Parts* (1989) with Egoyan, and Khanjian has starred in multiple Egoyan films and has become a prominent film and television actress in her own right.

[281] For the sake of clarity, Egoyan was born in Cairo, Egypt to Armenia parents, moving with his family to British Columbia when he was 3. Khanjian was born in Beirut, Lebanon, also to Armenian parents, the family moving to Montreal when she was 17. They met shortly before Egoyan was to begin production on *Next of Kin*, and have since married. There is no real paradox here in Egoyan's status as Canadian film pioneer; it is rather appropriate for someone who has come to embrace his own ethnic roots but is nevertheless devoted to Canadian life and to the industry.

specialties, allowing him to bring an ironic tone without disturbing the gravity of the emotions. The plotline, under anyone else's direction, might have turned into a cliché or slapstick farce, and from this first film alone we get a sense of Egoyan's particular grasp of life's tragedies as well as its absurdities. This trait will also be one of the many contributions that Egoyan passes on to future directors, and will be a general factor in the definition of Canadian film. Egoyan's films would be comparable to, and show influence from, European cinema; the former, however, are far more effective in allowing the audience to identify with the person who embodies the philosophies on-screen, rather than with the abstract concepts behind the characters.

The first impressions of the protagonist do in fact give us the feeling that we have picked up where we left off, specifically on a path eerily parallel to that of Peter in *Nobody*. The heroes appropriately share their first name,[282] and even the two sets of parents are alike in appearance and behaviour. An additional irony is pointed to, if not defined, in an essay on the film by Batia Boe Stolar.[283] Citing Donald Masterson's use of the term "doubles", Stolar points to "two families, two therapists, two sons, two cultures";[284] she is referring to the film's narrative, but the

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[282] "Peter", it may be remembered, was also the husband of Dolores in *Back to God's Country*. Canada has many historical Pierre's, but no Peters come to mind. There may be something archetypal in how an audience responds to certain names, but there appears to be no other connection.

[283] Batia Boe Stolar, "The Double's Choice: The Immigrant Experience in Atom Egoyan's *Next of Kin*," Monique Tschofen and Jennifer Lise Burwell, *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007).

[284] *ibid*, 177. One of the larger issues addressed by Stolar is the idea of a "split subject" (179) who confronts two different cultures and must choose between them; her thesis involves the relationship between reality and replica within personal identity; although the focus here is on a different aspect of this film, it would be well to read Stolar's essay along with Elder's book.

Although the following problem is not addressed within the body of the work, it is necessary to respond to some common interpretations of Egoyan's films. An ongoing trend in modern criticism and scholarship – in many departments – is to discuss the meaning of a film's perspective on the technological. Usually, this form of analysis occurs in the context of a modernist trying to understand a post-modernist. Several contributors to *Image and Territory*, for instance, including the editors, discuss issues of identity in terms of how we react to the technological recreations of our self-image.

Thus, the editors' first chapter is titled: "Artifice and Artifact: Technology and the Performance of Identity" [21-27]. The second, by Elena del Río, is "Fetish and Aura: Modes of Technological

idea can be easily transferred to the wider context. In Egoyan's film, we are introduced to Peter Foster, 23 years old but still living at home. This Peter, though, is far more of a "hard case" than his namesake. We first see Peter in bed and hiding beneath the covers, only peeking his head out to overhear his parents having a familiar argument – about precisely how to instill a sense of values in the "boy." The echoes of this argument are heard throughout the film, not quite inside of Peter's head and not quite outside of it.

Even prior to the introduction of Peter, the first image Egoyan gives us – one that will be used in many of his films – is of a suitcase making its way along an airport conveyor. The audience does not yet know where Peter is headed, but in the image of the lonely, square and somewhat battered suitcase, we might imagine Peter as being likewise. We will also discover that he is trapped inside of his own existence as effectively as the contents of his luggage, moving along through none of their own volition. As Peter tells us, acting throughout the film as narrator,

> "My name is Peter. I'm 23 years old and I've lived at home all my life, watching my parents dislike each other; for a while, I thought that was a pretty exciting thing to do, but in the last year or so, it's all begun to get on my nerves. So what I've been doing instead is spending a lot of time pretending. And I figured out a long time ago that being alone was easier if you became two people; one part of you would always be the same, like an audience. The other part would take on different roles, kind of like an actor."

Peter is, of course, looking directly into the camera/audience at carefully chosen moments during the narration, and so the audience is meant to be thrown off the track of just how conscious and in control of his own sanity Peter actually is, and of how much we are being fooled ourselves by

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Engagement in *Family Viewing*" [29-52]. While acknowledging that such analyses are simply in a different *mode* than those of the thesis, and also that interviews with Egoyan suggest that he is very much conscious of the technological as he is producing his art, he is actually very successful in *concealing* the technological from the audience. While Peter is initially engaged – and to some degree fascinated, with the video-camera and the audio-recorder, his use of that technology must become second-nature for him in order for him to follow through on his plans. With the exception of the means by which he discovers the existence of the Deryan family, his strategies are decidedly "low-tech."

his pretending. Likewise, the audience must now see Peter as being split, wondering how much of him will instead be travelling with – or inside of – the aforementioned suitcase.[285]

The next thing the audience learns about Peter and his parents[286] is that they are attending sessions of family therapy. We are allowed to witness the first appointment, during which the therapist instructs them that they should individually view the video-recordings of each session and reflect on what they see and on how each of them is behaving. While Peter has already been engaging in such reflection, he becomes further fascinated by the whole process of recording and of subsequently becoming an audience of himself. We can anticipate that his parents' approach will be an example of the opposite extreme, as they seem rather incurious by nature. Although we know what his mother means when she complains to the therapist that Peter "doesn't want to do anything with himself", we can still realize the irony of her perception and take it as a metaphor for her own life: she won't understand what is involved in bringing Peter out into the world if she fails to see what he truly is doing "with himself." She cannot admit, as Julie's mother did in *Nobody*, that "I just don't understand what is happening to you anymore."

While this may seem to make Peter Foster's parents somewhat of a caricature of any real persons, Egoyan is still getting at the ultimate truth of the barriers faced by the son; his mother's incuriosity about his life has driven him further away from her, and hence, further away from the society for which she claims to speak. At least the therapist seems reasonable: after enquiring

[285] It would be an interesting experiment to read many subsequent Canadian films in light of these analogues; the character Daniel in *Jesus of Montreal* (1989), for instance, faces a different kind of dual existence as an actor, managing a cast of actor-disciples as he himself plays Jesus; he is also a mirror of the actor Lothaire Bluteau and director Denys Arcand. While these and the above concepts of doubles are not unique to Canadian film, there may be a particularly Canadian way in which we understand dual identities, on an endless number of levels.

[286] It was speculated at first that Thomas Tierney, playing Mr. Foster, could be the real-life father of Patrick, but no confirmation of this was found. Another actor, Aidan Tierney, plays a role in Egoyan's *Family Viewing* (1987). Neither Stolar nor the other contributors to Image *and Territory* mention a connection, so it may be a mere coincidence.

into Mr. Foster's life, learning about his habit of getting up at 6 a.m. to go to a job he enjoys and works hard at, taking "a certain pride in" what he does, the therapist asks,

> "then how is it that you've managed to raise a son that doesn't want to work, has no pride, and...pretends that he's somebody else all the time?[287] [...] Maybe Peter's trying to reject your values. Is that it, Peter? You don't want to be like your parents?"

While Peter claims to have "nothing against" his parents, he must be prodded by his mother into telling the therapist that he loves them. Peter is then recognized by the therapist as undergoing a familiar quest: he craves some kind of meaning for his life, and no amount of pretending can satisfy it for him. There is no evidence that he has too actively tried distance himself from his parents, but at this point, after his parents have continued to demur in response to his attempt at dialogue, he must seek for his meaning and fulfillment elsewhere.

As with Peter Marks, we can speculate on how engaged with his emotions it is possible for Peter Foster to be; his very philosophy of pretending is, by definition, insincere. He is also reminiscent of Chance the gardener (Chauncey Gardiner) in *Being There* (1979); we are hesitant to attribute to Peter a special, mystical wisdom only to find out that we have been fooled. At this first therapy appointment, Peter increasingly becomes engrossed in the video-camera, not even being able to see the screen as of yet. While he is clearly performing at the moment, his ultimate excitement is that he will be able to watch himself later. The negative side of this, i.e. the narcissism, or even a potential degree of shallowness, is not denied, but this should not be seen as a defect of Peter's character, but rather as an unfortunate result of his parent's own disengagement from psychic realities and of a lack of encouragement of other options for him. As for shallowness, an earlier image of Peter at the swimming pool may actually show his own

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[287] Mrs. Foster's interim response, "Is it necessary to be so blunt about all of this?" (it has been noted already that she has a habit of answering for others) is not all that much of a caricature, considering the kind of behaviour documented in M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

depth relative to others; as with the initial scene of the film, Peter may be most emotionally secure when he is under the cover of blankets or water, but it is the results of these explorations in solitude that he wants to bring to his imagined audience.

One dilemma that "sophisticated" audiences will face with Canadian film is that there is often a lurking "simplicity of life" message that needs to be both confronted and absorbed. The irony in Canadian film is too prevalent for us to worry about the over-simplification of life, but the films also are rather vicious in their destruction of pretence. *Forrest Gump* (1994) was dismissed by many for this apparent defect. While such dismissal of American films is not endorsed here, there are elements that make *Next of Kin* and other Canadian films different, and in some ways, more "complex", from *Being There* or *Forrest Gump*. The most prominent elements, again, are realism, and the manner in which metaphors and dualisms are presented to the audience. On the most basic levels, the presentation is transparent; it is not the conceptual part of the brain, the part that is used to unravel riddles, that is meant to be stimulated; the audience is not meant to discuss the films afterwards in the manner of the critic or scholar, but to primarily reflect upon the moral implications. Knowing the lengths to which Peter Foster has to go to find meaning in life, the obstacles he faces, and knowing that his actions would in the long term be unsustainable, we can neither accuse him of simplicity nor can we deride him for the complications – the tangled webs – that he weaves for himself. Once the audience acknowledges that Peter's problems are real, then that audience is primed to note the complexities in their own lives.

More importantly, we are encouraged to discover in our own lives the kind of meaning that Peter craved, and to milk it for all of the (implicitly) religious value it contains. Demonstrating to the audience that he is most likely conscious of the kind of speculations that have been made here, and that he wants his thoughts to be as transparent as possible, Peter brings us a full turn

around the circle when he reflects – rather notably in the presence of Egoyan's own continued cameos at the airport conveyor:

> Looking back on our sessions at the family clinic, I've come to realize something: I envy therapists. I mean, what can be more exciting than getting to know another family…trying to solve their problems? What can be more satisfying than – than giving directions to other people's lives?

Given that their therapist has been using a mix of introspective, psychoanalytical and cognitive-behaviorist techniques, we should understand how much the therapy depends upon fictional/mythical constructions in order to arrive at a semblance of a practicable truth – which as we will see later, will still essentially be recognized as implicitly religious. Hence, when Peter is conscious of wishing to emulate that therapist, he will also be incorporating at least a variation of McLuhan's wisdom: Peter will use the fictional/mythical constructions and other techniques, but he will also go on to preach the foundational insight of the technique as a message in itself.

One rather simple manner in which Egoyan makes this possible for the audience is to have Peter narrate his own life; as is the case in any film, of course, the narration is in tandem with the audience's privileged position of being able to see the other character's reactions to Peter, and not just the reactions as Peter perceives them. This does not erase the possibility that what the audience sees *is* only a result of Peter's pretense, but the audience is nevertheless free to come to their own conclusions, particularly as they are given so many different angles from which to view the information.[288] One element of Canadian realism as applied to *Next of Kin* is an attention to the smallest of details, further drawing the audience in to the actualities of Peter's

[288] It can be argued that in American, and even in many European films, this freedom – whether as a right or as a privilege – is taken away from the audience by the brute force of the director's will. There are thus two ways in which a director can be tyrannical: over his cast and crew, and over his audience. Without continuing to belabor the issue of circularity, this is also essentially the nature of the religious quest, as it relates to character, audience and critic: if one is to have a privileged enough position to discover religious meaning, one must be willing to step both out of and into the diverse boxes of conceptual and non-conceptual thought. This is, again, why Canadian films are effective in provoking the audience, because they are not constrained to stay either on the inside or the outside of such boxes.

life: the two airport employees, for instance, sitting at the edge of the conveyor, were obviously told by Egoyan not to "act" but to carry on as usual. While more commercial understandings of "realism"[289] would still make use of such extras, the cameras would be careful not to focus too closely on their faces or on their natural idiosyncrasies. The Canadian form of realism, above all else, allows for another unique religious aspect of this film, and of others that follow its trends. If the audience becomes drawn as a community into the film, even if this is not technically reciprocated by the actors, then the quest for religious meaning becomes something for the community, rather than for the hero alone, to achieve. Ultimately, if the audience decides that there is merit to Peter's perspective on life, they will be less likely to question their own sanity in trying to engage emotionally or morally with a fictional character on the screen. After all, many audience members will be feeling precisely the lack of community that the Peters have felt, and are thus justified in gathering whatever internal, if seemingly fictional, resources are necessary to reach out to each other. In the process, audiences will be less likely to question the discovery of religious value in their own non-traditional locations.

Returning to the content of the film, the remainder of the premise is as follows. Peter is visiting the clinic for his weekly viewing of the recorded session; after charming his way past a new receptionist, playing along with her belief that he is a doctor, Peter tells us, "For 23 years I've been raised as my parents' pride and joy. That's got to change; I want control now." The tone of absolute conviction with which Peter makes the statement is not unlike that of a religious conversion, and the content is no less so: for the fortunate among us, the fact of one's independence from parental decision-making is a matter of course. Conversely, elements of explicit religion are likewise taken for granted by those who have been raised in the respective

[289] I.e., conventionally meaning the opposite of "far-fetched" or absurd.

environments, and the devotion is never questioned. Peter, however, is discovering such principles for the first time, in both directions, and he cannot possibly take them for granted.

Almost on cue, Peter finds the means to take control, naturally suggesting that the "source" of the meaning that he seeks endorses his decision: Peter discovers the recording of another family who have been attending the same clinic, George and Sonya Deryan, and their daughter Azah. Upon arriving in Canada, George and Sonya had been forced to give up their son Bedros for adoption; when three years later they found themselves in more stable circumstances, they gave birth to Azah. George, however, has been unable to let go of his regrets over Bedros, and Azah has since borne the burden of George's shame. She is unable, and finally unwilling, to be the son that George cannot have. The Deryans' therapist asks a form of the question that was earlier asked of Peter's parents: perhaps Azah "rejects the values you believe your son would have accepted?" Values in general are not necessarily religious, but the passion with which they are rejected by Azah, and the passion with which that rejection is felt by the parents, is at least indicative of a religious sentiment.[290] Family and relationships will therefore often involve religious values, regardless of whether they are consciously embraced. What we have in *Next of Kin*, however, is a conscious reconstruction of the historical perspectives on such values. The rights of the first-born son, as well as the nature of relations between child and parent, are written into the codes of several world religions; the codes for the human relations in general will also be

[290] An additional point that could be further explored: if a system of belief is to be distinguished as religious based on its "fruits", then we might look deeper into the *secondary* fruits of a value system: how fiercely they are maintained or reacted against. Again, the concept is nothing new, but the issue is degraded by making it a question of whether or not value systems, such as "personal fitness", for example, are of any religious substance. This supposed distinction between religious and non-religious values is again an example of looking for substance in the wrong place. It may beg the question to suggest that fitness is a religion for certain people, if the suggestion is only based on the content of the activity, because it ignores the background principles of why it means so much to the participant. On the other hand, *Mens sana in corpore sano*, is also not necessarily a religious principle, but it does point to the possibility of a religiosity behind the belief.

built upon an understanding of human-divine relations. Without asking the families to reject their religious systems, the therapists in the film encourage them to retell the inherited or habitual narratives, but with fresh scripts. Peter, already writing the screenplay for his own life, will now help to edit that of the Deryans.

After his own family's next session, having been asked by the therapist to keep an aural diary of a trip he is about to take – the audience does still not officially know where – Peter starts to re-narrate the parts of life he has already told us. He begins by repeating the same words but with different inflections, and then continues by providing updates. This will in turn be a valuable technique towards the re-writing, or even just the re-interpretation, of the religious scripts that have been inherited. This time, in talking about his envy of therapists, the "getting to know another family" turns into "getting involved" with the family. Onto the end of this reflection, Peter adds, "it must give one a great sense of purpose in life." Several elements are back in play here: the director's involvement with his film and with its cast and crew, the audience's involvement with the characters, and most importantly, as we are about to discover, Peter's involvement with the Deryans. We could extend this further to ourselves as critics, coming back in a circle to the subject-object relations discussed earlier, especially as Peter's new role as therapist to the Deryan's will be a lesson for us in the balance of inside and outside perspectives.

If there was any previous doubt about Egoyan's intentions, they vanish here: Egoyan is back in his cameo appearances, paying particular attention to, almost "watching over" Peter's reflections; viewing Egoyan's cameos here simply as a "cute" comment about his role as director is insufficient. As much as Peter has decided to take "control" of his own life, the religious moral is clear: this control will not be learned without appropriate, and experienced, guidance from

outside of his own mind. In this case, it is not guidance from 'above', but from 'around' – yet another comment on religious transcendence.

The action resumes at the airport, this time with Peter appearing to be more aware of his external surroundings; he is on his way to meet the Deryans and to introduce himself as their long-lost son.[291] Peter is taking a cue here from the Deryans' therapist, who had unsuccessfully tried to engage them in role play, the therapist playing the part of Bedros; Peter, though, will be far more successful with his techniques. He will also begin to see himself in a rather divine position, having some level of omniscience about the family he is about to join, but at the same time playing the part of "God's son". He does not have complete insight into what the "director" has in mind, and by joining the (human) family, he is also agreeing to be a dutiful son to George. In addition, he is unfamiliar with Armenian language or culture, confirming his status as a stranger in a strange land: he will be a hero of sorts, but he won't be of the all-knowing type. Peter has to make it up as he goes along – which of course is still his point.[292]

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[291] It will be later discovered that for the purpose of the audio recordings requested by the therapist, Peter reconstructs the circumstances of his involvement with the Deryan family, saying,

> I was invited to have dinner at the home of a very nice older couple, who introduced me to their daughter. They're an unusual family, quite different from what I'm used to. I'd like to spend more time with them and get to learn something about their…way of life.

[292] Egoyan often seems to comment on the universality of human nature, although his themes cannot be reduced to such terms. Nothing is made by the Deryans of Peter's apparent Anglo-Saxon ethnicity, but this too could be a statement either of the desperation of their need, or about their common humanity. The only change the Deryans notice is that "Bedros'" hair is darker than it "used to be", and thus even more like his "his mother's."

Stolar, along with lay/internet critics, attributes to the Fosters a "WASPy" background (Stolar, 178); while this is implicit, perhaps, in the surname and in what is highlighted of their value system, the contrast between the two ethnicities is probably not as important as what they have in common. In Stolar's piece, as well as in the scholars she cites, there seem to be traces of Orientalism in their description of the Deryan's culture.

Most importantly, while Stolar is probably correct about the challenge's of Peter's double existence and insider/outsider dilemmas, there is no evidence in the movie that he is even trying to mimic an Armenian identity (Stolar, 179); as much as he wants to fit into the Deryan family, he makes the most of the "fact" that he was adopted by Canadian parents and knows nothing of their culture. Admittedly, Peter does make a distinction, when speaking with Azah about his own parents, between her culture and "their [his parents] type of people", but this is only a side-effect of trying to avoid the conversation.

The potential of parallels with existing world mythologies is endless,[293] but this is left up to the reader's own judgment. What is of greater concern here are the actual conclusions arrived at by Peter/Bedros, by the Deryans and by the Fosters. For instance, as we observe Peter's emotional and moral progress throughout the film, we see him occasionally returning to the themes by which he introduced himself to the audience. Peter's reflection on the facility of life as "two different people", when repeated in his mind, is now a source of existential grief rather than of a positive "game plan". While at this point Peter is hardly ready to give up the experiment, he has tasted what it might be like to have a "real" father, and is saddened at the thought that he was only able to achieve this by pretense. At the same time, he begins to realize that as close as George will become as a father, George will not, as of yet, satisfy Peter's craving for a resolution of his more general angst.

A parallel risk for Peter, but with a more positive outlook, is entailed in his realization that he "almost couldn't tell which side of me was taking which part; and that was a bit scary at first. But I'm beginning to like it." The first part of one's self that must be sacrificed is the part that insists on moral, emotional and psychological divisions. This is the only way one can be successful with a role-play: by admitting that the mask one wears is actually, if unwittingly, more revealing of one's true character. In turn, Peter advises Azah to take a similar approach with her father, and the paradox is reinforced: "It takes more effort to speak what's on your

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[293] The most explicit of the implicit examples, perhaps, appears during the Deryans saying of grace: while George dedicates the prayer to "God's son, who was killed...," he is looking at "Bedros". When Peter subsequently asks George and Sonya about "any other children" they may have had, he is thus deliberately provoking the audience into reconsidering the gender balance in Christian history. The Deryan's initially claim to have had no other children, but the audience knows along with Peter that this is not true. The logic of this interpretation may seem somewhat convoluted; Peter had been "long-lost", although not "killed", and yet Azah had been explicitly "dead to" her father. Peter's attempt to resurrect her status in the family, ultimately above his own, is clear. Azah is the only "true" child of the Deryans. This would have nothing to do with reconstructing Christian history except that George's link between the two, and his errant denial of his daughter, makes it relevant.

mind, than to say, 'Yes, Dad.'"[294] That is, Azah must pretend to be someone else, someone who has the nerve to stand up for her existence, in order to say what she thinks; more importantly, she has a religious duty to put on this mask, because if she is not true to her principles, then any other form of "honesty" is meaningless. True to the nature of any great therapeutic methodology, this one also involves an apparent contradiction: part of Azah's acting job will involve agreeing with her father on the things that do not matter – in this case, on the taste of the dinner wine. Azah has told "Bedros" that she used to be the "spitting image" of her father; now that she no longer is, she must put on that mask too – the only way he will recognize her will be as his own image. Ultimately, though, she will be the one in control.

Peter does eventually have to confront his feelings about "home", and in the process, he must also confront whether or not he will be honest enough with himself to name his feelings at all. He will obviously have doubts about whether his "pretending" was not in fact a rather foolish enterprise, especially as he senses the need to confess everything to the Deryans. In some of the most tragic-comic ways, Peter Foster is actually the one who will reflect the Oedipus story: he appears to have almost killed his (surrogate) father, and from the beginning, he has clearly fit in more aptly with Sonya and Azah than with George. Most obviously Oedipal is the degree of self-reflection involved, exposing the very risk of intellectual incest that scares many a person a way from exploring subject-object relationships in the first place.

Instead of having torn a family apart, however, Peter has brought one together; it may have been destined that it would take George's near-death experience for the reconciliation between

[294] In addition to the conflict between father and daughter, and the gender issues involved for Azah in relation to her status as "second-rate," it is clear at one point that the patriarchy is more directly being challenged. As George witnesses Sonya's power as protector of "Bedros", he realizes that it is no longer the "man's world" that he grew up with. Peter is also playing into a role of sensitivity and gender-balance, if not reversal. This appears to be an additional disturbance for George, affirmed later when "Bedros" will not act in a sufficiently dominant manner while being entertained by an exotic dancer.

him and Azah to occur, in which case Peter does and does not deserve credit: he may have been just another tool of some divine plan. Peter Foster's participation in this plan has involved a far greater attunement with his place in the world than was possible for Peter Marks. This does seem to be the ultimate irony, given the very premises of pretence and detachment that allowed Peter Foster to live up to what was expected of him.

One of Peter's penultimate narrations summarizes much of what is seen in the film: "When you start with nothing, every bit you earn fills you with pride. It is yours. No bribes, no lies, no fear." These were originally George's words, describing his experience as an immigrant to Canada. Peter, however, is transforming the words into something more. Peter started with nothing – no knowledge of himself, no real relationships, and essentially, with no actual existence. The "earning" of these things was achieved, just as it was with George, through a "bootstrap" method of sorts; while acknowledging the necessity of external contributions, material and otherwise, Peter wanted to rebuild his character from scratch – meaning that his acts of pretending were in the end a *constructive* project. Ultimately, though, the purpose of that construction is the hope of bonding, both with a family and with the sense of destiny that seems to have cooperated with Peter at each step of his journey.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

The thesis began by offering a set of ingredients towards a definition of "religion", ingredients that might be found implicitly in the contexts of film and other forms of cultural expression. In the sections that followed were addressed a number of themes, described in terms of their various manifestations as issues of social, political, cultural and psychological importance, and as they have been portrayed in Canadian film. Some of these themes had to do with transcendence and the resolution of false dualisms, the use of images to convey philosophical or religious meaning, and the relevance of these and other issues to the structures and norms of authority. Through observing the various family and other social relationships in the film analyses, it was suggested that various acts of commitment to, or transgressiveness against, the diverse norms upon which traditional and non-traditional relationships are based, might represent a particularly Canadian way of confronting the issues. This task, however, is not yet complete, and so some of these connections may hopefully now be solidified.

It may be helpful to review two of the issues we dealt with in the first chapter: first, it was suggested that occurrences of any combination of the following would constitute the presence of religious sentiment or activity:

1) explanations of why we are here, how we got here, and where we go afterwards;

2) feelings of duty towards one's fellow inhabitants that transcend mere utility;

3) the idea that the meaning of life might likely extend beyond the practical or material (although one is not necessarily obligated to forsake the material);

4) discussions of the nature of consciousness and its relation to our physical body;

5) the need for or display of ritual, pilgrimage, sacred space, and metaphor;

6) conversations on the relationships between life and death;

7) concepts of divinity or consciousness not contained within a physical body;

8) questions surrounding the relationship between what is and what ought to be;

9) perspectives on salvation or a post-mortal existence [above, 40f].

This list was offered primarily in order to provide a broad enough framework for locating implicit religion, and only a few of the items were directly addressed in the film analyses. However, it is contended here that all of them can be discovered, many of the explicitly, in Canadian film, and that they are also inherently in the background of what was found in the three particular films in the third chapter.

The reader was also asked to keep in mind the particular theme of social relationships:

> First, how do we define the boundaries, if any, between ourselves and the apparent source of the religious? Second, what is the nature of relations between individuals, such that they are able to empathize as much with a stranger as with a member of their family? Are these relations religious or "merely" psychological? Third, when individuals congregate socially, why do even the many apparently secular groups look to "higher principles" when seeking the common welfare? [above, 42].

What follows might more clearly show how one might connect the factors in the above definitions of religion, to the questions of social development and participation. For instance, aside from the issues of transgression and commitment, the chapter on religion dealt with matters such as the privatization of religion and the issue of whether or not religion can be experienced without a corporate institution of fellowship. Two further problems related to this and to each other were the disputes over the notions of orthodoxy and heresy, and over whether or not a definition of religion should tend towards inclusivity or exclusivity. Also related to each other were the dilemmas over "is" and "ought", and the etymological traces of the word "religion", traces which revealed seemingly opposite connotations such as voluntary or involuntary bonding and reconnection. It was debated whether or not the religious should refer to something that is set

apart from "the rest of" what we experience, and it was asked whether one might locate the religious in the performative, in a way that does not suggest a behaviorist viewpoint. Most importantly, if not most thoroughly discussed, the search for a definition of "religion" was placed in the context of epistemology: "*how* we know"; the question of how one can know anything at all seems to clearly broach the matter of the religious as much as does any other kind of question.

This question was also connected to the issue of subject-object relations: if the scholar attempts to maintain a strict wall of separation between the subjects and objects of religious studies, then it becomes all the more difficult to discover religion implicitly. First, the scholar will be insistent upon *discovering* an object, not just an object of his or her own research, but an object that is worshipped by the supposed religious subject. Second, although it was not expressed in these terms, the research might ultimately result in an absurdity: the personal distance the scholar maintains from the object is necessarily reflected in a distance maintained from her or his own direct experience. What was suggested in this regard, albeit indirectly, is that the *truly* biased scholarship is that which deviates furthest from the parallel: i.e., the scholarship that refuses to engage on the same level as the object of study.

Again, these challenges were faced through the attempts at constructing a definition of "religion"; the family definition of the nine items listed above was made possible by these deliberations. It should already be somewhat clear now how all of the above debates are related and/or parallel to the process of answering the set of three questions about family relationships. The means by which one attempts to define "religion", and the ultimate content of that definition, will very much relate to how one sees the purpose and framework of one's relationships with others, whether family, friends, colleagues or strangers. It may certainly be noted right away: is this not circular reasoning? After all, if the search for a definition of

"religion" was modeled in terms of relationships, then the connection is inevitable. Even a claim that all we did was adhere to the various derivations of etymology, which naturally suggested bonding and reconnection, might not be sufficient to dispute circularity; we would then have succeeded only in highlighting the obvious, and thus no really new connections have been made. However, without being able to deny the circularity, it is still maintained here that in the context of the larger field of implicit religion, especially as it plays out in the sub-discipline of Religion and Popular Culture, it is still worth the time to emphasize what may be already obvious.

Another problem was confronted in regards to defining the word "religion" in human terms, namely the problem of religious meaning being "degraded". However, rather than religion being secularized or robbed of the sacred by defining it in terms of human relationships, it is more likely that in order for any phenomenon to *retain* its status as "religious", it must be defined in terms applicable to how our lives are actually lived. Repeating the words of Thomas Luckmann,

> In human life the 'supernatural' is bound up with the 'natural'; 'ultimate' meanings of life make sense only in the context of the significance of common everyday affairs; and the 'transcendent' is only transcendent with respect to something that is 'immanent.'[295]

From the opposite perspective, it also needs to be shown how human relationships really *are* based on some of these higher principles, rather than just on instinct, intellect and evolution. In light of what Bruce Elder had to offer, it is also submitted here that the answers given by Canadian films to the questions of how one is meant to form relationships, are very much based on issues of epistemology, confrontations with dualism, the attempts to understand nature,[296] and even more so on the many varieties of religious experience. It was the apparently "higher"

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[295] Luckmann, "Shrinking," 128.

[296] It may be a particularly Canadian phenomenon that instead of audiences being simply admonished to "reconnect with nature", they are rather encouraged to model their lives upon what should "come naturally": the *is* is what *ought* to be.

cravings of the two Peters – Marks and Foster – as well as those of Dolores, that ultimately might have provided a better guide for healthy human relationships than did the codified norms and "knowledge" of their social contexts.

Thus, to Elder's

> ...philosophy of reconciliation that answered to the dialectical needs of accounting at once for the opposition between human beings and nature and for the truly extraordinary intimacy between the two that developed,[297]

should be added, or at least re-emphasized, that Elder is after all referring to a "philosophy" and to a "dialectic." What the religiosity in Canadian film demonstrates for us is that the reconciliation between humans, akin to that between humans and nature, must be based on principles that are strong enough to overcome dualism. However, they also cannot be based on an unthinking monism, such as are some of the common interpretations of the *Gaia* principle: there must be a large degree of transgressiveness and of other forms of opposition and confrontations with dualism, and there must be a place for individual autonomy rather than a blind commitment to the community. The struggle to define boundaries in one's relationships – for the purposes of building both walls and doors – must be a conscious struggle with all that is presented to us by the world as "realities". Elder's link between Canadian realism and Calvinism only enhances this connection: just as Luther's "focus on the family" was a thorn in the side of the institutional church, so must Canadian relationships, if they are in tune with what has been stated about the Canadian religiosity, necessarily show "attitude" towards the authority of the state – and hence to any authority that threatens to deny one's desire to form social bonds.

Some of the larger principles involved in the film analyses may be now discussed in more detail, beginning with the ideas of implicit and invisible religion. None of the three films

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[297] Elder, 5.

analyzed were specifically "about" religion, nor were there specifically recognizable religious icons or symbols within the films. Even when religion was described under the family definition above, most occurrences of these qualities were discovered between the lines. There is nothing significantly new about the *act* of reading between the lines – it is requisite towards any form of literary criticism. However, when it comes to the problem of religion, it is sometimes charged that the practice gives too much artistic licence to the critic; in order to legitimize a phenomenon as religious, it must, according to convention, display images or use language that is germane to longstanding forms of religious dialectic.

It was sometimes required by previous scholarships and theologies that there be a specifically recognizable object of "worship," and that this object was necessarily external to the worshipper. Although this was never strictly the case with all of the major world religions, of course, it nevertheless appeared as a supposed principle in times when either scholarship or theology was newly challenged. Based on this principle of externality, a devotion to golf or to *Walt Disney* movies (or amusement parks) would more likely be designated as "religious" – albeit sometimes in a sardonic fashion – than would a devotion to humanism; because the latter seems by definition to be self-centered, it seems to some to be the very antithesis of religion. However, several answers to this problem were suggested above; one of the most concise responses as given by Edward Bailey may be repeated:

> It is empirically possible (whether or not it is considered desirable) to be thank-full [sic], without necessarily thanking any personalized one or any particularized thing; to pray, without formulating any concept of a being to whom one prays; to be at peace, without even raising the question, let alone suggesting an answer, as to what one is at peace with; to believe, without specific creed, to hope, without schematic soteriology, to be loving, without fixed or focused object.[298]

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[298] Bailey, *Implicit Religion* (1997), 47.

It is not completely out of line for the orthodox to wonder if Bailey's formula would itself only lead to self-centeredness, but a lack of some specific thing to be thankful to, does not imply that one necessarily thanks oneself. It is often the case that one cannot name a particular external object of gratitude because the field of creditors is so vast and always expanding.

In Durkheim, Eliade and Luckmann were found reasons for believing that the supposed object of worship, if it exists, cannot be located separately from some object or phenomenon that is recognizable in the "secular' realm: For Eliade, a stone is still a stone;[299] for Durkheim, the religious object is superimposed upon, not separate from, empirical nature,[300] and for Luckmann,

> In human life the 'supernatural' is bound up with the 'natural'; 'ultimate' meanings of life make sense only in the context of the significance of common everyday affairs; and the 'transcendent' is only transcendent with respect to something that is 'immanent.'[301]

One should easily be able to extend this principle to the immanence of human relationships; being wary of category issues, we can still speculate that it is the relationship – not physical but still "palpable" in a way – rather than the physical participants in the relationship, that might represent the supernatural, the ultimate, and the transcendent. We could get away from the usual traps of an external deity by attributing these qualities to a phenomenon such as "love", for instance, but especially for Eliade and Luckmann, at least as they are understood here, even "love" makes no "sense" unless it is witnessed in terms of our own observable existence. Thus, one could not worship "love", but only the application of it. It should still be clear that even just the application of love is suggestive of something far beyond behaviorism, precisely because it is an application of something that preexists the application of it.

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[299] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 14.

[300] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 229.

[301] Luckmann, "Shrinking," 128.

One can now consider how the principle of implicit religion plays out in the context of film analyses. In the film title *Back to God's Country*, the reference to the deity is, on the surface at least, only metaphorical. It was explained above[302] how "God's country" was a common American expression referring to the Canadian Northwoods. The audience or critic may still have the legitimate choice of taking and running with the *explicit* idea of "God's country," arriving at some of the same conclusions as given here, but with different methods. The explicit option might involve performing a more direct, face-value comparison of the film's content to the story of *Eden* – whether directly through a reading of *Genesis*, or *via* the interpretations of Milton. Subsequent to this initial explicit analogue, however, one must still fill in the blanks with evidence that can only be derived implicitly. Some such evidence is fairly close to the surface, such as a comparison of Rydal with the serpent, or the idea of exile from the *Garden* as a result of a loss of innocence. Others symbols are buried deeper, such as the meanings associated with the depiction of race and gender; others still require an engagement with various details of biography and production – especially as regards how a Canadian audience might be primed for understanding the film through a knowledge of the struggles between Curwood and the Shipmans. There would still be symbols in the film of deep personal and/or religious significance for the audience, but only in the context of the Canadian struggle for a cultural identity.

As a further illustration of these ideas, one might imagine that both before and after viewing *Back to God's Country*, the audience will have, or will have gained, various sets of answers to the three questions about relationships, by consciously or unconsciously recognizing in the film the ingredients of religion. For instance, the relationship between life and death will be perceived as even more tightly woven than is usually understood: while life as depicted in the film certainly

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[302] p. 134.

involves a constant struggle for survival, it is not a struggle against death, but against those persons or philosophies who would try to make us afraid of *both* death and life. While Rydal is twice a murderer, it is not the death of his victims that matters so much, as do the consequences for the living. Rydal has tried to rob Dolores of her agency in her quest for life, by attempting to make her afraid of him. Dolores does not fear death, but rather the virus of cowardice that infests Rydal's whole existence. The religious meanings here are of course open to opposite interpretations; the dualisms in the standard interpretations of *Genesis* may be retained, but if death and life are consciously recognized as only existing in tandem with the other, then one does not form in one's mind the analogue *Good : Evil = Life : Death*. As well, Rydal would most likely *not* represent the serpent in the creation story, because he is denying rather than offering the knowledge of good and evil, or of life and death. By disguising himself in the clothes of justice, he shows himself to lack the forthrightness and honesty of the serpent.

Similarly, implicit religious symbolism was sought in *Nobody Waved Goodbye* and *Next of Kin*. In the former, there was again no mention of "God", or of a church of any kind, but the lyrics of the theme song could still be dissected to see what connections might be made between human and religious love. The various connotations of the word "worry", as used by Peter Marks and his father, were also analyzed in order to glean the word's opposing religious perspectives. Peter and his father worried about different things, social and materially respectively, but Peter seemed to worry more and for longer periods. We remember that Frederick Elkin seemed to complain about one aspect of *The Next Voice You Hear*, namely that the kind of religion supposedly endorsed in the film promoted the avoidance worry or concern.[303] There was likely nothing explicit in the film that led Elkin to these precise conclusions, even though "religion"

[303] C.f. p. 54 above.

and "God" were explicitly present in their obvious forms. Thus, in the films that were considered here, it was necessary to look for the implicit, i.e. for the passing or "throw-away" remarks. This practice, along with the extrapolation from a secular comment or event to a more deeply religious one, are the hallmarks of finding religion implicitly.

This was the same process that was used when the meaning of a suitcase in *Next of Kin* was deconstructed: a physical object takes on religious significance, not because it is a religious "icon", but because it performs in the same way that Peter Foster performs. The conclusions need not be limited to saying that the suitcase is a metaphor for an aspect of Peter's life; rather, one can meditate on the meaning of the suitcase itself, and examine not just its function, but its substance.[304] Egoyan of course placed the suitcase in the film to *signify* some other larger principle, but this placement is only effective because the suitcase itself is substantially sacred. It does not just represent for us our diverse experiences of travel, but must actually *contain* those experiences – and not just on the level of the literal.

Not all such themes and meanings are directly available to the audience, and even with all of the information at hand for the critic, the effort to link the images and events with religious significance still requires imagination and speculation. That is to say, any critique of this kind involves drawing links that will be, for some, "quite a stretch"; we might be left with the question, therefore, of the degree to which the spectrum of meaning between the lines has been expanded by the critic. With this question in mind, one can be more certain that the academic search for religious symbols in an external thing or event is parallel to the examination of the religious quest itself: the connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena depend upon reading between the lines of the academic's own religious mind. As long as the two quests

[304] This may be a somewhat confusing equivocation on the meaning of the word relative to its use in the bulk of the thesis; however, each aspect of its meaning may be essential to understanding the others.

remain parallel, rather than "the same", then the scholar is at no risk of jeopardizing the appropriate distance.

The chapter on defining religion also dealt with the concepts of transgressiveness and transcendence, and it can now be shown how these two are also related. A great deal of moralizing, on the part of both conventional and non-conventional religious literature, regards the idea that we as humans *ought* to "transcend" – to get beyond our daily and "secular" needs or desires. We are meant to focus on something either outside of or higher than what we can perceive with our five senses. Very often, even the *non*-material senses of intellect or reason are considered to be more mundane than religious. The subsequent step, however, is where the traditional and the non-traditional diverge: standard interpretations of Christianity, for instance, tell us – at the same time as they are asking us to transcend something – that we are not actually capable of doing so. There is a wall between human potential and the divinity of God. To actually attempt a full transcendence would be to transgress upon the territory of God, even though to act as humans act is simultaneously viewed as a transgression in itself. From the "alternative" perspective, on the other hand, it is almost required that one transgress consciously – against the boundaries and norms of society as well as against the boundaries and the (expected) norms of the "heavens", as it were – in the process of transcendence. Moreover, as there was in some of the early Gnostic Christian texts, there is a sense in Canadian films that the "original" transgression, i.e. the theft of the fruit in the *Garden*, was the ultimate proof of humanity's right to a religious existence. Adherents of "New Age" religions, for instance, may more blatantly claim such prerogatives, but the point of religious transgressiveness in Canadian

film is more subtle: the targets of both transgression and transcendence here are the "inward doors and outward limits."[305]

There are parallels here with the story of Prometheus, and both are subject to dispute between standard and progressive interpretations. The conventional view, at least according to the kind of juxtapositions given by Luckmann and Bailey, is that once the fruit and fire were stolen, they were secularized, privatized, and perhaps even desecrated by humans, and so were no longer of religious importance: once these gifts were brought to humans, then the conventional kinds of transcendence were no longer necessary, but the humans would still charged with repeating the transgressions of Adam or Prometheus. What has been stated to be the religious attitude of Canadian film (and of general Canadian philosophy), however, is that humans must constantly grab, for themselves, consciousness of religious meaning; the breaking of rules – i.e. the transgressiveness – is synonymous with the act of transcendence itself. In the context of the conventional, one of the attitudes of the ascetics may indeed have been that it was a beautiful act of transgressiveness to deny one's flesh – the Christian God in this case was seen as the underdog who was enlisting us to fight against the "powers and the principalities" of the world. When religion *explicitly* treated in Canadian film, though, the churches and other authorities are *equated* with the worldly powers; if there *is* a divine presence in our lives, we must transgress and transcend even the context of the church in order to grasp that presence.[306]

An example of the relationship between transgressiveness and transcendence is also witnessed in *Next of Kin*. Peter Foster is in a strange place at the beginning of the film; he is both trapped inside of his own existence, isolated from almost everything that is outside of him, and yet the

[305] See p. 96 above, esp. n. 197.

[306] Such is the case in *Jesus of Montreal* (1989) and *Jesus Christ, Vampire Hunter* (2001).

material world seems to be the least of his concerns: he lives in his imagination. There is a paradox involved in asking what he needs to transcend and what he is meant to discover on the "other side." The transgressiveness is obvious; running away from his own family, deceiving the family psychologist, and even just the act of "pretending" in general, are all transgressions against what we would normally consider "appropriate behaviour." Just one way in which the transgressiveness and transcendence relate in this film is in Peter's encounters with the videotapes, both the process of recording them and the experience of viewing them. Peter needs to be able to observe himself, from outside of and from above himself, in order to come to the transcendent realization that he is meant to have a more significant purpose in life than just pretending on his own. The largest degree of transgressiveness should be clear in his illicit viewing of the Deryan's tapes and subsequent impostorship.[307] Here, subsequent to having transcended the inside of his own mind, he has given himself (or, has been given, depending on one's view of destiny in the film), the authority and the privilege of God's 1st and 3rd person omniscience: Peter is still narrating his own life, and he also has complete knowledge of what is happening for the Deryan's. This knowledge will in turn suffer a limitation when Peter inserts himself – and is initially perceived as a resurrected "son of God" – into their lives; this is especially significant in that having been to the mountaintop, Peter will ultimately come back "to earth" as a more recognizably human character, better able to relate to his human family. He has performed the transgressions of both Prometheus and Adam; at the same time as he achieves transcendence, he shares it with the Deryan's. Peter thus transcends himself, and at the same time, he truly *becomes* himself.

[307] Apparently not a legitimate word. I thus transgress boldly.

The surface transgressiveness is more obvious in *Nobody Waved Goodbye*, although it is more difficult in this case to see how transcendence is connected to it. Peter Marks did not actually succeed in achieving the transcendence he wished for, and so of course he could not present it as a gift to Julie, as did Peter Foster to Azah. He was neither Adam nor Prometheus, and yet was still cast out of the *Garden* for his transgressions. From a conventional interpretation, Peter is here seen as someone who defied authority, both human and divine, and thus must "repent" in order to be able to return to society. From this perspective, the film is rather a depressing one, because none of the adults are punished for their own mistakes. The true redemption of Peter, however, has to arrive in a deeper form. The alert audience will have no doubt that life would have no meaning for Peter, or for the world in general, if he were the only one to repent. Since his parents show no remorse, then there must be another solution. Peter's transgressiveness cannot be in vain, and there are certainly no hints of nihilism in this film as there are in other films about the teenage rebel.

One possible conclusion that can be drawn, then, is that when Peter sits in his car at the end of the film, friendless and homeless and with nothing to return to but a likely jail cell, his opportunity for transcendence is still on the horizon. The reason we know that Peter will be redeemed – although this knowledge is of course speculative and based on the implicit – is precisely because he transgressed: he is the only one who shows potential for transcending the static quality of his character. As opposed to the case with Peter Foster, we cannot see in the story of Peter Marks a direct and transcendental reward for his transgressiveness, but we may also speculate that this prodigal will be more joyfully welcomed to his transcendent home in the end, than will the denizens of his earthly one.

It is more difficult to discover these particular connections in *Back to God's Country*; the transgressiveness and transcendence are more recognizable in the context of the biographical, commercial, political and cultural systems that colour the film's interpretation. Outside of the content of the film, we have seen how two Canadians transgressed against an American, and how, in the process, they snubbed some of the major premises of Canadian industry and government. When Curwood had been commisioned by the CPR to write about Canada, and the Canadian government essentially endorsed this transaction, most Canadian participants in the film industry were either working for Hollywood or had simply taken their financial and creative talents south of the border. While the theatre distribution networks had not yet suffered control by the Hollywood-connected companies, the ambivalence that would lead to such arrangements was already being well-practised by those involved, and the general circumstances were tacitly, if not enthusiastically, accepted by the Canadian populace.

In terms of personalities, Ernest and Nell Shipman were colourful characters, but on some levels, they could most accurately be described as Canadians who beat Hollywood producers at their own game. However, it is the combination of their strong personalities, with the fact that they reclaimed Canadian mythology from an American, that gives audiences a sense that there was a fierce cultural identification as Canadians underneath the surface of the film's production. To complement this transgressiveness, it is initially hard to see what is "transcended" within the film – except for the odds against survival – unless we remember how Dolores really is doing battle against a heavenly patriarchy as well as against a would-be earthly one; by gaining the victory in both, she achieves for herself a subtle kind of apothe*a*sis.[308]

[308] The gender-switch here may be unnecessary, but the intention is to remain consistent with the alternate mythology that was suggested in the film analysis.

One issue that seems to be left hanging for us is that of the formal, functional and substantive means of defining religion, as described by Albanese and elaborated upon by Forbes *et al.* It was argued that it is legitimate to discuss the substance, as opposed to just the forms and functions, of religious experience. In the case of conventional or large world-religions, this substance is taken for granted, precisely through a particular divinity that has existence unto itself, rather than merely being an icon created by humans to serve a functional need or to give a sense of history to a communal ritual. In the case of modern religious movements, popular culture, or simply of individual experience, this substance needs to be argued for; again, the problem of advocacy arises for the scholar of such phenomena.

If it were not for the arguments that have been made on behalf of substance, however, almost everything that has been said in the thesis could be *passed off as* formal or functional exegeses. Nothing is directly denoted in the thesis as *a* religion to which substance should be granted, nor was it suggested that the phenomenon of Canadian film is "a" religion. Rather, the only intent was to claim that Canadian films reveal a uniquely Canadian religious perspective – a perspective that nevertheless reflects something of substance. One potential solution may be found in the difference between "is" and "is about." In the family definition of religion given in the first chapter, each of the nine possible ingredients might be taken, in a neutral way, as referring to the possibility that any given occurrence represents a conversation or symbol that is "about" religion. The musings and behaviour of Peter Marks, for instance, might reveal something to do with religion, rather than *being*, in themselves, religious. Although this distinction is again, in itself, rather questionable, it may be acknowledged that it is nevertheless a valid component of the arguments that attempt to deny substance to the unconventional. To some degree, it can even be suggested that the present work has not in fact demonstrated religious

experience or substance in the films, but has only talked *about* it. Interestingly enough, this distinction could be easily applied as an argument against the whole premise of finding religion implicitly: if a character in any given film does not explicitly mention god, church, spirituality, or any other artifact describable within a traditional vocabulary, then one may not claim that to have discovered anything that *is* in fact religious. Hints or suggestions of religion are not sufficient.

The rebuttal to this can only be *asserted*. While the language throughout the thesis may have been that of the "about", it is still suggested here that the films themselves have expressed an "is". Thus, as Peter Foster plays the part of Bedros, and one witnesses the passing equation seemingly made by George between Bedros and "God's Son," the character in the film – Peter/Bedros – *is* substantially "God's Son" for all relevant purposes. The film neither uses the word "like", nor does it express a verbal metaphor. Rather, it also fulfills the requirement of James Wall, that in order for a film to be religious, it should not *mean*, but *be*.[309] The substance in *Nobody Waved Goodbye* is the craving of Peter Marks for something "more". If this is related to the above discussions about the implicit, then it can still be said that it is precisely because neither of the Peters nor Dolores talk *about* religion, that the occurrences and content of their strivings can be taken for what they *are*. Dolores, in her activities with the animals, is not functioning *as* "Mother Nature", nor are we meant to think that her character is *about* "Mother Nature". Rather, we are meant to see that substantially, she simply *is*.

The example cited above, regarding the difference between the worship of love and the worship of its application, was used to suggest an alternative to the need for religious substance to be located in an external object. In light of this, the first of the three opening questions about

[309] C.f. p. 61 above.

relationships seems to betray a bit of uncertainty in this regard: a "source" is being posited, one whose existence might provide answers to the second and third questions. However, the implications were also left open, through a suggestion that the boundaries between ourselves and this "source" are left undefined. Ultimately, it may be the case as shown in Canadian film is that this lack of definition between ourselves and the "source", is what not only makes human relationships possible – i.e. that allows us to interact with other human beings on levels beyond form and function – and also what makes those same relationships complex, confusing, and entertaining. To frame this in a different way, the words used above[310] regarding intimacy and boundaries are reprised:

> We like the word "intimacy"...for its implications of a religious connection that cannot be explained by the physical, as well as for its root meaning from the verb "to intimate." The latter literally means "to make known", very often in a sensitive or indirect fashion. Thus, subject and object enter into intimacy; when the object is an image, then the communication becomes even more "intimate". In marriage counselling, intimacy must involve reciprocity and transparency, among other things, but we also think the opposite may be true: because intimate knowledge is always privileged, there must be a sense of mystery in protecting boundaries. The tension in the question over opposition and intimacy with nature, or with the image, may be one of the things that is highly pronounced in the interaction between a Canadian film and its Canadian audience. It cannot *help* but be a religious experience.

What is to be highlighted here is the opposition, in all human relationships, between pushing and protecting boundaries: there is something to share, something to protect, some hidden treasure to unearth if one engages in transgressiveness. In Canadian film, these three activities must coexist synergistically if any one of them is to hold meaning for the participants. As well, the barriers between subject and object must constantly be at risk of dissolution. If one now re-reads the nine items in the family definition of "religion", it can be seen how none of them can be answered without this dual nature of intimacy – the making known of something that at the

[310] C.f. p. 94 above, n. 190.

same time must remain privileged. If religion involved the idea that something was fixedly "set apart" from our experience, then we could not build meaningful relationships with other humans. If there was no boundary at all between ourselves and others, then there would be no relationship, because there would only be one homogenous whole. If there were no common rules about transcending boundaries, then knowledge would have no place to take root before being shared. Finally, if these rules were not regularly transgressed against, then the motivation to transcend would not be discovered. The interplay between the above is mysterious enough, but what we might truly say is "religious" in Canadian film, in at least one conventional sense of obligation or binding, is that humans face a constant struggle to get the combination "right". A bare lack of concern for the balance is what leads in the films to tragedies and other negativities.

It has not been possible or even desirable to lay out a neat correspondence between these principles and what occurs in Canadian film, but some examples are still illustrative. In *Back to God's Country*, Dolores is obviously the only one to get the balance right – to know when to remain within her boundaries and when to venture beyond them. When we see her at the beginning of the film, in the presumably nude scene while bathing with the animals, one can speculate that Dolores has already tasted of the fruit of the knowledge of "good" and "evil", but not in the same way as Genesis is usually interpreted. First, when Rydal appears and espies her bathing, she is not ashamed of herself, but is perfectly aware that her nudity is a source of shame among the society which bred Rydal. She is not "innocent" in terms of knowledge (in the modern sense of the word), because she is also clearly aware of Rydal's lechery. When he threatens her in the later scenes, she is not shocked by the knowledge of evil, but only angered by it. The contrast, in regards to human interactions, then, is between Dolores' knowledge of what intimacy is meant to be, and Rydal's ignorance of it. Rydal's decision to dress himself in the

clothes of justice is also a sign of his incomplete knowledge of good and evil. While he can only use a gun to kill, and has no knowledge of how to survive in the wilderness without his guide, Dolores has knowledge of what the gun is capable of, and thus only wields it in the end to protect herself.

In terms of the relationships she tries to maintain, we get the feeling that she has transgressed, with the cooperation of her father and husband, against the Western norms and notions of patriarchy and of the differences of power between the sexes. Her ultimate goal in convincing Peter to return with her to the North is so that she can return to the world in which she, as a woman, is in charge of circumstance and reality. She knows what the boundaries are between what is to be protected and what is to be shared, primarily because of the fact that she has also transgressed against the authority structures of the world in which she was originally raised.

In *Nobody Waved Goodbye*, Peter Marks longs to form relationships in which boundaries are both respected and transcended – with his family and with some undefined principle for which he seeks. Because his parents have shown no respect for his boundaries and yet have refused to acknowledge him when he lets down his own walls, he is misled into ineffective forms of transgressiveness; this is perhaps an excellent symptom of a child's actions towards attention-grabbing; he wants into a series of relationships in which secrets are both shared and kept privileged, and he is willing to be an equal partner. He steals a car as an act of not just transgressing against rules, but because he wants to gain entry into the world of the adults. He senses the relationship between transgression and transcendence, but he has not mastered the details. Peter also believes that there is a higher purpose to life, and he wants all those around him, especially Julie and his family, to share in it. He wants his human relationships to model the relationship he seeks with himself, and with the "something more". In the end, it is possible that

his misguided transgressions will still be effective in giving him the power he needs to more properly protect and transcend the boundaries in his life and in his relationships.

Next of Kin is, in itself, more directly about family relationships, and one need only add here that Peter Foster is finally successful in achieving the balance of boundaries, in both the give and take. His transgressions of pretending, and of being an impostor in the Deryan family, are not only accepted but are also rewarded.[311] He decides, in the end, that he will continue to live with his "adoptive" family, and commits a final kind of transgression by telling his real parents that he is not coming home. This later couple then returns to therapy, and through the method of role play will presumably learn to develop healthier boundaries and relationships. In the meantime, they must first learn to become transgressive in their own lives. There was a connection between their earlier lack of desire to transgress and their lack of motivation to transcend. In the beginning, it was Peter who seemed to be the one who could not escape his own headspace, but we discover that it was only because he was busy meditating on how to transfer the intimacy between himself and the "something else", to the intimacy between himself and a family.

Moving on to the future of a possible sub-discipline of Religion in Canadian Film, the words of Canadian film critic Katherine Monk are appropriate:

> "So what's the problem with Canadian film? We are. We don't watch them. We don't respect them. We don't know how to love them.[312] That's the purpose of this book. We need a little mental re-jigging – a crash course in deprogramming – a little chicken soup for our neglected Canadian psyche...I love [Canadian film] because it speaks to me. It reflects my reality, shows my currency, speaks my languages, shows me where I live, tells the stories of my peers, shares my sense of humour and makes me believe I'm not alone."[313]

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[311] Punishment and reward are also themes that might be dealt with more explicitly in future works on the subject of religion in film generally, but also with respect to the Canadian genres.

[312] An obvious reference to a more explicitly religious film.

[313] Katherine Monk, *Weird Sex and Showshoes and Other Canadian Film* Phenomena (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2001), 5.

Monk's language is clear enough for its religious sentiments to be recognized; it is rather surprising that these thoughts were not already translated to a larger work on the present subject. In any case, what has been started here will hopefully be picked up by others and more effectively developed. That this field is still new is sufficient reason for excitement, and there is no end to the different roads down which it can lead. The author of the present thesis believes, again, that a sub-discipline or course of study in Religion and Canadian Film is something for departments to consider. It is hoped that additional evidence for this proposal will be gathered by many others to come.

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Appendix: List of Canadian Films Viewed[314]

3 Needles. Dir. Thom Fitzerald. Canada: Bigfoot Entertainment. 2005.

The Adjuster. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Canada: Ego Film Arts. 1991.

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz. Dir. Ted Kotcheff. Canada: Astral Bellevue Pathé. 1974.

Ararat. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Canada: Ego Film Arts. 2002.

Away From Her. Dir. Sarah Polley. Canada: The Film Farm. 2003.

Back to God's Country. Dir. David M. Hartford. Canada/USA: Shipman-Curwood Co. 1920.

The Bay of Love and Sorrows. Dir. Tim Southam. Canada: Triptych Media. 2002

Better Than Chocolate. Dir. Anne Wheeler. Canada: Rave Film. 1999.

*** Black Robe. Dir. Bruce Beresford. Canada: First Choice Films. 1991.[315]

Blood. Dir. Jerry Ciccoritti. Canada: Spank Films. 2004.

The Blue Butterfly. Dir. Léa Pool. Canada: Galafilm Productions. 2004.

Bon Cop, Bad Cop. Dir. Erik Canuel. Canada: Alliance Atlantis. 2006.

(D) The Boys of St. Vincent. (TV) Dir. John N. Smith. Canada: CBC. 1992.

The Cabin Movie. Dir. Dylan Akio Smith. Canada: Cabin Movie Productions. 2005.

Careful. Dir. Guy Maddin. Canada: The Canada Council. 1992.

Ce qu'il faut pour vivre (The Necessities of Life). Dir. Benoît Pilon. Canada: Association Coopérative des Productions Audio-Visuelles (ACPAV). 2008.

Company of Strangers (aka Strangers in Good Company). Dir. Cynthia Scott. Canada: Bedford Entertainment/NFB. 1990.

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[314] [*** = does not fit the thesis' strict definitions of Canadian film; (D) = Documentary or Docudrama, included for their value towards the thesis].

[315] Notwithstanding some fine Canadian actors/actresses, as well as the location, the film is more akin to one of the early "Quota Quickies". The novel was written by an Irish-American, and director Bruce Beresford is Australian-American. The latter is indeed a "big name" in Hollywood, and his movies are of a high quality. Judgment is not passed here on the historical or religious "accuracy" of *Black Robe*, but the film is included so the reader knows that it was taken into consideration.

Cowards Bend the Knee (or: The Blue Hands). Dir. Guy Maddin. Canada: Power Plant. 2003.

*** Crash. Dir. David Cronenberg. Canada: Alliance Communications. 1996.

Dance Me Outside. Dir. Bruce McDonald. Canada: Shadow Shows. 1995.

Dirty. Dir. Bruce Sweeney. Canada: Dirty Productions. 1998.

(D) Dreamland: A History of Early Canadian Movies, 1895-1939. Dir. Donald Brittain. Canada: NFB. 1974.

(D) Drylanders. Dir. Don Haldane. Canada: NFB. 1962.

Emile. Dir. Carl Bessai. Canada: Emile Productions. 2003.

*** Emotional Arithmetic. Dir. Paolo Barzman. Canada: Triptych Media. 2007.[316]

The End of Silence. Dir. Anita Doron. Canada: Riverside Entertainment. 2006.

*** The Event. Dir. Thom Fitzgerald. Canada: Arkanjel. 2003.[317]

Exotica. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Canada: Ego Film Arts. 1994.

Falling Angels. Scott Smith. Canada: Mind's Eye Entertainment. 2003.

Family Viewing. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Canada: Ego Film Arts. 1987.

*** Fugitive Pieces. Dir. Jeremy Podeswa. Canada: Cinegram. 2007.[318]

Goin' Down the Road. Dir. Donald Shebib. Canada: Edvon Films, Ltd. 1970.

Growing Op. Dir. Michael Melski. Canada: Cineast Screen Developments. 2008.

The Hanging Garden. Dir. Thom Fitzgerald. Canada: Alliance Communications. 1997.

Hard Core Logo. Dir. Bruce McDonald. Canada: Terminal City Pictures. 1996.

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[316] Canada is only peripheral to the story; director, novelist and screenwriter are Canadian, but characters are not.

[317] Canadian director and screenwriter; majority of lead, supporting and secondary actors/actresses are prominent Canadians, but not characters. Set in New York City.

[318] Director and writers are Canadian. Canada and Canadians are otherwise peripheral.

Heaven on Earth. Dir. Deepa Mehta. Canada: Hamilton-Mehta Productions/NFB. 2008.[319]

Hochelaga. Dir. Michel Jetté. Canada: Baliverna Films. 2000.

Jesus Christ, Vampire Hunter. Dir. Lee Gordon Demarbre. Canada: Odessa Filmworks. 2001.

Jesus of Montreal. Dir. Denys Arcand. Canada: Max Films. 1989.

Johnny. Dir. Carl Bessai. Canada: Raven West Films. 1999.

I Heard the Mermaids Singing. Dir. Patricia Rozema. Canada: The Canada Council. 1987.

Just Buried. Dir. Chaz Thorne. Canada: RGM Entertainment. 2007.

Kissed. Dir. Lynne Stopkewich. Canada: Boneyard Film Company. 1996.

La face cachée de la lune (The Far Side of the Moon). Dir. Robert Lepage. Canada: FCL Films, 2003.

L'âge des ténèbres (Days of Darkness). Dir. Denys Arcand. Canada: Alliance Films. 2007.

La grande seduction (Seducing Dr. Lewis). Dir. Jean-François Puliot. Canada: Max Films. 2003.

La guerre des tuques (The Dog Who Stopped the War). Dir. André Mélançon. Canada: Les Productions La Fête. 1984.

La Mystérieuse Mademoiselle C. Dir. Richard Ciupka. Canada: Christal Films. 2002.

La turbulence des fluides (Chaos and Desire). Dir. Manon Briand. Canada: Max Films. 2002.

Last Night. Dir. Don McKellar. Canada: CBC/Rhombus Media. 1998.

Last Wedding. Dir. Bruce Sweeney. Canada: Last Wedding Productions. 2001.

Le chat dans le sac (The Cat in the Sack). Dir. Gilles Groulx. Canada: NFB. 1964.

Le déclin de l'empire américain (The Decline of the American Empire). Dir. Denys Arcand. Canada: Cineplex-Odeon Films. 1986.

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[319] While acknowledging the objections that, at the most, the characters portrayed by Mehta are only Indian ex-patriots, and the films are thus only peripherally Canadian, it should be argued that the fact of apparent non-assimilation was also initially the case with many other groups of immigrants, very much including the British and the French. As long as the English and French are allowed to exist under the euphemism of "two solitudes", then there can be nothing "un-Canadian" about any other collective solitudes who decide to settle here.

Le Nèg'. Dir. Robert Morin. Canada: Coop Vidéo de Montreal. 2002.

Leolo. Dir. Jean-Claude Lauzon. Canada: Alliance Films. 1992.

Le peau blanche (White Skin/aka Cannibal). Dir. Daniel Roby. Canada: Zone Films. 2004.

Les invasions barbares (The Barbarian Invasions). Dir. Denys Arcand. Canada: Astral Films. 2003.

Le vent du Wyoming (The Wind From Wyoming). Dir. André Forcier. Eiffel Productions. 1994.

Lie With Me. Dir. Clément Virgo. Canada: Conquering Lion Productions. 2005.

Lilies. Dir. John Greyson. Canada: Triptych Media. 1996.

Looking for Leonard. Dir. Matt Bissonnette, Steven Clark. Canada: Boneyard Film Company. 2002.

Lost and Delirious. Dir. Léa Pool. Canada: Cité-Amérique. 2001.

Maelstrom. Dir. Denis Villeneuve. Canada: Max Films. 2000.

Margaret's Museum. Dir. Mort Ransen. Canada: Glace Bay Pictures. 1995.

Marion Bridge. Dir. Wiebke von Carolsfeld. Canada: Idlewild Films. 2002

Masala. Dir. Srinivas Krishna. Canada: Divani Films. 1991.[320]

Ma Vie en Cinemascope. Dir. Denise Filiatraute. Canada: Cinémaginaire. 2004.

Mon Oncle Antoine. Dir. Claude Jutra. Canada: Office national du film du Canada. 1971.

Monkey Warfare. Dir. Reginald Harkema. Canada: New Real Films. 2006.

*** Mouth to Mouth. Dir. Alison Murray. UK/Germany/Canada: MJW Productions. 2005.[321]

My Winnipeg. Dir. Guy Maddin. Canada: Buffalo Gal Pictures. 2007.

The Nature of Nicholas. Dir. Jeff Erbach. Canada: Critical Madness Productions. 2002.

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[320] See n. 319 above, re: Deepa Mehta. Also c.f. "Visible Majority: Toronto's Growing South Asian Community." *CBC Toronto* http://www.cbc.ca/toronto/features/asianheritage_2005/index2.html Internet: Accessed July 21, 2009.

[321] Stars the Canadian actress Ellen Page (*Juno*). Otherwise not really a Canadian movie except for production participation.

Next of Kin. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Canada: Ego Film Arts. 1984.

New Waterford Girl. Dir. Alan Moyle. Canada: Sienna Films. 1999.

Niagara Motel. Dir. Gary Yates. Canada: Aquarius Films. 2006.

Nô. Dir. Robert Lepage. Canada: Alliance Communications. 1998.

Nobody Waved Goodbye. Dir. Don Owen. Canada: NFB. 1964.

Normal. Dir. Carl Bessai. Canada: Head Gear Films. 2007.

On Their Knees. Dir. Anais Granofsky. Canada: Have Mercy Pictures. 2001.

Past Perfect. Dir. Daniel MacIvor. Canada: Mongrel Media. 2002.

Québec-Montréal. Dir. Ricardo Trogi. Canada: Go Films. 2002.

(D) Radiant City. Dir. Jim Brown, Gary Burns. Canada: Burns Films, Ltd. 2006.

Rare Birds. Dir. Sturla Gunnarsson. Canada: Big Pictures Entertainment. 2001.

*** Le violon rouge (The Red Violin). Dir. François Girard. Canada/Italy/UK: Channel Four Films. 1998.[322]

The Rhino Brothers. Dir. Dwayne Beaver. Canada: Astral TV. 2001.

Roadkill. Dir. Bruce McDonald. Canada: Mr. Shack Motion Pictures. 1989.

*** The Rowdyman. Dir. Peter Carter. Canada: Agincourt. 1972.[323]

Rude. Dir. Clément Virgo. Canada: Conquering Lion Productions. 1995.

The Saddest Music in the World. Dir. Guy Maddin. Canada: Rhombus Media. 2003.

Saint Monica. Dir. Terrance Odette. Canada: Day For Night Motion Pictures. 2002.

Saint Ralph. Dir. Michael McGowan. Canada: Alliance Atlantis Communications. 2004.

Shake Hands With the Devil. Dir. Roger Spottiswoode. Barna-Alper Productions. 2007.

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[322] Canadian director and writer (Don McKellar), otherwise only peripherally Canadian.

[323] Not sure about this, surprisingly. Carter is British, but Gordon Pinsent wrote and starred – making him the parallel to Nell Shipman (C.f. Chapter 3.1). Producer Lawrence Dane is also Canadian.

Speaking Parts. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Canada: Ego Film Arts. 1989.

Stardom. Dir. Denys Arcand. Canada: Alliance Atlantis Communications. 2000.

Suspicious River. Dir. Lynne Stopkewich. Canada: Okulitch-Pederson Co. 2000.

The Sweater. Dir. Sheldon Cohen. Canada: NFB. 1980.

The Sweet Hereafter. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Canada: Ego Film Arts. 1997.

That Beautiful Somewhere. Dir. Robert Budreau. Canada: Loon Film. 2006.

Tout est Parfait (Everything is Perfect). Dir. Yves Christian Fournier. Canada: Go Films. 2008.

The Tracy Fragments. Dir. Bruce McDonald. Canada: Shadow Shows. 2007.

Twilight of the Ice Nymphs. Dir. Guy Maddin. Canada: Marble Island Pictures. 1997.

Unnatural and Accidental. Dir. Carl Bessai. Canada: Raven West Films. 2006.

Waydowntown. Dir. Gary Burns. Canada: Burns Films Ltd. 2000.

Wedding in White. Dir. William Fruet. Canada: Cinépix Film Properties. 1972.

(D) Weird Sex and Snowshoes: A Trek Through the Canadian Cinematic Psyche. (TV) Dir. Jill Sharpe. Canada: Omni Film Productions. 2004.

When Night is Falling. Dir. Patricia Rozema. Canada: Crucial Pictures. 1995.

*** Where the Truth Lies. Dir. Atom Egoyan. Canada/UK: Serendipity Point Films/Ego Film Arts. 2005.[324]

White Room. Dir. Patricia Rozema. Canada: Vos Productions. 1990.

Wilby Wonderful. Dir. Daniel MacIvor. Canada: Palpable Productions. 2004.

*** Wild Dogs. Dir. Thom Fitzgerald. Canada: Mongrel Media. 2002.[325]

Zero Patience. Dir. John Greyson. Canada: Zero Patience Productions. 1993.

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[324] A brilliant Egoyan film, with some of the finest Canadian actors/actresses in secondary roles, but unfortunately, not "Canadian" here.

[325] An excellent Fitzgerald movie, weaving the subplots of a Canadian pornographer, and a Canadian diplomat and his family, in Bucharest, Romania. (No spoilers here). The film deserves to be called "Canadian at heart".