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Locating the Intimate within the Global:
Xavier Dolan, Queer Nations and Québec Cinema
(eds. Kester Dyer, Andrée Lafontaine, and Fulvia Massimi.)

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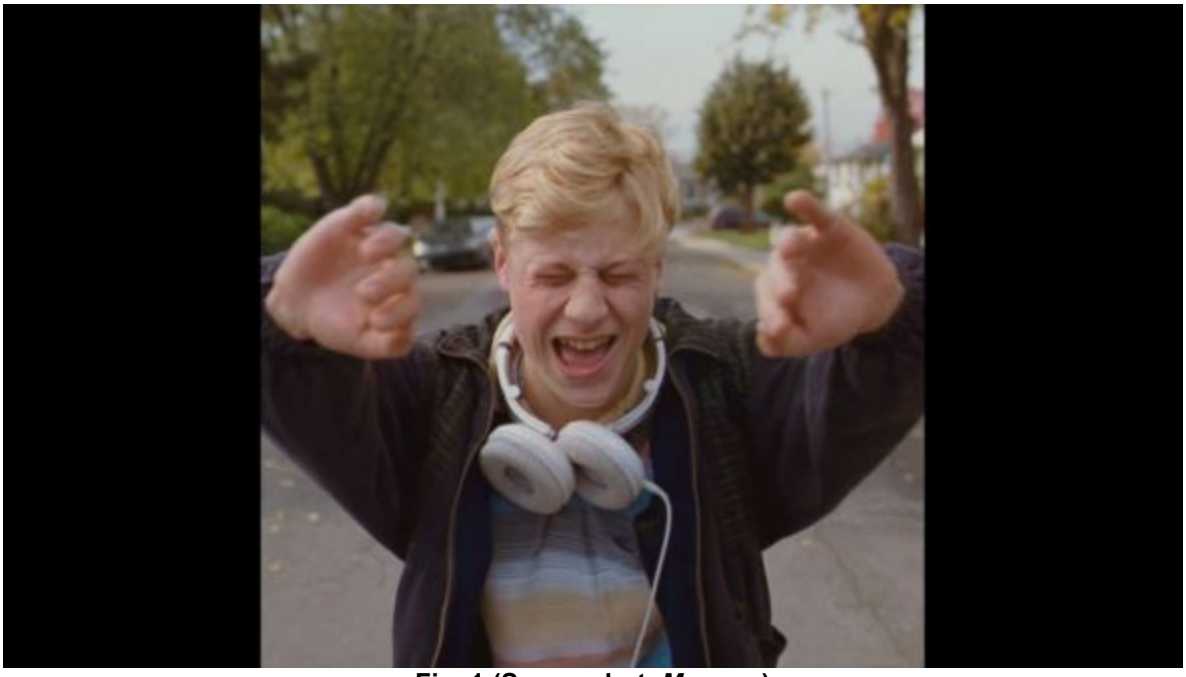

Fig. 1 (Screenshot, *Mommy*)

> "I'd rather be referred to as a precocious young Québec talent, than not be referred to at all."

Such was Québec-based director Xavier Dolan's response to Etan Vlessing, who interviewed him at the 2012 Festival de Cannes for *The Hollywood Reporter.* In this now famous interview, Dolan embraced audience's recognition of his dual local/national specificity with a pinch of his well-known sassiness.[1] Allergic to labels—first and foremost those concerning the contention that his cinema is an example of queer filmmaking—Dolan never regarded his sense of national belonging with the controversial attitude he demonstrated towards the awarding of the Queer Palm for his

[1] Etan Vlessing, *Cannes 2012: Canadian Director Xavier Dolan on 'Laurence Anyways' (Q&A)*. Web. May 18, 2012. http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/cannes-festival-xavier-dolan-qa-326081

third feature *Laurence Anyways* (2012), also at Cannes. In an interview with Canadian television host George Stroumboulopoulos, Dolan further elaborated on the subject:

> "I define myself as a Canadian *person* because I live in Canada, I define myself as a Québécois *filmmaker* because my movies are soaked with the Québécois attitude, and culture, and language, and vocabulary, and history… so yes, I define myself as a Québécois filmmaker."[2]

Whereas Dolan himself often discusses the exploration of gender and sexuality in his films as a reflection on the vast spectrum of human relationships, rather than a matter of queer "categorization," the relevance of his cinema to the specificity of Québécois spaces and identities has never been questioned with the same vehemence. On the contrary, it has been a *fil rouge* running through Dolan's filmography up to his latest feature *Mommy* (2014), paradoxically the most Québécois of his films in spite of its global circulation and critical acclaim.

Following in the steps of Québécois directors such as Denis Villeneuve, Jean-Marc Vallée, and Philippe Falardeau—who have all successfully emigrated to Hollywood in recent years—Dolan is currently exploring the international possibilities of his career, directing French band Indochine's *College Boy* video, British singer Adele's music video *Hello*, and working on the upcoming French-Canadian and US productions of *Juste la fin du monde* (2016) and *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan* (2016, in pre-production). However, Dolan's "very Québécois" profile combined with the wide circulation of his films in foreign markets continues to enhance the relevance of Québec's cultural specificity within wider frameworks of film reception, and the director's prolific output provides a growing corpus from which rich thematic, socio-political, and aesthetic approaches can be considered. With this in mind, *Synoptique* has taken Dolan's work and its relevance for both Québec and world cinema as an occasion to intervene in the debate on the global reach of small national and subnational cinemas sparked in the last decade from the publication of Mette Hjort's ground-breaking book *Small Nation, Global Cinema* (2005). In light of growing interest in these branches of Film Studies scholarship, *Synoptique* issue 4.2 will use Dolan's cinema as a departure

[2] *Xavier Dolan on George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight: Interview*. Web. October 5, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynEqZzz-EMs

point to reconsider the position of Québec film and Québécois cultural imaginary within a global cinematic culture.

Far from representing mere dichotomies of space, time, and feeling, the local and the global, the intimate and the public, the marginal and the central are crucial concepts around which the articles of this issue explore two intertwined sets of thoughts. On a wider scale, they highlight the tensions embedded in the circulation, reception, and production of moving images across the globe. On a more local scale, these articles locate in Québec cinema, and in Dolan's *oeuvre* more specifically, an ideal terrain for a challenging re-articulation of gendered and national issues within the contemporaneity of subnational film industries, imaginaries, and cultures.

In the opening article of the peer reviewed section, "A Boy's Best Friend is His Mother: Québec Matriarchy and Queer Nationalism in the Cinema of Xavier Dolan," guest editor Fulvia Massimi identifies Dolan's cinema as a privileged case study for the post-revolutionary revision of Québec's nationalist design within the framework of feminist and queer perspectives on nationhood. Departing from dominant critical accounts of the heterocentric impulses of Québec's nationalism under the Quiet Revolution, Massimi aims to underscore how the predominance of queer and feminist discourses in Dolan's representation of alternative family structures and mother-son relationships poses a challenge to traditional male-driven understandings of Québec's national identity.

Following up on the relocation of queer and female bodies at the core of an alternative understanding of Québec's cinematic and socio-cultural identity, Jason R. D'Aoust's article "Les voix queers dans *Mommy* de Xavier Dolan" examines the polyphonic texture of Dolan's most recent film by taking up the materiality of its multiple voices as a way to challenge the normativity of logocentrism in feminist and queer terms. D'Aoust passionately examines the employment of the *joual* vernacular and the performative incorporation of the soundtrack within the film, so as to point towards the ingenuity of *Mommy*'s take on queer sexuality and female subjectivity via the vocal construction of transgressive identities.

Moving from the particular of Dolan's cinema to the broader horizons of Québec film production and cultural representation, Julie Ravary's and David Hanley's contributions to the peer-reviewed section further interrogate the tensions between the intimate and global stances of Québec cinema that sit at the core of this issue's very title. The question of intimacy is especially central to Julie Ravary's historical and feminist account of Yves Simoneau's *Pouvoir Intime* (1986), wherein she recovers an understudied but highly emblematic piece of Québec's post-referendum film history and makes it resonate within the larger context of Québécois post-revolutionary momentum. Her article "Pouvoir et déclin de l'intime: Films postréférendaires, identités genrées et identités sexuelles" indeed focuses on the transgressive mise-en-scène of the "masculine" femininity and homosexual masculinity of the film's protagonists as a symptomatic reaction to the heterosexist design of nationalist movements in the wake of the first referendum for Québec's independence.

Opting for a "top-down" approach in lieu of Ravary's "bottom-up" one, David Hanley's "Conceptualizing Quebec National Cinema: Denys Arcand's Cycle of Post-Referendum Films as Case Study" situates the global impact of Québec subnational cinema at the core of its argument. Hanley aims to place Québec's film industry within an international context, using Denys Arcand's francophone film production to understand the different ways that domestic and foreign "mainstream" audiences receive and perceive Québécois films. Arcand's cycle of films concerned with the failure of Québec's national sovereignty is thus taken as a model for the application of Stephen Crofts' national cinema paradigm to Québec cinema, and as a case study to explain how and why certain films cross borders into foreign markets.

Hanley's account of the globalization of Québec's film industry guides the reader into the non-peer reviewed section of this issue, which features an interview with Bill Marshall conducted by the guest editors as its opening piece. Author of *Quebec National Cinema* (2001) and *The French Atlantic* (2009), among other seminal contributions to the study of Québec cinema and Francophone cinema at large, Marshall discusses the shifting paradigms of post-national and global cinema in relation

to Québec's film production, and more broadly, to *la francophonie*. Resituating his own scholarship within the evolving context of global film productions and circulations, Marshall refers to Dolan as one of the most significant examples of the emerging transnational dynamics in Québec cinema, as well as in the wider context of the 'Francophone Atlantic.'

The following contribution to the non-peer reviewed section of the issue, "Lectures croisées et pistes de réflexions autour de *Laurence Anyways,*" is comprised of three different critical perspectives on Dolan's third film, and seeks to address the current dearth of scholarly work on this key film. This dossier performs a bilingual cross-reading of *Laurence Anyways*, approaching his articulation of intimacy and subjectivity through the lens of fashion, gender, and queer theory. Christina Brassard's contribution "La transgression de la norme chez Dolan: une invitation à l'émancipation" employs key concepts from Judith Butler's canonical work on gender to unpack the resistance to heteronormative behaviours exhibited in the film within the broader context of contemporary Québec cinema. Katrina Sark's "The Language of Fashion and (Trans)Gender in Dolan's *Laurence Anyways*" takes up the popularization of the colour-block fashion trend between 2009 and 2013 to investigate the impact of the chromatic and clothing choices within the film on the construction of the characters' identity and interiority. Finally, Angela Urrea and Mariana Gil-Arboleda's "*Laurence Anyways*: The Transgression, Narrative and *Mise-en-Scène* of Transition" reprises Butler's gender theory to discuss the importance of the encounter with otherness in the search and construction of Laurence's identity.

The transgression of the heteronormative design of (French) Canadian nationhood discussed within the cross-reading of *Laurence Anyways* taps into broader questions of homonormativity and homonationalism addressed in the first contribution to this issue's book reviews. Here, Clinton Glenn's review "The True (Homonational) North, Strong and Free" provides an insightful account of OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon's edited collection *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging* (2015). The volume's engagement with questions of hetero-

patriarchy and pink-washing in the allegedly queer-tolerant Canadian nation-state is carefully examined, so as to provide a potential future reference for the further examination of queer matters within Dolan's cinema as well as Canadian cinemas *tout court.*

The three following contributions in the book review section move away from Canada to travel across different geo-political spaces and trends in Film Studies, situating themselves within the current debate around national and transnational cinemas, generic modes, and theoretical approaches. Meredith Slifkin's analysis of *Melodrama in Contemporary Film and Television* (2014) discusses the relevance of Michael Stewart's anthology in tracing the complex way in which the melodramatic mode works across boundaries of geography, media, genre, and time. Justin Langlois' engaged account of *Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema: Traces of a Lost Decade* by editors Mario DeGiglio-Bellemare, Charlie Ellbé, and Kristopher Woofter traces an American-centric approach in the analysis of a neglected decade of the horror genre. Finally, Parichay Patra's critical inquiry of Suranjan Ganguly's monograph *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation* (2015) challenges limited perspectives on authorship and auteur study in the national context of Indian cinema beyond Bollywood.

The global-local dialectic running through this issue of *Synoptique* ultimately returns to close the cycle in the last section, in which Bradley Warren's review of the 68th edition of the Cannes Film Festival and Adam Szymanski's report on the 2015 Cinemalaya Film Festival discuss the opposite polarities of globalized and localized film economies at play in these film festivals. On the one hand, Warren offers a personal insight into one of the world's most notorious A-list festivals in "On Heroines, High Heels and Hierarchies: Challenging the 68th Festival de Cannes' "Year Off"," by focusing on the diversified representations of nuanced female characters as a thread to navigate through the dense corpus of films selected for this edition. On the other hand, Szymanski's "Cinemalaya 2015: A Decade of Philippine Independent Cinema" discusses clusters of films addressing everyday-life in the festival's selection in this tenth instalment of Philippine's most prominent Indie film festival. As a localized

phenomenon of alterity and marginality which purposely works in opposition to both global and domestic mainstream cinemas (i.e. Hollywood and Filipino commercial cinema), Cinemalaya offers an interesting counter-example to the globalized film economy embodied by Cannes' *kermesse*. Whereas in the former festival review, the more mundane preoccupations of red carpet security and critics' film-slashing take the lion's share of the rationale for Cannes, in the latter, the preservation of independent and digital filmmaking practices concerned with the representation of diversity and minority issues strive to lead an internal revolution, attempting to rescue the intimate from the danger of an undifferentiated, globalized cinematic experience.

Like the protagonist of *Mommy* who forcibly expanded the film frame's aspect ratio to physically broaden the horizons of his otherwise restrained existence (Fig 1.), *Synoptique* issue 4.2 aims to perform a similar gesture by expanding the perimeters of Québec film scholarship. In departing from the circumscribed microcosm of Dolan's work, this journal issue focuses upon queer bodies and desires to move towards a wider understanding of the local in dialogue with the global within Québec cinema.

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"A Boy's Best Friend is His Mother": Québec's Matriarchy and Queer Nationalism in the Cinema of Xavier Dolan

By Fulvia Massimi

> Je veux devoir tout mon bonheur
> À la tendresse maternelle.
>
> ~ Alfred de Musset, *À ma mère*

According to Québécois director Robert Lepage, "We [Québécois people] are not a patriarchal society, but a matriarchal society. The culture survives because of the mothers, the women" (Dundjerovic 2003, 149-150). Such a provocative claim seems to forget, however, the history of Québec's nationalism as a site of strong masculine values—prompted in the 1960s by the nationalist design of the Quiet Revolution— and fails to acknowledge the existence of a wide-ranging feminist literature on nationhood as a heterosexist, masculine domain, wherein women are considered central to the national project only in the light of their reproductive role. In her study of feminism and nationalism in contemporary Québec, Diane Lamoureux argues that the existence of Québec's matriarchy should not be so easily inferred, as the mother—although considered "the origin of the world"—lacks actual power, and the world does not belong to her except on a mere biological level (Lamoureux 2001, 100). Accordingly, Chantal Nadeau further points out that "the Québec space, despite the fear of matriarchy, is still secured as the land of that male heterosexual triumphant shepherd, St. Jean Baptiste" (1999, 197), since the discourse on Québec's national identity rests on the generalized assumption of nationhood and manhood as interchangeable terms.

Several feminist scholars working at the intersection of gender studies and international relations have attested that the privileged relationship between nationhood and manhood—implied by the male-oriented writings of canonical theorists of nationalism such as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson—still resonates within the hierarchical structures of the gender world order, even in the age of the alleged crisis of Western masculinity (Sharp 1997; Peterson 1999; Nagel 2010). Joane Nagel observes that "State power, nationalism, citizenship (…) are all

best understood as masculinist projects, involving masculine institutions, masculine processes and masculine activities" (2010, 243). In such a context of persistent masculinism how can Québec be identified as the repository of feminist and queer potential in the formation of an aspiring nation? Stemming from a brief contextualization of Québec's revolutionary period as a site of heterocentric, nationalist drives, and from a likewise brief overview of feminist and queer perspectives on nationalism, this paper aims to relocate Québec into an alternative framework of nationhood, one that might find in femininity and queer subjectivities the necessary forces for the construction of a pluralist and more inclusive idea of nation.

For lack of a more nuanced term, 'matriarchy' will be used to identify the critical stance towards masculinity within Québec's nationalist project, and to endorse a feminist approach to nationalism that could challenge the mere metaphorization of women and queer others, as well as the secured position of men in the national picture. The controversial configuration of Québec as a matriarchal society will be further employed to understand the reinforcement of motherhood and the revision of patriarchal hegemony in the cinema of Québécois director Xavier Dolan (b. 1989), which will be taken into consideration as a symptomatic example of the counter-normative, female-empowered body of Québec's post-revolutionary and post-referendary society. The erasure of patriarchy and heteronormativity from Dolan's narratives, further counterbalanced by the relevance attributed to female and queer characters, will be interrogated in the attempt to challenge the structures of Québec's post-revolutionary nationalism. Femininity and queer subjectivities will be rearranged into the national design no longer as threats but as necessary forces of nation-building.

The paper will be divided into four sections. First, it will briefly consider the work of Canadian historian Jeffery Vacante on the relationship between the crisis of manhood and the failure of the revolutionary project in Québec, so as to expose the weak status of patriarchy and contrived masculinity in Québec's present history. Second, it will sketch out a feminist approach to nationalism that could be productively applied to the analysis of Québec's post-revolutionary national identity. Third, it will take into account the resignification of queer sexualities and queer

identities in Québec's cultural structures, so as to overcome the "fear of federasty" (that is the fear of homosexuality as a sexual but also national-cultural matter) theorized by Robert Schwartzwald in his homonymous article. Finally, it will merge the three levels of inquiry previously discussed within the analysis of Dolan's feature films in order to pinpoint the relevance of female-oriented relationships and queer subjectivities, thereby reinforcing a different discourse around national identity and gendered nationhood in Québec.

In regard to the final section, two caveats are in order. One, the extensive focus on the thematic aspects rather than on the formal features of Dolan's cinema does not intend to flatten the audacity and stylistic exuberance of the director's work. Rather, it is dictated by matters of internal cohesiveness and coherence to the central argument of the paper. Two, the decision to read Dolan's *oeuvre* through the lens of Québec's gendered nationalism has no ambition to settle the identitary paradigm of nationhood as the only viable interpretative option, nor to dismiss the variegated range of readings and possibilities that the analyzed films entail for both the present and future of Québec cinema. It is rather the author's belief that an encompassing analysis of Dolan's revitalizing engagement with the specificity of his own cultural and (sub)national belonging[1] will shed new lights on the ongoing conversation around nationhood and gender as still a crucial debate for the study of both Québec and Canadian cinemas.

Maîtres chez nous: a false myth

Questions around autonomy and sovereignty have been part and parcel of Québec's history since the original foundation of New France in the seventeenth century, and even more significantly so with the Conquest of 1760 and the foundation of the Province of Québec after the concession of French territories to Great Britain with the Treaty of Paris (1763). The attempt of the British colonizers to suppress and assimilate the Francophone culture during their colonial administration had the effect

[1] Jerry White's concept of national *belonging* over national *identity* is borrowed here to stress the adaptability of Dolan's films to a more flexible paradigm of National Cinema. His films do not necessarily pertain to a national project in political and territorial terms; but they do nonetheless participate in the construction and innovation of the cultural imaginary of a given "nation"—especially when the nation in question is not a recognized nation-state but a sub-national, minoritarian entity (White, 2004).

of exacerbating feelings of resentment, and fueling desires of independence and nation-building. The emergence of nationalist impulses in the strict sense of the term emerged, however, for the first time during the Quiet Revolution: the modernization and secularization movement that occurred in Québec in the 1960s to overcome the Catholic regime of the previous first century of its history—said regime having been identified as the main obstacle to the province's independence.

Departing from the chronological development of the Quiet and Sexual Revolutions as parallel trajectories (the former as a local phenomenon; the latter as a more geographically diffuse impulse towards gender revision in Western culture), Canadian historian Jeffery Vacante wrote extensively on the connection between Québec's political history and its history of sexuality (Vacante 2005, 2006). He specifically located in the Quiet Revolution the point of origin for the configuration of Québec's nationhood as a heteronormative, androcentric project -- in opposition to the attempts of the Sexual Revolution to revise fixed (mis)conceptions of gender dynamics. The promotion of male heterosexual power as a way to overcome the myth of Québec's "homosexual" nation—since historically emasculated by the Church and subjugated by the Anglophone colonizer[2]—is at the core of Vacante's interrogation of the relationship between masculinity and nationalism in revolutionary Québec. Referring back to the pre-secularized conditions of Catholic Québec in the 1920s and the 1930s, Vacante identifies in the Quiet Revolution "an important stage in Québec's evolving heterosexual identity […] that fulfilled many men's long-held desire to overthrow the devirilizing influence of their mothers, wives, and the Catholic Church" (2005, 36). The heterocentrism of both the political revolution and sexual involution[3] of the 1960s is thus construed as a hurdle to the production of a more

[2] As Vacante acknowledges, the call for secularization of the Quiet Revolution was supported by a strong reassertion of heterosexual masculinity based on two main arguments. On one side, the reevaluation and rejection of the Church's educational system as an environment accused to instill feminine values in the boys and therefore preventing the production of "strong and virile leaders" for an independent nation. On the other, the homophobic dismantlement of colonial discourses based on the homosexualized, feminized metaphor of Québec as the passive partner of the Anglophone colonizer. Independence, then, became for the leaders and theorists of the Quiet revolution an instrument to allow both men and nation in Québec to emerge from a state of weakness and dependence (Vacante, 2005, 36-37).

[3] 'Involution' stands here in contrast to the notion of 'revolution' so as to underline the reactionary nature of the gender politics promoted within the agenda of the Quiet Revolution: a masculine project rather than a quest for sexual and gender equality.

challenging national history, one that does not perceive female and queer subjectivities as threats to a solid albeit heterogeneous idea of national identity.

As Vacante further attests, the reassertion of heterosexual and hegemonic power over "the figurative state of homosexual weakness and dependence" in nationalist Québec can be hardly considered accomplished by the revolutionary design. Interrogating the alleged combination of nationalism and liberalism within the Revolution, Vacante brings men's studies into the equation, and exposes the reluctance of Québécois historians to engage with the crisis of male subjectivity, for they considered it a major threat to the construction of Québec's national narrative as a positive force of modernization (2006, 107). If the trajectories of modern nationalism and modern masculinity are assumed to be parallel (Nagel 2010), the subsidence of male subjectivity as a central paradigm in Western post-war history puts into question not only the secure structure of already established nations, but the fragile condition of subnational communities awaiting recognition as well. It is therefore understandable that Québec nationalism, which flourished under the leadership of the Liberal party, became heavily associated in the 1960s with a general idea of liberalism, but not necessarily with "liberal values such as pluralism and tolerance," especially in regard to sexual and gender identities (Vacante 2006, 111).

Vacante's call for the inclusion of men's studies in Québec's historical writings hence derives from the need to rethink the heterocentric project of the Quiet Revolution in the traumatic context of the post-referendary defeats of the 1980s and the 1990s, in order to revise the alleged responsibilities of women and queer subjectivities in the political failure of the masculine nation, and to underline the crucial role played by both in leading the modernization of Québec:

> There is a heightened sense of anxiety among French-speaking Québecers because the province is also coming to terms with the end of the Quiet Revolution. Since the 1960s, Québec society has been consumed with a project of modernization as well as state-building, as a growing segment of the population came to link manhood to the attainment of greater political independence. (2012, 23)

Vacante reads against the grains of Québec's nationalist mythology, and by exposing the failure of the sovereigntist project in the 1960s (as well as in the three

following decades) he demystifies the validity of the heterocentric paradigm epitomized by Jean Lesage's slogan "Maîtres chez nous" ("Masters in our own house"), where the "masters" are conceived as male and heterosexual. His approach is, however, partially limited: by privileging the stance of men's studies scholars on the issue of masculine nationalism, it overlooks the contributions of scholars addressing the question of gendered nationalism from a feminist standpoint. As crucial interventions to redefine the ground of inquiry of Québec's national design, such perspectives will be taken into consideration in the following section, which will attempt to find a more productive approach to Québec's post-revolutionary setting in both gendered and political terms.

Women that matter: a feminist perspective on nationalism

The discourse around Québec's national design can produce more relevant and pluralist models for understanding nationalism not only by increasing the presence of men's studies in the analysis of its history, but also by turning to feminist approaches on the same matter. As Joanne R. Sharp points out, "the silence of gendered identities of nationalism is due in part to the taken-for-granted nature of national identity in the contemporary world system" (1996, 107); a feminist approach to nationalism is therefore necessary to disrupt the overarching system of heterosexism, blatant gender binaries, and supposedly dominant patriarchy. The revival of nationalist claims in Eastern Europe is used by Sharp as a specific case study to interrogate the agency of feminist demands within the national design, but her conclusion might easily apply to revolutionary Québec as well, especially when she states that "during the nationalist revolt the 'women's question' disappeared as a political issue (…) and it would return to the public sphere of politics once independence has been attained" (1996, 103).

Although neglected by the nationalist design of the Revolution, the 'women's question' addressed by Sharp represented a touchstone for feminism in Québec, and for its later rediscovery in the post-revolutionary era. As Paula Gilbert Lewis notices, the years of the Quiet Revolution did not only elicit the awakening of national consciousness on a broad and generalized scale, but impacted specifically on the rise of feminist awareness of Québec's women and women writers in particular. In between the 1970s and the 1980s the work of authors such as Louky Bersianik,

France Théoret, Madeleine Gagnon, Nicole Brassard and others offered indeed a foundational ground to the emergence of a solid corpus of feminist literature in Québec, exposing strong links between feminism and nationalism, and signaling the equally important need to acknowledge the gendered and national oppression of women as Québécoises *and* female subjects (Gilbert Lewis 1985, 4-5).

In her study of experimental writing in Québec, Karen Gould stresses even further the ground-breaking role played by the abovementioned authors engaging with social, political, and gendered questions of national identity in subversive literary forms. As the pioneers of feminist consciousness and feminine writing in Québec, Bersianick, Gagnon, Théoret, and Brossard opened a breach in an otherwise male-dominated scenario, "challen[ging] the making of an in-different text and, in so doing, work[ing] to unsilence and recover a multitude of female voices, each with its own rhythm, tone, and story to tell" (1990, 2-3).

To rethink the asset of nationalism from a feminist point of view thus means to relocate female subjectivity at the core of the national discourse, not as an abstract entity but as a voice and a body that matters. Women can no longer be scripted in the fabric of nationhood as mere metaphors, never equal to the nation but only representatives of its more vulnerable, penetrable, conquerable aspects. On the contrary, their active involvement in the processes of nation-building must be acknowledged and heavily rooted in reality (Peterson 1996, 99): the urgency to rearrange female bodies and subjects as actual players within the nationalist agenda hence becomes a trope in the feminist approach to nationalism.

In a further contribution, Spike Peterson equates nationalism and heterosexism to draw attention to the role played by the latter in producing a foundational binary that de-naturalizes both the female and the queer other as markers of difference within the nation. Five "interactive ways" to resituate women and men in the national framework are employed to prove how "in reality, women are not only symbols and their activities extend well beyond the private sphere" (1999, 50).[4] Once again, the

[4] Peterson's "five gender differentiated dimensions of state-centric nationalism" are designed to expose the intrinsic heterocentrism of nationalist drives, focusing on five different aspects of female subordination and/or cultural-sexual exploitation: a) Women as

active participation of female subjects in the construction of the nation is stressed over the reduction of their role to the level of the metaphorical. As Teresa De Lauretis previously claimed in regard to feminist film theory, “radical change requires a delineation and a better understanding of the differences of women from Woman, and that is to say well, *the differences among women*. For there are, after all, different histories of women” (De Lauretis 1985, 164).

Although geared towards the formulation of a broader theoretical framework, feminist approaches to nationalism can provide a set of methodological guidelines for the analysis of the more specific and localized case of Québec. Elspeth Probyn, for instance, puts such guidelines into practice through an accurate account of the subversive *mise-en-scène* of female sexuality in popular television dramas in 1990s Québec (Probyn 1999). As Sharp before her, Probyn too questions the absence of gender specificity in male-oriented theories of nationalism (particularly Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, 1983), and aims to reject the equivalence of nationhood and masculinity in favor of the theorization of Québec as a potentially female nation. Such theorization must however transcend the danger of sexual and gendered metaphors traditionally used to address the ordinary in Québec, and focus instead on the concrete agency of women and on the material evidence of their role as nation-builders.

The ubiquity of sexualized images of women in prime-time television shows such as *Les Filles de Caleb* (1990-1991), *Shehaweh* (1992), and *Blanche* (1993), are taken by Probyn to reverse the metaphor of Québec as a “bleeding wound” in regard to “her brute of a husband, Canada,” and to encourage a reconsideration of the concrete role of women as founders of the nation. In a context like the Québécois one, doomed by “the absence of men” on the screen and outside of it, a revision of the female role in configuring the nation thus proves not only necessary, but also inevitable:

Heterosexual/Biological Reproducers of Group Members, b) Women as Social Reproducers of Group Members and Cultural Forms, c) Women as Signifiers of (Heterosexist) Group Identities and Differences, d) Women as Agents and Heterosexism as Ideology in Political Identity Struggles, e) Women as Societal Members of Heterosexist Groups (Peterson 1999, 44-54).

> In other words, if the movement of metaphorizing the nation in terms of woman would generally serve to displace actual historical women, the historical and social force of women in Québec society redirects this movement and reveals the very materiality of women in forging the nation. (1999, 52)

By questioning the validity of gendered metaphors in giving an account of Québec's nationalism, Probyn challenges not only the otherwise marginal role of female subjectivity in the national paradigm, but also the marginalization of homosexuality as a trope of political weakness. Stemming from Schwartzwald's thorough analysis of the homophobic stance of Québec's revolutionary nationalism, the following section of this paper intends to highlight the relevance of queer subjectivities collaborating with feminist approaches as to formulate an alternative model of nationhood in post-revolutionary Québec.

True feminine, real homosexuality: the revival of the national other

The "fear of federasty" addressed by Robert Schwartzwald in the title of his seminal essay (1991) is a phenomenon that both Probyn and Vacante take into further account to explain the threatening nature not only of the female but also of the queer other for the nationalist project of the Quiet Revolution. The marginality and passivity of the homosexual subject were blamed—along with the devirilizing influence of the Catholic Church—for the inability of Québec to decide in favor of independence (Probyn 1999; Vacante 2005).

Schwartzwald's study of the crisis of male subjectivity in Québec cinema intervenes in the longtime debate on the unstable status of masculinity within the representation of Canadian gender identity as a whole, which relies on from Robert Fothergill's influential but controversial essay "Coward, Bully, or Clown" (1973) to fill the gaps of a partial and asymmetrical account of the issue.[5] While English-Canadian "younger brother syndrome" in respect to the cultural interference of the United States was largely addressed by Fothergill as the cause of male inadequacy in Canadian

[5] Along with Schwartzwald, scholars such as Christine Ramsay (1993), Lee Parpart (1997, 1999) and Thomas Waugh (2006) have extensively addressed Fothergill's limited equation of Canadian cinema and impaired colonized masculinity. Although confirming the link between colonialism and marginal masculinities as a foundational trope of Canadian cinematic imaginary, the abovementioned contributions point in fact towards the outdated and over-generalizing tone of Fothergill's statement and argue for a more efficient reconfiguration of Canadian masculinities in post-colonial and queer terms.

national cinema, Québec's masculinity was easily dismissed as "a mode of positive self-realization of a distinct and significant kind" (Fothergill 1973, 241). The self-awareness of political culture that informs Québec cinema was, however, clearly outlined by Fothergill, who marked the difference between English-Canadian "individual" and Québec "ideological" approaches to the representation of masculinity, thus identifying a central motif in Québec's post-revolutionary culture. What Fothergill failed to fully acknowledge was nonetheless the crucial importance of the question of masculinity in Québec's political discourse, and therefore in its cinema: an importance that required then and still requires now a necessary investment, demanded by the political and cultural influence of the question on Québec cinema more than on its Anglophone counterpart.

The widespread crisis of male subjectivity in the contemporary world hence regains significance when considered in the context of Québec sub-state nationalism, as a source of frustration but at the same time of possibility for alternative modes of conceiving the nation. Schwartzwald focuses on Québec's climate of sexual anxiety within the Quiet Revolution as a consequence of decolonization and modernization, and locates in the supposed idea of "phallo-national maturity" the center of resilient homophobia in post-referendary Québec. Pointed at as *fédéraste*—a corruption of the French term "pédéraste" with anti-sovereigntist implications—the national enemy is thus qualified in sexual terms, even if only on a metaphorical level. The reduction of the other to the realm of the metaphorical in Québec's revolutionary culture, then, does not limit to women, but extends to queer subjectivities as well. As Schwartzwald argues: "homosexuality has served as an accepted metaphor for national oppression and continues to do so" (1991, 180). By taking Denys Arcand's successful *Le déclin de l'empire américain* (1986) and Hubert Aquin's literary oeuvre as case studies, Schwartzwald claims that homosexuality in Québec's culture is still represented as "a deviation, a 'detour' in the truest sense,'" and a result of the emasculating influence of Catholic "false fatherhood," which leaves its traces on both the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period (1991, 184-186).

Despite the non-homophobic nature of Québec's contemporary society in terms of its progressive legislation, the Quiet Revolution is blamed for its attempt to first create

and then erase the "federast" enemy from the nationalist scenario, by using the trope of sexual difference as a weapon:

> In Québec, this homophobic sexual anxiety accompanies a new nationalist project that wishes to effect a radical break with the conservative "agrarian" and clerically animated nationalism of the past […] In this anxiety, those found to be traitors or sell-outs to the cause of national revolution are gendered as passive/seductive men. (1991, 179)

The same argument is recuperated by Schwartzwald in his later article "'Symbolic' Homosexuality and 'False Feminine': Problematics of Identity in Québec" (1993), where Jacques Lavigne's philosophical apparatus (Lavigne 1971) and Gilles Thérien's account of the representation of otherness in Québec cinema (Thérien 1987) are employed to unpack the conflict between national authenticity and discursive production of difference in Québec (Schwartzwald, 1993, 266). By referring to Thérien's analysis of the presence of queerness as an identity problem in Québec national cinema, Schwartzwald questions the way in which Lavigne's notions of "symbolic homosexuality" and "false feminine" are applied to Québec's modern nationalism, when the attempt to construct the national body on the shape of the heteronormative, patriarchal family is disturbed by the interference of other forms of sexual and gendered subjectivity.

With the term "symbolic homosexuality" Lavigne defines an eroticized and affective relationship with a similar other (namely mother-daughter, father-son), that stands in the way of the achievement of *real* heterosexuality. The "false feminine" represents instead a pact between mother and son, an alliance against the father that allows the formation of "alien subjectivities" through the transfer of power on the child, and thus creates false forms of femininity and fatherhood as well. As Pascale Devette points out in her Master's thesis on Lavigne: "les termes utilisés par Lavigne renvoient à des images symboliques pour décrire des états psychiques" (Devette 2012, 64),[6] that is both principles signify for the Québécois philosopher a shift from positive and healthy structures of *real* subjectivity. Symbolic homosexuality and false feminine thus diminish the agency of *real* fathers and *real* heterosexuals, and fuel the homophobic panic of the Quiet Revolution subsequently portrayed in Québec post-revolutionary cinema (Thérien 1987).

[6] "The terms used by Lavigne point towards symbolic images apt to describe physical states." (Author's translation)

As symbolic conceptions of subjectivity, Lavigne's terms reduce the female and queer others to metaphors and prove inadequate to properly address the role of non-normative, non-masculine subjects in constructing and representing the nation. Through the rejection of Lavigne's theory and the re-evaluation of *true* feminine and *real* homosexuality as productive agents of identity and nation building in post-revolutionary Québec, Schwartzwald proceeds instead to dismantle the inscription of homosexual and female subjectivities as reasons for national failure within the Quiet Revolution. While suggesting the co-option of difference within the discourse of subnational identity, the author acknowledges however the persistence of issues even in his own approach:

> How far can we push the sexualization of the debate while remaining in tune with the insight of modernity about the fundamental failure of identity? How far can we affirm the positivity of female difference while resisting the reduction of subjectivity to consciousness, of self to willful nationality? I am not talking about mechanically substituting "nation" for "sex", "Québécois" for "female", but rather about underscoring how identitary preoccupations always have a *strategic* basis. (1993, 289)

In light of both feminist and queer approaches to the issue of national identity in post-referendary Québec, the cinema of Xavier Dolan might constitute a productive tool to venture an answer to Schwartzwald's questions, and to consider the role played by sexual and gendered subjectivities in Québec's post-revolutionary moment. In the final section of this paper, Dolan's feature films will be therefore analyzed as symptomatic grounds of inquiry for the reconsideration of femininity and queerness in the national design of Québec.

The act of killing: Xavier Dolan's matricidal/matriarchal cinema

Born in the decade of the first post-referendary defeat (1980) and raised in the aftermath of the second (1995), Québécois director Xavier Dolan could not have experienced the nationalist climate of the Quiet Revolution firsthand. Nevertheless, his cinema reflects the desire to revise Québec's history by engaging with crucial discourses of identity politics and national models of subjectivity in the present times, with an eye always turned to the past. As a recurrent stylistic feature in Dolan's films, the anachronism of the *mise-en-scène* through costumes and décors (the kitsch extravaganza of the 1980s-1990s in *J'ai tué ma mère*, the vintage rebound of the

1950s-1960s in *Les amours imaginaires*) might be blatantly read as a fashionable sign of citational auteurism, or rather, and more productively, as a coherent strategy of queer historiography.[7] In order to recompose the pieces of a past he could not have personally witnessed, Dolan looks back (in anger) to Québec's post-referendary consequences, exploring their effects on his contemporaneity, and revisiting the failure of Québec's modern nationalism through a persistent challenge to its familial models and dominant subjectivities.

Dolan's first feature film, *J'ai tué ma mère* (2009), successfully premiered at Cannes' Quinzaine des Réalisateurs in 2009. From its very title, the film seems to endorse the anti-oedipal scheme embraced by the nationalists of the Quiet Revolution: the refusal of the maternal, castrating figure—conceived as an act of murder—to clear the path for masculine agency in Québec. However, Dolan's matricidal intentions are rather symptomatic of the instability of the male protagonist, the teenager Hubert (Xavier Dolan), caught in between the struggle with his own sexuality and the suffocating presence of an exuberant, hysterical single mother (Anne Dorval), constantly blamed for her son's miseries. The relationship between Hubert and Chantal, built on non-reciprocity and estrangement to each other, seems to epitomize at first the unhealthy status of Québec when left in the hands of non-masculine, non-normative subjectivities. The erasure of the paternal figure from Hubert's life, and the reduction of fatherhood to an insignificant presence, is addressed in one scene by the father himself (the repository of Québec's "revolutionary" values) as the cause of Hubert's lack of discipline, and therefore as the sign of Chantal's inability to construct a functional masculine subject.

Chantal's rejection of the accusations she receives from both her son and her arrogant but powerless husband is displayed by the end of the film, when Dolan

[7] To understand the chronological discrepancy in Dolan's take on history and gender, it would be worth to refer here to Elizabeth Freeman's writing on gendered cross-identification as a matter of temporal drag. In her article "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations" (2000) and later on in her book *Time Binds* (2010), Freeman performs a queer reading of history based on principles of anachronism and dissonance, rather than on the exact correspondence of one's gendered identity to the social criteria of his/her contemporary historical moment. Not "how" but "when" queer performativity takes place is therefore a valuable question in regard to Dolan's oeuvre, where national and gendered history are both resumed in retrospect to reflect on the state of queer subjectivities in Québec's present.

eventually reveals his intention to represent motherhood as a site of resistance. Blamed by the principal of Hubert's boarding school for her son's escape—given her status of "mère monoparentale" and the absence of a masculine presence in the domestic space—Chantal reacts with anger, reasserting the importance of her parental role in conditions of indifference and weakness of the paternal figure. The uprising of Chantal's motherhood represents an epiphanic moment for both mother and son. Finally reunited to Chantal and open to rebuild the familial space on the renewed premises of mutual love and reciprocity, Hubert finds in the reconciliation with his mother the cohesion and plenitude necessary to reconstruct himself as a stable subject.

Elaine Pigeon's essay on Michel Tremblay's theatrical work as an act of queering Québec's national identity offers some relevant cues to read Dolan's cinema as strongly intertwined with the discourse of queer nationalism and the position of women and homosexuals in Québec's national design (Pigeon 2001). As she states in regard to Tremblay's *oeuvre*: "conceptions of the modern nation rely on the heterosexual model of the patriarchal family as a means of naturalizing nationalism" (2001, 35). Dolan's cinema aims from its very debut to reverse such paradigm, by expelling patriarchy from the national scenario and proposing instead alternative images of family unit. In *Les Amours Imaginaires* (2010)—where the shared infatuation for the new-guy-in-town Nicolas (Niels Schneider) compromises the friendship between Francis (Xavier Dolan) and Marie (Monia Chokri)—Dolan's concern is geared toward the study of romantic relationships, rather than familial ones. The inclusion of Nicolas' mother (Anne Dorval) as the only hint of parental dynamics within the narrative is however revelatory. "Father knows best", Désirée repeats with sarcasm, providing the portrait of a distant father who pays the bills but is not included in his son's life. Although unnecessary to the plot development, the presence of Désirée's character is significant to highlight Dolan's perception of his generation as a result of unstable role models and wrong management of familial relationships within the post-revolutionary decades; if the male subject is in crisis (and the nation with him), patriarchal family might be the cause of it.

The need to find alternative parents (like the teacher Suzanne Clément in *J'ai tué ma mère*) or to create surrogate familial models (such as the impossible triangle

between the three main characters in *Les Amours Imaginaires*) are therefore tropes in Dolan's cinema, along with the suppression of the paternal figure and the reinforcement of queer forms of sexuality over the marginalization of heterosexual male characters. Since the patriarchal, masculine project of the Quiet Revolution has damaged Québec's identity instead of securing it, Dolan's work engages with different forms of subjectivity in the attempt to find those who better represent the national instances of his contemporaneity. As Pigeon further states:

> A new, more inclusive national configuration is now needed; such a model must be expansive and diverse in its conception, allowing for difference rather than assimilation, which only leads back to reinstatement of an exclusive, self-defeating norm. While the appropriation of heterosexual model inflects the queering of nationhood with development failure, in order to arrest this interpretative trend, it is imperative to recognize how homophobic anxiety inevitably undermines the very model it seeks to impose. (2001, 39)

Dolan's third feature, *Laurence Anyways* (2012), perhaps best represents the director's attempt to assess the alternative "national configuration" mentioned by Pigeon. Set in Montreal in the decade between 1989 and the beginning of the new millennium, the film tells the story of Laurence Alia (Melvil Poupaud), a 35-year-old French teacher and aspiring writer who decides to undergo a long-desired sex change but has to deal with the reaction of his family, his colleagues, and his female lover (Suzanne Clément). Dolan recovers the years of his childhood as "the ideal birthing ground for a film about sex" (Knegt 2012), given that the proximity to the new century discloses promises and possibilities for the inclusion of different, non-normative forms of sexuality within the historical trajectory of post-revolutionary Québec. Twelve years after the actual setting of the film, Dolan asks, "the question is, how much have things changed?" (Knegt 2012). By linking the film to Québec's post-referendary climate Dolan extends the interrogative to the current situation of his "nation" as well.

The film identifies in Laurence a scapegoat for the post-referendary era, as the "wrong" male subject: queer and condemned for his transgressions against the national masculine paradigm as the *ecce homo* of the Christian tradition. Laurence's acceptance of his sexuality and his relationship with the mother Julienne (Nathalie Baye) offer a significant example of how alternative frameworks of subjectivity and

familial dynamics can enrich the modern asset of Québec sub-state nationalism. As in *J'ai tué ma mère*, the relationship between mother and son is initially depicted as a conflict, a refusal of the other, here represented by Julienne's rejection of Laurence's sex change as a way to preserve the domestic façade intact. Julienne's enraged reaction to Laurence's confession aims to traverse the blame society will put on her for the non-normativity of her son. "Should I torture myself and think I'm a bad mother? I don't care! Why should I?" Julienne screams, and her reply, although apparently progressive, differs from Chantal's one in the way it represses sexual difference and endorses the *status quo* of Québec's heteronormative society.

Laurence's transgendered metamorphosis as a passage from rejected masculinity to fierce womanhood allows nonetheless the eventual achievement of maternal recognition, by promoting a female bond that erases the already irrelevant paternal figure from the picture, and elevates instead the feminine and the queer as central components of the national identity. "I never saw you as my son, but I see you as my daughter," Julienne tells Laurence, thus establishing a previously absent complicity between the two, and suggesting the potential foundation of a more inclusive, pluralist, modern configuration of national identity addressed by Pigeon's essay.

The interpretation of Dolan's work in relation to culturally-specific and locally-grounded instances of Québec's nationhood needs however to be properly contextualized and unpacked, especially given the number of prominent international coproductions by Québecois filmmakers in recent years. While Bill Marshall famously defined Québec cinema as a national phenomenon (2001), several scholars have more recently moved to reframe Québec within the global (including Marshall himself, see his interview in this volume). The contributions of successful expatriates further collaborates this, including: Jean-Marc Vallée (*Dallas Buyers Club*, 2013; *Wild*, 2014), Denis Villeneuve (*Prisoners,* 2013; *Enemy*, 2013; *Sicario*, 2015), Philippe Falardeau (*The Good Lie*, 2014) and Dolan himself (with the forthcoming French/Canadian and US/Canadian co-productions *Juste la fin du monde* and *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan*). It could be argued indeed that Dolan's "special relationship" with France, evidenced by his involvement in the Cannes Film Festival and the French co-production and distribution opportunities, intervenes to shape his cinema as an *inter*-national product, rather than a national one. Considering the

dependence to French funding and the recurrent inclusion of his work in the lineups of film festivals all around the world, it is a legitimate concern to ask how Québec's local specificity is affected by the marketing and cultural strategies of film festival networks. As Felicia Chan puts it in regard to international film festivals and national cinemas: "how does the 'national' emerge from a transient event that seeks to market itself as 'international'?" (2011, 258). That is, how can the cultural and commercial drives of films be reconciled in the ambiguous space of festivals, especially when conceived as "both cultural celebrations and marketplace"? (257).

With *Tom à la ferme* (2013), the screen adaptation of Michel Marc Bouchard's homonymous play, Dolan provides an interesting answer to the above-mentioned interrogatives. Instead of conforming his production to a more palatable international taste—as with the case of *Les Amours Imaginaires*—Dolan reinforces the centrality of Québec, and therefore of its national discourse, over its erasure. Dolan's fascination for the original *pièce* is hence understandable, since it provides the ground for a close examination of disturbed familial dynamics as well as the key to accessing Québec's nationalist discourse through a different stylistic approach.

If Michel Tremblay's *oeuvre* from the 1960s and 1970s "participated in shaping Québec's nationalist project, for [he] wrote in response to the momentous transformation that Québec society was undergoing" (Pigeon 2001, 30), Bouchard's more contemporary work offers a significant account of Québec's national scenario by challenging familial roles and gendered subjectivities in a way that resonates the intent of Dolan's cinema as well. Bouchard's interest for conflicts such as family values, sexual, and national identities is indeed addressed by Jean Cléo Godin and Dominique Lafon as the most relevant trope in the theatre of Québécois' playwright, in which, they claim:

> La cellule familiale, et particulièrement la figure paternelle qui en constitue le centre névralgique, connaît, dans l'oeuvre, une évolution très significative des mutations comme des atermoiements idéologiques de la société québécoise. (1999, 95)[8]

[8] "The family, and especially its neuralgic center, that is the paternal figure, undergoes a crucial evolution in Bouchard's *oeuvre*: a process that regards the transformations as well as the ideological procrastination of Québec's society" (Author's translation).

As the first of Dolan's feature films to premiere in official competition at Venice, *Tom à la ferme* follows the uncanny journey of a young advertising agent (Xavier Dolan) from Montreal to a non-specified town in rural Québec, where he plans to visit his dead lover's mother Agathe (Lisa Roy) and his brother Francis (Pierre-Yves Cardinal), both of whom were previously ignorant of his existence and deny his romantic relationship with deceased son. What seems at first to be a narrative about the cultural clash between the modernity of the city and the backwardness of the rural environment quickly turns into a tale of psychological horror, where brutality and repression are employed as metaphors of a never outspoken but constantly present homophobia. Heavily influenced by the cinema of Alfred Hitchcock and Roman Polanski in its visual and sound values, *Tom à la ferme* represents a stylistic shift in Dolan's work, which was previously characterized by a creative re-appropriation of post-modern devices (video confessionals, intertitles, fake interviews, slow-motion), video-clip and art house cinema aesthetics. However, it remains part of his ongoing discourse on the role of sexual identities and non-normative subjectivities in shaping the nature of Québec's sub-state nationalism.

The homophobic, hyper-sexualized character of Francis epitomizes the dysfunctional male subject in the film, who is produced, once again, by the unsuccessful design of the Quiet Revolution, as his sexual ambiguity and his submission to his controlling mother disclose the failure of Québec's nationalism to brand itself as a masculine project. Agathe's character, on the other hand, only appears as an Oedipal monster, as her initial desire to keep her dead son's sexuality under cover is replaced in the end by the desperate desire to understand it. Her capacity to resist the matricidal design of Francis, and to diminish his authority in the domestic space—through the alliance with the queer other, Tom, and the eventual acknowledgement of her dead son's "normality"—seems thus to suggest another chance of inclusion and plurality within the national design.

Dolan interestingly chooses to change the original ending of the play, where Tom killed Francis and fantasized about returning to Agathe as her surrogate child. The end of Tom's nightmare and his final escape from the farm is staged instead as a return to consciousness: the alternative family that the character aimed to form is revealed as the product of an unstable mind, and the return to the city is therefore

conceived as the rediscovery of mental stability. The patriarchal family might be the cause of the exclusionary national project in Québec, but to substitute it with alternative models based on violence and terror is not a solution either. *Tom à la ferme* provides in the end a disturbing portrait of Québec's present, explained by Dolan himself as the result of an overall climate of violence blatantly associated with the cultural influence of the United States (signified in the film by Rufus Wainwright's song "Going to a Town" and Francis' star-spangled-banner shirt). It seems in this sense legitimate to ask if the film represents Québec's swan's song for the achievement of national "normality," or if a "new national configuration" can still be accomplished by reframing Québec nationalism in matriarchal and queer terms.

Dolan's latest feature *Mommy* (2014) resumes from the very title the director's concerns with questions of motherhood and matriarchy in post-revolutionary Québec, and intends to engage with the questions raised so far by leaving them partially unanswered. Ideally closing the circle started in 2009 with *J'ai tué ma mère*, *Mommy* sets the stage for yet another configuration of Québec's alternative national paradigm by addressing the struggle of single mother Diane "Die" Després (Anne Dorval) dealing with her violent son Steve (Antoine-Olivier Pilon) in a slightly futuristic, suburban Québec. Winner of the Jury Prize at Cannes (where it was finally presented in competition), and selected to represent Canada in the run for Best Foreign Film at the 2014 Academy Awards, *Mommy* preserves a strong connection with its Québécois setting despite the international scale of its circulation and reception. It offers a portrayal of Québec's working class enriched by the specificity of its spatial coordinates (the film is entirely shot on Longueuil), popular cultural references (the quotation from Michel Noël's *Capitaine Bonhomme*,[9] the musical number on the notes of "national heritage" figure Céline Dion), and regionally-specific language (the presence of the *joual* dialect as a Tremblayan device of socio-cultural accuracy).

As a recurrent feature of his cinema, Dolan's choice of the film format (or rather *formats*) suggests the coincidence of stylistic and semantic values. In *Mommy*, the 1:1 aspect ratio allows spectators to access just a limited portion of the characters'

[9] "Les sceptiques seront confondus".

lives, forcing them to exist within a square that is such only in geometrical and not socially conventional terms, suggesting the interest in the creation of an alternative *frame*work of familial and intimate dynamics. The trope of absent fatherhood and the inability of adult males to provide effective substitutes for the missing father are indeed touched upon once again by Dolan, who imagines the future of Québec as a heavily feminine scenario. The female bonding between Die and her neighbor Kyla (Suzanne Clément)—in the attempt to raise Steve in an alternative familial environment—thus offers another powerful example of Dolan's involvement with the reconfiguration of Québec's imaginary in non-normative and feminine terms rather than in heteronormative and masculine ones. Working on the film format(s) even more than on the film form to convey his message, Dolan uses the imprisonment of the characters within the 1:1 ratio to express his preoccupations for the effective future of Québec's gender and national liberation. In the opening of the format (strategically positioned as to coincide with Steve's hopes and Die's fantasies for a better life) lies the possibility to build a better tomorrow, but in its closing (also strategically positioned right before Steve's actual imprisonment) it is implied that such a possibility still needs to be worked through.

Conclusion

Taking Dolan's cinema as a symptomatic case study, this paper aimed to suggest that the potential reformulation of Québec's nationalism is no longer in accordance with the masculine, heterocentric project of the Quiet Revolution, but rather functions in more flexible and gender-inclusive terms. Feminist approaches to nationalism and queer revitalizations of Québec's cinematic imaginary have merged into the analysis of Dolan's work as an allegory of national potentialities. Queer subjects, maternal figures, and marginalized individuals, traditionally linked to culpability and national failure, have been rediscovered by Dolan's cinema as the repository of national change and strength.

In his acceptance speech for the Jury Prize at Cannes 2014, Dolan addressed New Zealander director Jane Campion as his primary source of inspiration, claiming that *The Piano* (1993) made him "want to write roles for women, beautiful women with soul and will and strength, not victims, not objects." His choice of words could not be more revelatory. In the relatively short span of his career, Dolan has emerged as one

of the most representative voices of Québec from both a local and an international perspective. Moreover, his call for a more profound and concrete engagement with the representation of femininity and queerness, in Québécois cinema and beyond, gives hopes for the revision of Québec's national design in more pluralist and open ways.

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Enemy (Denis Villeneuve, 2013).

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Juste la fin du monde (Xavier Dolan, 2016, in post-production).

Les Amours Imaginaires (Xavier Dolan, 2011).

Laurence Anyways (Xavier Dolan, 2012).

Mommy (Xavier Dolan, 2014).

Prisoners (Denis Villeneuve, 2013).

Sicario (Denis Villeneuve, 2015).

The Death and Life of John F. Donovan (Xavier Dolan, announced).

The Good Lie (Philippe Falardeau, 2014).

Tom à la Ferme (Xavier Dolan, 2013).

Wild (Jean-Marc Vallée, 2014).

SYNOPTIQUE

Les voix queers dans *Mommy* de Xavier Dolan

Par Jason R. D'Aoust

> On dit aussi que « la langue québécoise est riche de tant de modulations et variations d'accents régionaux et jeux d'accents toniques que, sans toutefois exagérer, il semble parfois qu'elle serait mieux préservée par la notation musicale que par tout système d'orthographe. »
>
> ~ Michèle Lalonde citée par Deleuze et Guattari

De nos jours, on entend rarement la musique de Schubert au grand écran. La trame sonore de *Mommy* (2014) présente le lied « *Heidenröslein* » alors que le personnage principal, Diane, quémande auprès d'une connaissance un boulot de traduction et surtout une avance de fonds. Après un zoom avant sur ses vêtements, la caméra effectue un zoom arrière en trois temps qui ponctue ce chant de la « Rose sauvage » en élargissant graduellement le champ (Fig.1-3). On voit alors Diane entourée de planchers de marbre et de boiseries, alors qu'une voix d'un autre temps (Friederike Sailer) énonce mélodiquement une pureté d'émotion. Comme les autres chansons de la bande sonore de *Mommy*, la musique de cette scène est un commentaire intertextuel sonore. Goethe couche en vers l'allégorie d'une jeune femme, la petite rose de bruyère, victime des attentions brusques d'un jeune homme.

Figure 1 : "Heidenröslein" 1

Figure 2 : "Heidenröslein" 2

Figure 3 : "Heidenröslein" 3

Malgré ses efforts pour se défendre, la rose « *musst es eben leiden* », c'est-à-dire qu'elle doit se résigner à souffrir. La prosodie étrange du lied (une musique insouciante et un texte violent) résonne en accord avec la dissonance entre la constitution visuelle de cette scène et le drame psychologique qui s'y déroule : Diane, vêtue d'un veston rose criard au motif fleuri et assise au milieu d'un luxe indifférent à sa souffrance, subit une précarité sociale et financière causée par les écarts de conduite de son fils adolescent, en proie à de graves problèmes psychologiques exacerbés par l'émergence de sa sexualité. Comme un reflet de la vie intérieure troublée de Diane assise dans ce

salon impeccablement ordonné, la violence implicite du poème est juxtaposée à la simplicité structurelle et la clarté classique de la musique. On comprend donc le choix de cette interprétation, de cette voix de femme cristalline; une version bon enfant, comme celle de Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, n'aurait pas eu le même effet. Pour reprendre l'expression de Roland Barthes, le grain de cette voix informe la poétique audiovisuelle du tableau.

Selon Susan McClary, l'orientation sexuelle de Franz Schubert a été le sujet de nombreuses spéculations. Est-ce que le rappeler rend la voix pure sur l'enregistrement de ce lied plus queer pour autant ? Est-ce que la vie sexuelle du compositeur donne à ce matériel sonore un côté étrange et inquiétant ? Dolan a dénoncé les associations entre l'orientation sexuelle de l'artiste et de son œuvre lorsqu'il a refusé la Palme Queer du Festival de Cannes :

> Que de tels prix existent me dégoûte. Quel progrès y a-t-il à décerner des récompenses aussi ghettoïsantes, aussi ostracisantes, qui clament que les films tournés par des gays sont des films gays? On divise avec ces catégories. On fragmente le monde en petites communautés étanches. La Queer Palm, je ne suis pas allé la chercher. Ils veulent toujours me la remettre. Jamais ! L'homosexualité, il peut y en avoir dans mes films comme il peut ne pas y en avoir.
> (cité par Verduzier)

Il ne sera pas question ici d'ériger les voix de *Mommy* pour en faire *la voix queer* de Dolan. Avant d'aborder ce qu'elles ont de queer, je veux commencer par porter à l'attention des lecteurs et spectateurs la matière brute des voix dans le film et comment elle peut déranger : ça passe par des chansons, des rires, des cris, des vociférations et des sacres. Afin de contextualiser ces voix sonores, je résumerai ensuite les défis que posent les voix aux théories queers et analyserai *Mommy* pour ses identifications vocales. Je proposerai ainsi une approche aux voix queers loin d'une métaphore à peine voilée pour la figure de l'auteur.

Pour arriver à ces fins, j'élabore dans les prochaines sections un argument théorique interdisciplinaire qui débute par une lecture post-structuraliste des sacres. L'exergue rappelle la musicalité de l'accent québécois, une musicalité que j'étends aux sacres puisqu'ils subvertissent l'assujettissement de la voix à la parole. Le scandale québécois

autour des sacres et de la langue de *Mommy* devient donc l'occasion de repenser la voix, à la fois comme complice du logocentrisme, suivant les premières publications de Jacques Derrida, et en tant que subversion du logos. Ma lecture de la matérialité crue des voix de *Mommy* est appuyée par une révision féministe et queer du phonologocentrisme. À chaque tournant, le corpus théorique et les analyses du film mettent l'accent sur l'expérience audiovisuelle des voix telle que décrite par Michel Chion. Ainsi, la reproduction audiovisuelle de la voix-objet met la sexualité queer de Steve à l'avant-plan, alors que les propos de certains laissent entendre qu'ils préfèreraient la garder bien à l'abri des regards. En effet, alors qu'à l'étranger l'appauvrissement linguistique fait partie prenante de la signification du film, au Québec on déplore ses 'langues sales'. Mon argument suggère qu'il y a quelque chose à la fois familier et étrange dans ce retour du joual qui nous inquiète et fait frémir nos oreilles.

I. La controverse québécoise sur la langue de *Mommy*

En octobre 2014, dans le sillon du succès de *Mommy* à Cannes, une lettre de Paul Warren parue dans les pages du *Devoir* fait éclater une controverse au Québec à propos de la qualité de langue et de l'abondance de sacres dans le film.

> Les *« crisse de tabarnak »*, pis les *« hostie d'ciboire »* qui secouent la parlure de notre dialecte québécois d'un bout à l'autre des formats carrés de *Mommy* (*« quand y pète une fiouse, tasse toé de d'là, parc'que ça joue rough »*) m'inquiètent. Xavier Dolan n'y voit pas de problème. On n'a qu'à sous-titrer le film en langue française pour les spectateurs qui parlent français… et à s'exprimer en anglais lors des conférences à Cannes. Et le tour est joué! Un drôle de tour, qui fait peur. *Mommy*, qui connaît un succès monstre au Québec et dans le monde, va convaincre encore davantage nos jeunes réalisateurs (ceux qui ne sont pas passés à Hollywood) que c'est drôlement payant de sacrer au grand écran et que notre cinéma doit continuer, plus que jamais, à parler le québécois de la rue et à manger les mots de notre langue.[1]

Les critiques français, eux, ne sont pas scandalisés par la langue de *Mommy* (Tremblay, « Un film »; Sed, « Œuvre choc »). Ils interprètent la violence linguistique du film comme un symptôme des détresses sociales et psychiques qui y sont présentées, plutôt que critiquer le refus du cinéaste d'adopter un ton littéraire. Curieusement, alors

[1] À part la lettre de Warren, on consultera les articles et chroniques de Lysiane Gagnon, Odile Tremblay, François Bilodeau, David Desjardins et Christian Rioux.

qu'on évoque au Québec la fonction identitaire de la langue pour juger du film, on refuse en même temps de le situer dans un contexte historique plus large que le discours intergénérationnel (Rioux, « L'enfant roi »). Tel un retour du refoulé, on croirait le débat sorti d'une page des *Insolences du Frère Untel* : on accuse Dolan et la jeunesse désaffectée du Québec de massacrer la langue française, alors qu'on louange les adultes responsables qui s'efforcent de la conserver. Comment cette langue inventée de Dolan serait-elle devenue celle des jeunes et ne serait pas digne de comparaison avec le joual de Michel Tremblay ? Cette critique paraît d'autant plus injustifiée suite à l'accolade du dramaturge qui admet se reconnaitre en Dolan (Tremblay, « Interview »). Pourquoi donc brandir l'argument de la langue sale pour dénigrer un film qui risque, selon l'aveu même de ses critiques, d'influencer toute une génération ?

Se retrouver dans sa langue, ne pas être aliéné par sa production culturelle, voilà un problème qui précède le théâtre de Tremblay. Selon Karim Larose, les dramaturges québécois du vingtième siècle ont été confrontés à un choix révélateur d'un malaise culturel profond : soit se dévouer au théâtre comme à la « grande » littérature française et s'aliéner les masses, soit se réclamer du vaudeville canadien-français et risquer de perdre leur crédibilité artistique dans le monde du spectacle. En déconstruisant les présupposés de ces deux positions insoutenables, des écrivains comme Gratien Gélinas, Jacques Ferron et Michel Tremblay ont trouvé dans la langue populaire un moyen de reconnaissance de l'identité culturelle québécoise. Donner au joual ses lettres de noblesse était la pierre angulaire de ce mouvement, car fort de la reconnaissance de leur distinction culturelle, les Québécois et Québécoises se seraient donné les moyens politiques et sociaux nécessaires afin de s'épanouir. Avec le recul que l'article de Larose nous permet de prendre, on voit bien comment le succès populaire de Dolan s'inscrit dans cette tradition tout en réfutant l'idée que le joual était une carence culturelle typiquement canadienne-française qui aurait été résolue depuis par la culture québécoise.

Cela étant dit, lorsqu'on refuse au cinéma de Dolan le statut linguistique et culturel du théâtre de Tremblay, on peut ensuite prétendre que Dolan n'a aucune légitimité à représenter le québécois de la rue avec lequel il n'entretiendrait qu'un semblant de solidarité et pour le seul bénéfice de la billetterie (Rioux, « Méfions-nous des rebelles »). À ce sujet, la démagogie de Christian Rioux mérite particulièrement d'être dénoncée : il accuse Dolan et d'autres artistes gais d'user de la revendication sociale comme une *mode* ou un *branding*, ce qui ferait d'eux de vulgaires opportunistes et non des artistes engagés. Si le présent article dénonce ces leçons morales rétrogrades, il ne sera pas question de les dignifier d'une réponse directe. En rappelant avec Larose notre histoire de langues sales, je ne cherche pas à dresser un tableau pour cerner et épingler le caractère engagé ou non du cinéma de Dolan. Les arguments qui suivent expliqueront plutôt comment les sacres dans *Mommy* mettent en lumière une matérialité vocale dont les sonorités transgressent l'usage habituel de la parole et confrontent les spectateurs à une sexualité qui inquiète.

II. Des sacres à la voix en tant qu'objet sonore

Paul Warren évoque la nécessité de sous-titrer *Mommy* en français « pour les spectateurs qui parlent français », comme naguère *Le curé de village* (1949) de Paul Gury « aurait eu besoin d'un doublage » en France (Larose, 18). Cela vaut peut-être pour l'accent et le joual, or les constructions grammaticales des sacres québécois et des jurons français sont similaires en grande partie : « les règles sont identiques, seul leur domaine d'application diffère » (Léard, « Sacres et jurons » 136). Ils partagent donc une gamme de combinaisons qualitatives et quantitatives qui permettent à une oreille française la moindrement musicale de se retrouver dans *Mommy* : « La première impression est déroutante d'*un français dont on comprend à peu près le sens, ou en tout cas la musique,* mais dont les mots, traîtres mots, nous filent entre les lèvres » (Lefort, je souligne). Même lorsque la combinaison est qualitative — *un crisse de beau char* / *une putain de belle caisse* — plutôt que quantitative, on retient des éléments de comparaison : *crisse de tabarnak* n'est pas différent de *putain de merde* sur le plan de la syntaxe. Il y a, par contre, des différences entre les sacres québécois et les jurons français. Les sacres québécois sont dissociés maintenant de leurs signifiés d'origine,

puisque leur transgression n'est plus basée sur l'invocation des objets sacrés du culte catholique. De plus, la prononciation des sacres n'a rien en commun avec celle des objets du culte : un *p'tit crisse* ne renvoie plus au petit Christ. C'est plutôt leur irruption sonore inappropriée dans un contexte social donné et leur intensité expressive, leur charge affective, qui dérangent. Autrement dit, sacrer en public est mal vu puisqu'on impose aux autres notre trop-plein d'émotions par le biais d'une voix qui n'est plus porteuse de paroles. En sacrant, on troque la politesse d'une parole énervée pour une voix sonore grossière et étrangement inquiétante.

Au-delà d'une apologie des sacres en tant que symptôme de la misère sociale et psychique des protagonistes du film, on peut aussi chercher à entendre ce que ces « langues sales » expriment. Une première stratégie d'écoute serait de traiter cette sonorité vocale comme une musique. La combinaison accumulative de sacres, par son rythme et sa répétition sonore, démontre une certaine musicalité, surtout lorsqu'elle ne qualifie pas une personne, un objet ou tout autre phénomène : « *hostie d'crisse de tabarnak* », par exemple. Prétendre que les sacres ne veulent rien dire, car ils n'ont plus de signifiés fixes, reviendrait à dire que la musique ne signifie pas non plus.[2] Cela est d'autant plus réducteur lorsque l'analyse procède d'une œuvre cinématographique plutôt que d'un fait divers ou d'une conversation entendue par hasard dans la rue. Pour comprendre les sacres de *Mommy*, il faut donc écouter la musicalité des voix qui les expriment afin d'éviter les interprétations moralisantes et patriarcales qui veulent restreindre leur portée subversive. Posons-nous donc la question suivante : est-ce que tous les sacres du film sont proférés sur le même ton ?

Prenons, par exemple, les paroles de Steve lors de son retour à la maison, alors qu'il retrouve dans la chambre de sa mère les vieilles photos, les odeurs des vêtements et des couvertures, un CD de chansons compilées par son père : "Crisse… Est folle 'stie… Bien tabarnak!" La voix de Steve, bien qu'elle connote sa surprise, est d'une tendresse évidente. Ces sacres sont exprimés avec une voix douce et feutrée sur un

[2] Ce lieu commun de la critique littéraire sur l'insignifiance de musique, depuis Derrida et de Man, est dénoncé par la musicologue sémioticienne Carolyn Abbate dans l'introduction de *Unsung Voices*.

fond d'accords soutenus au synthétiseur et de sons d'un ruisseau (extraits de « Childhood » de Craig Armstrong), alors qu'on regarde des rideaux ondulants qui chatoient sous les reflets du soleil.[3] Entre les évocations sensuelles étrangères à la vision (l'ouïe et l'olfaction) et donc de l'espace, Dolan place des images rappelant la fluidité de l'eau. Hors de l'espace, nous remontons avec Steve le cours du temps et sommes submergés par son passé indéfini. Ces moments oniriques sont entrecoupés de retours sur la mère dans la cuisine. Diane projette sa voix au-dessus de sa radio (qui diffuse « Provocante » de Marjo) et de la musique que joue Steve, afin de le sommer de mettre un terme à la cacophonie. Dans ce plan sonore diégétique, Steve est calme et plongé dans ses souvenirs jusqu'à ce que l'intrusion provocante en provenance de la cuisine nous rend sensible à la violence sonore qui interrompt ses visions rassurantes. De cette séquence, on retiendra que Steve sacre non seulement pour exprimer sa frustration et son refus des normes sociales, mais également pour exprimer ses émotions intimes, comme son amour filial et sa quiétude d'être de retour parmi les siens.

Cette scène des deux radios rappelle les techniques cinématographiques de l'acousmêtre, telles que décrites par Michel Chion dans *La voix au cinéma*. Comme les penseurs post-structuralistes qui le précèdent, Chion est intéressé par la voix non seulement en tant que porteur d'un message, mais en tant qu'objet. Dès la première page du livre, il rend hommage à Denis Vasse et son travail psychanalytique sur la voix.

> Et c'est à partir de Lacan que le beau livre de Denis Vasse, *L'Ombilic et la voix*, paru en 1974, proposait une des premières approches consistantes et dialectiques à ce sujet, permettant non seulement de parler « autour » de la voix, mais aussi de la penser comme objet, sans se perdre dans la fascination qu'elle inspire ni la réduire à une simple fonction de *véhicule* du langage et de l'expression (Chion, 12).

[3] La musique du film n'est pas disponible sur disque compact. On peut toutefois consulter une liste incomplète des musiques du film (sans Schubert) sur Spotify, un service d'écoute en ligne, en suivant ce lien : <https://open.spotify.com/user/1121727053/playlist/24jwc0niq0Dq2bJsypp9G2>. L'écoute est gratuite, mais nécessite un abonnement.

En effet, Vasse est un excellent auteur pour qui veut entamer une réflexion sur le type d'écoute nécessaire afin d'entendre dans les aspects sonores de la voix ce que la parole ne peut pas exprimer.

> Il y a, dans « le dialogue de sourds », par exemple, que représente souvent la « discussion », une manière de ne pas écouter, de ne pas laisser résonner en soi la voix de l'autre, en feignant de se laisser prendre à la seule cohérence du discours, au seul raisonnement. Chacun sait, pour en avoir fait l'expérience, qu'il n'y a pas d'agression plus subtile que celle qui consiste à enferrer quelqu'un dans son propre dire. La parole s'en trouve coupée, séparée du lieu où le sujet cherche à se dire (Vasse, 178).

Il y a donc un paradoxe plus aberrant que celui de mon argument — exiger une écoute généreuse des sacres dans *Mommy* par le biais de l'œuvre d'un psychanalyste membre de la Compagnie de Jésus — et qui serait d'invoquer la qualité linguistique de blasphèmes sans signifiés afin de justifier une sourde oreille à ce que ces sonorités vocales expriment. Il ne suffit pas de déplorer l'emploi abusif de sacres dans un film comme un appauvrissement symbolique de la langue. Qu'on ne veuille pas écouter dans l'espace public les sacres intenses du premier venu, soit. Or cette distinction ne doit pas servir à refuser notre écoute à l'intimité sublimée qu'un film nous présente et dans lequel ces interjections sont autrement signifiantes.

La sensibilité de Chion à la sonorité matérielle de la voix provient également de son métier de compositeur. Assistant de Pierre Schaeffer au début de sa carrière, Chion compose des pièces de musique concrète ou acousmatique. En dissociant la sonorité des corps qui les produisent, cette musique électroacoustique déconstruit la définition idéaliste et formaliste de la musique abstraite. Or la dissociation du son de l'instrument ou du corps qui l'émet — la définition même d'acousmatique — n'est pas l'apanage du vingtième siècle et de ses technologies de reproduction audiovisuelles. Comme le font remarquer Chion (27) et Mladen Dolar, le voile mythique qui sépare Pythagore de ses disciples non-initiés obscurcit la source du savoir ésotérique et rend acousmatique « la voix de son maître » : la source, l'origine voilée de la voix est donc le « dispositif inaugural » du théâtre de la philosophie. (Dolar, *A Voice* 60-71) Avec ce dispositif, la

parole et la vérité se mettent à l'abri du regard pour former à eux seuls le savoir.[4] Cette figure du maître, dont la figure demeure voilée au regard profane, présente le problème de la voix dans la pensée critique tel qu'en témoigne le triptyque de Jacques Derrida, notamment à propos de l'enchevêtrement du phonocentrisme et du logocentrisme.

Les voix-objets que nous suivons dans *Mommy* déconstruisent cette zone de confusion sensorielle. Bien avant la reproduction mécanique du son et de la critique derridienne du phonocentrisme, la musique occupait l'espace sonore ambigu qui fait de la voix un objet et un signe aux signifiés multiples. Suivant une tradition de psychanalystes français intéressés par la voix et l'opéra, dont Michel Poizat, Dolar entraperçoit le potentiel subversif de la matérialité vocale dans l'envers des observations de Platon et de Saint-Augustin sur la musique chantée.

> La musique est peut-être bien l'élément d'une élévation spirituelle au-delà de la matérialité et de la représentation, mais elle introduit également, pour cette même raison, une puissance invincible et insensée qui surpasse les plaisirs sensuels plus malléables. La voix n'offre aucune assurance de transparence; bien au contraire, la voix ébranle toute certitude et tout ordre établi du sens. La voix [musicale] est sans borne, sans garanties, et, sans coïncidence, du côté de la femme. […] L'on peut tirer de ce bref résumé, nécessairement schématique, une conclusion provisoire : l'histoire du logocentrisme ne va pas tout à fait de pair avec le phonocentrisme, qu'il y a une dimension de la voix qui va à l'encontre de l'auto-transparence, du sens et de la présence; la voix contre le logos, la voix en tant qu'autre du logos, son altérité radicale (Dolar « The Object Voice » 23-24, je traduis).

Bref, si la voix sonore (comme la musique) ne s'accommode pas des limites du langage, ce n'est pas pour autant l'aveu de leur insignifiance. La matérialité de la voix, cette sonorité extra-linguistique explique pourquoi le film — avec son abondance de sacres, d'expressions idiomatiques et d'accents — a été aussi bien reçu hors du Québec.

III. Vers une théorie queer des voix

Dans un numéro consacré au cinéma queer de Xavier Dolan, il m'apparaît essentiel de situer ces objets-voix dans le cadre des récentes publications sur la voix dans les

[4] Se référer à la discussion ci-dessous avec Schlichter et Eidsheim au sujet du supplément visuel dans la constitution d'un message sonore (note 8, ci-dessous).

théories queers. J'ai passé d'abord par une discussion des sacres pour mieux déconstruire les assises idéologiques qui bloquent une multiplicité d'écoutes de la voix en tant qu'objet sonore. L'écoute musicale des voix se doit d'être généreuse, car sans élément linguistique aucune écoute ne serait adéquate pour plus qu'une voix. En ce sens précis de ce processus d'ouverture, l'écoute est performative : elle ne rend justice aux particularités d'une voix que lorsqu'elle se réinvente en cours de route. Pour élaborer avec une métaphore musicale, nous ne parlons pas d'une écoute composée à l'avance, mais plutôt d'écoutes qui seraient autant d'improvisations soigneusement préparées. Les théories queers semblent donc tout à fait indiquées pour interroger la multiplicité de la matière vocale et de son expression.

Néanmoins, une théorie queer des voix s'est fait longtemps attendre.[5] Deux discours théoriques s'opposent à la matérialité de la voix sonore telle que conçue dans les théories audiovisuelles et en psychanalyse. Nous retrouvons d'un côté la mise de l'avant de l'écriture et de la textualité par Derrida et les poststructuralistes, et, d'un autre côté, la plasticité du corps dans la performativité de l'identité par Judith Butler.[6] Pour que ces corpus théoriques aient pu se rejoindre, il aura fallu une réévaluation du rôle de la voix dans les théories critiques. Bien que personne ne nie le rôle de la voix dans la transmission écrite du Verbe (le *logos*), depuis quinze ans plusieurs philosophes et théoriciens remettent en question le bannissement de la voix sonore. Le phonologocentrisme obscurcirait un phénomène qui n'est pas transcendant en soi, notamment une multiplicité de voix sonores qui s'oppose au caractère univoque de la voix de l'auteur ou de la voix en tant que présence. À l'hypothèse que le savoir occidental aurait été produit et organisé autour d'un rapport privilégié à la parole, ces

[5] Avant l'élaboration des recherches que je présente dans cette section, la musicologie queer accordait déjà une importance à la voix chantée, mais la discipline était moins intéressée par la matérialité de la voix que par la portée symbolique des significations qu'on lui attribuait. C'est le cas, par exemple, de la contribution de Joke Dame dans *Queering the Pitch* au sujet de la distribution des rôles de castrats dans les nouvelles productions d'opéras baroques. De plus, le présent article n'est pas préoccupé par les métaphores de la voix en tant que représentation de minorités dans les discours dominants. Je reviendrai aussi sur les premiers lieux d'une théorie audiovisuelle de la voix queer (voir note 9).

[6] Plutôt que de parler de théories du genre pour traduire « Gender studies, » j'utilise le terme « théories queers » pour traduire « Queer Theory. »

penseurs opposent l'argument inverse. La critique anti-oculaire de l'histoire des idées prend forme avec *Listening and Voice* de Don Ihde (1976) et a connu un gain d'intérêt suite à la publication de *Downcast Eyes* de Martin Jay (1994) et de *À l'écoute* (2002) de Jean-Luc Nancy (Janus « Anti-Ocular Turn »). La critique anti-oculaire interroge, pour ne citer que quelques exemples, le rejet de l'ontologie fluide d'Héraclite par Platon en faveur de celle plus statique de Parménide, ainsi que le Verbe héliotrope et la raison analytique des Lumières, pour conclure que le regard a dominé et domine toujours l'organisation du savoir occidental (Dyson, *Sounding* 21-28).

Plus près du champ de recherche qui nous intéresse, Adriana Cavarero publie en 2003 *A più voci: Filosofia dell'espressione vocale* et la traduction anglaise par Paul Kottmann, *For More Than One Voice*, paraît deux ans plus tard. Cavarero admire Derrida pour son analyse de la « dévocalisation du logos » dans *La voix et le phénomène*, mais elle n'est pas d'accord avec sa solution pour éviter le retour de certains lieux de la métaphysique, c'est-à-dire l'évitement à tout prix de la voix, gardienne de la présence auto-affective, par la mise à l'avant de la multiplicité de l'écriture. Après des centaines de pages d'analyses littéraires et philosophiques de voix non-conformes et subversives, Cavarero argumente contre Derrida que les formes et les idées chez Platon font plutôt partie d'un ordre vidéocentrique auquel les voix sonores auraient été soumises (Cavarero, *For More* 213-41).[7]

Suite à la publication du livre de Cavarero, d'autres théoriciennes féministes et queers reprennent son argument afin d'en élargir la portée. Après Dyson, Annette Schlichter, dans son article « Do Voices Matter? Vocality, Materiality, Gender Performativity », souligne l'absence de la voix dans le texte fondamental de Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (*Trouble dans le genre*). Selon Schlichter, l'argument de Butler repose sur une figure lyrique centrale qui, paradoxalement, n'a pas de voix. Elle questionne cette aphonie théorique qui prend pour modèle la scène *drag*.

> Butler rate non seulement l'occasion d'élaborer sur la voix, elle finit par nous présenter des corps aphones. Un acte pertinent de réduction au silence se produit

[7] On consultera également la traduction française d'un court extrait de sa critique du phonologocentrisme. (Cavarero, « La voix de Derrida »)

> dans l'une des scènes les plus importantes de l'histoire des théories queers et féministes : le déploiement de la scène *drag* comme véhicule de la dénaturalisation du genre. […] Puisque Butler se concentre sur l'image du genre, alors qu'elle exclue la voix comme l'un des aspects pertinents de "la réalité corporelle signifiante" de la performance *drag*, son "petit théâtre théorique" des troubles dans le genre reste complètement contenu dans une logique visuelle. La répression de la voix dans le spectacle *drag* transforme la scène *drag* en une allégorie pour la performativité du genre en tant que théorie qui tente de faire parler des corps tout en coupant le son de leur voix (Schlichter 32-33, je traduis).

Bien qu'elle s'oppose à ce silence de la voix queer, Schlichter offre en contrepoids des arguments pour éviter une supposée identité naturelle des voix. Ses arguments s'appuient sur l'ethnomusicologie de Nina Eidsheim — qui réfute les supposées caractéristiques raciales des voix — et sur la mue des garçons — qui n'est pas complètement dictée par des transformations biologiques, mais aussi par des facteurs culturels et sociaux.[8]

Également paru en 2011, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* de Freya Jarman-Ivens n'a pas pu se prévaloir de la critique vidéocentrique des voix queers telle qu'esquissée ci-dessus avec Schlichter, bien qu'elle arrive à un résultat similaire. L'auteur interroge trois icônes lyriques des cinquante dernières années — Karen Carpenter, Maria Callas et Diamanda Gallas — pour élaborer une théorie queer de l'identification vocale. Afin de ne pas neutraliser le potentiel subversif de ces voix, Jarman-Ivens cite de longues et nombreuses définitions du mot queer (13-17) qui rappellent la nécessité d'éviter de circonscrire ces voix et les corps d'où elles surgissent afin de leur attribuer des orientations sexuelles. Dans cette optique, est vocalement queer ce qui se doit de rester une inquiétante étrangeté afin de contrer les idées préconçues sur l'identité dite normale ou naturelle, fixe et stable — des préjugés qui perdurent et servent toujours à discriminer contre les minorités de tout ordre. Pour Jarman-Ivens, la notion d'identification vocale permet justement de contrer le préjugé que notre voix serait le pendant sonore d'un corps naturel. À la place de cette voix naturelle, et en combinaison avec de multiples autres facteurs sociaux, chanter en *play-back* ou faire du *lip synch* forme et transforme notre identité vocale.

[8] Voir Eidsheim au sujet du complément visuel dans la signification d'un acte sonore (*Voices as Technology* 178, cité par Schlichter).

> L'aspect queer de l'inquiétante étrangeté nous permet donc de dire qu'il y a dans ces processus mêmes d'identification vocale — centrale d'une certaine façon dans l'articulation de nos identités — des processus qui sont fondamentalement queers (37, je traduis).

Il y a donc une intertextualité de performances vocales qui — à la suite de nos contacts avec les voix-objets des technologies audiovisuelles — dénaturalise notre identité vocale. Puisqu'elles sont à la fois connues et inquiétantes, les voix queers transforment ce qui nous est familier en le rendant étrange, d'où leur lien avec la notion de l'*Unheimlich* dans la psychanalyse freudienne.[9] Par conséquent, cette subversion des préjugés sociaux est porteuse d'une ouverture envers une multiplicité de possibilités d'identifications et d'expressions vocales.

IV. Les identifications vocales de *Mommy*

Lorsque Steve part en *longboard*, la bande sonore extradiégétique propose « Colorblind » de Counting Crows, alors que la gestuelle du *skater* et les bribes de son diégétique qu'on peine à percevoir laissent entendre qu'il écoute « Blue » d'Eiffel 65. Que veut-dire cette confrontation musicale et narrative ? A-t-il les bleus ? Y est-il aveugle comme nous y sommes sourds ? Peu importe notre interprétation de cette intertextualité musicale, la superposition répète le procédé diégétique que j'ai analysé ci-dessus dans la séquence des deux radios et sa confusion de voix. Nous sommes dans un espace sonore parallèle à celui de Steve et nous entendons à peine sa voix qui chante en *play-back*, alors qu'il déambule par les rues.

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[9] Notons que Freud élabore la notion du *Unheimlich* en citant un commentaire d'Ernst Jentsch sur les contes de E.T.A. Hoffmann : « L'un des procédés les plus sûrs pour évoquer facilement l'inquiétante étrangeté est de laisser le lecteur douter de ce qu'une certaine personne qu'on lui présente soit un être vivant ou bien un automate. » (in Freud 14) Freud quitte la référence purement littéraire pour explorer cette notion dans une œuvre musicale, notamment l'opérette *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* de Jacques Offenbach. Toutefois, il rate l'occasion d'explorer le côté *unheimlich* de la voix d'Olympia, le rôle pour soprano colorature qui imite la voix d'une poupée mécanique : « la poupée Olympia, en apparence animée, ne peut nullement être considéré comme seul responsable de l'impression incomparable d'inquiétante étrangeté que produit ce conte. » (id.) Freud préfère explorer l'aveuglement de Nathanaël comme métaphore de la castration. Cet aveuglement (vidéocentrique) de Freud sur le lien entre la voix et le doute paranoïaque homosexuel est l'objet d'une critique pertinente par Ellis Hanson dans le premier article sur la voix queer (Hanson 1993). La contribution de Hanson mérite d'être notée, non seulement parce que Schlichter et Jarman-Ivens n'en font pas mention, mais aussi parce qu'il discute d'aspects technologiques qui intéressent aujourd'hui les penseurs du post-humanisme.

Si ce procédé intertextuel nous ‘montre’ des voix que les personnages n’entendent pas, le film fait également usage d’ellipses. On imagine Kyla entendre la bagarre de Diane et Steve et traverser la rue pour venir prendre connaissance du drame. Par contre, on la voit repartir chez elle chercher une trousse de premiers soins. Le soir même, ou le lendemain, elle dine chez ses nouveaux voisins. La mère et le fils sont en compétition pour les soins de leur nouvelle amie. Diane est provocante : elle coupe la parole de Steve et l’injure. Steve lui rend sa monnaie. Or le silence forcé de Kyla les mène contre leur gré vers une écoute attentive, même s’ils ne manquent pas une occasion de la taquiner. L’aphonie partielle de la nouvelle venue met de l’ordre dans la cacophonie vocale de ce duo bruyant.

Après le diner, les trois chantent et dansent dans la cuisine sur un tube de Céline Dion, « On ne change pas ». Suivant seulement Butler, on ne pourrait pas avancer que cette scène soit proprement une scène *drag*. Par contre, avec le parcours théorique sur les voix queers que j’ai rappelé plus haut, nous sommes en mesure de comprendre comment ce chant en play-back est partie intégrante de la dimension performative de la scène drag. Steve s’est vêtu de noir, s’est coiffé un peu à la manière de la vedette pop lorsqu’elle avait les cheveux courts et s’est légèrement maquillé les yeux de mascara. Nous sommes loin dans cette séquence d’un travestissement complet et d’un *lip synch* aphone sur « *You make me feel like a natural woman* », tel que Butler met en scène la dénaturalisation du genre par la *drag queen* (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 29-30). Steve chante par-dessus l’enregistrement. S’il ne porte pas une robe, sa gestuelle est un hommage à la chanteuse. De toute évidence, Steve connait la chanson pour l’avoir écoutée d’innombrables fois. Elle fait partie des souvenirs qu’il a retrouvés en rentrant à la maison.

Figure 4 : "On ne change pas" 1

Figure 5 : "On ne change pas" 2

La théorie queer d'identification vocale de Jarman-Ivens nous sert à comprendre comment les voix-objets sont non seulement un lieu de revendication des différences, mais également un lieu pour construire de nouvelles communautés. Cette chanson lie les trois personnages. Diane, gênée, et Kyla, confuse, commencent par observer Steve chanter en champ-contrechamps. On connait la sexualité difficile de Steve. On sait qu'elle met les deux femmes mal à l'aise. On pourrait dire que les moments intimes entre Steve et sa mère sont des symptômes d'une orientation sexuelle qui ne s'est pas encore affirmée, tout comme ses propos homophobes laissent sous-entendre qu'il est

en lutte avec certains aspects de sa sexualité. Or la performance vocale dans cette scène montre qu'il est possible de se construire une identité, de sortir un peu de soi même lorsqu'on est blessé, fragile et incertain. La distance qu'impose le regard, par contre, s'efface lorsqu'ils se partagent la mélodie à tour de rôle. Pour clore la scène, la bande sonore et la voix de Céline reviennent en premier plan, alors que la caméra opère un zoom arrière qui les montre tous ensemble, faisant le *party* dans la cuisine. Dolan présente une vocalité queer harmonieuse : le travelling est fluide, en contraste avec le zoom en trois temps de la séquence du Schubert, et il n'y a pas ici de friction entre le son diégétique et extradiégétique. Sans être une scène *drag*, il y a bien une identification vocale queer à ce moment du film. C'est une scène de possibilités. S'il y a des éléments d'inquiétante étrangeté dans ce chant en *play-back* sur « On ne change pas », c'est que « l'écoute visualisée » de cette musique, pour reprendre le terme de Chion, nous montre autre chose que les paroles de la chanson, sans toutefois mettre le doigt dessus.

La superposition de voix chantées dans cette séquence n'est pas pour autant une compétition vocale pour dominer un espace sonore. Il y a là une harmonie de voix qu'on ne trouve ni dans la séquence des deux radios, ni dans celle du bar karaoké. Or ces séquences chantées nous demandent d'être témoins de la puberté inconfortable de Steve. Son séjour au centre de détention juvénile semble s'être déroulé sans la présence de filles de son âge et, mise à part une jeune fille au centre d'achat, la mère et la voisine sont les seules femmes qu'il a côtoyées jusqu'à maintenant dans le film. Cette isolation est rompue par leur sortie au bar karaoké. La violence tacite de la normativité de cet espace hétérosexuel dérange Steve. Alors que Paul domine socialement et psychologiquement Diane en faisant miroiter son aide légale en échange d'un weekend intime au chalet, les jeunes hommes aux tables de billard dominent physiquement leurs compagnes.

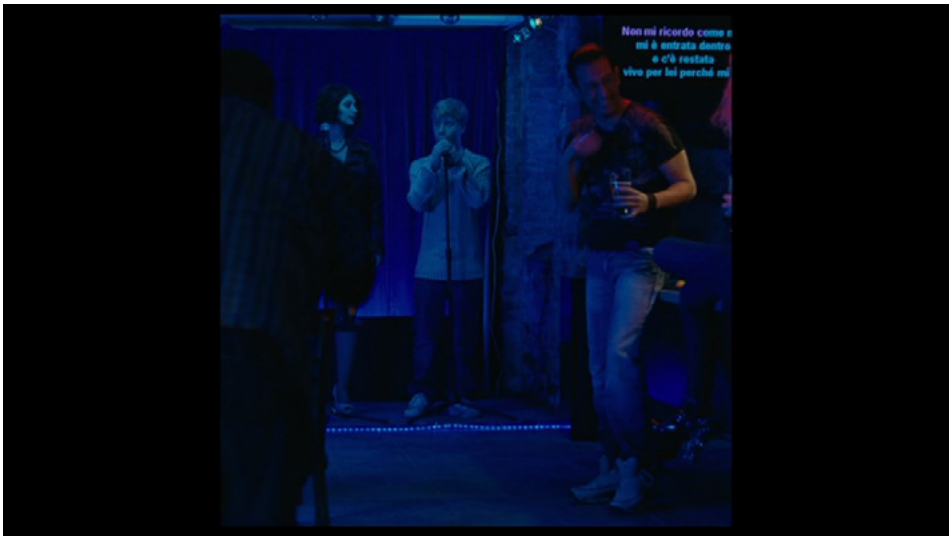

Figure 6 : "Vivrò per lei"

Ce soir-là, comme quelques soirs auparavant, la voix chantée de Steve est construite en accord avec les voix des femmes : c'est l'héritage sonore que lui a laissé son père par la voie d'un disque gravé et étiqueté « DIE + STEVE MIX 4EVER ». Or Steve, au micro du karaoké et en duo avec la *disk jockey*, perd la voix suite aux apostrophes des mâles mal à l'aise devant l'expression de ses émotions. Si la voix queer de Steve met les spectateurs mal à l'aise en raison du joual qui secoue sa parole, sa voix est également le site où les multiples performances d'identités mineures servent à dénoncer des injustices autrement inquiétantes que quelques sacres bien sonnés.

V. Conclusion

Près de la gare d'Utrecht, il y a une chapelle convertie en bistro où l'on doit rester debout au bar lorsqu'on ne veut pas manger. Le vendredi soir, sous l'imposant orgue désormais silencieux, une masse d'hommes communie en cacophonie au bar, alors que les femmes et les couples assis dans les bas-côtés et au jubé se tordent les oreilles pour s'entendre parler. Dans le vacarme imposé par cette socialisation entre hommes, on pourrait sacrer à son gré et cela passerait inaperçu, non seulement parce que leur bruit noierait l'interjection, mais parce qu'on n'a plus les codes moraux que ceux du monde d'hier.

Si les lieux sacrés sont caractérisés par le silence qu'on y impose, nos salles de cinéma sont maintenant plus propices à la réflexion éthique que ne le sont certains édifices religieux dont il ne reste que les apparences. *Mommy* navigue la cacophonie de notre monde pour nous aider à mieux comprendre les démunis, les mal-aimés, les abandonnés et sans faire de sermons. Pourtant, les voix de *Mommy*, qu'elles poussent des sacres ou des chansons, ne sont pas entravées par les moyens musicaux limités de leurs personnages (*lip synch* et *karaoké*). Dolan joue de tous les registres vocaux pour faire passer son message au-dessus, mais surtout à travers le vacarme d'une société patriarcale en communion parfaite avec ses propres intérêts. Il ne faut donc pas lamenter la langue de *Mommy* comme symptôme de l'appauvrissement de celle de la jeunesse, mais se demander pourquoi certains spectateurs sont dérangés par ces voix. En effet, les sacres québécois ne sont ni étranges, ni inquiétants; hier comme aujourd'hui, c'est plutôt un lieu de reconnaissance culturelle populaire. Or les voix de *Mommy* « queerent » les sacres québécois, puisqu'ils approprient les lieux d'où ils sont habituellement proférés. Ce qui dérange certains n'est pas réellement les *hosties de tabarnak* ou le joual, car on n'en fait pas de plats quand ils décrivent la réalité des vestiaires et des bars sportifs. Ces spectateurs seraient dérangés plutôt par ce que nous pourrions nommer une redistribution du sensible, en faisant référence à Jacques Rancière. Ils seraient étrangement inquiets par le retour de ces lieux intimes que sont les sacres québécois, parce que ce sont des femmes pauvres et leurs fils à la sexualité queer qui les vocifèrent. Bref, les voix queers de *Mommy* investissent des lieux intimes de la culture québécoise afin de mieux s'y faire entendre. Pourquoi donc les interdire ou vouloir laver leurs langues sales ?

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SYNOPTIQUE

Pouvoir et déclin de l'intime : Films postréférendaires, identités genrées et identités sexuelles

Par Julie Ravary

> The attempt to include only films that are somehow linked to a project of emergent, progressive nationalism will inevitably lead to romantic, and perhaps most importantly incomplete history of a national cinema.
>
> ~ Jerry White, «National belonging: Renewing the concept of national cinema for a global culture»[1]

> Postréférendaire :
> Relatif à la suite des événements découlant du Référendum tenu par le gouvernement du Québec le 20 mai 1980 sur l'avenir de la nation.
> Syndrome postréférendaire :
> État d'âme et d'esprit empreint de malaise et d'inquiétude qui se manifeste par divers événements, attitudes et comportements individuels et collectifs depuis le Référendum.
>
> ~ Jean-Pierre Bonhomme, Michel Dongois et Pierre Migneault, *Le syndrome postréférendaire*[2]

La mise en récit de l'histoire d'un cinéma national se voit influencée par l'écriture de l'histoire sociale, politique et culturelle de la nation en question. Le cinéma québécois n'y fait pas exception. Il ne s'agit que de recenser le nombre d'études portant sur le cinéma québécois ayant abordé la thématique de la politique, et plus particulièrement les différentes manifestations et remous du mouvement nationaliste indépendantiste, pour comprendre à quel point le cinéma québécois fut très souvent pensé en fonction de son contexte sociopolitique. L'une des périodes étudiées par ce corpus de littérature s'étant penché sur le lien entre nationalisme et cinéma québécois est celle des années 80. Pierre Véronneau, dans son texte « L'histoire du Québec au travers de l'histoire du cinéma québécois. Le cinéma québécois a-t-il le goût de

[1] Jerry White, « National Belonging: Renewing the Concept of National Cinema for a Global Culture» dans *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 2, issue 2. 2004. p. 214.
[2] Jean-Pierre Bonhomme, Michel Dongois et Pierre Migneault (éds.), *Le syndrome postréférendaire*. Montréal, Édition Stanké. 1989. p. 1.

l'histoire? » (2008), résume l'impact de la défaite du Oui au référendum de 1980 pour le milieu du cinéma québécois :

> Il était inévitable que le cinéma [québécois] fasse écho au référendum de 1980, d'autant plus qu'il n'est pas exagéré d'affirmer que dans son ensemble le milieu du cinéma accordait son appui à la souveraineté-association. Mais la victoire du Non rend les gens amers et tétanise le milieu culturel, ce qui va se refléter dans plusieurs films.[3]

Cette ère cinématographique qu'ont été les années 80 porte d'ailleurs un nom plus qu'évocateur : l'ère des films « postréférendaires ». L'emblème de cette période est sans aucun doute devenu le film de Denys Arcand *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* (1986).

Malgré le fait que la vision d'Arcand face à l'avenir du projet national soit dans son ensemble plutôt pessimiste, il n'en demeure pas moins que le cinéaste porte une réflexion explicite sur l'évolution du mouvement nationaliste et plus particulièrement l'évolution des changements sociopolitiques engendrés par la Révolution tranquille, qui fut freinée par la défaite du Non en 1980. Le film d'Arcand, par son ton polémiste, sa distribution d'acteurs et d'actrices étoiles et sa grande popularité, tant locale qu'internationale, est devenu un marqueur historique cinématographique d'une époque déterminante pour la société québécoise. On peut tout à fait considérer *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* comme prenant part (et une part capitale!) à l'histoire romancée du cinéma national dans lequel il s'inscrit, un phénomène culturel auquel fait référence White ci-haut.

Quelques mois avant la sortie du film d'Arcand, un cinéaste coécrit et réalise un film proposant un ton et un style contrastant au *Déclin*. En empruntant les codes du film noir, en présentant des personnages possédant des identités hétérogènes et en félicitant, par un « happy-ending » empreint de symbolisme, deux personnages habituellement marginalisés par le cinéma (la femme « masculine » et l'homme

[3] Pierre Véronneau, « L'histoire du Québec au travers de l'histoire du cinéma québécois. Le cinéma québécois a-t-il le goût de l'histoire? » dans *Cinémas*, vol. 19, n°1, 2008. p. 94.

homosexuel), le film *Pouvoir intime* (1986) d'Yves Simoneau est une véritable bouffée d'air frais pour cette période postréférendaire du cinéma québécois.

Contrairement au film d'Arcand, *Pouvoir intime* est représentatif des œuvres exclues des grandes lignes de l'histoire romancée de son cinéma national auxquelles fait référence White dans la citation ci-haut. Il est de notre avis que *Pouvoir intime* demeure une œuvre méconnue, non pas par son manque de résonnance au contexte socio-politique de l'époque mais, plutôt puisque sa vision de la société québécoise ne cadre pas avec l'histoire romancée du mouvement nationaliste et sa représentation (son ressentiment face à) de la défaite du référendum.

Par une étude détaillée de son inscription dans l'histoire du cinéma québécois, nous souhaitons rendre hommage à l'œuvre d'Yves Simoneau *Pouvoir intime*. Notre approche n'est ni une critique objective ni une étude analytique. L'objectif de ce texte est de fournir des informations narratives et visuelles sur un film qui n'a jamais été distribué en VHS ou en DVD. Le fait que la seule copie de visionnement public réside à la *Cinémathèque québécoise* est la cause (ou la conséquence) du manque de rayonnement de ce film dans l'histoire du cinéma national québécois. Tout au long de ce texte, nous proposerons différentes hypothèses théoriques féministes et/ou historico-culturelles quant aux raisons de son absence des grandes lignes romancées du cinéma québécois. Ces propositions sont avant tout des pistes de réflexion qui n'agissent qu'en tant qu'agréments au recensement descriptif du film. Notre objectif est avant tout de faire découvrir ce film à ceux et celles qui n'auraient pas encore eu la chance de croiser son chemin. Nous tenons d'ailleurs à remercier Isabelle Desmarais de *Téléfiction* ainsi que les acteurs (Pierre Curzi, Jacques Godin et Jacques Lussier) et l'actrice (Marie Tifo) du film qui nous ont permis d'emprunter et de publier les éléments visuels que vous trouverez dans cet article.

Description et pistes de réflexion

L'étude de la mise en scène des deux personnages principaux, soit Roxane (la femme « masculine » hétérosexuelle) et Janvier (l'homme homosexuel) dans le contexte

socioculturel et politique de la nation québécoise des années 80, saura informer mes constats quant à la proposition inédite de Simoneau pour l'époque. En bref, nous comptons interroger cette production cinématographique en lien avec une dimension spécifique du cinéma national dans lequel il s'inscrit, soit à l'ère cinématographique post-référendaire des années 80. Mentionnons d'emblée que *Pouvoir intime* est sans aucun doute un film postréférendaire. Il propose simplement une vision différente de l'avenir, de l' « après », une lointaine version de celle proposée par plusieurs films de l'époque, dont celui de Denys Arcand.

Mon hypothèse est la suivante : c'est précisément à travers les personnages de Roxane et de Janvier que *Pouvoir intime* se propose comme un film « postréférendaire », un « postréférendaire » à l'opposé de la proposition d'Arcand. *Pouvoir intime* confronte un des aspects importants du mouvement nationaliste québécois de l'époque qui semble symptomatique d'un phénomène socio-culturel observé par la branche théorique féministe des *gender and nation* : le caractère hétérosexiste sous-jacent au développement de l'imaginaire national proposé par certains mouvements nationalistes. Afin de mieux comprendre ce phénomène socio-culturel, voici une brève description des grandes lignes de la théorie des *gender and nation*.

Gender and Nation

Durant les années 80, une branche de la discipline des *gender studies* concentre ses études sur le lien entre la construction des identités nationales et la représentation des identités sexuelles et genrées dans les récits nationaux propagés par ce que Benedict Anderson a appelé l' « imaginaire national »[4]. On appellera cette branche les « *gender and nation* ». Traitant spécifiquement du problème de la naturalisation de certaines identités sexuelles et genrées et de la marginalisation de d'autres par les imaginaires nationaux, à travers diverses époques et au sein de différentes nations, ces théoriciennes et théoriciens ont identifié les identités genrées impulsées par la rhétorique nationaliste. Ces ouvrages participèrent à l'intérêt que porta la troisième

[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. New York et Londres : Éditions Verso, 1983.

vague féministe[5] pour l'étude de l'identité nationale dans la construction des identités genrées et sexuelles. Avant de débuter l'analyse des œuvres à l'étude, procédons à une revue étayée de la branche théorique des *gender and nation* par le biais de trois auteures spécifiques qui, selon nous, fournissent des pistes pertinentes à notre analyse de *Pouvoir intime*.

Sinha, Peterson et Sharp

Dans l'introduction de son texte « Gender and Nation » (2013), Mrinalini Sinha propose une synthèse des avancés théoriques du courant des *gender and nation*. Elle débute en soulignant la contribution de cette branche théorique aux aveuglements des études des États-nations/nationalismes, mais également à la discipline des études féministes. « If the scholarship on nationalism had demonstrated a certain indifference to gender as a category of analysis », souligne Sinha, « feminist scholarship was equally guilty of neglecting the study of the nation and of nationalism ».[6]

Selon Sinha, par le biais de leurs études du caractère inventé de l'identité nationale ainsi que de l'institutionnalisation de l' « Autre » sexuel et genré, les *gender and nation* ont ouvert la voie pour penser l'essence exclusive des discours nationalistes non seulement pour les identités genrées et sexuelles mais, également pour les identités ethniques, religieuses et de classes sociales :

> Because the construction of national identities does not "depend on the existence of any objective linguistic or cultural differentiation but on the subjective experience of difference" it necessarily entails a continuous process of defining itself against a host of "others".[7]

[5] La troisième vague féministe voit le jour vers la fin des années 1980. Cette nouvelle vague est fondée sur le désir de plusieurs écrivaines et écrivains féministes revendiquant la pluralité de l'identité de la femme. Cette troisième vague se veut une mise en lumière des différences qui existent entre les réalités des femmes de différentes nationalités, religions, classes sociales et orientations sexuelles. On accuse la deuxième vague de n'avoir présenté qu'un seul portrait, qu'une seule version de ce que peut être la réalité d'une femme.

[6] Mrinalini Sinha, « Gender and Nation » dans *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, dirigé par Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim. Édition Routledge, 2013. p. 227.

[7] Ibid. p. 228.

Cette subjectivité dans la construction de la nation nous oblige à reconsidérer les facteurs historiques et évolutifs des récits nationaux :

> The gendered articulation of the nation—no less than its articulation in other forms of organizing differences—can be examined only in concrete historical situations […] All nations are gendered, but there is no one privileged narrative of the gendering of nations. [8]

Remettre en contexte la perspective historique de la nation est exactement ce que nous souhaitons faire par le biais de notre analyse du « film postréférendaire ». Un second concept descriptif guidant notre étude des films d'Arcand et de Simoneau est celui avancé par V. Spike Peterson selon lequel l'identité politique nationaliste serait hétérosexiste. Dans « Sexing Political Identities / Nationalism as Heterosexism » (1999) Peterson décrit son concept comme suit:

> Heterosexism presupposes a binary coding of polarized and hierarchical male/masculine and female/feminine identities (ostensibly based on a dichotomy of biophysical features) and denies all but heterosexual coupling as the basis of sexual intimacy, family, life, and group reproduction. And heterosexism is key to nationalism because today's state-centric nationalisms […] not only engage in sexist practices that are now well documented by feminists, but also take for granted heterosexist sex/gender identities and forms of group reproduction that underpin sexism but which are not typically interrogated even in feminist critiques.[9]

L'auteure conclut que les idéologies nationalistes à travers les époques ont participé à une double marginalisation, en excluant autant sur une base de l'identité genrée que sexuelle. Cette idée de Peterson quant à la marginalisation d'identités précises par les mouvements nationalistes sera idoine à notre analyse des personnages « marginaux » de Roxane et Janvier.

De son côté, Joanne Sharp dans « Gendering Nationhood: A Feminist Engagement with National Identity » (1999) abonde dans la lignée du théoricien Benedict Anderson voulant que la nation ne soit pas créée à un moment originel distinct, mais plutôt par une répétition de symboles qui deviennent faits admis sur l'histoire et l'unicité de la

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[8] Ibid. p. 232.

[9] V. Spike Peterson, « Sexing political identities/nationalism as heterosexism » dans *Women, States, Nationalism: At Home with the Nation?*, édité par Sita Ranchod-Nilsson et Mary Ann Tetreault, New York, Édition Routledge, 1999. p. 59.

nation en question. Les *gender and nation* ont également observé d'autres manifestations de l'idéologie nationaliste à travers la formation de symboles précis en lien avec la définition d'identité sexuelle et genrée. Mentionnons par exemple l'étude de l'archétype de la famille nucléaire hétéropatriarcale, les politiciens comme pères symboliques de la nation, la figure de la Terre-mère (corps de la femme/mère comme territoire national) ou encore la définition hégémonique de l'identité masculine militante. Sharp souligne justement qu'il ne faut pas négliger que, dans sa promotion d'une version particulière et étroitement définie de la masculinité, l'idéologie nationaliste s'avère également potentiellement oppressante et sexiste envers les versions/identités masculines qui ne cadrent pas dans l'identité privilégiée par cette idéologie :

> But just as this gendering of the national privileges the masculine over the feminine, so too does it privilege one particular notion of masculinity. Nationalist rhetoric is characteristically heterosexual/heterosexist, most especially in its promotion of the nuclear family.[10]

Elle propose d'ailleurs un rapprochement tout à fait éclairant entre ce qu'elle appelle la généalogie poststructurelle de la construction sociale de l'identité de genre développée par la théoricienne féministe Judith Butler et la construction du fait « national ». Tout comme les définitions de la masculinité et de la féminité propagées par l'hégémonie dominante, les mouvements nationalistes, mouvements fondateurs de toutes nations, prolifèrent d'une manière semblable des versions bien définies et cadrant dans l'histoire romancée de la nation.

Cette valorisation d'une certaine version de la masculinité au détriment des « autres » versions de la masculinité et de la féminité en général par certains mouvements nationalistes, a également été observée dans certains discours politiques québécois. Dans « Writing the History of Sexuality and 'National' History in Quebec » (2005) Jeffery Vacante se penche sur les discours sexuels enchâssés dans certaines strates du mouvement nationaliste de la Révolution tranquille :

> The Quiet Revolution, then, became the means through which the feminized, emasculated, and "homosexualized' man/nation could reassert

[10] Joanne R. Sharp, « Gendering Nationhood: A Feminist Engagement with National Identity » dans *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, dirigé par Nancy Duncan, New York, Édition Routledge, 1996, p. 105.

> his/its heterosexuality […] "National" liberation, then, can be seen as little more than a means of entrenching traditional sexual hierarchies and reaffirming a male virility that is thought to be missing. In the process, heterosexual expression becomes naturalized alongside the attainment of Quebec independence.[11]

L'historien et sociologue Robert Schwartzwald s'est d'ailleurs intéressé au lien entre discours sexuel et question nationale dans de nombreuses études dont plusieurs avaient précisément pour objet la société québécoise. Dans « La fédérastophobie, ou les lectures agitées d'une révolution tranquille » (1997), l'auteur interroge « l'allégorisation de la question nationale selon une mise en scène de la différence sexuelle »[12] dans certaines œuvres littéraires et cinématographiques québécoises. Il choisit précisément *Pouvoir intime* comme contre-exemple de la tendance d'un certain cinéma nationaliste prenant place au Québec à l'époque.

> Cependant, le film [*Pouvoir intime*] n'aura pas recours à une allégorie de dysfonction sexuelle pour expliquer la dissolution de ces codes [« sûrs »], de même qu'il s'abstient de stigmatiser ses personnages les plus marginaux- les hommes gais et une femme « masculine »- ou de les tenir responsables de cette déchéance. Au contraire, le film nous fait nous demander selon quel droit, hors de la convention elle-même, nous avons pu croire que ces codes devaient fonctionner.[13]

C'est exactement dans cette confrontation des conventions entourant les discours sexuels comme allégorie de la question nationale que nous concevons *Pouvoir intime* comme une œuvre postréférendaire.

Plutôt que de discriminer deux identités habituellement condamnées par l'idéologie hétérosexiste, soit l'identité sexuelle non hétérosexuelle et l'identité genrée féminine, comme l'ont fait nombreux films nationalistes, Simoneau choisit au contraire de privilégier précisément ces deux personnages, Roxane et Janvier, en faisant d'eux les uniques survivants. Nous proposons l'hypothèse qu'en renversant le sort habituellement réservé au personnage de la femme « masculine » et de l'homme « homosexuel » dans

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[11] Jeffery Vacante, « Writing the History of Sexuality and "National" History in Quebec », dans *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 2, n°39, 2005. p. 37-38.
[12] Robert Schwartzwald, « La fédérastophobie, ou les lectures agitées d'une révolution tranquille. », *Sociologie et sociétés*, vol. 29, n°1, 1997. P.129.
[13] Ibid. p.141.

les codes narratifs du film noir, Simoneau prend position quant au discours identitaire nationaliste québécois, une position politique éclairante à bien des égards et qui, encore aujourd'hui, est malheureusement méconnue contrairement à d'autres.

Analyse filmique de *Pouvoir intime*

Je propose une analyse des personnages de Roxane et Janvier en me penchant particulièrement sur la mise en scène de leur féminité et masculinité à travers le concept de performativité tel que décrit par Judith Butler.[14] Nous sélectionnons cinq séquences qui sauront informer nos constats quant à la représentation des identités sexuelles et genrées que présente *Pouvoir intime*.

Schéma narratif

Pouvoir intime fut présenté pour la première fois en 1986. Ce film est une scénarisation de Pierre Curzi et d'Yves Simoneau. Ce dernier assure également la réalisation de l'œuvre tandis que Curzi tient le rôle de l'un des personnages principaux, un brigand nommé Gildor. L'intrigue du film, se résumant principalement à un vol à main armée qui tourne mal, n'est en fait qu'une trame de fond au propos central du film : les différentes relations qui se tissent et se délient entre les personnages tout au long du film.

La distribution est complétée par Marie Tifo dans le rôle de Roxane, Jacques Lussier dans le rôle de Janvier ainsi que Robert Gravel dans le rôle du gardien de banque Martial. Roxane fait partie de la bande de brigands qui manigance le vol d'un camion de banque. Martial, l'un des gardiens de ce camion, restera coincé à l'intérieur du véhicule pendant le vol. Janvier est le conjoint de Martial. Il sera témoin de l'enlèvement de celui-ci devant la façade du casse-croûte dans lequel il travaille.

[14] Dans *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler indique que les conceptions idéologiques rattachées aux identités de genre ne sont jamais résolues, qu'elles sont constamment réinventées et qu'elles sont foncièrement influencées par le contexte historique, social, culturel et politique dans lequel elles évoluent : « Terms such as "masculine" and "feminine" are notoriously changeable; there are social histories for each term; their meanings change radically depending upon geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints on who is imagining whom, and for what purpose. » (p. 10)

Film noir

Lorsqu'on se penche sur les éléments esthétiques les plus reconnaissables du film noir tels que les costumes, les décors et la direction de la photographie, on peut facilement reconnaître l'influence de ce genre filmique dans la réalisation de Simoneau. Il existe également une autre composante de l'œuvre qui rappelle beaucoup le film noir et qui, contrairement aux éléments visuels et sonores, n'est peut-être pas si flagrante au premier coup d'œil : la dialectique entourant la masculinité et la féminité, élément inhérent au film noir. Richard Dyer dans son texte « Postscript : Queers and Women in Film Noir » (2000), explique la place importante accordée à l'élaboration et à la performativité des identités de genre :

> Film noir queerness suggests that the feminine is not coterminous with womanhood –that there are different ways of being feminine, that some men can be feminine, that some women can be effeminate. […] I'm inclined to believe that most culture works to hold the line of sexual differentiation, but not film noir, or at any rate not always definitely.[15]

La construction du personnage de Roxane s'inscrit tout à fait dans la ligne du constat que fait Dyer sur le discours de la féminité dans le film noir. Un exemple de cette discussion entourant l'identité genrée prend place dans la scène où Roxane fait sa première apparition.

[15] Richard Dyer, « Postscript: Queers and Women in Film Noir », *Women in Film Noir*, Édité par E. Ann Kaplan. British Film Institute, 2000. p. 129.

Scène 1: L'entrée en scène de Roxane

Cette séquence débute avec un plan moyen en plongée sur les chaussures de Roxane. Un plan sur des bottes de cuir brunes qui pourraient autant appartenir à un homme qu'à une femme. La caméra se déplace tranquillement vers le haut du corps de la femme. On aperçoit encore une fois des vêtements qui ne laissent pas présager l'identité féminine du personnage : elle est vêtue d'un pantalon de couleur kaki, d'une ample chemise et d'un blouson de cuir brun. Ce n'est qu'en apercevant son visage que l'on peut constater que ce corps est celui d'une femme. Dès le premier plan de Roxane, on met l'accent sur le jeu de la performativité des genres et surtout sur les présomptions vestimentaires associées à la féminité et à la masculinité. Quelques scènes plus tard, lors de la rencontre entre Roxane et Théo, le brigand à la tête du groupe, l'allure plus « masculine » de Roxane sera abordée de façon plus explicite.

Scène 2 : Présentation de Roxane à Théo

Cette séquence débute avec un plan d'ensemble de l'entrepôt de théâtre. La caméra, dans un travelling avant, se rapproche de Roxane qui fait son entrée dans cet espace. Roxane inspecte le lieu. Cet endroit rempli de torses de plâtre, de mannequins et de costumes, ajoute à l'élément performatif de cette scène. On aperçoit la silhouette de Théo au deuxième étage. Il descend tranquillement les escaliers tout en épiant Roxane qui se tient dans la seule lumière de la pièce, comme si elle se tenait sous un projecteur. Théo s'approche d'elle, mais demeure dans l'ombre. Roxane, se sentant scrutée de la tête aux pieds, demande à l'homme s'il cherche quelqu'un de plus féminin

pour les besoins du vol.[16] Gildor entre alors dans le cadre. Théo avance dans la lumière et lui signifie qu'en effet il cherche quelqu'un de plus féminin. Gildor intervient en suggérant qu'un caractère plus féminin « s'arrange facilement », ce n'est qu'une question de vêtements. La scène se termine sur la réaction des trois protagonistes à ce commentaire : ils se regardent et se sourient. Quelques scènes plus tard, lors du vol, Roxane délaissera son blouson de cuir et son pantalon ample pour un tailleur rose et une perruque aux cheveux longs, question de jouer un rôle « plus féminin » qu'on lui a attribué, soit celui d'une secrétaire. Cette scène rappelle le caractère performatif des identités de genre tel que suggéré par Butler. La féminité pour Roxane relève de choix lucides et non de fins ensoi. Son identité de genre n'est pas fixe, mais multiple et performative.

Dans une entrevue accordée à la revue *Séquences* en 1986, Simoneau témoigne de l'importance pour lui de renverser la figure de la femme-accessoire.

> Nous avons décidé de modifier le personnage pour éviter de tomber encore une fois dans le piège de la femme-accessoire. […] Dans un film noir, il y a toujours un héros qui, après une quête de l'absolu, va se faire tuer à la fin. Nous avons pris le même pattern pour le renverser, comme une photo dont on prend le négatif. Voilà une fille qui cherche l'absolu et qui, à la fin, s'en sort.[17]

Simoneau réussit son pari : il détourne l'axiome de la femme-accessoire en faisant de Roxane le personnage le plus indispensable du groupe de brigands. Non seulement elle n'est pas qu'accessoire, mais ce sera elle qui gardera son sang-froid durant le crime, motivera les troupes et effectuera la majorité des tâches physiques. Son identité et sa version de la féminité seront toujours assumées et, à aucun moment, problématiques ni pour elle ni pour ses acolytes. En laissant de côté son blouson de cuir et son pantalon ample pour un tailleur rose, question de jouer une secrétaire pour les besoins du vol, Roxane nous rappelle que les identités de genre ne sont ni binaires ni fixées; elles relèvent plutôt de constructions culturelles, de choix et non de fins en soi.

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[16] Théo cherche une femme qui pourrait jouer le rôle d'une secrétaire se faisant kidnapper par les brigands en espérant forcer ainsi les gardiens à lui donner les clés du camion qu'il souhaite voler.

[17] André Giguère, « Images d'ici » [Entrevue avec Yves Simoneau], *Séquences*, n°124, avril 1986. p. 8-9.

Comme l'écrit Butler : «[…] what is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo. In its very character as performative resides the possibility of contesting its reified status».[18] Une des réflexions sur la performativité des identités genrées, et surtout sur les constructions socioculturelles de celles-ci, se produit également lors de l'association entre Janvier et Roxane.

Scène 3 : Rencontre entre Roxane et Janvier

Après de nombreuses tentatives et échecs à convaincre Martial de sortir du camion, Roxane propose à son groupe de demander l'aide de Janvier afin de faire entendre raison à son conjoint enfermé dans le camion. La mise en scène de cette séquence est construite de manière à suggérer un jumelage entre les corps de ces deux personnages : Roxane et Janvier sont habillés de façon identique. Leur blouson, la couleur de leur chemise et de leur pantalon, même leur coupe de cheveux est similaire. Les allures semblables de Roxane et Janvier incorporent la flexibilité, la commutativité

[18] Judith Butler, « Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory », *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, dirigé par Carole R. McCann et Seung-kyung Kim, Routledge, 3ième edition, 2013. p. 463.

et, dans ce cas-ci, même l'interchangeabilité des performances de la masculinité et de la féminité entre l'homme et la femme. Ce brouillement des corps de Roxane et de Janvier viendra même jusqu'à fourvoyer Martial dans sa perception de la réalité. Dans la séquence qui relate l'arrivée de Janvier à l'entrepôt de théâtre, la vue de son conjoint aux côtés de Roxane fera croire au gardien de prison qu'il est en train d'halluciner.

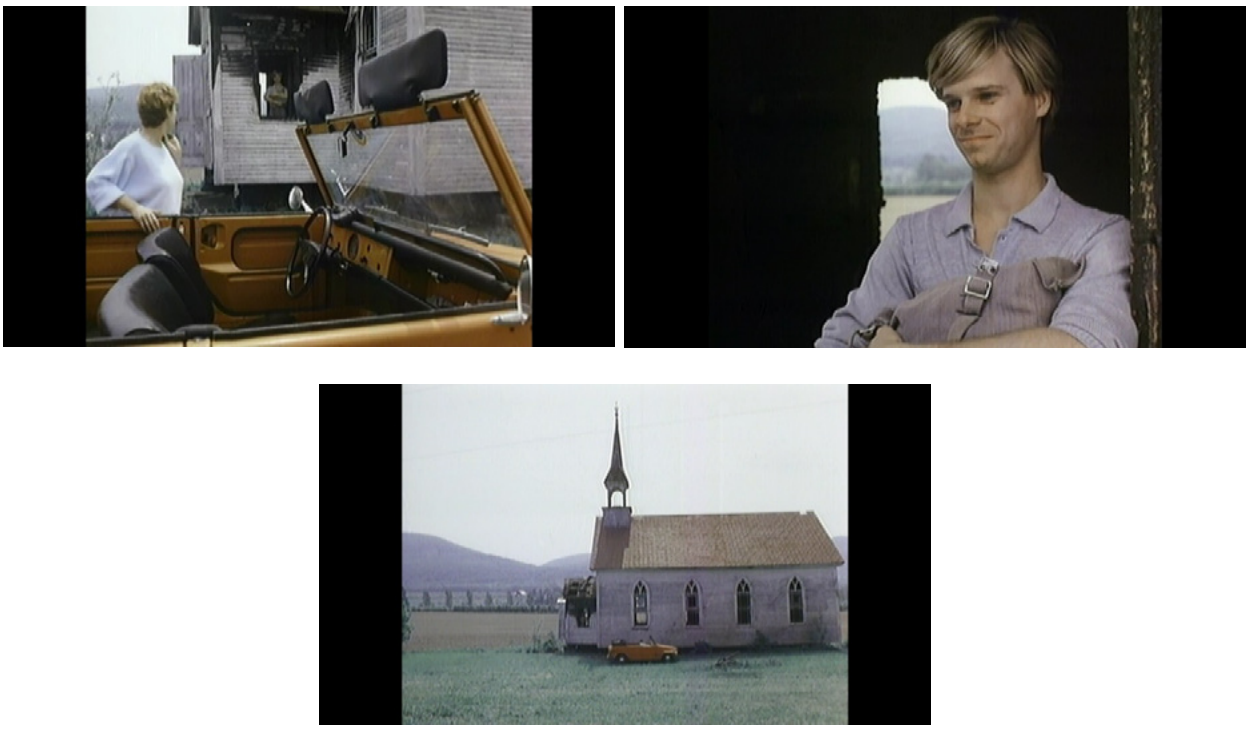
Scène 4 : La confusion de Martial

Cette séquence débute avec la première tentative de Martial de sortir du camion dans lequel il est reclus depuis le vol. La porte de l'entrepôt s'ouvre. On coupe alors à une prise à deux de Roxane qui entre dans la pièce suivie de près par Janvier. Les prises suivantes consistent en un montage rapide entre les visages de Martial, Janvier et

Roxane : on coupe à un plan moyen de Martial, puis à un plan moyen de Janvier qui appelle son conjoint. On revient à Martial, puis à Roxane et par la suite à Janvier. Martial semble de plus en plus confus par ce qu'il voit. Pour suggérer cette confusion de la part du gardien de prison face à la ressemblance entre les corps de Janvier et Roxane, le cinéaste alterne rapidement les prises créant un brouillement entre leur visage. On va même jusqu'à interchanger leur voix : on entend la voix de Roxane sortir de la bouche de Janvier et vice-versa. Martial, croyant sombrer dans la folie, rebrousse chemin et retourne rapidement s'enfermer dans son camion. Janvier tentera de le faire sortir, mais en vain : l'homme est convaincu d'halluciner la présence de Janvier sur le corps de Roxane.





Scène 5 : Séquence finale

La bande de brigands propose au gardien Martial de lui laisser la vie sauve à condition qu'il débarre la porte du camion. Ce dernier refuse de coopérer. Le tout se termine très mal pour la majorité des personnages : les gardiens de prison, les brigands, les policiers corrompus, tous y laisseront leur peau à l'exception de Roxane et Janvier qui réussiront à se sauver avec le butin. La scène finale, suivant la fusillade de l'entrepôt, débute avec un plan rapproché sur un contenant de verre emprisonnant un papillon de nuit, une main faisant résonner le verre à l'aide d'un couteau. On reconnait le couteau que Martial a offert à Janvier avant le vol. La caméra recule tranquillement nous dévoilant que cette main est celle de Roxane. Elle entend un bruit, saisit son couteau et le plante sur la table. Une main entre dans le cadre, dépose un journal et un pistolet, celui que Gildor avait donné en cadeau à Roxane. La main soulève le contenant de verre libérant ainsi le papillon. On coupe à une prise à deux, en plan moyen, nous révélant ainsi que cette main était celle de Janvier. Roxane et Janvier en sont même venus à interchanger leur cadeau offert par leur amant respectif. Ils échangent quelques informations. On comprend alors qu'il s'agit du lendemain de la fusillade et

que Roxane et Janvier ont réussi à s'enfuir. Roxane se lève, on coupe à un plan large. On découvre alors le lieu dans lequel elle se trouve. Comme la scène ne débute pas avec un plan d'ensemble, à première vue, ce décor de vieux bois et de vitraux nous rappelle l'entrepôt de théâtre. Les vitraux en forme d'arche nous informent que Janvier et Roxane sont plutôt dans une église abandonnée. La prochaine prise le confirme : après avoir partagé le butin avec Janvier, Roxane sort de l'église. L'image remplie de symboles (de l'entrée de l'église brûlée aux champs verts à perte de vue) suggère également que les deux protagonistes ont quitté la ville. Janvier observe Roxane de l'intérieur de l'église. Ils se sourient et se séparent.

En situant le dénouement de ce film dans une église brulée abandonnée, le cinéaste met en scène un relent de l'histoire du Québec. Le symbole de désuétude des ruines de l'église fait écho à une période post-Révolution tranquille, mais propose ici une inversion de l'exode rural associé à cette période. Roxane et Janvier quittent la métropole et trouvent refuge dans cette campagne. La caméra magnifie le paysage tandis que la musique englobant cette scène crée une atmosphère apaisante autour de cette église rurale. Il est clair ici que Simoneau propose une vision alternative de l'accès à la « modernité » de la société québécoise que plusieurs ont associé à cette séparation entre l'État et l'Église.

En gardant comme uniques survivants les personnages de Roxane et Janvier, Simoneau offre un dénouement rarement vu dans le cinéma québécois. Comme le souligne Thomas Waugh dans son texte « Ashes and Diamonds in the Year of the Queer » (1986), ce dénouement peut même sembler inédit pour le septième art à l'époque:

> [*Pouvoir intime*] includes film star Marie Tifo in a tomboyish part whose sex role reversal complements the refreshing nonstereotype design of the film. […] I can't resist mentioning the magically satisfying ending in which for the first time in film history the queer actually gets off with the loot.[19]

[19] Thomas Waugh, « Ashes and Diamonds in the Year of the Queer » *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema*, Duke University Press, 2000. p. 169.

Alors que Waugh soulignait quelques mois après la sortie de *Pouvoir intime* l'importante contribution du film à l'histoire du cinéma, quinze ans plus tard Bill Marshall, dans son livre *Quebec National Cinema* (2001), procède à une remise en contexte du rôle primordial de ce film pour la tradition du cinéma queer au Québec : « If there is little in Québec cinema that can approximate to the British and American New Queer Cinema of the early 1990s», affirme Marshall « a truly penetrating meditation on gender, sexuality, and nation can be found in Yves Simoneau's second feature, *Pouvoir intime* of 1986».[20]

Cette méditation entre genres, sexualité et nation, auquel fait référence Marshall, trouve tout à fait écho dans les lignes de pensée des *gender and nation*. Comme souligné plus tôt, l'un des concepts opératoires de cette théorie est que les mouvements nationalistes privilégient une identité genrée et sexuelle très précise (masculine et hétérosexuelle) au détriment des autres. Tamar Mayer dans son livre *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (2000) écrit « throughout the contemporary world these power systems [les différentes formes de nationalismes] generally reward heterosexual males and often punish women and gays ».[21] Dans *Pouvoir intime* c'est complètement le contraire. Ce sont les femmes et les gais qui sont récompensés et les hommes hétérosexuels qui périssent. À la lumière de cette citation, il semble indéniable que *Pouvoir intime* met en scène un discours sexuel à l'antithèse de celui proposé par les discours nationalistes de l'époque.

Postréférendaire versus syndrome postréférendaire

Les œuvres postréférendaires ne se résument pas uniquement aux films ayant mis en scène l'amertume de la défaite du Non, il s'agit simplement d'œuvres ayant pensé le référendum comme une scission ouvrant une nouvelle période (infortune ou non selon les positions). Dans *Le Déclin de l'empire américain*, Denys Arcand propose précisément une mise en image du syndrome postréférendaire. Le syndrome

[20] Bill Marshall, *Quebec National Cinema*, Montréal et Kingston, McGill et Queen University Press, 2001. p. 128.
[21] Tamar Mayer, *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, New York, Édition Routledge, 2000. p. 4.

postréférendaire est une des dimensions, une des visions que l'on peut avoir de la période postréférendaire. Comme le soulignait Véronneau, puisque la majorité des cinéastes québécois en 1980 affectionnait le projet nationaliste et que ceux-ci ont proposé des représentations de la société québécoise s'apparentant à ce qu'on a appelé le « syndrome postréférendaire », c'est cette vision de la période qui domine l' « histoire romancée », à laquelle fait référence White du cinéma québécois des années 1980.

De son côté, Simoneau met en scène cette « fin » d'une période que plusieurs ont associée à la « modernité québécoise » et propose plutôt la suite, le « post » comme une occasion de briser des barrières, de changer les codes et de proposer un modèle québécois plus inclusif. Pour toutes ces raisons, *Pouvoir intime* est un film postréférendaire bien inscrit dans son contexte de cinéma national de l'époque. Or, malgré son avant-gardisme sur plusieurs aspects, comme l'ont souligné Waugh, Marshall et Schwartzwald, il semble avoir été exclu de l'histoire romancée du cinéma national québécois, et ce, pour les raisons bien précises que j'ai soulignées ci-haut.

Conclusion

Plusieurs ont souligné le caractère problématique quant à la représentation du personnage de Claude, l'homme homosexuel et de certaines femmes dans *Le Déclin de l'empire américain.*[22] À la lumière de ces constats, si l'on considère l'immense popularité du *Déclin de l'empire américain*, autant du point de vue du public que de sa place dans les ouvrages historiques québécois comparativement à la réception de

[22] À titre d'exemple, mentionnons une citation de Thomas Waugh quant au personnage masculin homosexuel et à l'un des personnages féminins hétérosexuels : « No one knows what to make of Arcand's giving the gay character an AIDS-like non-AIDS illness (he pisses a very dramatic toiletful of blood early in the picture) […] Many feminists have had similar reservations about Arcand's rendering the woman part-time lecturer as a masochist (played by the very unsubmissive rock singer, Louise Portal).» dans « Ashes and Diamonds in the Year of the Queer *: Decline of the American Empire, Anne Trister, A Virus Knows no Morals*, and *Man of Ashes*» (2000, 168).

Pouvoir intime,[23] il est tout à fait possible de tirer des constats quant à la version privilégiée à l'époque du lien entre sexe et nation dans le cinéma québécois et sa société. *Pouvoir intime* fait partie de l'histoire des œuvres avant-gardistes ayant défriché des chemins moins évidents pour l'époque dans laquelle elles s'inscrivaient. Or, trente ans plus tard, il est temps de rendre ses pellicules de noblesse à un film qui, dans sa mise en scène des identités genrées et sexuelles, en éclairera encore plusieurs.

Par le biais de ce texte, nous avons tenté de proposer différentes pistes pouvant expliquer l'omission de *Pouvoir intime* dans l'histoire romancée du cinéma québécois. En prenant en considération le contexte particulier du cinéma québécois des années 1980, son inscription dans la tradition du film noir, et une analyse filmique pointue de la mise en scène des identités genrées et sexuelles, il a été démontré que *Pouvoir intime* offre une vision à nulle autre seconde du lien entre discours sexuel et question nationale en période « postréférendaire ».

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[23] Selon mes recherches, ce film n'a jamais été distribué en DVD. La seule copie disponible pour visionnement public à Montréal réside à la Cinémathèque québécoise. Nous souhaitons d'ailleurs remercier le co-scénariste et acteur du film Pierre Curzi pour le prêt de sa copie personnelle.

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Filmographie

Le Déclin de l'empire américain. Réalisation: Denys Arcand, 1986, DVD, 102 min.

Pouvoir intime. Réalisation: Yves Simoneau, 1986, DVD, 85 min.

SYNOPTIQUE

Conceptualizing Quebec National Cinema: Denys Arcand's Cycle of Post-Referendum Films as Case Study

By David Hanley

Over the past half century, Quebec cinema has grown from small beginnings into an industry that regularly produces feature films that win critical recognition and festival prizes around the globe. At the same time, it is one of the few places in the world where local products can occasionally outdraw Hollywood blockbusters at the box office. This essay analyzes the Quebec film industry, examines what types of films it produces and for what audiences, and explores the different ways domestic and international audiences understand its films. The pioneer figure in introducing Quebec cinema to mainstream audiences beyond the province is writer-director Denys Arcand. His cycle of films dealing with the failure of his generation to achieve independence for Quebec offers both a paradigm of a type of film newly important to the Quebec industry, and a case study in explaining how and why certain films cross borders into foreign markets.

Of particular interest in this essay are Arcand's *Le déclin de l'empire américain* (1986), *Jésus de Montréal* (1989) and *Les invasions barbares* (2003), all of which had successful commercial releases in international markets, including the United States, a rare occurrence for a Quebec film. One reason this international popularity is of interest is that the films' politics, central to their narratives, were and are controversial in Quebec. However, this political aspect is largely invisible to non-Quebec audiences, who appreciate the films for their other qualities, a tendency that can be seen in a handful of recent Quebec films that have also received international commercial distribution.

This essay examines Quebec film releases and box office returns to establish the existence of a largely Montreal-based industry that annually produces a group of

French-language films, some of which are very popular in its domestic market, and whose share of that market grew impressively in the early 2000s. This leads to the question of what kind of industry is making these films. Is it a national cinema? If so, what are the components of this national cinema? Does it produce different kinds of films? If so, do they have different rationales for financing and are they made for different audiences? How are these films received outside of the province? This essay uses rival concepts of national cinema to examine these questions and to distinguish the difference between Quebec's French-language cinema and the cinema (or cinemas) of the rest of the country. Having discussed Quebec cinema as an industry and as a national cinema, this essay then pursues an auteurist analysis of a series of films made by writer-director Denys Arcand which examine the province and Arcand's generation following the failure of the nationalist option in the 1980 referendum on Quebec independence. This cycle of films provides a case study of the evolution of Quebec cinema over the past few decades. Arcand's films can be seen as examples of what Bill Marshall calls "mass-audience-friendly auteur cinema," a type of Quebec film whose numbers expanded rapidly in the 2000s. Further, of these films which combine elements of both popular and art cinema, Arcand's "referendum cycle" offers clues as to why some, but only some, have been able to secure international commercial distribution.

Quebec Cinema as a National Cinema

The first problem with conceptualizing Quebec cinema as a national cinema is raised by Toby Miller, who asks: "When we are told a national cinema exists, does that mean it is produced in a particular country or that it is the cinema mostly watched in that country?"[1] This is relevant because Quebec's screens are dominated by Hollywood releases, which accounted for 75% of box office receipts in 2009 and 83% in 2010.[2] In the latter year, the Hollywood blockbuster *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009) was such a runaway hit in the province that it earned more money at the box office than all the

[1] Toby Miller, "National Cinema Abroad: The International Division of Cultural Labor, from Production to Viewing," in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Natasa Durovicova and Kathleen Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 143.
[2] Brendan Kelly, "Hollywood Totally Dominating Quebec Box Office," *The Montreal Gazette*, January 16, 2011, accessed April 26, 2014, http://blogs.montrealgazette.com/2011/01/16/hollywood-totally-dominating-quebec-box-office/.

Quebec films made that year combined.[3] Still, the roughly 20% of the domestic market that Quebec films earned annually since 2000, peaking at 26% in 2005,[4] is very respectable in the face of Hollywood hegemony, although this became less true after this share dropped sharply to 10% in 2011 and then to 5% in 2012.[5]

Despite this worrying drop in box office share, the progress of Quebec cinema can be measured by noting that while only two films sold at least 100,000 tickets in 2000, in every year but one between 2001 and 2011, at least five films reached that mark, peaking at eleven films in 2004. The one exception is 2006, when the bilingual comedy *Bon Cop Bad Cop* (Érik Canuel, 2006) drew over 1.3 million customers by itself.[6] Even in a disastrous year like 2012, when not a single Quebec film dented the year's domestic top ten for the first time since the 1990s, there were still three films passing the 100,000-ticket mark.[7] There was a minor improvement in 2013, when again three films sold 100,000 tickets and *Louis Cyr* (Daniel Roby, 2013), a period biography of the legendary Quebec strongman, made Quebec's box office top ten by drawing nearly half a million customers and earning over $4 million.[8] This has not (yet) turned out to be the start of a sustained commercial revival, but films are still being produced, many of high quality, and every year at least a few achieve wide domestic exposure. Given this, it is

[3] Kelly, "Hollywood"; Charles-Henri Ramond, "Page Box Office des Films Québécois," *Films du Québec*, accessed April 25, 2014, http://www.filmsquebec.com/box-office-des-films-quebecois/.
[4] Pierre Véronneau, "Genres and Variations: The Audiences of Quebec Cinema," in *Self Portraits: The Cinemas of Canada since Telefilm*, eds. André Loiselle and Tom McSorley, (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 2006), 117. Bill Marshall offers alternate figures in "Quebec Cinema 2005," pegging the domestic box office percentage of Quebec films as closer to 12%, which remains an impressive increase over their 1990s box office share. Unfortunately, he does not provide the source of his figures, but it at least raises a warning flag concerning Véronneau's numbers. Bill Marshall, "Quebec Cinema 2005," *Vertigo* 2.9 (2005), accessed February 24, 2016. http://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-2-issue-9-autumn-winter-2005/quebec-cinema-2005/
[5] Elizabeth Lepage-Boily, "Box-office québécois 2012: Pire performance du cinéma québécois depuis 10 ans," *Actualité*, January 8, 2013, accessed April 26, 2014, http://www.cinoche.com/actualites/box-office-quebecois-2012-pire-performance-du-cinema-qubcois-depuis-10-ans/index.html.
[6] Ramond, "Page box office."
[7] Ibid. It should be noted that while Hollywood takes by far the largest share of Quebec's cinema box office, Quebec television has traditionally been dominated by domestic product, which partly accounts for the development of a local star system. See: Bill Marshall, *Quebec National Cinema* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 288.
[8] Ibid.

possible to describe Quebec's film output as that of a mature national cinema with an established domestic audience.

There are some obvious limits to this essay. While my focus on box office earnings confines this discussion to theatrical feature films, a significant proportion of the cinema produced in the province consists of documentaries, short films, animation, experimental work, and, of course, television. These types of productions may involve different expectations regarding audiences and possibly significantly different rationales for funding decisions. Further, this analysis does not deal with First Nations or English-language productions, even those made by Arcand, seeing them as falling outside of this essay's definition of Quebec national cinema.

Much of the writing about Quebec as a national cinema has been concerned with justifying its claim of distinctiveness from English-Canadian cinema. Writing in the wake of the second failed referendum on Quebec sovereignty in 1995, Bill Marshall asserted that "Quebec certainly is a nation and has a national cinema,"[9] while William Beard and Jerry White declared their support for a "'two national cinemas' theory of Canadian cinema."[10] Central to both Marshall and Beard and White's conception of Quebec cinema's distinctiveness is that its distinguishing characteristic is not only that it is produced in Quebec, but that it is also in French. It is an explicit rejection of the idea of a "coherent Canadian national self, composed of English and French elements" as naïve (Pierre) Trudeau-era federalist rhetoric.[11]

Of course, the idea that Quebec national cinema is a French-language cinema is contested. As Pierre Véronneau points out, the term "cinéma québécois" can have varied meanings: "For some it meant a 'cinema made in Quebec,' for others a 'French-

[9] Bill Marshall, *Quebec National Cinema*, x.
[10] William Beard and Jerry White, "Introduction," in *North of Everything: English-Canadian Cinema since 1980*, eds. William Beard and Jerry White (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002), xviii.
[11] Ibid.

speaking cinema,' and for others still a 'cinema expressing the culture of Quebec.'"[12] In fact, the Quebec film industry is extremely varied. It includes foreign "runaway productions" (typically, but not exclusively, from Hollywood), which often use local crews and actors. There is a great deal of First Nations media production, particularly in the areas of documentary, TV and short films, as well as effectively bilingual productions like *Bon Cop Bad Cop*, *French Immersion* (Kevin Tierney, 2011) and *Funkytown* (Daniel Roby, 2011), which filmmakers hoped (vainly, for the most part) would appeal to both French and English audiences. The province also has a long tradition of English-language filmmaking, going back to Gordon Sparling in the 1930s through to work by a varied group of filmmakers that includes Arthur Lipsett, Paul Almond, Ted Kotcheff, David Cronenberg, Robin Spry, Cynthia Scott, and, more recently, Jacob Tierney. There are even Francophone filmmakers, such as Maurice Devereaux, or even Denys Arcand himself with *Stardom* (2000), who have made films in English. Indeed, even if Quebec cinema is defined narrowly as only films produced in Quebec and in French by Francophone filmmakers, it is impossible to pretend there is no interaction with all the other cinemas going on around it.

This is at the heart of Andrew Higson's argument that the concept of national cinema captures neither the "internal diversity of contemporary cultural formations" nor the "overlaps and interpenetrations between different formations."[13] For Higson, the concept constructs artificial, and often essentialist, categories which ignore the degree of cultural migration that occurs routinely in our globalized world and the extent to which cinema has always been a transnational industry. While Jerry White agrees with Higson that the national cinema label is typically used prescriptively rather than descriptively, privileging films that further a nationalist project and in this way distorting the reality of what films are actually being made, he still argues that, as an analytical tool, the term national cinema "remains a potentially useful lens through which to look at a diverse body of

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[12] Pierre Véronneau, "Introduction," in *Self Portrait: Essays on the Canadian and Quebec Cinemas*, eds. Piers Handling and Pierre Véronneau (Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 1980), xi-xii.

[13] Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 63.

work."[14] What is needed is specificity about what types of films constitute this body of work.

White writes that "films are a part of a given national cinema because of what they *are*, not because of what they *do*."[15] That is, a film does not have to engage with national themes or questions of identity. Any film produced by a "nation" is part of its national cinema, regardless of its content. However, White does not believe that all cinema produced in Quebec is necessarily part of Quebec national cinema. For example, he considers First Nations productions to be part of North American Aboriginal cinema, work that is "linked by a sense of non-geographically contiguous national belonging."[16] While White does not specifically address the question of the status of English-language films made in Quebec, he does write that the presence of a shared "national identity" is "crucial" for the existence of a national cinema.[17] Given his earlier assertion that the lack of a "coherent Canadian national self, composed of English and French elements" precluded the inclusion of Quebec cinema as part of Canadian national cinema, then it is difficult to see him claiming English-language films as part of a coherent *Québécois* national cinema. Similarly, while Bill Marshall sees the province's English-speaking minority as part of the Quebec nation, it is as an unassimilated "national minority" distinct from the majority "on which the Quebec nation is based."[18] Therefore, while there is an "important anglophone Quebec cinema," it would be a "conceptual error" to include it as part of Quebec national cinema because "it is above all the French language which represents the distinctness of Quebec."[19] In addition, French-language films face greater difficulty in accessing the lucrative U.S. market than those in English, and this has a significant influence on what kinds of films are made in Quebec.

[14] Jerry White, "National Belonging: Renewing the Concept of National Cinema for a Global Culture," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 2.2 (2004): 220.
[15] White, "National Belonging," 212. Author's italics.
[16] White, 225.
[17] White, 224.
[18] Marshall, *Quebec National Cinema*, x.
[19] Ibid.

While Marshall uses national cinema in what White would consider a descriptive way, surveying all types of the province's French-language feature films, he is more concerned with how themes in Quebec films relate to the questions posed by the evolving nature of a distinct Quebec national identity than he is by how the *types* of films made situates the film industry in terms of other national cinemas. However, he does offer a useful typology, dividing the bulk of Quebec's output into "auteur cinema" and "popular cinema," while suggesting that space had opened up for "a more mass-audience-friendly auteur cinema."[20] While auteur and popular films are each the subject of a chapter in his book, Marshall spends little time on the third category. This may be because at the time he was writing, in the late 1990s, Quebec cinema's share of its domestic box office was still less than 4%,[21] and there were not that many of these types of films. Nor does Marshall show much interest in the question of what types of films can achieve commercial success outside of the province. This may be partly due to his focus on defending Quebec cinema's status as a national cinema, but also because, with the exception of *Le déclin de l'empire américain* and *Jésus de Montréal*, there were not any border-crossing French-language Quebec films to talk about at the time.[22] The increasing visibility of "auteur" films that achieve box office success in Quebec and at least some international distribution, a phenomenon that relatively little has been written about, can be seen as a marker of how Quebec cinema has since matured.

While Stephen Crofts does not offer an equivalent to Marshall's concept of commercial-friendly auteur cinema, he does theorize an analytical framework that identifies types of national cinemas that in some ways fills the gaps in Marshall's typology.[23] White has

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[20] Marshall, *Quebec National Cinema*, 176. Marshall points to Denys Arcand and, less convincingly, Jean Beaudin as examples.
[21] Marshall, 15.
[22] Marshall, 176. Marshall does say the logical extension of an international commercial strategy is to shoot films in English, and several English-language films made in Quebec did achieve international commercial success during this period. However, not being French-language films, they fall outside of his definition of Quebec cinema.
[23] Stephen Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," in *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 27. Crofts' categories of national cinema are: 1) European-style art cinema; 2) Third cinema; 3) Cinema intended solely for local

criticized Crofts' model for "boiling down each national cinema to a sustained set of formal and thematic concerns," inevitably leading to essentialist pigeonholing that radically distorts the realities of those cinemas.[24] White cites a number of national cinemas (Indian, South Korean, etc.) that contain almost all of Crofts' categories, suggesting that this renders them inadequate when distinguishing between national cinemas. However, while conceding White's point that national cinemas are never a single unified type, but are inevitably a combination of the types of cinema practices Crofts identifies (European-style art cinema, films intended primarily for local audiences, English-language imitations of Hollywood, etc.), these categories can still be useful in analyzing the types of films that make up a national cinema, as well as in contrasting them with other cinemas that contain a different combination of categories.

Crofts identifies Quebec as the best known example of a regional or ethnic cinema that is a distinctive sub-category of a larger national cinema, in this case Canadian national cinema.[25] A weakness in Crofts' concept of Quebec cinema is that while there are important connections between Canada's English- and French-language cinemas, there are also important distinctions. Even in the Quebec film industry's off year of 2012, the meager 4.4% of domestic box office taken by Quebec films was in a different league than the less than 1% Canadian films, including those from Quebec, received in the rest of the country.

An illustration of arguably the key difference between the film industry in Quebec and the rest of Canada is offered by *Louis Cyr*. It earned $4.1 million at the domestic box office, the most a Quebec film has earned since 2009. But this was nowhere near enough to cover its $8 million budget, and with little prospect of distribution outside the

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markets; 4) Cinemas that "ignore Hollywood" and rely on their own established and substantial distribution networks; 5) English-language cinemas that offer "pallid imitations" of Hollywood; 6) Entirely state-controlled and state-subsidized cinemas; and 7) "Regional or national cinemas whose culture and/or language take their distance from the nation-states which enclose them."

[24] White, "National Belonging", 216. To be fair, White slightly distorts Crofts' argument, since Crofts does write that these categories are "highly permeable" and that Indian national cinema, for example, contains three of his categories (Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," 27).

[25] Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," 38.

province, it is unlikely it ever will.[26] However, because of generous government subsidies, the film's producers did not lose money. This suggests that while Quebec funding agencies apparently believe it is a social good for Quebeckers to see themselves on screen, funders in the rest of the country seem to believe that if a film is any good, it should pay for itself.

There are other differences, including the centralization of Quebec's film industry in Montreal, a homegrown star system, and a reliable distribution network which allows for access to cinemas for films deemed commercial. For example, TV crime show spinoff *Omertà* (Luc Dionne, 2012) played on 98 screens across the province, not that many less than most Hollywood imports.[27] These all argue for the consideration of Quebec cinema as more than an ethnic subgenre of Canadian cinema. Even in terms of Crofts' typology, it has a very good claim to be considered a national cinema in its own right rather than as a subgenre of Canadian cinema. At the very least, it should be considered the most mature and largest component of a number of cinemas loosely associated under the label "Canadian cinema."

In spite of this weakness, Crofts' typology is useful in describing the types of films made, and not made, in Quebec. Designating the use of French as a defining characteristic of Quebec cinema, which both Marshall, Beard and White and, at least implicitly, Crofts, do, precludes its inclusion among English-language national cinemas (such as English Canada's) that produce low-budget imitations of Hollywood genre films. These films, hoping not so much to compete with Hollywood product as be mistaken for it, are distinguished from both art and populist cinemas by their elimination of indigenous markers of identity, what Crofts calls a "blithe bleaching-out of domestic cultural specificity."[28] This categorization highlights a distinction between English Canadian popular cinema, often made with the intent of cracking the U.S. market, and

[26] Charles-Henri Ramond, "Entrées en salles des films québécois de 2013," *Films du Québec*, accessed May 5, 2015, http://www.filmsquebec.com/entrees-en-salles-films-quebecois-2013/ .
[27] Ramond, "Page Box Office."
[28] Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," 37.

Quebec popular cinema, which government subsidy allows filmmakers to focus on the small domestic audience.

Quebec produces many examples of European-style art cinema, which Crofts defines as films which do not compete directly with Hollywood, either in domestic cinemas, where they lack popular appeal, or in foreign markets, where they receive limited release on the niche "arthouse" circuit.[29] This model seeks to "differentiate itself textually from Hollywood" through formal elements such as psychological characterization, ambiguity and non-linear or fractured narrative. They also assert "national" elements, which qualifies them for state subsidy regardless of commercial prospects, because they are seen as cultural standard bearers.[30]

Quebec's art film tradition dates back to the 1960s, and continues with recent critically praised but commercially marginal films such as *Curling* (Denis Côté, 2010), and *En terrains connus* (Stéphane Lafleur, 2011), both of which sold roughly 6,000 tickets in Quebec.[31] In spite of never coming close to earning back their production budgets, the cultural capital and prestige earned by critical success and festival awards seems to be satisfactory for funding agencies, as the films' directors received subsidies for later projects.

What Marshall calls mass cinema fits Crofts' category of local "entertainment cinemas that struggle against Hollywood" in their home markets.[32] Like art films, these productions emphasize local qualities, but unlike them, they are genre-oriented and populist. They are non-exportable, because they don't fit the festival and arthouse circuit model. That is, a film like *Curling* may have local references incomprehensible to foreign audiences, but can still be appreciated by them for its formal qualities. However, the local references that make films attractive in their own market are packaged in

[29] Crofts, 27-28.
[30] Crofts, 28.
[31] Ramond, "Page Box Office."
[32] Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," 27.

Hollywood-type narratives, but made for a fraction of a typical Hollywood budget and featuring performers who are local "stars," but virtually unknown outside the province.

These films are the mainstay of Quebec's French-language industry. Among the most popular are lowbrow comedies like *De père en flic* (Émile Gaudreault, 2009), the durably popular *Les Boys* series of hockey comedies (five films and counting, plus a TV series, between 1997 and 2013) and, of course, *Bon Cop Bad Cop*. There are also spin-offs of popular TV series like *Omertà*, seedy action thrillers like *Nitro* (Alain Desrochers, 2007) and torn-from-the-local-headlines docudramas such as *Piché: entre ciel et terre* (Sylvain Archambault, 2010). A notable recent trend is the series of biopics of iconic Quebec figures, including *Maurice Richard* (Charles Binamé, 2005), Alys Robi (in *Ma vie en cinémascope* [Denise Filiatrault, 2004]), and 2013's hit *Louis Cyr*. There are also remakes of 1940s rural melodramas such as *Séraphin: Un homme et son péché* (Charles Binamé, 2002) and *Aurore* (Luc Dionne, 2005) which, like many of the biopics, show an odd nostalgia for a time of hardship and struggle, often expressed through the physical suffering of the protagonists, perhaps because the need for social cohesion and, by implication, Quebec independence, seems more clearcut in these contexts.[33] These films compete directly against product from Hollywood in Quebec cinemas, and while they usually do less well than the bigger budgeted imports, they do a better job than many local industries of holding a share of their domestic audience.

Both Crofts and Marshall suggest that a characteristic of art cinema is the presence of formal experimentation or narrative ambiguity to distinguish it from Hollywood cinema. However, this exposes a gap in their typologies. For example, while Arcand is rarely formally innovative, his films clearly have higher ambitions than, say, the *Les Boys* series or *Aurore*. Other Quebec films that seem to fall into this niche include *La grande séduction* (2003, Jean-François Pouliot), *Un dimanche à Kigali* (Robert Favreau, 2006), *Incendies* (2010, Denis Villeneuve), *Starbuck* (Ken Scott, 2011), *Inch'Allah* (Anaïs Barbeau-Lavalette, 2012) and *Monsieur Lazhar*. Like Arcand's work, these films are

[33] Liz Czach, "The Quebec Heritage Film." Paper presented at SCMS 2015, Montreal, QC, March 29, 2015.

less reliant on crowd pleasing formula elements such as familiar genre tropes, archetypal characters, subject matter lifted from the tabloids, local references (including jokes incomprehensible to non-Quebeckers), action sequences and pratfall humour, but also tend to lack the narrative ambiguity and stylistic experiments associated with art films. This is not to say these elements are always absent, even in Arcand's work, only that these films do not comfortably fit into the categories of either art or populist cinema as defined by Marshall and Crofts. The fact that there are an increasing number of films like this being produced in Quebec, and that these films might have a far greater chance of tapping into a wider audience outside of the province than is possible for films confined to the arthouse and festival circuit, or those films simply deemed unexportable, argues for a more nuanced typology when describing the Quebec film industry.

Denys Arcand as Auteur

One way of developing this more nuanced typology is to examine in depth the evolution of the way Arcand's films have fared internationally. Because his films are in French, they tended to be "recycled" by distributors, transformed from popular-art hybrids into straightforward art cinema when they crossed into the U.S. market, a fate typical of non-English language films searching for an American audience. For example, when *Le déclin de l'empire américain* was released in 1986, it won the FIPRESCI Prize at Cannes and the People's Choice Award (and Best Canadian Film prize) at Toronto. In Quebec, it ran for a full year and not only broke the record for box office takings by a local film previously held by *Deux femmes en or* (Claude Fournier, 1970), it even passed *E.T.* (Stephen Spielberg, 1982) as the most popular draw in Quebec history up to that time.[34] The film also earned $1 million in the rest of Canada, a record for a Quebec film until it was broken by Arcand's *Jésus de Montréal* in 1989.[35] In France, it was one of the top five box office draws of 1987, earning $10 million and becoming a cult film, running continuously in one Paris cinema until 1993.[36] In the United States, it was picked up by the independent distributor Cineplex Odeon and had an eighteen-

[34] André Loiselle, *Denys Arcand's* Le déclin de l'empire américain *and* Les invasions barbares (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 25.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Loiselle, *Denys Arcand's* Le déclin de l'empire américain *and* Les invasions barbares, 26.

week run during which it received excellent reviews and became the first Canadian film nominated for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar.[37] It played on up to a maximum of thirteen screens in the U.S. and earned $1.1 million.[38] Yet compare this to *Porky's* (Bob Clark, 1981), an English-Canadian comedy that perfectly fits Crofts' definition of a pallid imitation of Hollywood product, which had a twenty-four week run and reached a distribution peak of 1,605 screens across the U.S.[39] In France, *Le déclin* had been a mainstream hit, but in the U.S. it was clearly confined to the arthouse circuit.

Arcand's next film, *Jésus de Montréal*, won the Jury and Ecumenical Prizes at Cannes and had successful runs in Quebec and the rest of Canada, becoming the first Quebec film to be picked up by a major U.S. distributor, Orion Classics.[40] Like *Le déclin*, it received excellent reviews and an Oscar nomination. Even so, its exposure peaked at twenty-one screens,[41] and while its $1.6 million gross was excellent for an arthouse release, it still could not be described as the mainstream hit it was in Canada and France.[42]

Les invasions barbares had a slightly different trajectory. It made over $5 million in Quebec and won prizes for director and actress at Cannes. It earned another $7.9 million in France,[43] where it became the only Canadian film to win the César (France's equivalent of the Oscar) for Best Film. It then topped this by becoming the only Canadian film to win the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Distributed by Miramax, it broke out of the arthouse ghetto and reached a release peak of 134 screens while earning $3.5 million in an 18 week run. This is, of course, a fraction of the screens taken

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[37] *Le déclin de l'empire américain*, *Jésus de Montréal* and *Les invasions barbares* were the first three Canadian films to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.
[38] Bernard Bérubé and Richard Magnan, "La distribution des films québécois aux États-Unis," *Cinémas* 7.3 (1997): 46-48.
[39] Bérubé and Magnan, "La distribution des films québécois aux États-Unis," 38; "Porky's," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed August 5, 2015, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=porkys.htm.
[40] Bérubé and Magnan, "La distribution des films québécois," 36.
[41] "Jesus of Montreal," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed April 26, 2014, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=jesusofmontreal.htm.
[42] Bérubé and Magnan, "La distribution des films québécois," 47.
[43] "Les invasions barbares," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed April 25, 2014, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=lesinvasionsbarbares.htm.

by a major studio blockbuster release, and well short even of *Porky's*. Its release pattern was more similar to that of *Once* (John Carney, 2006), the Oscar-winning independent Irish film that peaked at 150 screens.[44] This was still a much wider release than Arcand's earlier films had received.

This pattern has found a recent echo, with *Incendies* being picked up by Sony Classics in 2010 and reaching 90 screens in the U.S., while Music Box Films distributed *Monsieur Lazhar* the following year to 86 screens. Both films snagged Oscar nominations and earned over $2 million in the U.S.[45] While these are hardly blockbuster figures, the breadth of distribution suggests these films have gone beyond the arthouse circuit and are competing, if not in the mainstream U.S. film market, at least with the better known independent domestic films.

The local cultural markers that Crofts claims are characteristic of both art and populist cinema are present in these recent Quebec films, which have strong political resonances in the province. However, they are largely contextual. That is, unlike a film such as *Maurice Richard*, whose narrative almost entirely consists of culturally specific sports and political references, the narratives of films like *Les invasions barbares, La grande séduction, Incendies* and *Monsieur Lazhar* are more universal and abstract, and their political meanings arise largely through the knowledge that the spectator brings to the cinema of the social and cultural context in which they were made. This paradox is particularly interesting in the case of Denys Arcand, whose films have specific, and often very controversial, meanings in Quebec which often sail over the heads of audiences outside of the province.

Although Arcand would make any reasonable list of Quebec auteurs, he is not an auteur in the original sense of an artist who has produced a body of work with a consistent

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[44] "Once," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed April 25, 2014, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=once.htm.
[45] Incendies," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed April 25, 2014, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=incendies.htm; "Monsieur Lazhar," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed April 25, 2014, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=monsieurlazhar.htm.

visual style and uses his control of *mise-en-scène* to express his worldview. His films tend to look quite different from each other, making it difficult to describe him as a visual stylist. However, it is possible to trace some visual characteristics, particularly in his contrasting treatment of Quebec's urban and rural landscapes. While his work from the 1970s tends to look a little rougher than his later films, arguably a matter of budget and experience as much as anything else, Arcand's urban landscapes throughout tend to be anonymous and unmemorable. The few occasions when they are not, as in the view from the office of the lawyer-Satanic tempter in *Jésus de Montréal* or the reinvention of the Olympic Stadium as bureaucratic hell in *L'âge des ténèbres* (2007), the intention is either negative or satiric. On the other hand, it is possible to relate his increasingly gorgeously photographed and romanticized portrayals of Quebec's countryside, climaxing with Rémy's death in *Les invasions barbares* and Jean-Marc's epiphany in *L'âge des ténèbres*, to his increasingly pessimistic view of the Quebec constructed by its urban elite.

A stronger claim for Arcand as an auteur is based on his role as writer or co-writer on many of his projects, for he often returns to the same ideas and themes. This is particularly true of a series of films beginning with the documentary *Le confort et l'indifférence* (1981) that engage directly with the question of Quebec independence, and take on semi-autobiographical meanings as they specifically deal with the failure of Arcand's generation to achieve its historical project and the consequences of this for the province. What makes this cycle of films particularly interesting in this discussion is Arcand's use of the failure to achieve independence as a structuring absence that informs all the actions portrayed. It is this means of engagement with the issue that makes his films both intensely local and politically specific on one hand, but simultaneously universal and abstract enough on the other to make them exportable worldwide in a way that was unique, but has since been followed by a handful of films, with potential for more in the future.

While it is possible to find recurring themes and ideas running through all of Arcand's films, even those he did not write, this discussion is specifically concerned with *Le*

déclin de l'empire américain, *Jésus de Montréal*, *Vue d'ailleurs* (1991), *Les invasions barbares* and *L'âge des ténèbres*, as they are the films that present an evolving portrait of Arcand's own class and generation, leaders of Quebec society who abandoned Roman Catholicism for the new religion of nationalism, only to find themselves lost and bewildered in the aftermath of the failed 1980 referendum, and sketches out the consequences for the province of his generation's failings. This discussion will touch on some of Arcand's earlier films to the extent that they engage with subject matter which becomes centrally important in his post-referendum cycle. However, this excludes consideration of the post-1980 films *Le crime d'Ovide Plouffe* (1984) and *Joyeux calvaire* (1996) because they lack the autobiographical flavour that comes with Arcand's focus on bourgeois boomers like himself, and the English-language films *Love and Human Remains* (1993) and *Stardom*, which fall out of the conversation not only for that reason, but also because their use of English removes the language barrier that affects international distribution of French-language films and, beyond that, leaves them outside this essay's definition of Quebec national cinema.

Because of the generational and autobiographical aspect of Arcand's referendum films, some biographical and historical information is useful in understanding his work. Arcand was born in 1941, and raised at a time when Quebec was immersed in a deeply conservative ethos built around a defensive nationalism. The passive acceptance of injustice and exploitation as long as it allowed for the survival of Roman Catholic and French-speaking Quebeckers as a people is an idea that Arcand has treated as central to the province's character. This reactionary ideology found expression in a handful of Quebec films made during the late 1940s and early 1950s, notably *La petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre* (Jean-Yves Bigras, 1952) and *Un homme et son péché* (Paul Gury, 1949), popular low-budget tales of rural suffering endured stoically in the hope of a better life in the next world.

Arcand's generation, particularly urban intellectuals like himself, was very much identified with the Quiet Revolution, a secularization of society which followed the election of a Liberal government in Quebec in 1960 after a long spell of conservative

rule. Having rejected the reactionary mores of the Roman Catholic Church and the defensive nationalism associated with it, many members of Arcand's generation embraced both leftist politics and a more assertive articulation of Quebec Francophone identity which between them they believed would leave Quebec less open to the economic exploitation that they claimed characterized the province before 1960. This new type of nationalism would come to embrace, in many cases, the goal of making Quebec an independent country. This goal was shared by Arcand and several of his fellow filmmakers at the federally funded National Film Board of Canada (NFB), where he began working in the early 1960s.

After spending several years "practicing" filmmaking on NFB documentaries whose content he did not control, Arcand was finally promised free rein on a documentary about Quebec's textile industry.[46] The title of *On est au coton* (1970-1976), literally translated, refers to the cotton used in textile mills; it is also a colloquial expression meaning "We're fed up!" However, while the textile industry at that time had among the worst paid workers and most miserable working conditions in the province, the documentary subjects were not nearly as fed up as the people filming them.[47] The result was less a leftist analysis of capitalist exploitation than an attack on the baffling passivity of Quebec's workers who declined to take up their part in the class struggle. The film was one of several at that time that ran into trouble with NFB management, who shelved it and only released an edited version in 1976, six years after it was finished, while a restored version was not publicly screened until 1994.[48]

After making one more documentary, Arcand left the NFB and made a trio of films that used genre tropes to critique Quebec society. The first of these, *La maudite galette* (1972), which can be roughly translated as "dirty loot," was a crime thriller about a lowlife couple who decide to rob their rich uncle with disastrous consequences that

[46] Pierre Véronneau, "Alone and with Others, Denys Arcand's Destiny within the Quebec Cinematic and Cultural Context," *Auteur/Provocateur: The Films of Denys Arcand*. Ed. André Loiselle and Brian McIlroy (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 14.
[47] Véronneau, "Alone and with Others," 15. As Pierre Véronneau writes, Arcand ended up "making a film, not about rebellion, but about resignation" (15).
[48] Loiselle, *Denys Arcand's* Le déclin de l'empire américain *and* Les invasions barbares, 5.

offered a sour commentary on materialism in Quebec society. As André Loiselle and Brian McIlroy point out, the film "divides the working class into parallel sub-classes that prey on one another but never envision the possibility of uniting against an extra-diegetic common enemy."[49] Arcand followed this with *Réjeanne Padovani* (1973), a topical exposé of political corruption in Montreal inspired by Suetonius' account of the decay of the Roman Empire, in which he mischievously cast lookalikes of then Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau and then Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa in key roles. As politicians, businessmen and Mafia types party into the night, the only sympathetic character (Luce Guilbeault in the title role as the ex-wife of a corrupt building contractor) is taken away and murdered. The attack on a decadent materialist society with no counterbalance except a soon-to-be-murdered woman and a handful of ineffective leftist protestors is even more downbeat than his previous work. Pierre Véronneau writes about this film that "Arcand exposes many things that should upset the spectator – corruption, crime, etc – but since, as he sees it, there really is no class struggle in Quebec, only exploiters and exploitees happy with their fate, there is no point in trying to change it. It is a politicized cinema minus the militant dimension."[50] His next film, *Gina* (1975), is a rape-revenge story which features a film crew giving up their leftist documentary on exploited workers in order to make something more commercial, a stripper (the title character) gang raped by locals in snowmobile outfits to the tune of "O Canada" on a motel television, and a gangster's gruesome revenge on the rapists. Critics were horrified, and the film was unfairly dismissed as a nihilist dead end whose unpopularity prevented Arcand from directing again for several years.

Arcand's next realized project as director was *Le confort et l'indifference*, a documentary examining the 1980 referendum on Quebec sovereignty. Arcand was a supporter of Quebec independence, and the electorate's decisive rejection of the watered down option of sovereignty-association was a profound shock.[51] In his film, Arcand offered an analysis, inspired by Machiavelli, which attributed the referendum

[49] André Loiselle and Brian McIlroy, "Introduction," *Auteur/Provocateur: The Films of Denys Arcand*. Ed. André Loiselle et al. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 3.
[50] Pierre Véronneau, "Alone and with Others," 19.
[51] Véronneau, 21.

defeat to Quebeckers' addiction to "comfort" (materialism) and "indifference" (apathy, or perhaps passivity). Arcand argued that Quebeckers were "spoiled by the crumbs of American wealth," and would therefore "never take the risk of losing whatever little they have in order to achieve some distant promise of freedom."[52] Some sovereignists have pronounced the film "brilliant,"[53] but nationalist intellectual and political commentator Lise Bissonnette wrote a scorching critique, calling it "an insulting film by intellectuals against the little people who voted NO" and claiming that Arcand "says to the people that they are stupid and cowardly and makes himself appear courageous for saying it."[54]

Whatever its shortcomings, *Le confort* is key to understanding Arcand's later work. In a 1982 interview, Arcand told *Le Devoir*: "I don't have dreams and I don't know many people who do. I don't see a dream for Quebec anymore."[55] For Arcand, the referendum loss killed the dream of a generation. He would soon be examining what a society without dreams looks like.

Arcand's Post-Referendum Film Cycle

Le déclin de l'empire américain is the definitive portrait of post-referendum Quebec, chronicling the disengagement from politics of Arcand's generation and its embrace of hedonism. There is no mention of the referendum, but this is a structuring absence that informs everything that takes place. Arcand once told an interviewer that "In Canada, nothing ever happens. Canada has always been on the margin of everything."[56] For Arcand, Quebeckers had an opportunity to make history in 1980, but instead voted to be Canadian, opting for the material benefits of being an appendage to the U.S. instead of

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[52] Véronneau, 13.
[53] Josée Legault, "Movie Says Much About Quebec Today," *The Montreal Gazette*, May 16, 2003, accessed April 23, 2014, http://www.vigile.net/archives/ds-actu/docs3/03-5-16-1.html#mgjl.
[54] Lise Bissonnette, "La vengeance et le mépris," *Le devoir*, January 30, 1982, 12; Lise Bissonnette, "Denys Arcand and 'Le confort et l'indifference.'" Trans. Ron Burnett. *Ciné-Tracts* 4.4 (1982), 74-76.
[55] La Rochelle, *Denys Arcand*, 19.
[56] André Loiselle, "I Only Know Where I Come From, Not Where I'm Going: A Conversation with Denys Arcand," in *Auteur/Provocateur: The Films of Denys Arcand*, ed. André Loiselle et al. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 154.

the certain risks and hypothetical rewards that might come with independence. As Loiselle argues:

> "[t]hese characters are rich and comfortable because they benefit from the wealth of America – they live 'off the crumbs of the American table.' Quebecers, like the rest of Canadians, are to Americans what the Etruscans were to the Romans: a marginal parasitic nation that could profit from the wealth of the neighbouring empire."[57]

This sense of choosing to be peripheral to history is reinforced by the film's idea that when empires decay, the rot begins at the extremities.

A closer analysis of *Le déclin* reveals how precise a portrait Arcand provides of post-referendum Quebec. The film opens with a history professor explaining her theory that in virile societies people are willing to make sacrifices and defer happiness for the common good. Individual gratification only becomes a priority when a society begins to fail; therefore personal happiness is inevitably linked to decline. Again, nobody in the film brings up the question of Quebec sovereignty, but, as Loiselle writes, "[t]he pulverization of the dominant nationalist narrative triggered a multiplicity of other priorities among the population of Quebec, including a great fervor for personal 'comfort.'"[58] Quebec audiences in 1986 would have had no trouble coming up with an example of a society that had given up a collective dream and was now focusing on individual desires.

Yet while the film has fun with its characters' sexual activities, Arcand has described hedonism as "a dead end" that "leads nowhere."[59] For all their incessant talk of sex, the characters seem to get relatively little pleasure from it, and require ever more extreme behaviour to achieve a sexual frisson, from sleeping with each other's partners to attending swinger's clubs for sex with strangers to sado-masochistic whipping, the last an intriguing echo of a scene of a nun whipping herself Arcand was forced to cut from his 1965 documentary *Ville-Marie*. If nationalism had replaced religion in 1960s and 70's Quebec, then hedonism had now replaced nationalism, with similarly unfulfilling results.

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[57] Loiselle, *Denys Arcand's* Le déclin de l'empire américain *and* Les invasions barbares, 20.
[58] Loiselle, 66.
[59] Loiselle, "I Only Know Where I Come From, Not Where I'm Going," 154.

This is the source of what Bart Testa calls the "corrosive bitterness veiled so poorly in the comedy,"[60] and the absence of any talk of the future. Beneath its bright chatter, the film is deeply sad and pessimistic.

Le déclin de l'empire américain was clearly Arcand's most ambitious film to that point, and it breaks from his previous work in ways that made it more exportable. While Arcand's earlier films had been grim stories spiced with flashes of black humour, *Le déclin* was, despite its underlying gloominess, often very funny. And it was funny about a universal subject, sex and male-female relations. Instead of Arcand's usual alienated lumpenproletarians, the characters were now bourgeois types, much like Arcand himself. While their portrayal is hardly uncritical, they are far more witty and charming than any he had presented before. In addition, the actors spoke standard French rather than *joual* (an urban, primarily working class, French slang unique to Quebec), which since the 1960s had been the dominant mode in Quebec films as a conscious attempt by artists to create and assert a distinct Quebec identity.[61] But Arcand knew these bourgeois intellectuals would not be speaking *joual*. A consequence of this use of standard French is that it removed a distancing language barrier and allowed the film to be more easily received by audiences in France.[62]

French critics welcomed *Le déclin* as a witty, upscale sex comedy in the manner of Eric Rohmer or Woody Allen.[63] There were also comparisons to *The Big Chill* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1983), with Arcand's sharp-eyed and downbeat assessment of a generation who failed to complete its generational project transformed, outside of its original context, into a more generalized narrative of baby boomers who have traded their 60's idealism for consumerism. According to Denis Bachand, this was central to the film's

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[60] Bart Testa, "Arcand's Double-Twist Allegory: *Jesus of Montreal*," in *Auteur/Provocateur: The Films of Denys Arcand*, ed. André Loiselle et al. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 103.
[61] Loiselle, *Denys Arcand's* Le déclin de l'empire américain *and* Les invasions barbares, 19.
[62] Loiselle, 20.
[63] Denis Bachand, "Entre l'écho des voisins et celui des cousins: Les voix croisées de la reception critique des films de Denys Arcand aux États-Unis et en France," *Cinémas* 7.3 (1997), 124.

success in the U.S.[64] However, while *The Big Chill* included specific references to the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War, the restricting of Quebec's political context to a structuring absence allowed Arcand's film to become akin to a blank screen upon which international viewers could project their own histories.

Critics in France and the U.S. responded differently to the film. In France, it was received as an example of what Crofts calls the "European commercial film," which mixes elements of the art and populist films to compete in domestic markets against Hollywood, but may turn up, depoliticized and stripped of its cultural specificity, in the U.S. as an art film.[65] This does not quite describe *Le déclin*, since the cultural signifiers Crofts claims are central to both art and populist cinema are absent. That is, while Arcand's film is very politically and culturally specific, it crosses borders because these specificities are invisible to those unaware of the context in which it was made. In the U.S., it was received as a European-style art film, having both the whiff of sex and generalized humanism that Crofts claims gives them their appeal, but the language barrier (overcome, in the case of France) still confined it to the arthouse circuit.[66]

There was some confusion among U.S. critics about the title, with Stanley Kauffman asking in *The New Republic* why it wasn't called "The Decline of the North American Empire," since it was made in Canada.[67] Peter Wilkins explains this response from Kauffman and a number of other critics by suggesting that "Americans do not see themselves as having any imperial control over Canada" and "have difficulty seeing how this group of French-Canadian academics participates in the American empire."[68] The film's politics were in this sense obscure enough to American audiences that even as normally astute a critic as J. Hoberman of *The Village Voice* could claim that the film

[64] Ibid.
[65] Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s," 39-40.
[66] Bachand, "Entre l'écho des voisins et celui des cousins," 124.
[67] Peter Wilkins, "No Big Picture: Arcand and His U.S. Critics," in *Auteur/Provocateur: The Films of Denys Arcand*, Ed. André Loiselle and Brian McIlroy (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 113.
[68] Wilkins, "No Big Picture," 116-117.

was "so de-natured it might have been produced anywhere."[69] Clearly, the film was comprehensible enough on a surface level to be enjoyed by anybody, but just as clearly not in the same way as it is in Quebec.

Arcand's next film, *Jésus de Montréal*, dealt with a charismatic actor who returns to Montreal to stage the Passion of Christ, and gathers a troupe of followers whose unorthodox production challenges and offends Church authorities in ways that echo the Gospels. Although on the surface it seems a religious allegory that satirizes contemporary society, Testa argues this is "naïve" since Arcand "has persistently subjected religion, and Catholicism in particular, to mockery and derision."[70] Testa agrees with Loiselle and McIlroy, who identify the narrative's central conflict as between artists, led by the Christ-like actor Daniel, and corruptors of art, led by Father Leclerc (the priest who originally commissions the production).[71]

Without denying that the elements Testa, Loiselle and McIlroy ascribe to the film are present, there is another, more culturally specific reading. The Quebec presented in this film is essentially the same as that of *Le déclin*: without ideals or history, and consumed by hedonism and materialism. Returning from an extended period abroad, Daniel finds his former comrades dispersed and demoralized. Again, while the 1980 referendum is never mentioned, it remains a structuring absence, as the loss of idealism in society mirrors the situation in *Le déclin*. His rekindling of their dreams and the enthusiastic response he receives is not an answer to the question "What would happen if Christ returned?"; rather, it answers the question what would happen if the 1980 referendum was rerun. The answer is provided in the conversation between Daniel and Father Leclerc. Although sympathetic, Leclerc will not risk his Church sinecure to support Daniel's production. That is, he rejects Daniel's vision in exactly the same terms as Arcand ascribes to the No voters in *Le confort et l'indifférence*. The subsequent events, with Daniel literally crushed under a giant crucifix, is an allegorical replay of the 1980 referendum, or at least Arcand's vision of it. The coda, in which some of the actors are

[69] Wilkins, 119.
[70] Testa, "Arcand's Double-Twist Allegory," 91.
[71] Loiselle and McIlroy, "Introduction," 5.

co-opted by the establishment to found a theatre in Daniel's name, but implicitly lacking his idealism, is on one level a reference to the Catholic Church, but, on another, a sardonic jab at the Parti Québécois, the nationalist political party which had remained in power after losing the 1980 referendum by promising "good government" and deferring the question of Quebec independence, theoretically its *raison d'être*.

According to Bachand, most U.S. critics treated the film as a religious allegory or a generalized social critique.[72] For example, Roger Ebert praised it as "an original and uncompromising attempt to explore what really might happen, if the spirit of Jesus were to walk among us in these timid and materialistic times."[73] Not knowing about Arcand and his generation's history of anti-clericalism or Quebec's post-referendum political context made it seem natural for U.S. critics to look at the story's universal aspects. However, perhaps Arcand wasn't trying to be universal at all. As Peter Wilkins writes, "[t]his Jesus is specifically located in Montreal, immediately creating a tension between Christ's supposed universality as the savior of humanity and the particularity of a city in Canada. The U.S. critics avoid the question of this particularity."[74] It is, in fact, the very invisibility of this particularity that made the film exportable to the U.S.

Vue d'ailleurs, a short film Arcand directed as part of the compendium film *Montreal vu par . . .* (1991), is a sort of companion piece to *Jésus de Montréal*. While Arcand's naming his film *Jésus de Montréal* deliberately limited its universality, it also carried the implicit assumption that Montreal was as far from the seat of real power in today's world as Nazareth or Jerusalem was from Rome during biblical times. *Vue d'ailleurs*, which can be roughly translated as "view from abroad," picks up on this by presenting a couple who recall their diplomatic posting in Montreal years earlier and relate an anecdote of them making love on a Westmount lawn and climaxing just as an FLQ[75] bomb explodes

[72] Bachand, "Entre l'écho des voisins et celui des cousins," 125-129.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Wilkins, "No Big Picture," 123.
[75] The Front de libération du Québec, or Quebec Liberation Front, was a Montreal-based urban terrorist group that advocated Quebec independence. Members carried out a series of bombings during the 1960s, and their activities climaxed with the events of the October Crisis in 1970.

nearby. A droll, iconoclastic retelling of the FLQ years as a fondly remembered sexual anecdote that took place in a charming backwater, the couple's inability to recall what the letters FLQ stood for reinforced how inconsequential the storms and alarms of Quebec might seem from an outsider's perspective.

During the 1990s, Arcand made three feature films, including two in English, but it was not until 2003 that he returned to his cycle of films about the state of Quebec and his generation with *Les invasions barbares*. In the 13 years since *Vue d'ailleurs*, there had been a shift in Quebec culture. The narrow defeat of the sovereignty option in a second referendum in 1995 had been followed by a wave of nostalgia in the province's literature, music and cinema. As Loiselle argues, "nostalgia and a fixation on ancestral roots have become the dominant ethos in the province since the 1990s. Finding the lost father seems to have become a central metaphor for the Québécois search for an identity anchored in the past."[76] Films that reflect this partial rehabilitation of the era before 1960, which had typically been labeled *la grande noirceur* ("great darkness"), include nostalgic biographies of Maurice Richard, Alys Robi and Louis Cyr, and extremely popular remakes of notorious reactionary rural dramas *Aurore* and *Séraphin, un homme et son péché*. Most of these also revived the truism that the "real" Quebec was in the regions outside of Montreal. *Les invasions barbares* shares some of the characteristics of these films, particularly in its father-son generational reconciliation and in the father's decision to return to the countryside to die.

However, *Les invasions barbares* is significantly less nostalgic than other films of this period, since it portrays the characters from *Le déclin* that it now revisits after seventeen years as a failed generation. The ultimately sentimental reuniting of friends and reconciliation of generations that are the film's main concerns suggest that Arcand's generation is not only condemned, but also forgiven. In a key scene, the old friends pass around a joint while reminiscing over the foolish ideologies they followed when they were young, from Maoism to post-structuralism . . . to Quebec independence. Arcand has revised the analysis he provided in *Le confort et l'indifférence*; he now

[76] Loiselle, *Denys Arcand's* Le déclin de l'empire américain *and* Les invasions barbares, 150.

points the finger of blame at the generation of bourgeois intellectuals who failed, not because (or at least not solely because) of the addiction to materialism and passivity of the masses, but because those belonging to his class and generation lacked true conviction. This scathing condemnation is, however, accompanied by a rueful forgiveness. Arcand has said that "while Canada might not have a very exciting history, there is a sense of peacefulness and serenity here; an immanent happiness that no one 'talks' about, but that is communicated through images of the landscape, of nature, of the beautiful houses that the characters inhabit. It is also in the friendship that unites these people."[77] Despite their failings, the dying Rémy and his friends had reconciled themselves with their weaknesses and given up the pointless hedonism that was the focus of *Le déclin*, instead finding solace in life's small, quotidian pleasures: good food, fine wine, the glory of nature, the ties of family and friendship.

This does not mean Arcand excuses them entirely. The legacy of their failure is a wrecked society with a health system in shambles, corrupt unions, an incompetent bureaucracy and ineffectual police. By failing to achieve independence for Quebec, Rémy (and Arcand) and his friends' generation left the province open to the forces of globalization and everybody with any talent or spirit has left. Rémy's son is an international financier living in Europe, while his daughter spends her life on the high seas, delivering yachts. The American empire has continued to decline, and the barbarians, having overrun peripheries like Quebec, now strike at the heart of the empire, which is how the 9/11 attacks (which occurred during the filming of *Les invasions barbares*) are described. In *Le déclin*, there was no talk of the future. There is some talk of the future here, but only for those who leave. As Loiselle writes, "Rémy's death is nothing less than an analogy for the death of Quebec."[78]

The film's political implications were clear to Quebec audiences. Sovereignist pundit Josée Legault, while disputing its conclusions, considered it an accurate portrayal of Quebec's narcissistic elites in the aftermath of the 1995 referendum. She describes the

[77] Loiselle, "I Only Know Where I Come From, Not Where I'm Going," 154.
[78] Loiselle, *Denys Arcand's* Le déclin de l'empire américain *and* Les invasions barbares, 89.

film as a portrait of those "francophone, Quebec baby boomers who control most of the levers of political and economic power here," who "used to dream of an independent Quebec but now look at it as either a lost battle, a danger to their material well-being, or simply too much trouble to achieve."[79] Significantly, this is achieved with only one brief mention of sovereignty, again relying on the contextual knowledge of the domestic audience to provide the political resonance.

Once again, this political dimension disappears when it crosses borders. For example, the New York *Times*' A.O. Scott assumed the title was a straightforward reference to 9/11 and the film a humanist tale about generational reconciliation involving ex-radical baby boomers and their Reaganite offspring.[80] This was true of European reaction too: where Arcand considers *Les invasions barbares* a "sad film," it was celebrated at Cannes as "hopeful."[81] This type of reception by foreign audiences is shared by *Monsieur Lazhar*, whose political implications would be unnoticeable to anyone not following Quebec's debate over the "reasonable accommodation" of immigrants. The use of an elliptical rather than explicit approach to political and cultural questions may be an avenue future Quebec productions will take to gain international audiences.

L'âge de ténèbres, the final film of Arcand's generational cycle, acts as a bitter coda. Quebec is even more of a shambles. The protagonist, Jean-Marc, is a baby boomer turned ineffectual bureaucrat. "When I was young," he says, "I marched for independence. Now I shuffle papers." On his journey through contemporary Montreal, Jean-Marc finds a people who, like him, are without hopes or dreams and retreat into fantasy, despair or mindless consumerism. Arcand's solution is to have Jean-Marc return to the countryside, where he finds solace and rejuvenation through contact with his ancestral soil and, in the final scene, experiences a moment of transcendent happiness through the simple act of peeling an apple. This mixture of bitter attacks on

[79] Legault, "Movie Says Much About Quebec Today."
[80] A.O. Scott, "The Barbarian Invasions," *New York Times*, October 17, 2003, accessed April 27, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F01E6DF143EF934A25753C1A9659C8B63.
[81] Loiselle, *Denys Arcand's* Le déclin de l'empire américain *and* Les invasions barbares, 252.

contemporary society and simplistic conservative retreat was an unexpected turn for Arcand that was unpopular in Quebec and barely released outside the province.

Arcand's most recent film, *Le règne de la beauté* (2014), picks up on some of the themes that characterized his generational cycle. The protagonist is Luc (Éric Bruneau), an architect whose talent and ambition, like that of the "barbarian" financier son played by Stéphane Rousseau in *Les invasions barbares*, is too large for the backwater Quebec has become. While the province's urban spaces continue to get short shrift (Quebec City is portrayed as an incestuous small town where Luc's attempts to have an adulterous fling are complicated by his inability to go anywhere without being recognized), the beautifully photographed countryside is no longer idealized. It is instead identified with Luc's lovely but mentally unstable wife, a former athlete who lacked the talent, unlike Luc, to attain world-class level. The film's version of Quebec may be beautiful, but it can only hold him back or even drag him down. As the film's flashback structure shows Luc in the future as a famous architect accepting a prestigious international award and married to a Spaniard, it does not suggest that Arcand's view that there is no place in modern Quebec for the ambitious has changed much since *Les invasions barbares*. The film's main novelty is that Arcand abandons his own generation to introduce a set of younger characters, only to reveal that he doesn't find this younger generation very interesting or sympathetic, and does not seem to have much to say about them either. *Le règne de la beauté* sold just over 40,000 tickets in Quebec, earning roughly $300,000 in box office receipts, far short of its $7.5 million budget, with little in the way of distribution outside the province to make up the difference.[82] The good news for Arcand is that, if the province's current financing practices continue, the international prestige he has earned over his career should make it possible to gain financing for his next one.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have been less concerned with justifying the status of Quebec's film industry as a national cinema through the identification of consistent themes than by

[82] Ramond, "Page box office."

pointing to the simple fact that it is producing a body of films which are consumed by audiences in a way that is clearly distinct from the rest of Canada. Much of this difference comes down to funding policies. In Quebec, a film is deemed successful by funding bodies if it earns critical recognition and international prestige, or if it draws a domestic audience, even if in neither case it comes close to covering its production costs. How else to explain the ability of talented auteurs like Denis Côté to receive financing for his projects despite negligible box office support?[83] Similarly, unpretentious Quebec crowd pleasers like *Louis Cyr* or *Omertà* are considered "hits" even if their box office receipts fall far short of their production budgets and their cultural specificity and lack of formal experimentation preclude earning money in foreign markets to make up the difference. However, in the rest of the country, while there seems to be a limited tolerance for art cinema, popular films are expected to pay for themselves, which explains the focus on breaking into the U.S. market. Compare, for instance, the reception of *Louis Cyr* to *Men with Brooms* (Paul Gross, 2002), which in many ways is simply an English-language reworking of *Les Boys*. Paul Gross' curling comedy earned $4.2 million in Canadian theatres, making it one of the most popular Canadian films ever in English Canada, but still fell short of earning back its $7.5 million budget,[84] and therefore failed to spawn a series of sequels and imitations. Meanwhile, its cultural specificity resulted in little distribution in the United States, where a more generic film (with no curling) might have passed as American and had a chance of making its money back.

My discussion of Denys Arcand's work is intended to help explain one of the recent developments in Quebec cinema, the growth of what Marshall calls mass-audience-friendly auteur cinema. Beyond the increasing commercial acceptance of Quebec films by Quebec audiences, the increasing importance of these hybrid films which contain elements of both art and populist cinemas is an important element of contemporary

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[83] Some of Côté's box office figures: *Elle veut le chaos* (2008) sold 569 tickets, *Carcasses* (2009) sold 649 tickets, *Curling* (2010) sold 6,021 tickets, *Béstiaire* (2012) sold 488 tickets, *Vic + Flo ont vu un ours* (2013) sold 8,338 tickets (his biggest "hit"), and *Que ta joie demeure* (2014) sold 159 tickets. Ramond, "Page box office."

[84] "Men with Brooms," *The Numbers*. http://www.the-numbers.com/search?searchterm=men+with+brooms

Quebec cinema, and seems to be the key to any possibility of expanding distribution into foreign markets, particularly the U.S.

While this is largely due to funding practices which permit Quebec filmmakers to make films intended to attract domestic audiences rather than being forced to depend on distribution in the U.S. to achieve financing, it is also because, following Arcand's lead and using the local political and social context as an implicit structuring absence, a few Quebec filmmakers have, in recent years, made films which are simultaneously intensely local and also legible to international audiences unaware of the domestic contexts central to their reception by Quebec audiences.

There are some obvious limits to this discussion which offer multiple areas for further research. While my essay has adopted an analytical model which isolates French-language Quebec cinema in order to study those distinctive characteristics which define it as a national cinema, it might also be useful to map out the connections with other Canadian cinematic practices which complicate this definition. For this type of study, rather than following Crofts and seeing Quebec cinema as a subset of Canadian national cinema, or with Beard and White, who posit related, but distinct and parallel English- and French-language Canadian cinemas (and possibly a third parallel cinema from First Nations filmmakers), it might be helpful to see these as umbrella terms hosting a variety of overlapping cinema practices not only within English, French and First Nations cinemas, but also between them as well. Even so, within this intertwined network of cinemas, it is impossible not to designate French-language feature filmmaking in Quebec as the most mature and varied element, as well as the one most capable of producing films that have both national specificity and export potential.

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SYNOPTIQUE

Interview with Bill Marshall

By Kester Dyer, Andrée Lafontaine, and Fulvia Massimi

Fifteen years have passed since the publication of Bill Marshall's *Quebec National Cinema* (2000), a book that explored the understanding of Québec cinema as more than a territorialized, linguistically limited phenomenon, and anticipated academic breakthroughs such as Mette Hjort's *Small Nation Global Cinema* (2005). Challenging the traditional application of the National Cinema framework, Marshall's pivotal work allowed for an understanding of the sub-national reality of Québec as a broader phenomenon in terms of industry and cultural identity. The state of Film Studies scholarship dealing with national cinema has drastically changed in the past two decades, discovering in world cinema and transnational cinema useful paradigms to rethink the circulation and reception of the filmic object in the global era, but also the negotiation of geo-cultural specificity in the growing scenario of film festival circuits, online exhibition, and migration of local talents abroad. Québécois directors such as Denys Arcand and Léa Pool led the way during the 80's and the 90's, allowing younger generations of filmmakers such as Denis Villeneuve, Jean-Marc Vallée, and Xavier Dolan to export Québec cinema and grant it international—if not global—visibility. On the occasion of *Synoptique*'s special issue on Xavier Dolan and Québécois cinema, we discussed with Bill Marshall the recent achievements and global turns of Québec cinema, and what they entail for the future of its practice and academic investigation.

Editors: *In accordance with the changes in both the making and the study of Québec cinema, how do you feel your scholarship has shifted, or rather evolved, from the idea of Québec cinema as a national phenomenon to a global one? How do you position yourself and your work in the ongoing debate on national and transnational cinema studies?*

Bill Marshall: The 'global' reach of Québec cinema is very partial and incomplete, and you seem to acknowledge that possibility in your introduction, which draws a slight distinction between 'international' and 'global' visibility. There is also a paradox in the question, as it retains that 'national', 'sub-national' or 'provincial' terminology, i.e. a category we call 'Québec cinema'. Here I think it is important to ask: which 'Québec cinema'? The exportable films such as those of Arcand, Dolan, or even *La Grande Séduction*? Or the frankly inexportable, such as *Séraphin*? It remains the case that only a fraction of Québec auteur cinema is distributed abroad, or even reaches festivals (although this is true of most 'national' cinemas), and the difficulties of finding audiences for Québec films in seemingly the most obvious international market, that of France, are notorious. However, there is no denying the changes that have taken place since 2000, despite the nuances we may place on them, and the national/transnational question does raise the all-important question of mapping that is so productive in the humanities today. I am inspired by the work in literary studies of Franco Moretti, and in Film Studies that of Dudley Andrew, Mette Hjort, Lucia Nagib etc., which forces reflection on, and indeed exploration of, what different cartographic perspectives can do to the creation of a corpus, the juxtaposition of heterogeneous texts, the generation of new insights. I followed the *Quebec National Cinema* book with a large project which sought to rethink—via an Encyclopedia and monograph—cartographies of French and Francophone Studies both literally and figuratively via the term 'The French Atlantic.' Whereas the terms 'global' and 'globalisation' risk being rather abstract and general, I am more interested in tracing the specificities of particular exchanges, routes and itineraries that spatial categories such as the Atlantic, *la francophonie*, nordicity, and so on create.

Editors: *In a talk given at the ACQS conference in Montreal in October 2014 ("Spaces and Times of Québec in Laurence Anyways (2012) and Tom à la ferme (2013)") you discussed matters of queer historiography and geography in the work of Xavier Dolan. What do you believe is the role played by Dolan in the shift towards the global stance of Québec cinema?*

Marshall: Dolan's breakthrough is extremely important, and in some senses it is also a break-out, in that his work has found both new audiences and new scholarly attention beyond the rather restricted field of Québec specialists outside Canada. This begins I think with *Laurence Anyways*. It is true that he sidesteps deep models of national or class grand narratives, and favours a proliferation of surfaces whose playfulness, plurality and expressiveness challenge imposed categories of 'normality.' This is appealing to international youth audiences, and the fact that sexuality is a key example of this fluidity does mean that, for me, 'queer' is a useful term to use in relation to his work. Of course, he dislikes being pigeon-holed in terms of sexual identity, but as long as we use 'queer' with an anti-heteronormative rather than identitarian emphasis—or even as a verb ('queering')—then I think it is rather enabling. At the moment I am trying to reflect further, again, on the issue of space in his work, and the idea of 'queer spaces', or the 'queering' of space in for example *Tom à la ferme*. I also like the way that for him music is part of that mobility. It may be said that he is part of a generation that has definitively discarded the colonial reference in relation to both the English language and Anglophone culture: it is interesting—and amusing—that James Cameron's *Titanic* is famously more important to him than some of the classics of Québec cinema.

Editors: *Can you identify a corpus that can be addressed as the herald of the "global turn" of Québec cinema? And if so, how does Dolan situate within it? Moreover, how does such corpus, if it exists, relate to the one examined in* Quebec National Cinema*?*

Marshall: There are several concurrent phenomena here. Dolan, yes, but before that *La Grande Séduction* (unusually, a highly exportable comedy which spoke to different global audiences all negotiating the relations among belonging, community, and international capitalism), *Les Invasions barbares* of course, with its ambitions to say significant things about the current epoch, and its attendant international success. The work of Jean-Marc Vallée, finding international audiences with *C.R.A.Z.Y.*. I would also not underestimate *Café de flore*, which despite its faults is one of the recent Québec films which produces the most sustained sense of global connectedness. Villeneuve

and *Incendies*, of course. The globalising trajectory constituted by remakes, of *La Grande Séduction* and of *Starbuck*. However, I would also stress because of this the difficulty in establishing when the 'global turn' actually takes place: already in *Quebec National Cinema* I was discussing the Hollywood remake of *Louis 19 le roi des ondes*, and the work of Denis Chouinard, whose *Clandestins* is also from the 1990s but is a very powerful and prescient work about international migration flows.

Editors: *Is it possible to argue, provocatively enough, that the national take of your seminal book could be now revised in light of the global cinema paradigm? What has consistently changed to allow the passage from national to post-national understanding of Québec cinema?*

Marshall: The nation is not going to go away. The nationalist project seems currently to be in abeyance and support for it among 18-35 year-olds in decline, but who knows the future? *Quebec National Cinema* was in any case never about nationalist readings of films, but rather about the way in which the contradictions and tensions inherent in the idea of the nation were present in individual film texts or a film corpus. It is possible to see this 'push and pull' between forces of assertion and dispersal in what has happened since 2000: alongside the global successes, we find new heights reached in the Québec domestic film market by locally produced films which, as we have seen, are sometimes very inexportable, even incomprehensible to audiences outside Québec. I ended *Quebec National Cinema* with a discussion of so-called 'post-modern' film texts which related to globalisation. So I would firstly say there is some continuity rather than a complete break with the past. But secondly, and more importantly, the changes since 2000 have definitely seen an *intensification* of processes which were already becoming visible in the second half of the 1990s (including the big popular successes, such as *Les Boys*). That intensification in turn both generates re-shapings, and, as we have seen, invites re-mappings of the spatial categories within which we position film texts. Those re-shapings are both industrial and to do with the readings we make and that can be made. For example, Oedipal father/son relationships still abound, but now, in a film like *C.R.A.Z.Y*, the gay son can be integrated into a national narrative. *Café de flore*'s

extreme idea of the extensibility of the self also plays with a time that is labyrinthine rather than that of linear progressivism associated with 'national narratives'. Xavier Dolan's combination of mother/son paradigms, queer sexualities, ludic film form, and spatial mobility takes us into new territories. The evolving difference is that Québec cinema, instead of its narratives and content being conceived in terms of 'lack', is becoming more and more *relational*.

Editors: *How have changing funding structures shaped not only the practice but also the study of Québec cinema?*

Marshall: There are more films produced, and so more to look at, and very competing practices of filmmaking become visible. A race for the popular means that success breeds not only success but the expectation of success by funding organisations, with the possibility of more risky auteur projects being squeezed out. The quest for *valeurs sûres* means that the role of production companies devoted to independent film, such as Les Films de l'Autre, become all the more important. The other big change is of course that of more mobile film personnel, as we have seen, including moving across languages. What concerns me is that despite the increase in production, and the big successes, the opportunities for women filmmakers and those of indigenous or immigrant origin to make fictional feature films is not progressing significantly. This idea of the 'global turn' being expressed in the 'worlds within' national cinemas is one of the most exciting possibilities the paradigm shift, if that is what it is, holds out, and it is a pity that insufficient advantage is taken of it. A (scholarly, critical) effort to 're-map' and connect minority or other identity positions across different national spaces may help this process.

Editors: *Since you have been working within Québec film studies so long, what other developments have you seen in the study of Québec cinema outside the national-global debate? As Québec film continues to grow and diversify, are there any other trends you have identified in the study of this cinema in North America and/or Europe (is there more scholarship in English or cross-linguistic conversations?*

Marshall: I have to say that in the UK at least (but also the USA, where Québec is absent from most French Departments), it is still a battle to interest scholars in Film or French Studies in Québec, despite my and others' best efforts. Lucille Cairns' 2006 book, *Sapphism on Screen*, takes a wide Francophone purview that includes Québec. There is not a lot more, certainly in terms of monographs, although queer and gender issues are probably among the most fruitful avenues to follow. Here, Dolan helps a lot, and I was able to organise a workshop recently in London on him that reached beyond the *Québécistes*. One significant change since I began work on Québec cinema in the early 1990s is the much greater dialogue between Anglophone and Francophone work in Canada. There is much more critical work going on in English, often from teachers at or graduates from Concordia, and the cultural studies paradigms are shared much more than before. When I began, the gap between the latter and formalist approaches in French was rather vast, but no longer. Figures such as Germain Lacasse, Chantal Nadeau, Robert Schwartzwald (whose book on *C.R.A.Z.Y.* is just appearing) and Sherry Simon have played very important roles as intercessors here. Rather than write a sequel to *Quebec National Cinema*, my next project will be to do an edited book of essays that will include film scholars not usually associated with writing on Québec film, but there will be established names in the Québec field too!

Editors: *Documentary has been and still is a predominant mode of filmmaking in Canada, and Québec in particular has offered quite a few box office hits in the recent years. What place is reserved to those branches of Québec cinema that don't pertain to successful documentary filmmaking as well as to internationally renowned feature films? What about studies of cinema in Québec that don't fit into either category?*

Marshall: Popular cinema really needs to be looked at, as I have said. There are a number of directors that deserve scholarly attention and wider audiences, such as François Delisle, as well as work by women and minorities I alluded to earlier. One 'uncategorisable' figure who consistently produces interesting work but about whom very little academic work is written is of course Robert Morin.

Editors: *In* Small Nation, Global Cinema *Mette Hjort has observed that "minor cinema is understood at some level as appealing to national but also international audiences on account of the way in which it articulates or rearticulates the core understandings, experiences, and expressions that are the basis for a deep sense of national belonging." (Hjort 2005, 116) Do you believe such claim to be applicable to the current state of Québec cinema as well?*

Marshall: Yes, Québec is a very important case, hence my initial interest in it, because I saw here a whole host of issues and relations, between national and global, regional, local, gender, sexual, immigrant etc. cultural identities which could inform debates elsewhere, particularly in Europe. The term 'minor cinema' needs to be unpacked here, I think, as it can be used in various ways: referring to small nations, but also to minorities in nations or other imagined communities small and large, and then there is the sense in which Deleuze and Guattari use it. As I have argued, Québec and other cinemas navigate between (would-be) 'major' and 'minor' configurations of nationhood. What I would stress in relation, and in addition, to Mette Hjort's work are the key elements of mapping and re-mapping which characterise the insertion of small-nation cinemas within global cinema, and the way film scholars look at them; the very different configurations which can be analysed according to the cartographies used; and the renewed emphasis on Relation, including Édouard Glissant's conceptualisation of it, when looking at the plurality of cultural forms in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

The above interview highlights Bill Marshall's role as both an innovator and a catalyst in the scholarly discussion surrounding (small) nationhood, cinema, and globalization. More specifically, his seminal work on Québec cinema has further enabled the understanding of these themes as categories in constant transformation. Marshall's reference to Mette Hjort as a close interlocutor, and the shared concerns of his work with that of the Danish scholar, proves particularly telling in this regard.

Hjort's seminal book *Small Nation, Global Cinema* began to explore globalization not simply in terms of broad trends, but from the necessary perspective of specific contexts, as she discussed a wide array of case studies to provide a more complete and nuanced picture of this multifaceted phenomenon (24). Marshall's interview seems to answer this call by continuing to interrogate and expand the scope of his already thorough examination of the Québécois context. His more recent work promises indeed to push the boundaries of what Québec national cinema constitutes, perhaps announcing a further stage in our understanding of globalization as an observable occurrence. Marshall thus intimates that it is precisely from the heterogeneous perspectives coexisting within specific (small) national contexts that productive scholarship on the intersections between nationhood, cinema, and globalization can most usefully emerge.

A further conjuncture between the works of Marshall and Hjort can be found in their shared interest in the political gesture of small national and subnational cinematic movements. In *Small Nation, Global Cinema* Hjort understood Dogme 95 as a way for small nations to "change the rules of the game" dominated by Hollywood and take active participation in it (40-41). In this interview, Marshall's reference to the *littérature-monde* manifesto and the corollary notion of *cinéma-monde* could offer a compendium to Hjort's perspective in relation to the specificity of the Québec case. Does the *littérature-monde* manifesto and its cinematic analogy also "change the rules of the game" for Québec and other francophone cinemas in relation to *la francophonie*? Does it bear a similar effect of "levelling the field" to the one that Hjort observes in New Danish Cinema? Is the *littérature-monde* manifesto comparable?

Anticipating Marshall's intervention at the upcoming 2016 Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) Conference in Atlanta—where he will further develop his reflection on "new thematic convergences" and the notion of a "post-national" Québec cinema—our interview shows the scholar's concerns with the insufficient exploration of the potential connection between the "global turn" of cinematic culture and the representation of "minority or other positions" from within and across different national cinemas. In this respect, as Marshall notes, the anti-hegemonic notion of queerness proposed by

Dolan's cinema not only functions in opposition to narrower categorizations of gender and identity, but could also help shape different cartographies of global cinema. This engagement with queerness, de-centred articulations of globalization, and small national contexts also confirms the timely rationale of *Synoptique*'s current issue, which views global and Québec cinemas through the lens of Xavier Dolan's oeuvre.

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SYNOPTIQUE

Lectures croisées et pistes de réflexions autour de *Laurence Anyways*

A Cross-Reading of *Laurence Anyways*

Interventions by Christina Brassard, Katrina Sark, Angela Urrea and Mariana Gil-Arboleda

Lauréat du Queer Palm et du prix du meilleur long-métrage à TIFF à sa sortie en 2012, *Laurence Anyways* décrit l'amour difficile entre Frédérique et Laurence — une transgenre que nous rencontrons d'abord en tant qu'homme. À la fois complexe et nuancée, cette exploration de l'identité, du genre et de l'amour est un terrain fertile pour une lecture croisée mettant à profit des chercheurs provenant de divers domaines et régions géographiques. Christina Brassard, doctorante à l'Université de Toronto en études françaises, exploite les concepts et schèmes d'analyse développés par Judith Butler pour analyser les tiraillements entre hétéronormativité, résistances et transgression des normes au sein du film dans le contexte plus large du cinéma québécois. Katrina Sark, qui enseigne à l'Université Victoria, fait quant à elle porter son analyse sur le rôle de la mode dans la construction de l'identité et, plus particulièrement, sur l'utilisation de la couleur par Dolan comme outil pour révéler le monde intérieur de ses personnages[1]. Pour conclure, Angela Urrea et Mariana Gil-Arboleda, de l'Université Manuela Beltran (Colombie), retournent chez Butler pour explorer l'importance du regard de l'autre dans la quête et la construction de l'identité.

[1] Ce texte est tiré d'un ouvrage à paraître sous peu, *Montréal Chic : A Locational History of Montreal Fashion.* Intellect, 2016.

La transgression de la norme chez Dolan: une invitation à l'émancipation

Par Christina Brassard

Fig. 1 : L'Île au Noir

En 1976, Michel Foucault déclare que « le sexe, ça ne se juge pas seulement, ça s'administre » (Foucault, 35). En s'interrogeant sur les discours « utiles » et « publics » qui régissent la norme sexuelle, celui-ci décrit l'importante liaison entre le pouvoir, le savoir et la sexualité, et nous invite à reconsidérer l'effet de résistance produit par les discours normalisant. Dans les années 1990, Judith Butler dénonce, quant à elle, l'hétéronormativité et réfléchit sur le pouvoir des mots et des actes. Elle signale que certains discours peuvent subvertir ou déstabiliser les illusions fondatrices de l'identité sexuelle afin de dénaturaliser les normes. La théorie queer qui apparaît dans les années 1980 renforce l'idée que l'identité sexuelle est une construction que l'on doit observer non seulement par le biais de l'hétéronormativité, mais également par le biais

des pratiques non-normatives. Dans *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), Lee Edelman met en évidence l'importance du queer dans la résistance par rapport à la norme sociale : « […] the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form » (4). C'est dire que, depuis les écrits fondateurs de Foucault, toute une branche de la théorie critique se penche sur le pouvoir de la marge vis-à-vis de la norme; sur la transgression par la marge de toute forme de structure dominante.

Force est d'admettre qu'avec *Laurence Anyways* Xavier Dolan nous amène à réfléchir d'une façon toute particulière à cette question. C'est par la création cinématographique qu'il réussit à émettre une pensée critique réflexivement ouverte sur la transgression de la norme sexuelle et qu'il parvient à nous offrir un discours qui déstabilise à sa manière les illusions fondatrices de l'identité sexuelle. Dans un entretien à *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight* à la CBC, Dolan affirme d'ailleurs que son film met en relief une quête identitaire singulière : « *Laurence Anyways* is a love story between a man and a woman […] trying to forget about labels, trying to forget about words […] The movie is just about being who you are, it's not about being different ». Selon lui, *Laurence Anyways* est donc une histoire à propos de devenir qui l'on est tout en oubliant les barrières, les mots et les jugements. Par « forget about labels », on comprend qu'il semble aussi attaché à pourfendre toute forme de catégorisations – que ce soit par rapport aux identités sexuelles ou aux inégalités sociales. Plus encore, grâce à *Laurence Anyways*, Dolan nous convainc de ne pas marginaliser la différence. Et c'est dans les mots de Laurence que se manifeste de façon magistrale cette idée. En réponse à la question que lui pose la journaliste, « Qu'est-ce que vous recherchez, Laurence Alia ? », Laurence affirme: « Écoutez, je recherche une personne qui comprenne ma langue, et qui la parle même, une personne qui, sans être un paria, ne s'interroge pas simplement sur les droits et l'utilité des marginaux, mais sur les droits et l'utilité de ceux qui se targuent d'être normaux ». Avec cet énoncé, nous sommes portés à examiner les droits des identités marginales et ceux de la masse, et à les comparer.

Laurence Anyways: de l'exception au banal ou du banal à l'exception

C'est en nous arrêtant sur cette idée de « being who you are » que nous arrivons à nous poser les questions suivantes: « Mais qui sommes-nous ? Qui voulons-nous être ? Et pourquoi ? » L'identité étant en grande partie une construction sociale liée aux notions de norme et de marge, il n'est alors pas impossible de montrer que le film de Dolan est à même de critiquer la normativité liée à l'identité sexuelle, c'est-à-dire de faire le procès des étiquettes qui lui sont imposées**.** Ainsi, si *Laurence Anyways* peut être perçu comme un film qui illustre un questionnement sur la construction identitaire sexuelle normative, il nous est indispensable d'évaluer l'appel de Butler en 1990: « C'est l'exception, l'étrange qui fournit la clé d'interprétation pour comprendre comment l'univers banal et évident des significations sexuelles est constitué » (Butler, 2009, 221). En effet, on a toutes les raisons de croire que l'évolution identitaire sexuelle de Laurence est marquée par trois étapes principales : celles du rejet, de l'acceptation et de l'émancipation. Ces trois étapes montrent que Laurence est l'exception qui vient, et non sans conséquence, mettre en doute la règle; elle est l'étrange qui aide à comprendre l'univers banal dans lequel s'inscrit la norme.

D'abord, Laurence est un homme qui se sent comme étant une femme. Elle veut ainsi changer son identité sexuelle, car elle postule que celle-ci ne correspond pas à la norme de genre en vigueur. En affirmant son droit à la différence, elle est automatique rejetée par ceux qui se targuent d'êtres normaux : par sa mère, son père, sa blonde et par l'institution où elle travaille. Cette étape est alors manquée par l'altérité et la transphobie. La scène cruciale de l'apogée de son altérité est bien sûr celle où Laurence est assise dans un bar et qu'elle se fait insulter par un homme. En réponse à cette agression verbale, elle le frappe de façon répétée et est frappée en retour. Chassée du bar, elle se retrouve errante dans la rue, le visage en sang. Elle semble démunie au point où elle doit solliciter les passants pour un peu de change. Nous sommes devant son exclusion totale : Fred est partie, sa mère et son père refusent de lui parler, elle a perdu son emploi et elle subit l'injure en faisant face à une solitude blessante. À la suite de ce parcours identitaire laborieux, Laurence est recueillie par un groupe de marginaux : les Fives Roses. À partir du moment où Baby Rose offre son

appui à Laurence dans la rue, en affirmant « As-tu besoin de téléphoner mon amour ? », cette dernière est projetée vers une nouvelle existence. C'est exactement après cette phrase qu'elle passe à l'étape de l'acceptation. Son identité est découverte, acceptée et reconnue. La fonction du Pink Club est de montrer que la marge devient la nouvelle norme de Laurence et qu'elle favorise son changement identitaire. Il lui donne sa puissance d'agir. Le Pink Club vient marquer l'opposition et la transgression par rapport aux institutions et aux figures d'autorité.

Dès lors, nous passons à l'étape de l'émancipation où Laurence parvient à se distinguer. Le transgendérisme est subséquemment perçu comme étant un moyen de resignifier les normes. Sur ce point, l'idée d' « identité sexuelle » est, selon Butler, liée à un savoir « naturalisé », c'est-à-dire à un acte de parole qui a été produit et reproduit dans le discours social de manière à créer une norme. Butler suggère notamment que le drag – plus précisément le travesti ou le transgenre – montre que « la 'réalité' [du genre, du sexe] n'est pas aussi fixe que nous le pensons habituellement » (Butler, 2009, 47). L'exception qu'il représente nous donne la possibilité d'inventer de nouvelles formations du sujet et de subvertir l'identité sexuelle. En transgressant les normes, il va sans dire que Laurence invite son entourage à penser autrement. De surcroit, elle est l'élément perturbateur qui permet le changement culturel et social. Le point de vue des gens qui l'entourent est modifié au fur et à mesure que la trame narrative se développe jusqu'à la scène symbolisant le summum de sa reconnaissance identitaire: celle où, sur son balcon, elle reçoit des baisers soufflés de la part d'un jeune homme situé sur un balcon supérieur — scène qui donne crédit à sa transformation identitaire. À la fin, nous comprenons que l'émancipation de Laurence illustre le message important du film : transgresser afin d' « être ce qu'on est », c'est s'émanciper, c'est changer les règles.

Affranchissement identitaire

Longtemps on a vu dans le cinéma québécois des personnages inachever leur quête identitaire, cherchant une voie sans la trouver, cherchant à être sans devenir. Par conséquent, dans le cinéma québécois d'auteur, peu nombreuses sont les représentations positives de quêtes achevées, de personnages ayant trouvé leur voie,

étant parvenus à la réalisation de leur identité propre. C'est pourquoi *Laurence Anyways* est une innovation dans le monde cinématographique québécois, puisque ce film, tout en évitant le manque de profondeur et le *happy ending* américain, est source d'espoir et d'émancipation identitaire. Il va de soi que Dolan est un jeune réalisateur qui risque de nous apporter encore plusieurs créations, mais pour le moment il semble lui même en quête : l'ensemble de son cinéma ne représente pas la lueur engendrée par *Laurence Anyways*. Pour conclure, il faudrait nous demander ceci: pourquoi, dans le cinéma québécois, peu de créations sont susceptibles d'un dépassement de « l'être qui l'on veut », et de l'être pleinement.

En guise de réponse, je me suis tournée vers l'ouvrage de Christian Poirier intitulé *Le cinéma québécois : à la recherche d'une identité ?* Poirier y met en valeur — et ceci tient actuellement de l'évidence — que l'incertitude identitaire est un thème récurrent dans le cinéma québécois. Il indique : « La société québécoise est engagée depuis plus d'un demi-siècle dans une vaste opération de réaménagement symbolique de ses représentations d'elle-même et des autres » (Poirier, 5). En analysant la relation entre identité et politique dans le cinéma, il montre que, depuis 1930 et jusqu'aux années 2000, deux grands récits identitaires sont présents dans le cinéma québécois : celui dit de « l'empêchement [éclatement, errance, manque] » identitaire (12/280) et celui de « l'enchantement ou de l'accomplissement » (12/280) identitaire. Or, celui de « l'empêchement » semble avoir laissé sa trace de façon plus exhaustive.

Tel que nous le fait remarquer Poirier, la période de 1975 à 1986 est le moment où le récit du manque identitaire et de l'empêchement d'être est « a un degré particulièrement élevé » (15), mais les années à 1987 à 2000 sont elles aussi atteintes par ce manque. De son côté, Dolan fait partie des cinéastes québécois du 21^{e} siècle et son cinéma semble de même pris entre ses deux catégories de récits identitaires. Avec *Laurence Anyways*, on est devant l'enchantement, mais les autres films nous laissent parfois tomber dans l'empêchement. La place de *Laurence Anyways* dans l'œuvre de Dolan est nettement importante et marquée par une maturité qui, espérons-le, pourra être revisitée dans ses prochaines réalisations et saura marquer le cinéma québécois

du 21e siècle : nous projetant vers une recherche identitaire plus accomplie. Puisque, comme le mentionne Poirier, la question identitaire au Québec ne s'est que très rarement extraite de la question nationale, mettre en relation l'identité de Laurence avec la question de l'identité nationale québécoise est inévitable. Si ces identités soutiennent des points communs et des points de comparaison, il nous apparaît possible d'affirmer que nous n'avons nul besoin d'un référendum pour modifier notre identité et pour devenir ce que nous voulons être; il suffit de changer le discours et ses représentations, éviter le stéréotype des Québécois vaincus et marginalisés.

The Language of Fashion and (Trans)Gender in Dolan's *Laurence Anyways*

By Katrina Sark

Fig. 2: Laurence's (Melvil Poupaud) confession to Fred (Suzanne Clément)

In August 2012, after the release of Xavier Dolan's third film, *Laurence Anyways*, Montréal's *Musée des beaux-arts* hosted an event entitled the "Colour-Block Party" in conjunction with its exhibition on "Tom Wesselmann: Beyond Pop Art" and the annual *Festival Mode et Design*, bringing together young local designers whose creations were inspired by pop art and the colour-block style which Dolan explored in his films.[2] The sea of bright colours worn by the museum guests complemented Wesselmann's colour celebrations on the walls and the local designers' fashion creations on display, and alluded to a scene from Dolan's *Laurence Anyways*, when brightly-coloured pieces of clothing fall from the sky and envelop the two main protagonists. The Colour-Block event marked an important intersection of Montréal fashion, art, film, and cultural scenes, underscoring the collaborative and inter-connected nature of its creative industries. Between 2009 and 2013 international fashion magazines and fashion blogs popularized colour-block fashion trends, providing commentary on colour theory, offering advice on the do's and don'ts of matching different colours, and giving general suggestions on how to incorporate the colour-block style into casual and formal wear. Dolan's fascination with colour blocks, which he first explored in his film *Les amours imaginaires* (2010), his ability to pick up on such cultural and sartorial trends and use them in his films, and his deep interest in fashion enrich his cinematic and story-telling vocabulary. Fashion plays a significant role in his narratives, acting not only as what Elizabeth Wilson described as a "vehicle for fantasy," but through its very performativity and connection to the unconscious, shaping and fashioning the "production of the social self, of which clothes are an indispensable part."[3] Dolan's "sartorial vocabulary" with which he can "define and describe"[4] individual and collective identities, helps us to

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[2] See, Katrina Sark, "Tom Wesselmann and the Art of Colour," *Suites Culturelles* (August 2, 2012), http://suitesculturelles.wordpress.com/2012/08/02/tom-wesselmann-and-the-art-of-colour/. The exhibition showcased 180 of Wesselmann's works of abstract colour and form, pop art, fashion, and advertising, reflecting American post-war affluence and mass media. Montréal designer and fashion blogger Duc C. Nguyen presented one of his red geometric dresses from his "Coupé à vif" (raw cut) collection; Bodybag by Jude, whose atelier and boutique is located in the heart of Mile End on Rue Bernard, displayed a green bodysuit; and Iris Setlakwe opted for a bright red two-piece suit. Martin Lim selected a short black and white leather dress, while !Nu.I by Vickie fashioned a green blouse with a black belt.

[3] Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013 (1985), 246.

[4] Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 5.

identify the links between his protagonists' individual quests and their urban and social environments. Having full artistic control over his film productions, Dolan conceptualized the costume design on all five of his films released to date. This allows him to use all creative techniques at his disposal to craft multi-layered, captivating, and visually original and innovative films, and to further the cinematic and narrative scope of his protagonists. In this article, I examine the ways in which *Laurence Anyways* (2012) utilizes costumes, colours, colour blocks, and styles to reveal the protagonists' inner worlds and contradictions, tracing their personal quests from rebellious chic to conventional acceptability and acceptance.

In his article on "Chromophobia," David Batchelor explores the ways in which traditional mainstream cinema tended to "devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity," specifically by making colour "the property of some 'foreign' body – usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological," or by relegating colour to the realm of the "superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic." According to Batchelor, colour was regarded either as "alien and therefore dangerous," or "perceived merely as a secondary quality of experience, and thus unworthy of serious consideration."[5] In his films, Dolan challenges the conventional ideologies of colour, representations, identities, and genders. By mobilizing colour blocks in his protagonists' fashion choices to express their various selves, moods, and aspirations, Dolan not only makes colour an essential visualization tool in his story-telling, but also challenges and subverts the traditional (patriarchal) attitudes to colour, gender, and identity.

Laurence Anyways premiered at Cannes, where it won two awards,[6] followed by the Best Canadian Feature Film Award at the Toronto International Film Festival, and Best Costume Design and Best Make-up at the Canadian Screen Awards. For this film, set in the late 1980s and 1990s, Dolan collaborated with the Montréal costume designer

[5] David Batchelor "Chromophobia," in *Color: The Film Reader*. Ed. By Angela Dalla Vacche and Brian Price (New York: Routledge, 2006), 64.
[6] Dolan won the Queer Palm Award for his film, and Suzanne Clément won the Un Certain Regard Award for Best Actress.

François Barbeau (who previously worked on *Afterglow* (1997) and with Cirque du Soleil). The film portrays the transition of Laurence—a transgender woman (Melvil Poupaud)—and her complex relationship with her partner Frédérique, or Fred (Suzanne Clément). Dolan presents their different personalities by contrasting their clothes, styles, and appearances in the beginning of the film, and gradually making Laurence resemble Fred towards the end. In the beginning, Fred wears very bright clothes that symbolize her strong, passionate, free-spirited personality. She has long, curly, dyed red hair, with one side shaved above the ear (as it was popularized by hipsters around 2012). Laurence initially has short dark hair and wears dark-toned clothes that symbolize the invisibility of her true self. Initially, Laurence dresses conservatively and inconspicuously—as a man; she is not in touch with her true self and feels increasingly trapped in her restricted identity. In an early scene in their relationship, Laurence pours a basket of warm laundry clothes she took out of the dryer over Fred while she is still in bed, foreshadowing the rain of clothes when they reunite later at Île au Noir (Fig. 1).

When Laurence comes out to Fred as a transgender woman, telling her that she has been living a lie and feels that she was born in the wrong body and wants to continue living as a woman, Fred initially accuses her of being gay and betraying her, but when Laurence reassures her that she does not like men, but loves and needs her, Fred gradually begins to understand the depth of their emotional dilemma. In that scene (Fig. 2), which takes place in their dark blue bedroom, Fred is wearing a rainbow-coloured blazer (of colour-blocks) and a bright blue coat, which contrasts with her red hair, symbolizing on the one hand her daring personality, and on the other hand the spectrum of her conflicted emotions when she is confronted with Laurence's revelation. Laurence is only wearing dark-toned underwear, revealing and baring her body, and allowing Fred to see her at her most vulnerable. Dolan portrays Laurence's struggle with acceptance throughout the film, often employing costume and colour to symbolize not only her gradual transformation, but also her inner turmoil and eventual self-acceptance.

Laurence's first outfit as a woman when she decides to come out at work is a green suit with a long narrow skirt, red collar and cuffs, a golden blouse, yellow medium-heeled

shoes, and one long earring. Her decision to use bold colour blocks for this occasion reveal her determination to eliminate all stylistic ambiguity that she is indeed dressed as a woman, and underscores her adaptation of Fred's bold, daring, expressive, and unapologetic colour palette. She remarks to a colleague who asks whether the outfit is meant to symbolize a revolt, that it is, in fact, a "revolution." Fred continues to be supportive of the transition, but finds out that she is pregnant and decides to get an abortion without telling Laurence. As a consequence, Fred falls into a depression that Dolan visualizes by changing her colour palette to dark and cold tones, while Laurence is fired from her job because some parents complained, and gets attacked and beaten up in the street. Their emotional turmoil during the initial phase of the transition escalates into Fred's emotional breakdown over brunch, when she tells Laurence to leave her alone. That evening Fred goes to a fancy ball in a backless, beaded dress, where she meets Albert and moves to Trois-Rivières to marry him and start a family.

Five years later, Fred is living in a big, white, modern, suburban house with beige furniture, and has a little boy, Leo. Her hair is still dyed the same shade of red, but her clothes are more sophisticated (she wears geometrical dresses and a bright green trench coat) reflecting her new social status. It is as if colour has been drained out of her surroundings, and only her clothes (through occasional colour blocks) can retain the part of her personality that symbolized rebellion, unconformity, and free-spirited nature. In a nostalgic gesture, she takes the warm laundry out of the dryer and spills it on top of her son, just as Laurence used to do. Laurence also lives in an apartment with beige walls in Trois-Rivières. She is a writer, has long dark hair, wears pastel colours, and lives with a woman, Charlotte, who feels threatened by Laurence's continuous obsession with Fred (at night Laurence sits in her car and watches Fred's house). When Fred receives Laurence's published book of poetry in the mail, she realizes that Laurence has been watching her all these years because of a pink-painted brick on her white fence—a literal colour block in her otherwise colourless life—Fred is overcome by emotions, which Dolan symbolizes with water pouring into and flooding Fred's living room, leaving her and everything around her fully drenched. Fred reacts to this emotional awakening by sending a letter to Laurence through her publisher, asking

Laurence to come to her. They reunite as lovers and decide to go on a trip to Île au Noir together, as they had planned when they were together.

In this key scene of the film (Fig. 1), and arguably, one of the most cinematically memorable and emotionally-evocative scenes in Canadian cinema, Fred and Laurence walk down the street together surrounded by white snowy fields and white suburban houses of the island community, as bright, colourful clothes fall from the sky around them to signify their happiness at being reunited. Dolan saturates the screen—and their lives—with sudden bursts of colour, which is contrasted with the white landscape and with their de-saturated lives during their separation, thus making visible the emotional elation they feel and the meaning of colour in their lives and identities. They are both dressed in long trench coats—Fred in blue, with red sunglasses and Laurence in purple with black sunglasses. The splash of colour that envelops them as they walk down the otherwise colourless street signifies their temporary liberation from the social, familial, and personal restraints they live under, and their unrestrained joy at being able to express their true selves and share this liberation and acceptance with each other. Dolan visualizes this moment of acceptance very symbolically through clothes—in a scene placed strategically in the middle of the film, and in the middle of their respective colour spectrums—using not only the clothes they wear, but random pieces of brightly coloured clothing to surround them to symbolize their connection. Their walk is shown in slow motion—Dolan is slowing down time here to allow the viewer and his protagonists to take in the full pleasure of this moment—they are happy, smiling, kissing, laughing, as the clothes fall on and all around them. This is the only time in the film that their colour palettes match and they are, for a short time, emotionally in sync. But their short escape is soon interrupted, when Charlotte tells Fred's husband about them, causing a bitter fight in which Fred tells Laurence about her abortion, and shatters all hopes of a lasting reconciliation and new life together by saying she doesn't want to risk her marriage so that Laurence can find herself, thus misinterpreting Laurence's need for authenticity as a selfish indulgence, and ultimately shattering the hope of true acceptance and understanding, and a future together. Laurence leaves and they do not speak for several years.

In the last segment of the film, they meet several years later in Montréal, when Laurence finds out that Fred moved back after her divorce, and after Laurence's transition is fully completed and she has become a famous author. Her hair is curled, she is wearing pink nail polish, and her skin is smooth. She has grown more confident and comfortable as a woman, and wears pastel woollen suits with pencil skits. Again, Dolan visualized their respective inner transformations through costumes and colours. They both look more conservative, both have long, brown, curled hair—they both look less rebellious and more sophisticated. They wear suits and long trench coats. While Laurence still incorporates colour, albeit with less contrast, into her outfits, Fred is wearing a black jacket and has no traces of the colour blocks that marked her style and appearance in the past. They have transitioned to the opposite sides of the colour spectrum, and are at opposite emotional stages in their lives. Fred asks if Laurence has any regrets about choosing to become a woman (over being with her). Laurence replies that they were very different people with different backgrounds, and that their relationship may not have worked out even if she didn't choose to live her life as a woman. Fred gets upset and picks a fight. As they both walk away from the bar, the wind sweeps up brown autumn leaves around them—but unlike the colourful clothes that swept and twirled around them on the island, the leaves are fallen and dead, symbolizing the end of their long, complex relationship.

The conventional devaluation of colour to which Fred succumbs at the end of the film, seemingly for the sake of respectability and maturity, reveals the hidden, contradictory nature of her character. Despite her free-spirited and rebellious appearance (through colour blocks) in the beginning, she ultimately wants a traditional life and marriage (which ends in divorce), tragically failing to accept Laurence's need for self-actualization and true selfhood. By contrast, Laurence's sartorial transformation transitions from black tones (obscurity and invisibility) to bold colour blocks that allow her to express her true self, her courage, and her search for authenticity despite conventions and social restrictions. Through their unconventional relationship, Dolan managed to get to the raw emotional core of all relationships and to visualize the wide, contrasting spectrum of these emotions through colour blocks and clothes. By foregrounding strong women,

young gay men, and trans people as his leading protagonists, and by using costumes and colours as a vital narrative device to reveal their deeper psychological realities, Dolan challenges the traditional cinematic and social conventions of colour, gender, and identity, allowing us to re-negotiate various representations of inner and outer worlds through the language of clothes.

Laurence Anyways: The Transgression, Narrative and *Mise-en-Scène* of Transition

By Ángela Urrea and Mariana Gil-Arboleda

Fig. 3: The Five Roses of the Pink Club

Set in the nineties, *Laurence Anyways* narrates the story of a man, Laurence, who in the course of ten years accomplishes the transition to become the woman he feels he is. The film portrays the vicissitudes, difficulties and emotional pains of his physical transformation, taking as a transverse axis his relation with Fred—his girlfriend—with

whom the difficulties are also at the core of the film. This story invites a multidisciplinary approach to establish a dialog between the cinematographic theory and gender studies, art and social sciences, and between art and humanism, since the exploration of what makes us humans is perhaps one of the most pertinent starting points for the film. With this in mind, this essay offers a reading of the film using Judith Butler's theories of gender, gender performativity and power, focusing on narrative and *mise-en-scène*.

This essay takes a closer look at the interiority of Laurence as a human being, her deep and complicated love relationship, the tensions she experiences for having a body she does not recognize, the crossroads she experiences for transforming it and for questioning the *sex-genre-desire* system in which she does not have a place. In other words, this essay explores how *Laurence Anyways* proposes a representation of the transgression to gender normativity, in its aesthetic, narrative and plot, by an analysis of the non-hegemonic performativity of gender.

In her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (1988) and subsequent book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Butler states that there is a sedimentation of gender norms that produces the peculiar phenomenon of natural sex, and that over time this sedimentation has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes, which then exist in a binary relation to one another (Butler, *Performative Acts* 524). Gender is therefore not a fact but a repetition of acts instituted by the stylization of the body and enforced through certain modes of punishments and rewards. Masculine and feminine ideals, moreover, are constructed and configured as allegedly heterosexual, which suggests an alignment between sex, gender and desire.

This alignment works as an invisible censorship that circumscribes what is speakable and what is livable, and it is a manifestation of power relations because of an implicit division between what is acceptable and what is not. Butler's work, by extension, also proposes a discussion on the *other*: that which is unintelligible, illegible, impossible, unrealizable, unreal, illegitimate, inhuman, and incoherent—in short, that which does

not fit into the dominant codes and order. This implies that in certain cases the *other* is not considered as a human being, and the *other*'s life is not considered worth of being lived, being wept, being felt.

Thus, departing from Laurence's story (i.e. the non-recognition of the materiality of her body, her intervention in it and her relationship with Fred), what does it mean to transcend that alignment between *sex-gender-desire*? How does the society react and handle this situation?

One might say that the first sequence of the movie, supported by *non–diegetic* music, stages society's view of Laurence. This first sequence is composed of various people in the foreground—young people, women, mothers, elders—who look directly at the camera as they follow Laurence walking in front of them. A similar sequence is repeated following Laurence's first appearance as a woman at school. Laurence crosses the school's halls and a subjective camera captures the fixed looks of the students and teachers. Once again, these looks follow Laurence, although in this instance they are middle ground, *over-the-shoulder* shots. Both scenes stage the look to the different and illegible from the standpoint of normative gender codes. The scene that perhaps more explicitly shows the tense relationship between society and what is different occurs at the restaurant, when a waitress makes unpleasant comments about the the couple's and Laurence's appearances. This is one of those sequences where the film seems to address directly the audience, as its narrative—Fred's speech—more than its aesthetics, situates the spectator at the receiving end of Fred's furious and weary response.

We can affirm that the film positions the viewer to experience the suspicious look directed at the different, because these scenes are talking directly to us. And what is beyond this, is the institutionalization of the *normal* and the criminalization of the *other.*

Butler's work aims to open up the field of possibility for gender. If reified and naturalized conceptions of gender are constructed, this means that they can be constructed

differently. By deconstructing sex and gender, Butler introduces the political charge of her theory on several fronts: because she undoes and redefines the restrictive normative concepts of sexuality and gender; because she thinks the gender beyond the masculine-feminine binaries; because she reformulates the question about the human; because she refers to the existence of real people that experience the rejection and the violence for being different by their sexual orientation; and because she opens a gap for social transformation. Gender norms are subjected to re-negotiation, since they are unstable and depend on a stylized repetition of acts.

This changes how we are to understand power and power relations in the context of *Laurence Anyways*. Power is not limited to coercion or physical repression, because it also encompasses the production of meanings, subjects, speeches, orders, identities and representations. Power therefore becomes manifest in representations, and also by imposing a determined organization of the world, by categorizing human beings and by supporting a symbolic and social order that rejects the difference. Consequently, Laurence's transition has to be considered as a dispute: a dispute of the human being in the world, a dispute of the order of the things, in order to achieve control over one's own life and to question normalized representations.

This implies producing new possibilities for experiencing gender and "constructing a world in which people could live and breathe inside the sexuality and the gender they already live" (Belgrano). Gender is extra-moral and it is not appropriate to speak of *good* or *bad* genders (Birulés). Nevertheless, it is imperative to avoid falling into radical determinism or radical voluntarism. In other words, we are not totally determined because there is a margin for practices of freedom and resistance. But simultaneously, we are located in a social, economic, cultural and political context that restricts and limits the horizon of possibilities.

The film presents two key moments in which its characters fit in and escape marginality. Both the Five Roses and the Black Island are places where difference is accepted,

where Fred and Laurence can be a couple, and where being different is a value. Nevertheless, they are marginal.

The Five Roses represents in many ways a rejection of the hegemony of gender. It is an eccentric group of old women and drag queens who look after themselves, where nobody respects the norm. We never, however, see the members of the Five Roses outdoors; they are always indoors. In other words, the Five Roses live in a place of their own, a place hidden from society. The Black Island, on the other hand, represents a break from the norm and the freedom of being in a place away from daily life, and this sensation is reinforced by the sequence in which clothing falls from the sky as they walk. The desolation of a remote place serves as the perfect shelter to escape and it seems as if there are not many people living in that place, reinforcing the idea of a place without a society.

But perhaps the possibility for a non-hegemonic performativity of gender is best exemplified in the transformation of Laurence. The first allusive image of the transition in the movie happens in the classroom. As students are writing in class, Laurence sits at his desk, and we can see on the end of each finger a paper clip that emulates long nails (see cover illustration). From this point on, Laurence undertakes an odyssey. The film shows the character crossing a deserted park in winter and before a bifurcation in the way, we see him take a decision and to go until the end. This is how Laurence begins his process to change his body and his appearance. He begins to wear make-up, nails polish, to put on earrings and necklaces, to wear skirts, dresses and heels; he begins electrolysis to eliminate the body and facial hair, and to take hormones. In “Trois-Rivières 1995”, we can see that Laurence now has breast implants and long hair. And finally, at the interview in Montreal in 1999 Laurence has accomplished her transition into a woman.

Throughout the movie, Laurence has an interaction with a journalist that alternates between cordiality and rebuff. The journalist, an elegant and refined woman, has an attitude towards Laurence that is akin to what a western conventional and conservative

spectator feels towards such a discord with the non-normativity Laurence embodies. At first, the journalist does not dare to look at Laurence in the eyes. Doing so, she refuses to acknowledge her presence and existence. Yet, Laurence dares the journalist to look at her.

In doing this, the film positions this character as a mirror of the spectator. In other words, the viewer is the interviewer; it is not only through her that we find out what happened, but she also asks questions the spectator would like to ask. The *mise-en-scène* reinforces this illusion as Laurence looks directly at the camera when talking to her, as if talking directly to the spectator.

The journalist becomes a surrogate for the spectator. Laurence faces the camera, looks and winks at us, and after hearing the entire story we are lead to accept the existence of difference when the journalist agrees to look into her eyes. The film seems to say at this point: these three hours of film should not been in vain, you should now understand that the difference exists, acknowledge it, and that gender norms are as ridiculous as the idea of an exclusively binary world.

Laurence Anyways proposes at once an aesthetic and a narrative portrait of the transgression of the rule, from the standpoint of a character who refuses to follow the binary division between men and women, male and female. Indeed, *Laurence Anyways* is a film that proposes the representation of a character who transgresses the rules of gender, by building her own identity as a woman. At the same time, it is important to note that Dolan's film also violates aesthetic and stylistic norms of mainstream cinema, proposing an, at times, unconventional treatment of verisimilitude.
The film is then rebellious in various and complementary levels, but its value does not rest on such rebellion: the value of the film rests primarily in its representation of the struggle for freedom of a human being on her transformation into the woman that she was destined to be. The film does this by forcing the spectator to see, acknowledge and understand the painful reality that some people must go through.

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REVIEW SECTION

SYNOPTIQUE

The True (Homonational) North, Strong and Free

OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon, eds. *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2015. 224 pages.

Book review by Clinton Glenn

OmiSoore Dryden and Suzanne Lenon's *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging* looks at the contemporary Canadian nation state in order to examine the ways in which white heteropatriarchy structures political and social relations, while reinforcing the myth of the benevolence of Canada towards LGBTQ subjects. Underlining this is the concept of homonationalism, a form of sexual exceptionalism that places the white secular queer subject within the frame of nationalism while simultaneously marginalizing other queer bodies,[1] in particular people of colour and indigenous peoples of Canada. The volume itself attempts to fill a gap in contemporary formulations around homonationalism: namely, that scholarship is predominantly American-centric and rarely looks at other national contexts. In attempting to correct this, *Disrupting Queer Inclusion* presents eight different essays focusing on disparate issues including Canadian nationalism, pinkwashing and the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games, queer communities and incarceration, and queer solidarity with Palestine. The goal of the book, as the editors state in the introduction, is "to disorder, unsettle, and disturb such facile binaries of the liberal 'good gay' and the radical 'bad queer' by speaking to the complicated and often uneven relationships of exclusion and belonging, complicity and community."[2] They are, in effect, well aware of the main critique that could be levelled against such a collection – one that is bound up in critiquing homonormativity while rejecting complicity in the functioning of neoliberalism in Canada. The inherent value of this collection lies in its

[1] Lenon and Dryden borrow heavily from Jasbir Puar's formulation of homonationalism in her 2007 book *Terrorist Assemblages : Homonationalism in Queer Times* as a way to conceptually frame homonationalism in the Canadian context. Suzanne Lenon and OmiSoore H. Dryden, "Introduction: Interventions, Iterations, and Interrogations That Disturb the (Homo)Nation," in *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2015), 8.
[2] Ibid, 5.

reflexive nature, as well as in its interjections on discourses surrounding Canadian nationhood, particularly in relation to the commonly held perception that Canada is a safe haven for LGBTQ individuals. As the editors note, Canada presents itself as a country which champions human rights, while simultaneously denying the foundation of the nation built upon white heteropatriarchy: "the idea of Canada as a safe haven is decidedly questionable, relying as it does both on the erasure of violences and on benevolent colonial practices."[3] Most importantly, the editors steer clear of setting down the parameters of what constitutes queerness; rather, each of the essays is allowed to shape their own theorizations around queerness and how it functions in relation to homonationalism and settler-colonialism.

However, the volume isn't without its problems. *Disrupting Queer Inclusion* has a tendency to present Canada as a homogenous nation, rather than a confederation of various regional, linguistic, and political differences, in spite of the clear differences in geographical and social position in each essay. While the editors note that the pluralisation of homonationalism in the book's title is deliberate, stating that the "chapters collectively present a snapshot of these variegated formations of homonationalisms at different temporal and spatial sites,"[4] this intention is often made unclear as one proceeds through the book. *Disrupting Queer Inclusion* fails to address the ways in which homonationalisms can be seen as functioning differently in various parts of the country, as in, for example, provinces that have greater control over immigration and social policy like Québec. Apart from the short though excellent chapter on the Montreal-based Prisoner Correspondent Project by Marty Fink, the book glosses over the existence of Francophone Québec, reinforcing this volume as an analysis of Anglophone Canada, predominantly that west of the Ontario-Québec border, rather than a true examination of the country and all its disparate parts.

Further, the book's critique of white settler-colonial heteropatriarchy, its *raison d'etre*, tends to place the *settler-colonial* aspect of this triad as an afterthought. A single

[3] Ibid, 11.
[4] Ibid, 8.

chapter, “Pink Games on Stolen Land: Pride House and (Un)Queer Reterritorializations,” addresses the complicity of queerness in colonialism and its impact indigenous rights under the guise of Pride House at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games. This is not to suggest that the volume should have made this dynamic its central focus—there are a number of other texts that exist, such as *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*[5] (2011) that fill this gap. Perhaps this can be put down to a problem of framing: in attempting to tackle a country as large and diverse as Canada, the editors clearly had to make choices in what to include within the book. While the editors introduce homonationalism in the introduction and allow the various essays to pick up on its functioning on a political and social level, the lack of a concluding chapter makes the volume feel like a very slight incursion in the neoliberal structures that reify white heteropatriarchy as the default within Canadian society. If, in effect the activist tactics that are presented in a number of these essays are meant to effect a wholesale change in social relations across the country, the ways in which this can be brought into the larger political sphere, short of a social revolution, remain vague and murky. While one may be tempted to read this criticism as a very pessimistic reaction to the volume, it is precisely because of the various potentialities the authors see for a push-back against homonationalisms in Canada that makes the lack of directive all that more disappointing.

Despite these drawbacks, *Disrupting Queer Inclusion* presents a rich and diverse set of voices all drawing attention to the functioning of homonationalism and the reinforcement of white heteropatriarchy as underpinning the Canadian State. What I find most interesting is that the text itself remains a stark reminder of the long, dark Harper government years, where Canadian politics spoke out one side of its mouth, promoting the country as a safe place for LGBTQ immigrants, while simultaneously forcing them to integrate into a nation built upon white supremacy. As the editors note, "[t]he Conservative government’s 2013 ‘Speech from the Throne’ perpetuated this unwriting

[5] See: Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, editors, *Queer Indigenous Studies: Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* (Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2011).

and disavowal of conquest, genocide, and slavery as foundational to the building of the nation,"[6] contributing to a wholesale rejection of any understanding of how Canada is the way it is. The recent change in government at the federal level may impact the editors' arguments; with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's claims to work on a nation-to-nation dialogue with Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, the social field they are critiquing is shifting (however so slightly) to the left. In effect, *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging* is more representative of how queerness has been regulated, and by extension become regulatory, under the auspices of the Harper Conservatives, than a sustained critique that can easily shift between political factions in Canadian federal politics. It would be interesting to revisit a number of the included topics in the years to come, particularly to question how far the Liberal Party of Canada's "sunny ways" go towards correcting some of the structural violence that homonationalism inflicts on disparate communities in the country.

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[6] Ibid, 10.

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SYNOPTIQUE

The Lure of an Ever-Elusive Global Melodrama

Michael Stewart, ed. *Melodrama in Contemporary Film and Television.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 246 pages.

Book review by Meredith Slifkin

In recent years, melodrama has experienced a surge in critical attention, a second act to follow the Linda Williams and Christine Gledhill-led march to reclaim, reinvigorate, and redefine a mode that had been marginalized by a high-versus-low cultural hegemony in film studies academia. An interest in the way that melodrama shapes narratives not just of gender and genre but also of nation and history has contributed to the current impetus to investigate global and transnational connections. This is where *Melodrama in Contemporary Film and Television*, edited by Michael Stewart, aims to situate itself: among the growing list of scholars attempting to expand the narrow geographic and historical parameters of melodrama put forth by scholars such as Peter Brooks (*The Melodramatic Imagination* 1976) and Thomas Elsaesser ("Tales of Sound and Fury" 1972).

The collection of essays was published in 2014, emerging from a symposium at Queen Mary University in Edinburgh in 2010. The films and television series examined are therefore mostly of the millennial era, throwing into question the eponymous contemporaneity of the book. This lack of timeliness, combined with a noteworthy absence of examples from Latin America and a misplaced section on gender and sexuality, leave the reader to question whether this collection can successfully fulfill its ambitious goals. The collection might not be the comprehensive answer to the question of how melodrama functions in a global media culture, but it does provide insightful readings of its chosen topics. Despite some limitations, the collection as a whole successfully conveys an urgency in its methodology: an imperative to explore the complexities at work in the melodramatic mode across boundaries of geography, media, genre, and time.

The collection is divided into two parts, on television and film respectively. Stewart explains this division was made for reasons of convenience rather than design, yet the distinction necessarily brings up questions of how melodrama functions as a mode across different media. Indeed, medium specificity plays a significant role in the first section of television essays, which focuses mainly on the importance of seriality to melodramatic methods of narration and affective manipulation. Of particular interest is Douglas McNaughton's chapter, "Nature, Culture, Space: The Melodramatic Topographies of *Lark Rise to Candleford,*" wherein the author argues that melodrama functions to revise history by privileging the subjectivity and experience of women during the transitional period of modernity. The specific context of the British television industry and the aesthetics of BBC literary adaptations discussed in McNaughton's chapter contrast interestingly with Shoma Munshi's essay, "'We Are Like That Only': Prime Time Family Melodramas on Indian Television." Both highlight the ways in which melodrama is used to signify notions of national identity, respectively denoting "Britishness" or "Indianness" as it is propagated by these two massive television markets. The increasing relevance of melodrama's ability to connect with popular and public cultures through television is evident in this section, and Munshi's essay especially highlights the urgency of understanding the Indian family melodrama within the changing cultural structures of the new millennium.

Less topical, perhaps, is the following section on gender and sexuality in American television. Though filled with insightful readings of *The Sopranos* finale from Martin Zeller-Jacques ("Don't Stop Believing: Textual Excesses and Discourses of Satisfaction in the Finale of *The Sopranos*"), and the melodramatic concept of excess in *Nip/Tuck* from Alexia Smit ("On the 'Scalpel's Edge': Gory Excess, Melodrama, and Irony in *Nip/Tuck*"), the themes overall seem out of place for a collection that otherwise makes strides towards understanding melodrama in a post-colonial context. The essays in this collection generally cohere around the possibility of theorizing melodrama as a mode that exists across borders and mediums, yet this section explores only American television without any explanation for the delineation. The topics seem more arbitrary

than in other sections of the book where issues of gender and nation are more closely entwined.

The second part of the collection moves to film, with a section on memory, cultural trauma, and destiny in contemporary film melodramas, a fitting topic for the current cycle of melodramas that explore memory and evocations of the past (most notably, Wong Kar Wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and Todd Haynes' *Far From Heaven* (2002), as well as the spate of nostalgia-centric films that followed in their wake). The most theoretically complex essay of the collection can be found in this section: Kenneth Chan's "Melodrama as History and Nostalgia: Reading Hong Kong director Yonfan's *Prince of Tears*." Chan treats the film as a tool for understanding current Chinese political anxieties through the lens of the political history of Taiwan portrayed in the film. Melodrama, he argues, through its unique manipulation of nostalgia and desire, functions as a conduit for expressing the collective cultural trauma of the era of the White Terror (the 38-year period of martial law in Taiwan that lasted from 1949-1987). In her chapter, "Vienna to Beijing: Xu Jinglei's *Letter From an Unknown Woman* (China, 2004) and the Symbolic Simulation of Europe, Sarah Artt picks up on many of the same themes as Chan, as she explores the primacy that melodrama is once again taking in contemporary Chinese cinema when it comes to expressing the experience of Chinese cultural life. Her essay furthermore forges interesting transnational connections by addressing the transplantation of the story from Vienna to Peking. Both Max Ophuls' 1948 film and Xu Jinglei's are based on the 1922 novel by Stefan Zweig, which takes place in turn-of-the century Vienna. Artt explores the translation of this story to 1940s Beijing (then Peking), where the novel's themes of women's suffering and the melodramatic manipulation of time are repurposed in a new socio-cultural context.

The final section of the book addresses a prevailing issue in melodrama studies: the question of the melodrama-realism divide. The two were, for a long time, seen as diametrically opposed. Melodrama has long been associated with exaggeration, excess, and expressivity at levels both visual and thematic, reliant upon a Brooksian notion of moral legibility that enforces binaried codes of good and evil. However, the line between

melodrama and the messier world of realism appears increasingly blurred in these essays, as many scholars of melodrama would argue it should be. Stewart's own chapter, "Anticipating Home: *The Edge of Heaven* as Melodrama," explores the renewal and reapplication of melodramatic tropes in spaces that otherwise break confining notions of home and nationhood in the Turkish film. Taraneh Dadar explores similar issues in contemporary neo-realist Iranian cinema in "Framing a Hybrid Tradition: Realism and Melodrama in *About Elly*," wherein he argues that the Manichean moral universe of Peter Brooks is complicated by the film's style of "excessive reality."

Taken as a whole, Stewart's collection succeeds in its main goal: to understand the relationship between melodrama and history more fully than existing canonical work on melodrama. The assembled essays take full advantage of the distinct cultural moment that is post-millennium cinema, and examine the ways in which melodrama functions politically and aesthetically in different forms across different film cultures (though, as previously noted, there is a problematic gap when it comes to Latin American cinema). By dividing the sections into television and film the collection unintentionally creates a divide not just in medium specificity, but also between popular culture and art cinema. This latter divide needed to be addressed, but overall the collected chapters provide thought-provoking analyses of the complexities and prevailing relevance of the melodramatic mode in contemporary cinema.

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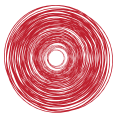

SYNOPTIQUE

Digging Up a Decade: Unearthing the Relevance of 1940s Horror

Mario DeGiglio-Bellemare, Charlie Ellbé, and Kristopher Woofter, eds. *Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema: Traces of A Lost Decade*. Lanham: Lexington, 2015. 378 pages.

Book review by Justin H. Langlois

Many regard the significant years of the horror genre in the United States to be in the 1930s, with the rise of the Universal movie monsters. Movies such as Browning's *Dracula* (1931) and Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) exemplify the Universal canon. By 1968, a more visceral and violent take on the genre was unearthed. Films such as Romero's *Night of The Living Dead* (1968) and *Last House on The Left* (1972) by Craven scared audiences in new and traumatic ways. Both periods have been widely acknowledged as quintessential for the horror genre, helping it carve out a place in academia and film history. However, many scholars regard the 1940s as a dead zone for horror. This low point in the genre produced a multitude of sequels that rehashed old frights and monsters, and clung to the popularity of the previous decade.[1]

In a new collection of essays, *Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema,* Mario DeGiglio-Bellemare, Charlie Ellbé and Kristopher Woofter draw together a group of scholars who answer Mark Jancovich's call that 1940s horror has been wrongfully overlooked in academia. Much of Jancovich's work prior to this volume, such as "'Two Ways of Looking': Critical Reception of 1940s Horror" (2010) and "Pale Shadows: Narrative Hierarchies in Historiography of 1940s Horror" (2008), shed light on the critical reception of 1940s horror.[2] Jancovich reveals that many of the films from this era had been previously dismissed, calling for more scholarly reflection on these forgotten works. DeGiglio-Bellemare, Ellbé and Woofter, all well versed in horror scholarship, have collected a series of articles that re-establish the primacy of 1940s horror. The collection

[1] Mark Jancovich, "'Two Ways of Looking': The Critical reception of 1940s Horror." *Cinema Journal* 49.3 (Spring 2010): 45-66.
[2] Mark Jancovich, "Pale Shadows: Narrative Hierarchies in the Historiography of 1940s Horror," in *The Shifting Definitions of Genre: Essays on Labeling Films, Television Shows and Media.* Eds. Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Jancovich (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008): 15-32.

includes many different theoretical approaches, which help reveal the undeniable influence this decade had on the genre. By not limiting the essays to the United States or a specific theoretical approach, the editors cast a tremendously large net to reel in and capture an amorphous moment in this genre's history.

Though academics have typically regarded the horror genre as diluted and 'in crisis' during the 1940s, DeGiglio-Bellemare, Ellbé, and Woofter argue throughout this collection that genres such as film noir and the woman's film helped to construct the decade's long lasting and unique impact on the genre. The editors also reflect on genre formation and periodization, clearly designating how this collection elaborates on the work of other academics such as Mark Jancovich, Rick Worland, Richard J. Hand, and Paul Meehan. The book is divided into four parts—"Interventions," "Hybridity," "History" and "Poverty Row"—to reflect on a multitude of political and industrial climates that influenced horror in this decade. Standout contributions from Kier-La Janisse, Jancovich, Louise Fenton, and Gary D. Rhodes all work to reshape and reclaim this lost decade.

The first section of the collection, "Interventions," hits the ground running with a chapter by Woofter, who comments on gothic realism within this era and reclaims the importance it played. He notes that scholars overlook the fact that the 1940s witnessed a proliferation of sub-genres, such as film noir, mystery and woman's films, and the films from this era were infused with gothic and cinematic realism. By breaking down the ways in which scholars approach gothic horror and the 'thriller,' Woofter reveals that definitions tend to limit the ways in which the era expressed the social, political and cultural trauma that came with the advent of the Second World War. The subsequent two chapters address femininity and the proto-slasher genre, and how one may position their presence and longstanding influence on the horror genre. DeGiglio-Bellemare explores iconic horror writer and producer Val Lewton and his film *The Body Snatcher* (1945). He reflects upon the film's masterful use of the Grand Guignol tradition, while playing off the trauma of the Second World War.

"Interventions" is the most direct and compelling section of the book, reclaiming the decade and shedding light on its potency and longstanding influence. This section recuperates this nebulous moment in the genre's history through an analysis of how academics perceive the genre, and how recent important approaches to horror are applicable not only to the canonical eras of the genre but also the 1940s.

The next section of the book is tremendously convoluted due to the expansive range of the topics that reflect on many different factors at play during this lost decade. "Hybridity" reflects on what is often missed and overlooked by academics. The section jumps from a reflection upon children's serials, to Edgar Allan Poe films of the era, and finally to Humphrey Bogart's performances of the 1940s. The staggering scope of these topics leaves the section seemingly without focus. The chapters that stand out here are the contributions by Janisse and Ellbé. Janisse's article "The Child Witness: Peril and Empowerment in 1940s Horror *From The East Side Kids* to *The Window*" is a meticulous reflection on kids' serials and the role that horror played within them. These serials and their use of slapstick comedy and horror have been largely dismissed by scholars but would, she argues, "inspire generations of Monster Kids to come" (110). Their longstanding influence has been demonstrated in serialized cartoons such as *Scooby Doo* (1969) and films like *The Monster Squad* (1987). Ellbé's reflection on the *Inner Sanctum* film series (1943-1945) similarly unearths Universal's adaptations of radio thrillers. Ellbé conveys the unique positioning of these films in history and why their place is so relevant to the genre. Ellbé notes how these films stand out in style and form, and how they demonstrate a slow shift to psychological horror. This style was appropriated from its radio predecessors and would further develop in the cinematic form in later decades. These are just two of the section's standout chapters that shed light on lost histories that academics mostly ignore. "Hybridity" also offers an analysis of how the horror genre, especially in the early days of cinema, has incorporated the cultural influences of other media, shaping the genre's development.

The next two sections, though pertinent and revealing, do not wield the same agency or potency as their predecessors. The "History" section of *Recovering 1940s Horror*

Cinema focuses on the historical context of these films' production and distribution, and reflects upon the traumas experienced on a global scale during this decade due to the Second World War. The final section of this grandiose collection focuses more specifically on 'Poverty Row' films. These low-budget films, which were produced by independent American companies such as Monogram and Republic, were typically overshadowed by major Hollywood studio releases. As such, scholars commonly regard 'Poverty Row' productions as a subpar attempt at horror. In this case, however, the authors reclaim their place in history by revealing their worth. This section notably includes these productions and their auteurs as valuable additions to the horror canon despite their humble budgets.

In their introduction "Fragments of the Monster: Recovering a Lost Decade," DeGiglio-Bellemare and Woofter attempt to ground the book with a reflection on the 1944 Lew Landers film *The Return of the Vampire.* They use the film as a springboard into issues of historical context, re-appropriation, and influence on the genre from other media forms. A problem with this transition is that the scope of the introduction, and thereby the collection, is so large that it at times becomes unfocused. The editors do manage to save their collection from obscurity, though, by framing it as a reclamation of 1940s horror, thereby answering Jancovich's challenge to reconsider films from this decade. The majority of the chapters within this book therefore feel like an excavation, where the writers dig deep into the annals of film and uncover lost treasures, covered in grit, previously lost to the world.

The essays in *Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema* champion a lost decade of genre filmmaking, weaving between different geopolitical and economic contexts to reveal psychological trauma, generic intertextuality, and an irrationality of films, all produced in a decade supposedly plagued by sequels and lacking originality. Noël Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror*[3] notes the vehement place nostalgia has within the horror genre. Horror is said to be carnivorous due to how frequently films within the genre revise and

[3] Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

revamp the themes and stories of its predecessors.[4] It is for this reason that the recuperation of the 1940s is so important. *Recovering 1940s Horror* digs up the skeletal structure of these films, marking its long lineage while looking forward and tracing its influence on the more violent and visceral horror of the late 1960s that was, similarly, a product of war and period anxieties.

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[4] Ibid.

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Confused Auteurism: What Has Adoor Gopalakrishnan Got to Do With It?

Suranjan Ganguly, *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan: A Cinema of Emancipation*. London and New York: Anthem Press, 2015. 178 pages.

Book review by Parichay Patra

Since the disciplinary refashioning of film studies in India in the 1990s, an obsessive engagement with the national popular cinema, that is, Bollywood, is perceivable in the field. The Indian New Wave of the long 1970s[1] rarely features in cinema studies scholarship, and the scattered articles in anthologies and intermittent dissertations on the period fail to compensate for this inadequacy.[2] New Wave auteurs like Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani have recently attracted some scholarly attention. Pioneering Indian cinema scholar Ashish Rajadhyaksha has written on Kaul and edited selections of Shahani's writings, and Laleen Jayamanne, a film scholar at the University of Sydney, published the first book-length work on Shahani in English in 2015.[3] The Kerala triumvirate—namely Adoor Gopalakrishnan, John Abraham, and Govindan Aravindan—have not been so fortunate. Apart from writings from the film society days[4] that include Aruna Vasudev's pre-Film Studies work on the Indian New Wave (1986) and articles in *Deep Focus*, almost no scholarly work has been published on their films. The South Asian Cinema Foundation (henceforth SACF) brought out a collection of essays on and interviews with Adoor Gopalakrishnan, albeit most of the contributors writing for the volume belonged to the pre-Film Studies era (Joshi and Venkiteswaran 2006).[5] Because of the overwhelming presence of critics belonging to the pre-Film Studies school, new methodologies associated with the academic discipline of Film Studies have not been used in the book. In the absence of a canon, Suranjan Ganguly, who has been

[1] The 1970s is an immensely important period in the study of Indian cinema and it is usually extended into the following decade, the reason why it is referred to as 'the long 1970s', the impact of which fades only with the advent of economic liberalization in the 90s.
[2] See Bhaskar (2013); Parikh (2010).
[3] See Rajadhyaksha (2009); Rajadhyaksa (2015); Jayamanne (2015).
[4] I am referring to the period when Film Studies was not established as a university discipline in India. Film societies used to publish journals and periodicals to offer a specific brand of non-academic film criticism. The first Film Studies department in India was set up at Jadavpur University in 1993.
[5] See also C. S. Venkiteswaran (2006: 27-32) and Maithili Rao (2006: 33-44) et al.

writing on Gopalakrishnan and his cinema for a considerable period of time (Ganguly 2008; Ganguly 2013), and who also contributed to the SACF volume (Ganguly 2006: 9-26), has come up with this rather unambitious monograph, the primary purpose of which is to introduce Adoor Gopalakrishnan to the West, or, more specifically, to the United States, where he resides and teaches European and Asian cinemas.

What is intriguing about the monograph is Ganguly's reliance on newspaper sources, scattered interviews published in not-so-well-known journals and film magazines as his research materials, as well as his insistence on representing Gopalakrishnan as an auteur. The sheer unavailability of Gopalakrishnan's work[6] is the primary reason of him being much less famous than his illustrious predecessors like Ray and Ghatak. Ganguly's book offers a brief outline of Gopalakrishnan's cinematic preoccupations, his engagement with dramatic arts and pre-cinematic performance forms like *Kathakali*,[7] an overview of politics in the South Indian state of Kerala and the film society movement, and a thematic appreciation of Gopalakrishnan's major films. Ganguly, who has previously published a monograph on Satyajit Ray, deliberately avoided a chronological unfolding of Gopalakrishnan's cinematic life. Instead, he has undertaken a journey through Gopalakrishnan's oeuvre in a (seemingly) idiosyncratic way that he claims serves his purpose of a thematic reading. But in reading the monograph, a number of questions can be raised. Namely:

1. What are Ganguly's methodologies and theoretical framework(s)? How successfully, effectively and consistently he has been able to employ them?
2. Ganguly claims to present a different, non-chronological way of reading the Adoor Gopalakrishnan oeuvre. Does his framework support his claim?
3. Does his monograph invite comparison with other works in the field? How does his writing style separate his monograph from others?

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[6] Only three of his films are available in digital format for the western audience, namely *Elippathayam* (*The Rat Trap*, 1981), *Kathapurushan* (*Man of the Story*, 1995), and *Nizhalkkuthu* (*Shadow Kill*, 2002).

[7] *Kathakali* is an ancient folk performance form of Kerala. Gopalakrishnan's engagement with various folk and classical performance traditions is evident in his documentaries on them. He hails from a feudal family that used to be a patron of the *Kathakali* form, his acquaintance with it started in his childhood. He has made three documentaries on *Kathakali* performers, namely *Kalamandalam Ramankutty Nair* (2005), *Kalamandalam Gopi* (1998) and *Guru Chengannur* (1974).

4. How does or does not the monograph contribute to the larger domain of Indian Film Studies, studies on the Indian New Wave and on Malayalam cinema?

Ganguly's casual understanding and interpretation of auteur criticism seems problematic. With the resurgence of global art cinemas and the decline of culturalist critique in favour of aesthetic-philosophical approaches, "film authorship" is freed from the romanticism associated with the aura of the author and has been taken up as a research method in the world of film criticism once again. This rejuvenation of auteurism is distinct from previous definitions of auteur theory outlined by André Bazin, Pauline Kael, and Andrew Sarris. Adrian Martin, writing about Jacques Rivette's film trilogies, comments on the new auteurism:

> What auteurists seek are the ways in which the films…successively, or in more displaced, circuitous patterns…answer, extend, invert, fulfil, critique, or even destroy each other. (Martin 2012: 115)

This articulation of auteurism is more about the "diverse networks" that auteur studies forms and less about the romantic notion of authorship. Significant instances of this practice, primarily found in French film criticism, include, as Martin suggests, "the sophisticated treatments of Alain Resnais by Francois Thomas or Jean-Louis Leutrat and Suzanne Liandrat Guigues," Nicole Brenez's book on Abel Ferrara, and Chris Fujiwara's study of Jerry Lewis (Ibid). For the Anglophone reader, Leutrat's article on Jean-Luc Godard might be useful. In that essay, Leutrat consistently juxtaposes and associates one film with another, traversing the Godard canon with sufficient dexterity, with the possibility of multiplying "crossovers" endlessly, "indefinitely" (Leutrat 1992: 24). Brenez's engagement with Ferrara, in translation, offers endless cross-generic games that Ferrara played, crisscrossing and shaping up a web of references (Brenez 2007). In her *Positif* article "Approche inhabituelle des corps: Bresson avec Jean Eustache, Philippe Garrel et Monte Hellman", Brenez studies Philippe Garrel, Jean Eustache, and Monte Hellman and, without reducing Bresson to a mere source of 'influence,' consistently finds her way back to Bresson through the myriad cinematic references (1996: 88-92). Ganguly, in his auteur study, does not engage with Gopalakrishnan's canon in a critical way, nor does he attempt to explore the curious ways in which a canon might conceal references to other

canons, other cinemas. Rather, he prefers an uncritical adulation and reiterating of broad thematic unities to a more nuanced understanding of the fissures within.

Ganguly's foray into Gopalakrishnan's oeuvre lacks a structural as well as a methodological explanation for the non-chronological selection of Gopalakrishnan's films. Instead, his work seems a sophisticated version of the tradition of film society criticism that was prevalent in India before the advent of the discipline of Film Studies. Terms like "sordid aspects of social reality," "humanism," "emancipation," "triumph of the individual," and "liberating vision about choosing life" are frequent in his writings. These terms are ambiguous and can mean different things in different contexts, therefore differ from terms generally associated with contemporary film studies and criticism.

Since most of Gopalakrishnan's films are not available commercially for the western audience, Ganguly's introduction proposes to offer an exegesis of them. Exegetical film criticism is an interesting way of looking at films, and scholars like Lesley Stern use this style effectively by remaining more concerned about the mimetic qualities of film criticism[8] and inserting esoteric philosophical texts into the body of writing. Ganguly, on the contrary, apparently believes that offering a not-so-subtle thematic description acts as exegesis. As such, detailed textual analyses or mise en scène analyses are not present in Ganguly's reading of films. Instead, what he does is mere description, without considering the connotations of description in film criticism. A visual narrative that is self-descriptive is difficult to write about, and a verbal re-description doesn't avoid the risk of redundancy.[9]

Furthermore, *The Films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan* invites comparison with similar research in the field. Jayamanne's *The Epic Cinema of Kumar Shahani*, also published in 2015, studies one of Gopalakrishnan's contemporaries and colleagues[10] at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) whose debut *Maya Darpan (Mirror*

[8] By mimetic I mean a kind of film criticism that remains responsive to and reflects (verbally) the pace, rhyme, rhythm of the film it describes.
[9] For the problem of description in film criticism, see Clayton and Klevan (2011).
[10] New Wave auteurs formed a curious circuit around themselves. John Abraham assisted Mani Kaul in his debut *Uski Roti* (1969). Kaul wrote a now-lost article on Aravindan's *Thampu* (1978) that *Filmfare* rejected for its alleged incomprehensibility. Kaul reminisced

of Illusion, 1972) appeared the same year as Gopalakrishnan's *Swayamvaram* (*One's Own Choice*). Jayamanne, without resorting to thematic considerations of Shahani's films (which is almost impossible to do, given the avant-gardist nature of Shahani's cinema and writings), places Shahani within her larger framework of art history, cultural histories, architecture, anthropological studies, linguistic complexities, literary/mythical allusions, and the epic structure. Ganguly, with only scant references to Gopalakrishnan's interest in and use of *Kathakali* and other forms, never departs from his chosen method of thematization.

Finally, the aspect of Ganguly's analysis that is most troubling is his almost complete lack of engagement with other researchers within the larger field of Malayalam cinema or the Indian New Wave. Malayalam cinema's construction of identity is possible only through differences, as its literary culture, popular leftism, and middle class patronage stands out in contrast with cinemas of its neighbouring states. Gopalakrishnan's work needs to be placed within his regional, national, and transnational cinematic traditions, alongside his status as an auteur. Ganguly does not offer such a holistic understanding to his reader. His work seems completely ambivalent about other southern cinemas in the states that border Kerala. Scholarship on southern cinemas and their idiosyncrasies are not referred to, and Kerala's insularity and differences seem to be taken for granted. Moreover, contemporary researchers publishing in the field of Malayalam cinema, especially Ratheesh Radhakrishnan,[11] do not feature in his work at all. Nor does Ganguly access indigenous sources, primarily because of his unfamiliarity with Malayalam. His conception of the Indian New Wave in general or Malayalam New Wave in particular is problematic as well, as he makes unsupported claims of Shyam Benegal's *Ankur* (*Seedling*, 1974) launching the New Wave in Bombay and makes no distinction between art cinema (*Kala*) and middle cinema (*Madhyavarthi*) in Malayalam. By grouping Aravindan and Abraham with M. T. Vasudevan Nair and K.

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about it in one of his *Times of India* articles after Aravindan's death. Gopalakrishnan published an intense yet brief Malayalam article on his memories of Kaul after his demise.

[11] One of Radhakrishnan's recent articles on *Swayamvaram* and two other 1970s Malayalam films by P. A. Becker and K. P. Kumaran examines the supposed realist destiny of Malayalam cinema (2014: 89-100). It is an unusual reading of Gopalakrishnan's debut that Ganguly could have referred to in his own work.

G. George, Ganguly blurs political and aesthetic demarcations, likely because of his lack of acquaintance with middle cinema and scholarship on the latter.[12]

The result, therefore, is a severely inadequately referenced and methodologically confused monograph which projects Adoor Gopalakrishnan as an auteur without a history and background, without associations with his Malayali contemporaries or FTII colleagues, without any engagement whatsoever with the other chapters of the film movement in other parts of the nation, or beyond it.

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[12] Middle cinema is situated somewhere between the arthouse and the popular, it imbibes traits from both, and appeals primarily to a middle-class audience, sharing an exhibition network and patterns with the popular. See Menon (2010: 105-121) for an adequate definition of middle cinema and a detailed gendered reading of two representative K. G. George films.

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FESTIVAL REVIEW SECTION

SYNOPTIQUE

On Heroines, High Heels and Hierarchies: Challenging the 68th Festival de Cannes' "Year Off""

Festival review by Bradley Warren

If I were to identify two major characteristics that distinguish this year's Festival de Cannes, I would point towards the increased security on the Boulevard de la Croisette, as well as the toxic critical reception to the films on offer. The first of these qualities—security—is doubtlessly a ripple effect of the attack on the Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris five months earlier. Of course, Cannes is no stranger to an intimidating police presence. Every year, I am stunned at the small army that convenes each evening to block off the Croisette from the casino to the Hotel Barrière, in anticipation of the cavalcade of limos delivering red carpet guests. Where do these police come from, who would otherwise be unnecessary in this small Riviera resort community?

Regardless, the most visible change was not in the presence of police, but in the circulation of people in and around the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès. It may seem insignificant, but the placement of barriers outside the main doors to the Palais (used to enter the market or visit the Nespresso bar for some much-needed coffee) extended to the crowded sidewalk and enforced a unidirectional movement of foot traffic. This would often result in unexpected traffic jams and language barriers to accompany physical ones, as people did not comprehend—in French—the restrictions on their movement. In one memorable moment, a stampede of accredited students and cinephiles being refused access to the Palais to see Natalie Portman's directorial debut *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2015) collided with the black-tie queue feeding into the Grand Theâtre Lumière for the premiere of *Mia madre* (Nanni Moretti, 2015). I was not destined for either screening but simply wanted to get into the building to pick up the following day's schedule.

This exertion of control onto the movement of press and professionals—evidently to satisfy the needs of security, rather than in the interest of efficiency—dovetails with the

other major characteristic of the festival's 2015 iteration: the arrangement and quality of the films, insofar as the profile and relative access to the features are dictated by their placement within the festival's programming structure. The hierarchal organization of the program begins with the prestigious official competition, which not only translates to prizes but greater visibility to the press and more saturated international distribution. Following this is Un Certain Regard (screened in the smaller-but-still-massive Theâtre Debussy), other non-competitive selections, and the "unofficial" sidebar programs of the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs (Director's Fortnight), the Semaine de la Critique (Critic's Week) and the ACID (l'Association du Cinéma Indépendant pour sa Diffusion). These selections are programmed independently of the official selection and run parallel to the Festival de Cannes proper.

Each of these various programs has a different stated purpose—for example, only first and second features are selected for the Critic's Week, and they receive greater attention in a shorter program that offers only one premiere each day. Regardless, the press understands this as a stratified system speaking to the quality of the films on display. When a bold work such as Miguel Gomes' tripartite *Arabian Nights* (2015) shows up in the "lower" rung that is the Director's Fortnight, the taste of Cannes' frontman Thierry Frémaux (understood to have the first choice of films on offer) is called into question by the international media. Of course, Gomes' opus, projected at the JW Marriott in three parts over the course of three days, would never have been permitted to reign over the red carpet of the Lumière for as many sessions—the *tapis rouge* itself a "path" with its own designated purpose. These famous black-tie screenings demand two or three new cinematic (and fashion) spectacles each evening, a routine which would not be broken to accommodate Gomes' long-form experimentation with structure and duration.

The demand for immediate reactions—Twitter makes the daily news cycle of trades like *Screen Daily* seem slow and old-fashioned by comparison—creates an urgency to making definitive statements on the quality of the festival as a whole, often in advance of the closing ceremonies. The dailies cease publication on the ninth or tenth day as

they are most strongly tied to the market aspect of the festival. Journalists often leave early as well, if only to save on airplane fares; the advantage to this trend is that the last screenings are easier to access. The final films to premiere—*Macbeth* (Justin Kurzel, 2015), *Valley of Love* (Guillaime Nicloux, 2015) and the non-competitive closing film, *La Glace et la ciel* (Luc Jacquet, 2015)—often are excluded from the majority of critical discussions and perhaps less likely to receive prizes as a result. My lack of attention to the former two films (I was unable to see Jacquet's documentary) in this review is less a testament to their quality than a sign of festival fatigue.

If one was to pronounce a time of death for this year's slate, it would have been the day following the first press screening of Gus Van Sant's *Sea of Trees* (2015), a film that was excessively derided.[1] For this reason, as well as those stated before, the critics were quick to label Cannes as taking a "year off" in terms of quality. The atmosphere created by this derision was tangible throughout the festival's eleven-day span culminating with the official competition's awards on the final Sunday.

Blinded by Cannes' hierarchy—an established path to experience the festival which is determined by purpose, individual taste of program directors and, of course, industry demands—the collective press is more interested in criticizing the organization of the films on display rather than making their way through the overall selection and being enriched by the patterns that form. Certainly, there are exceptions; Laura Kern presents one interesting counter-strategy in her report for *Film Comment*, limiting her purview to those films exclusively on display in the market.[2]

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[1] Without sounding disproportionately apologetic, *Sea of Trees,* while not necessarily great (or particularly good), is yet another film marked by a compelling female performance (Naomi Watts, here playing against type). The afternoon screening attended by this writer—and intended for the industry guests, not press—was met with the same polite applause that characterizes most screenings in the Lumière. However, it is likely a direct result of the caustic reception in the trades that Van Sant's film, as of January 2015, remains undistributed worldwide.

[2] Laura Kern, "Slumming It: Days and Nights in the Market," *Film Comment* 51.4 (2015): 66.

The subsequent observations are of my own path through the sixty-eighth edition of the Festival de Cannes (I was able to fit in about thirty-odd films), which was characterized by the presence of notable female leads. My own navigation of Cannes is informed by a number of factors: accreditation and conditional access to tickets, familiarity with a film's pedigree, the country of production (South Korean cinema is particularly tantalizing) and the program in which a film appears (the competition as a consequence of its visibility, and the surprises to be found in the Critic's Week).[3] Above all, considerations must be made for scheduling—the repertory films are almost always a conflict—and acclimating to the time that will be spent in queues, the distance between venues and navigational obstacles such as the aforementioned blocked-off streets and traffic jams.

The awarding of prizes (either sponsored by the festival or "unofficial" honors such as the Queer Palm or FIPRESCI) are one means of recognizing the achievements of individual films, albeit as an expression of the subjective taste of an individual or small collective navigating a pre-determined path through the selection. It is also here in which one can observe the most direct connection between the 2015 edition of the Festival de Cannes and this issue of *Synoptique,* as its filmmaker in focus, Xavier Dolan, navigated his own path through the festival by serving on the jury for the official competition. Following the awards ceremony on closing night, rumors persisted that it was by one jury member's insistence that Emmanuelle Bercot of *Mon Roi* (Maïwenn, 2015) share the Prix d'intérpretation féminine *ex-acqueo* with Rooney Mara for her supporting role in *Carol* (Todd Haynes, 2015). It does not take a leap of faith to understand why the Québécois filmmaker might have been the one to actively campaign for Bercot's performance. Despite moments of over-sustained melodrama, the character fits comfortably alongside the celebrated emotional range of Anne Dorval and Suzanne Clément in Dolan's own films.

[3] One of the most pleasant viewing surprises of the festival—*Paulina* (Santiago Mitre, 2015)—was a consequence of mixing up the venue for an early morning screening of *Coin-Locker Girl*. I did not realize the error until the production credits indicated a film from Argentina, rather than South Korea.

The *roi*, or king, of the film, is Georgio (Vincent Cassell), a DJ and businessman who at times reduces his wife, Tony (Bercot), to a concubine. However, the story remains hers, beginning with her own skiing accident that is insinuated to be intentional. The increased capacity of her knee to bend backwards serves as a reflexive justification for the film's flashback structure. Even as Tony becomes aware of the dark side to Georgio she continues in the relationship in the capacity of wife and later mother, despite the better counsel of her family and friends. In between the outbursts of emotion and hostility the film challenges us to accept her agency, even when she has a tendency to be self-destructive. The end of the film implies that this *amour fou* will, to some degree, always exist between them.

I would also single out three other features for the visibility of their female characters within genre templates: *Coin Locker Girl* (Han Jun-hee, 2015), *Sicario* (Denis Villeneuve, 2015) and *The Assassin* (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 2015). The first is a South Korean film presented as an out-of-competition selection of the Critic's Week, described by program director Charles Tesson as a hybrid of the thriller and romance schemas currently popular in that country. The premise revolves around a baby, Il-young—portrayed as an adult by Kim Go-eun—abandoned in a coin locker at a train station. In her youth, the resourceful girl becomes involved in a loan shark's criminal operation. When an eighteen-year-old Il-young chooses to pursue a normal life the organization's madam, nicknamed "Mother" (Kim Hye-soo), sends her henchmen after the protagonist.

Arterial blood spray had audience members fleeing to the exit, leading them to miss the critical denouement on the maternal lineage at the core of this film and the alternative society it presents. The selection of the film is itself a savvy counter-strategy on the part of Tesson and the Critic's Week. The matriarchal focus of *Coin Locker Girl* may not be representative of contemporary South Korean crime thrillers, and for that reason, it is worthy of heightened visibility on the international festival circuit. More to the point, it is a stronger film than the "official" Un Certain Regard selection from South Korea, *The Shameless* (Oh Seung-uk, 2015), itself informed by patriarchal film noir tropes.

On the other hand, *Sicario* often places its female hero, Kate Macy (Emily Blunt), in the role of witness to the machinations of masculinity and the morally unsound decisions made by men in the war on drugs. After the opening sequence, in which innumerable dead bodies are found boarded up in the wall of an Arizona home (traumatizing imagery which evokes one of the film's genre idols, *Silence of the Lambs* [Jonathan Demme, 1991]), Kate's moral drive motivates her to join an FBI task force, which is accompanied by Benicio del Toro's enigmatic, menacing Alejandro. The team illegally entering Mexico is only the first of its ethically dubious practices, which culminate with the revelation of Alejandro's true identity and purpose.

Kate, unwilling to abandon her values as her male peers do, is unable to pull the trigger at a key moment and might, at first glance, appear powerless. Instead, this encounter highlights the reality of defying immense patriarchal organizations, specifically the military and the drug trade, and how challenging it is to dismantle or operate against them. This is a reality in which Kate's agency is already circumscribed, as her ability to impact change is contingent upon the information provided to her: the identity of Alejandro, the operating powers of the task force and the motivation behind her recruitment. The American government's effort to control the cartels is effectively fruitless and cinematically serves to drive the film's genre leanings. *Sicario*'s treatment of its protagonist within the world of law enforcement proves to be just as insoluble and even more illuminating.

In the world of *The Assassin*, however, one important life (or death) is able to make a difference in the fragile political balance; it is this balance that the female protagonist, unlike Kate, is able to affect and determine. In Hou's film, set in ninth-century China, Shu Qi portrays the nominal assassin Nie Yinniang who is sent to kill her cousin (and once-suitor) for ambiguous political reasons. Characteristic of the filmmaker's work expository details are kept to a minimum, therefore demanding the spectator's rapt attention. After seeing the film twice, it's still not clear why Nie Yinniang was trained to become a legendary killer, and moreover, assigned to the position of maintaining the equilibrium between the Imperial government and its provinces. Certainly, a *wu xia* film

is expected to be populated by such figures but by eliding this information, it is suggested that it does not matter why *she* takes on this role over a male figure. Even if the tropes motivating Yie Ninniang's social position are rooted in the classic Chinese folk tales that influenced *The Assassin*, the context of its presentation at Cannes, juxtaposed with other female-centered films, highlights this quality above other meticulous aspects of the film.

The above-mentioned features are only a handful of works that exemplified an unusually high presence of strong female characters, often within genre cinema. Also worthy of consideration is the Palme d'Or winner *Dheepan* (Jacques Audiard, 2015), which includes the most compelling woman within Audiard's cinema of masculinity, and one who does not have to take on masculine traits in order to assert herself. I do not wish to state that the festival's programming is an inadvertent expression of its heightened security state and emphasis on controlled circulation of its guests, but it is compelling that the women of *The Assassin*, *Coin Locker Girl* and *Dheepan* illustrate societal counter-strategies, whereas *Mon Roi and Sicario* serve to highlight the restrictive structures in place. If the films selected for Cannes aspire to be the "best" and most representative of what world cinema has to offer, it is, therefore, reasonable to expect these works to provoke a productive engagement with the contexts of their production and distribution.

It has been my intention to illustrate that, despite the press' malaise toward Cannes' selection of films this year, there remain important thematic undercurrents that circumvent the festival's organization of films into hierarchical programs. The discourses around the festival, including its dearth of female filmmakers and controversies about standards of footwear on the red carpet, draws attention to a continuing, larger relevance of these themes which will hopefully take on the same prominence in years to come.[4] Indeed, why is Cate Blanchett's performance in *Carol*—akin to those I have

[4] Pat Saperstein, "Cannes Clarifying Red Carpet Shoe Policy," *Variety* 20 May 2015, 27 December 2015 <http://variety.com/2015/film/news/cannes-clarifying-red-carpet-shoe-policy-1201501516/>. To summarize, a woman was denied admittance to a formal dress screening of

explored herein—of more "value" than Bercot's, instead of being *also* of value? Such an understanding is narrow and limits itself to the films' respective award trajectories and a conscious process of canonization that the festival selection and juries are expected to be in sync with. It idealizes the subjective experience of the jury members, such as Xavier Dolan, whose contributions are marked by unique paths through the festival, alternative engagements with its security and, of course, more parties. Even in Cannes' supposed "year off," it remains a cinematic lightning rod and one that can be mined for further productive discussions.

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Sea of Trees for wearing flat-heeled shoes, with no special consideration made for medical conditions or other extenuating circumstances. This imposition took on an ironic resonance with the theme of female agency so prevalent in *Carol* and *Sicario*.

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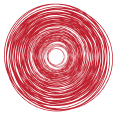

SYNOPTIQUE

Cinemalaya 2015: A Decade of Philippine Independent Cinema

Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival. Manila, Philippines.
August 10-18, 2015

Festival review by Adam Szymanski

Since its inception in 2005, the Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival has annually produced and showcased ten to fifteen original feature films, with special support for budding Filipino filmmakers.[1] These productions were financed by grants of PHP 500,000 (approximately $10,000 U.S.) that were made available through two different funding portfolios. As part of its founding "New Breed" programming in 2005, Cinemalaya produced ten films per year by first-time directors. Five years into its existence in 2010, Cinemalaya began a "Director's Showcase" programme which funded five established directors per year. Yet 2015 would mark a year of changes for the festival. Cinemalaya recently faced the biggest crisis of its short history when business tycoon Antonio O. Cojuangco decided to pull the bulk of his financial support, leaving Cinemalaya unable to fund the original feature films that Manila's cinephile audiences had come to expect. To remedy the problem, this year's festival organizers adopted a new three-pronged structure that included an "Asian Showcase" of significant art-house films yet to have a premiere in the Philippines, including Zhang Yimou's *Coming Home*, Ju Anqi's *Poet on a Business Trip* and Isao Takahata's long-awaited return with *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*. Festival organizers recently announced that the Asian Showcase will be a permanent fixture of the festival going forward. The 2015 program also included a collection of ten in-competition short films (in lieu of the usual features), and a comprehensive retrospective of past years' "Best Film" award winners from both its "New Breed" and "Director's Showcase" portfolios.

[1] English subtitling is a mandatory requirement for all recipients of Cinemalaya production grants, in order to make the festival as accommodating as possible to international spectators and jurors. The majority of the films' dialogue is in Tagalog, though other Philippine languages are occasionally spoken when a film takes place outside of Manila.

My curiosity about Philippine independent cinema was piqued in 2009 when I was introduced to the work of queer Indigenous filmmaker Kanakan Balintagos (during the period when he was directing under the name of Auraeus Solito). After *The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros*, his Cinemalaya breakthrough about the love story between a boy and a police officer set in a Manila slum, Balintagos found modest success on the international film festival circuit showing films about topics as diverse as gay teen sexuality (*Boy*) and the spiritual life of his ancestral people (*Palawan Fate*) at the Torino Gay and Lesbian Film Festival and the Cannes Director's Fortnight, respectively. For international audiences, he quickly became the flag bearer of contemporary Philippine cinema and the proliferation of minority perspectives that it has fostered. Nevertheless, the majority of Cinemalaya titles have yet to be screened or distributed outside of the Philippines, so the 2015 retrospective was a truly rare opportunity to witness the artistic context in which Philippine independent cinema produced its new standout auteur—an opportunity that I couldn't pass up. Based on the crowds of people who filled the Cultural Center of the Philippines each day of the festival, it appears that local audiences found the programming just as compelling.

Cinemalaya's popularity is worth highlighting, especially considering its shoestring budgets and clear focus on promoting young homegrown filmmakers. The international star factor is virtually nonexistent, as it's not the sort of "A-list" festival where non-Filipino films make their premieres. Cinemalaya also prides itself on being a non-commercial antithesis to both Hollywood and the Philippine studio system. Yet audiences continue to grow, and the festival attracts involvement from national celebrities such as Piolo Pascual and Rhian Ramos, who were both in attendance for this year's closing film *Silong [Shelter]*, to the pleasure of screaming fans. Cinemalaya has exponentially multiplied its attendance figures from 11,607 in its inaugural year in 2005 to an impressive 96,639 in 2013.[2] The demographic composition of the audience is equally noteworthy; the spectators are for the most part younger than the filmmakers, and as writer-director Clodualdo Del Mundo, Jr. notes, the filmmakers are considered

[2] Official festival attendance figures are compiled in *Making Waves: 10 Years of Cinemalaya* (99).

old if in their thirties (7). In an age when home and online viewing are frequently cited as successors to the theatrical experience, it's a refreshing sight, especially given the on-screen subject matter.

In commenting on some of the festival's dominant themes, Lito B. Zulueta argues that "Cinemalaya has given rise to a cinema of the marginal" (32). The creative freedom afforded by independent cinema and digital technology has resulted in a wealth of films that tell stories about the quotidian problems of Filipinos who must contend with life in a globalized economy that doesn't do them any favours. Unlike many upper-class romances produced by commercial studios, wherein a confusing love life is the biggest problem facing the pale-skinned characters,[3] Cinemalaya has repeatedly fostered filmmaking that is in touch with the diverse peoples who compose Filipino society. Dark-skinned Filipinos, Indigenous peoples, slum dwellers, gays, women, children and migrants show up on screen in prominent roles, thanks to Cinemalaya's commitment to new minority filmmakers. For at least one commentator with decades of experience in the Philippine film industry, this shift in representational practices combined with the fact that independent films account for about half of the national Filipino annual film output (Cheah 41), constitutes "a sort of renaissance in the history of our national cinema" (Del Mundo, Jr. 5).[4]

The following sections account for some of the festival's most politically pressing minority perspectives that were articulated by the retrospective, including those of migrants, Indigenous peoples, and youth.

[3] The Philippine star system is dominated almost exclusively by light-skinned (*maputi*) Filipinos. This phenomenon can be found elsewhere in East and South Asia, and is reflective of racist standards of beauty imported by colonial interests from the West.
[4] Nestor Jardin provides a nearly comprehensive list of Cinemalaya films that have gone on to receive awards at international festivals. This international recognition underscores the enthusiasm that local critics and film industry personnel have expressed for the festival. For details, see the chapter entitled "The Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival" in *A Reader in Philippine Film: History and Criticism*.

Precarious Migration

Halaw [*Ways of the Sea]* (Sheron Dayoc, 2010) and *Transit* (Hannah Espia, 2013) both put the migrant Filipino experience on screen. The former follows a clandestine boat ride past the Malaysian border and the latter bears witness to the ruthless deportation of Filipino children born in Israel to parents who work illegally on expired visas as domestic help. In *Halaw*, a group of strangers all seeking work in Sabah (a Malaysian state) board a rickety ship that navigates rough waters and interpersonal tensions. This bleak film challenges the ideologically suspect narrative that hard work could actually improve their lives. In an opening scene that sets the tone for the rest of the film, a frustrated pimp tries to convince two pre-teen girls to board the ship with him so that he can sell their virginity to Malaysian businessmen and pay off his debts. He manages to bring one of them along for the harrowing voyage where the characters endure hunger and danger only to be shot at by border patrol as they cross into Malaysian waters and disperse into the night to evade capture. *Transit* also grounds its drama in the real-life difficulties that face some Filipino diasporic communities by telling the story of a family ripped apart by Israeli immigration policy. In a manner reminiscent of Gus Van Sant's *Elephant*, the film strings together vignettes about how the lives of different family members are affected by the constant threat of deportation.[5] It makes for a deconstructed melodrama that doubles as a timely critique of the conditions of migration under global capital.

Indigenous Visions

Cinemalaya has helped to bring a number of groundbreaking Indigenous films into being, including *K'Na The Dreamweaver* (Ida del Mundo, 2014)[6] and *Batad: Sa Paang*

[5] For a historical analysis of the deportation of Filipino caregivers from Israel, see Claudia Liebelt's *Caring for the 'Holy Land': Filipina Domestic Workers in Israel*.

[6] Ida Del Mundo, the director of *K'Na the Dreamweaver* is in fact a non-Indigenous Filipina-American who encountered the T'boli peoples in 2013 at the T'nalak Festival (t'nalak is the traditional cloth of the "dream weavers" and serves a number of important social functions, such as the transmission of myth and religion). Whether or not this film should in fact be considered a work of Fourth Cinema (and thus an "Indigenous film") depends on the framework applied. In "Celebrating Fourth Cinema," Barry Barclay expounded a set of criteria that would exclude this film from being considered a work of Fourth Cinema as it was not made entirely by and for an Indigenous peoples. Houston Wood takes a different approach in his book, *Native Features*, and argues that Indigenous filmmaking should be configured as a continuum with no defined

Palay (Benji Garci & Vic Acedillo Jr., 2006) which were both on display at this year's retrospective. *K'na The Dreamweaver* was shot in the ancestral homelands of the T'boli people in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, and takes place in a mythic time. Lead character princess K'Na is torn between her duty to end an ancient conflict by marrying a man from an opposing clan and her desire to be with the local man who she truly loves. The dilemma plays out through lyrical images of intricate textile patterns made by the community dreamweavers – women who dream patterns with social and spiritual utility for the community. K'Na eventually chooses to weave a pattern that ends the violence between the warring clans, but it bonds her to a strange new man she must now learn to love. The pervasive sense of longing that colours her decision is evoked by the traditional T'boli songs that lift her story from personal drama to a tragedy of mythic proportions. The film echoes a number of other Fourth Cinema works such as *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (Zacharias Kunuk, 2001) and *Ten Canoes* (Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr, 2006) that take place prior to colonial contact in order to revive images of traditional Indigenous life.

Batad: Sa Paang Palay lightheartedly comments on the fissure between modern life in the Philippines and the traditional ways of the Batad people who cultivate the rice terraces of Ifugao (a majestic UNESCO World Heritage Site). It focuses on a teenage boy who loses interest in the agricultural work of his ancestors the more he interacts with urban Filipinos and foreign tourists. The shift in his cultural influences culminates in a fetishistic obsession with acquiring a pair of shoes. Drama and comedy ensue, as he must deal with his father's disapproval and a clunky pair of hiking boots that cause him to trip all over the rice fields that he used to navigate so effortlessly. By the end of the film, he decides to stay in Ifugao, cultivate rice in the manner of his ancestors, and pursue a local woman who has aroused his interest and quelled his passing obsession with modern Filipino life. Like *K'Na The Dreamweaver*, *Batad* is a film that stresses the

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inclusion or exclusion criteria. I include the film under the "Indigenous Visions" heading here in order to signal how Cinemalaya has represented the lives, traditions and lands of Indigenous peoples in the Philippines, even when the filmmaker in question is foreign to the cultural positions represented on screen.

importance of duty to culture and community in the face of the temptations posed by fleeting romance and disposable consumer goods.

Corruption

Filipinos are well acquainted with hearing about government corruption. A year before Erik Matti's crime thriller *On The Job* (2013) tossed the problem of rampant corruption into the limelight behind the star vehicle that is Piolo Pascual, Lawrence Fajardo's *Posas [Shackled]* (2012) impressed the Cinemalaya jury with a gritty story on the very same topic of police officers who force prisoners to carry out extra-judicial killings for political gain. *Posas* opens with an act of petty criminality. Protagonist Jestoni Biag steals a high-end cellphone from a bourgeois Filipina. He is eventually "brought to justice," but winds up getting more than just some draconian jail time. In the film's penultimate scene, a corrupt police chief blackmails Jestoni into killing off a local gang lord that the police have bound and blindfolded. It makes for a poignant film that sympathizes with the thieves of Manila's slums who are offered little to no economic alternatives other than crime, and then must contend with further exploitation when eventually detained by law enforcement officials.

In contrast to this indie feature's intense violence, *Last Supper #3* (Veronica Velasco, 2009) broaches the problem of corruption with a dose of Kafkaesque black comedy. It tells the true story of a gay production assistant who must navigate the never-ending absurdities of the Filipino legal system after having misplaced a prop (a "last supper" decoration, which is common to find in Filipino dining rooms). His mild infraction results in a multi-year struggle to pay the decoration's owner, settle legal fees, and ultimately testify in front of a judge on criminal charges that, if upheld, would have had him thrown in jail. The absurdity of it all is registered by Joey Paras's witty performance as an honest man who tries to hold onto his decency despite being treated like a hardened criminal for a harmless mistake. Underneath all of the laughs lies a pointed critique of a bloated and nepotistic legal bureaucracy that can dehumanize the most upstanding of citizens.

Youth

Perhaps the most remarkable trend of Cinemalaya's eleven-year history is the recurrent and self-reflexive focus on youth. Two notable award winners from the festival's inaugural year starred child protagonists: Nathan Lopez as Maxi, a gender-bending pre-teen who falls in love with a local cop in Auraeus Solito's indie hit *The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros* (2005), and Elijah Castillo in Clodualdo del Mundo, Jr.'s *Pepot Artista* [*Pepot Superstar*] (2005), as a kid who dreams of becoming a movie star and gets to act out his fantasies through musical numbers and vignettes that pay homage to the golden age of Philippine cinema. The cute factor certainly has something to do with these films' success, especially in the case of *Pepot Artista*, but there is something more profound that unites these two films and embodies a certain tendency within Cinemalaya as a whole: an affirmative care for the Filipino future. *Maximo* ends with a broken heart and *Pepot Artista* with a dose of reality, but both films wholeheartedly sympathize with their protagonists' efforts to live the lives that they want to live, even when their desires clash with conservative societal expectations and dire economic situations. While some of the realist works cited above, like *Halaw*, *Transit,* and *Posas,* dwell on the injustices of society and end on very grim notes, they, like the more fun-loving films *Maximo* and *Pepot Artista*, have an unbounded sympathy for their characters who survive the most tumultuous circumstances. The sympathetic attitude embodied by the overwhelming majority of films included in the retrospective is an affective and political disposition that refuses to give in to the cutthroat, individualistic logic of the global economy that condemns so many Filipinos to a life of material poverty.

In spite of its strong focus on youth, 2015 may well mark the year that Cinemalaya has come to maturity. It overcame the disappointment of not having produced any new features this year, secured new funding from the Cultural Center of the Philippines to produce ten feature films for next year's festival,[7] and reflected on its accomplishments thus far through an extensive retrospective. In one of those telling moments when the movies echo the historical context of their production and distribution, this year's best

[7] In 2016, the grants will be for PHP 750,000 (about $15,000 U.S.) since the festival will only be funding ten films instead of the habitual fifteen.

picture award in the short film competition went to *Pusong Bato [Stone Heart]* (Martika Ramirez Escobar), a film about a retired actress who spends her days looking back on the highlights of her career. I'm sure the resonance with Cinemalaya's own situation was not lost on the jurors.

With such a young and diverse pool of talent having matured at Cinemalaya over the past decade, it is likely that the Philippines will continue to produce films that depict the people and appeal to the people in ways that distinguish the spirit of independent cinema from its less reflexive counterparts in evermore distinct and urgent ways. Cinemalaya is now more than just a festival: it doubles as a platform for the expression and emergence of minority subjectivities that are otherwise absent from mainstream Filipino screens and their habitual blindness and apathy towards class and race-based systems of oppression. It also serves as a poignant reminder of how digital filmmaking technology can assume a political valency when paired with uncompromising artists and art institutions that are committed to narrating marginalized and underrepresented experiences that make commercial cinemas and their establishment values very uncomfortable. Philippine independent cinema has had to contend not only with Hollywood exports but also with a national film industry that has failed to confront the issues at Cinemalaya's thematic core: poverty, racism, neocolonialism and corruption. Independent Philippine cinema is still marginal to the culture industry, yet armed with honesty and criticality, it is consistently winning over Filipino audiences who are finally starting to see the drama of their daily lives on screen.

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