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## Cinema in the Age of Globalization

My first recollection of the film industry in British Columbia dates from 1979, when my friend Gord Darby invited me to attend the Vancouver premier of a film in which he claimed to have played a central role. Gord is 6-foot-10 and played college basketball. As he tells it, he received a phone call at home one evening from a film producer, whose first words were, “I hear you’re tall.” Gord was thus recruited to wear the large and cumbersome costume of the monster in the John Frankenheimer horror movie *Prophecy*, which was shooting some scenes in North Vancouver. We laughed all the way through this ridiculous film – until the end, that is, when Gord’s name was excluded from the credits, leading us to believe that none of his scenes had made the final cut.

I had a similar experience in 1986 when another friend, Larry Pynn, a reporter with the *Vancouver Sun*, signed on as an extra for the Michael Chapman fantasy *Clan of the Cave Bear*, then filming on Bowen Island. At the film’s Vancouver debut, it seemed that most of the audience consisted of extras like Larry. To this day, Larry still searches for himself on the screen – midway through the film, at the edge of the frame of a busy scene in which hundreds of extras adorned in animal skins arrive for a gathering of the clans. I found him as hard to recognize as Gord had been in his monster costume. The credits, at least, verified Larry’s participation.

The BC film industry was in those days, to me and my friends at least, a lark, nothing we were prepared to take seriously. Even when, as a student at Simon Fraser University, I began to study the Canadian film industry during the free-trade debates of the late 1980s, I had little regard for what was happening all around me. Filmmaking in British Columbia was not *real* cinema, because the province was little more than a Hollywood back lot, and because the films shot in British Columbia were almost always set somewhere else. The province's role seemed no more integral to these films than Gord and Larry had been to theirs. To my mind, the products of what had come to be called Hollywood North lacked the integrity of those rare home-grown films like Phillip Borsos's *The Grey Fox* or Sandy Wilson's *My American Cousin*, films that were conceived, shot, *and* set in British Columbia. I was convinced that, for the most part, real cinema took place elsewhere.

But the film industry in British Columbia has become harder and harder to ignore. It has grown steadily, producing more films and television programs, and spending more money in the province each year. Some years have been leaner than others, certainly, but Hollywood's anticipated desertion of British Columbia has never materialized. In fact, during the busy summer months, often enough film crews and studio space aren't available to satisfy Hollywood's demands. If anything, Hollywood's presence in British Columbia has become further entrenched in recent years as major Hollywood studios establish local production facilities. At the same time, a small indigenous industry has emerged, gaining notice and occasionally awards at film festivals throughout Canada and internationally.

British Columbia has become in the span of twenty-five years one of the largest centres of film and television production in North America. Compared to just 4 productions and \$12 million in direct spending in 1978, the film and television industries spent \$1.18 billion on 192 productions – including fifty-six feature films – in British Columbia in 2000 (BC Film Commission 2001b). These numbers are significant not only to British Columbia. They attest to the growing importance of regional and foreign location production within the Canadian film industry. Every province in Canada has at least one government office promoting film production, and within the provinces there are regional and municipal film commissions seeking to attract location activity to their areas.

At the same time, these numbers underscore the increasing internationalization of commercial film production by the major studios, a development

California film workers have found threatening. Two Hollywood labour organizations – the Directors Guild of America and the Screen Actors Guild – commissioned a study that singled out British Columbia as a chief culprit in luring film and television production away from southern California (Monitor Company 1999). During the spring and summer of 1999, California film and television workers staged rallies in Burbank, Sacramento, and Hollywood, calling for action from the state legislature to stem so-called runaway production (Movie, TV workers 1999).

A report commissioned by the International Trade Administration (2001, 27) of the US Department of Commerce estimated US\$2.8 billion in direct expenditures were lost to runaway production in 1998, although the Directors Guild of Canada claimed the figure was closer to a still-substantial US\$1.74 billion. The Film and Television Action Committee (2001) said that of the 37 percent of all US-developed film and television productions in 1998 made in foreign locations, 81 percent were made at least partly in Canada; it accused Canada of trying to steal the film industry from the United States (see also Magder and Burston 2001, 208). By October 2001, a bill had been introduced in Congress asking the US government to provide wage-based tax credits for small to mid-size projects filmed in the United States (Garvey 2001a). In December 2001, the Film and Television Action Committee and the Screen Actors Guild filed a petition with the US Department of Commerce, asking Washington to impose penalties on film and television productions shot in Canada (Garvey 2001b).

Canadian film and television production has become a \$4.4 billion industry, creating the equivalent of 46,000 full-time jobs annually. The industry produces about forty Canadian feature-length films each year (Yaffe 2001). British Columbia occupies a distinct place within this industry, given its relatively recent emergence as a production centre, its heavy reliance on foreign service production, and its consequent modest contribution to Canada's stock of indigenous films and television programs. From 1990 to 2000, for example, spending by foreign film and television producers accounted for more than two-thirds of the industry's economic activity (BCFC 2001b). As recently as 1995, BC production represented just 7 percent of Canadian production budgets, compared to Ontario's 59 percent and Quebec's 30 percent (CFTPA 1997, 1-10).

British Columbia's heavy reliance on foreign location production raises an obvious question: What does it mean, in an age of global image flows

and transnational audiovisual production, to speak of the *British Columbia* film industry, an industry with clearer links to Hollywood than to Canada? Besides being the geographical site of production, what relevance does this place have to the dramatic cinema that is produced within its boundaries? Such questions have been the source of some angst, as the opening paragraphs of a front-page article in the *Vancouver Sun* attest: "It's the old familiar story. In the movie business, BC residents are the hewers of wood and drawers of water for a seductive foreign culture – and Beautiful British Columbia itself stands in for less beautiful foreign parts, usually in the United States. The movie invasion of British Columbia by US producers may be good for Canada's economy, but what is it doing for our soul as a nation? In the circumstances, the nickname 'Hollywood North' takes on an ominously ironic ring" (Canadian culture? 1995). Where does British Columbia fit within this cinema? Is it merely a convenient yet expendable site of production? Or can it make a more integral claim to the cinema made within its boundaries?

These questions arise from unstated assumptions about the nature of cinema and the proper relationship between a cinema and its site of production. These assumptions, which cast the BC film industry as some kind of misfit, thwart serious evaluation of what kind of cinema it is and how we might understand its relationship to place. The idea that British Columbia's feature film industry is a dis-placed cinema is written into the nicknaming of Vancouver, the province's centre of film production, as "Hollywood North" or "Brollywood." The *New York Times* has called Vancouver "The City That Can Sub for All of America" (Elias 1996).

## **CINEMA AS NATIONAL CINEMA**

If cinema is one of the media through which we imagine place, it must also be acknowledged that place is one of the templates with which we imagine cinema. Cinema, in other words, has commonly been analyzed as a medium of expression specific to a geographically situated culture. And within cinema's taxonomy, privilege has been granted to *national* cultures. Even those studies that foreground genre or auteur analyses frequently appeal to national cultural contexts to explain specific characteristics of film texts. Thus, we read about German expressionism, Soviet socialist realism, Italian neo-realism, French impressionism and surrealism, and the American western (see Cook 1985; Bordwell and Thompson 1986; Turner 1990).

Certainly it can be argued that context remains pertinent to the analysis of both film industries and film texts. But what is less clear is how context itself should be demarcated. Classifying cinema as national cinema can no longer be assumed to be the most appropriate category of analysis for a body of films produced within a given nation-state, nor can it be taken for granted that all film industries are national industries. The nation is not the only scale on which place can be imagined. The framing of cultural production as national cultural production is called into question by transnational enterprise, by local or regional cultural workers, and by cultural producers whose identity is not tied to geographic proximity. Thus, we can point to women's cinema, black cinema, and queer cinema as examples of filmmaking traditions emanating from communities that do not necessarily share a geographical locale.

Classification is an important issue because how we categorize cinema informs how we talk about films, or whether we talk about them at all. Critical categories, such as national cinemas, help to define cinema by assigning the medium a particular social role, by establishing parameters of discussion, by including certain film texts, and by excluding others. Dissonant elements, however, are then either suppressed or overlooked: "The problem is that categories have a mythologizing and homogenizing function: they perpetuate a logic of identity, a logic which dictates that the critic emphasize elements (textual or extra-textual) of coherence, unity and wholeness" (Stukator 1993, 118).

Andrew Higson (1989) argues that there is no single, accepted discourse of national cinema. National cinema can be defined in economic terms, whereby the term "national cinema" embraces an entire domestic film industry. National cinema discourse can also take a text-based, consumption-based, or criticism-led approach, reducing national cinema to "quality art cinema": "In other words, very often the concept of national cinema is used prescriptively rather than descriptively, citing what *ought* to be the national cinema, rather than describing the actual cinematic experience of popular audiences" (36-7). The process of identifying a national cinema, Higson maintains, is an attempt to contain that cinema, to limit what it can mean and, ultimately, produce (37).

Peter Morris (1994) offers a specific example of this problem in his analysis of canon formation in Canadian film studies during the 1960s and 1970s. A prevailing assumption of criticism in that period, Morris remarks,

was that films in Canada should be discussed as products of a national culture. Morris invokes two Claude Jutra films: *Mon Oncle Antoine* (1971), which has been thoroughly analyzed and is a staple of film studies courses; and *À tout prendre* (1963), which remains marginal to Canadian cinema study. While both are generally acknowledged to be excellent films, they are distinguished by their treatment of identity. *Mon Oncle Antoine* deals with French-English relations, and therefore fits comfortably within the “two solitudes” discourse of Canadian film scholarship. *À tout prendre* is a very personal and autobiographical film, and thus falls beyond the thematic boundaries of Canadian national cinema. Morris argues that the nationalist orientation of 1970s criticism “effectively negated any meaningful debate about how a ‘national’ cinema might be defined” (30-3).<sup>1</sup>

For Bart Testa (1994), Canadian film scholarship has been constrained by a “social-reflection thesis,” a legacy he traces to John Grierson, who institutionalized this thesis in the National Film Board of Canada: “Canadian critics (and governments too) have repeatedly declared that there should be ‘distinctly’ Canadian movies. The distinction would be that these movies would ‘reflect’ Canadian social realities, and so they would somehow have to be ‘realistic.’ This social-reflecting activity, in turn, would constitute Canadian identity. It is this social-reflection prescription that provides unity to critical debates and to Canadian cinema” (9). Testa remarks a “consensual preoccupation” among Canadian film scholars that “movies should serve a high moral purpose” – nation-building, the articulation of a national culture – as opposed to being, for instance, sources of entertainment.

Organizers of an extensive Canadian cinema retrospective at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1993 struggled over how to categorize the disparate assortment of 145 films they chose to screen. The cumbersome title of the exhibition – *Les Cinémas du Canada: Québec, Ontario, Prairies, côte Ouest, Atlantique* – acknowledged plurality at the same as it embedded Canada’s national cinema in the country’s diverse regions.<sup>2</sup> The catalogue that accompanied the retrospective devoted chapters to Quebec and “les autres provinces” as well as to documentary, feminist, experimental, and IMAX films (Garel and Pâquet 1992). In his introduction to the catalogue, Sylvain Garel (1992, 9) acknowledges that “ces cinématographies abordent des thèmes et développent des styles très différents, à tel point qu’il aurait été plus logique d’intituler cette rétrospective et cet ouvrage «Les cinémas du Québec et du Canada».” However, “ce titre a dû être abandonné à cause de

problèmes économique-politiques résultant de l'interminable et complexe débat constitutionnel canadien.”<sup>3</sup>

Michael Dorland (1998, 3) proposes that the challenge to scholars of filmmaking in Canada is “the utter heterogeneity of its cinema.” Besides its various genres – documentary, experimental, animation, features, shorts – Canada offers distinct production traditions emanating from an array of institutional sites. “Given the complex heterogeneity of Canadian cinema, where was the analyst to actually ‘locate’ it?” he asks (5). Canadian film scholarship has typically treated Canadian cinema’s heterogeneity “as problems to be disposed of,” Dorland argues, rather than as “starting points for a problematic of historiographical method.” The concept of national cinema has conveniently allowed scholars to provide a unified frame for a fragmented Canadian cinema (5-6). By reducing cinema in Canada to national cinema, and thereby glossing over the difficulties of sharing the North American continent with the United States, English-Canadian film critics, in Dorland’s view, have tried to play a role in forging a national culture (11).

Conventional analyses of cinema as national cinema also ignore or suppress what has become an increasingly prominent feature of contemporary film. The transnationalization of Hollywood’s film production sector, which resulted from the Hollywood majors abandoning the factory-like studio system of production in the postwar period, further complicates the relationship between cinema and place. What Toby Miller (1996, 77) refers to as “the new international division of cultural labor” means that local film industries around the world include both indigenous filmmaking and runaway production conceived and financed by, typically, American film companies. In places like British Columbia, the hybrid motion picture industry is devoted *primarily* to foreign location production. Over time, local film workers have increasingly implicated themselves in the production of Hollywood films and television programs by assuming creative roles as performers, directors of photography, assistant directors, and occasionally as directors. When Steven Spielberg shot portions of *Schindler’s List* (1993) in Poland, for example, Polish nationals Janusz Kamiński (director of photography), Allan Starski (set designer), and Ewa Braun (costumes) occupied key creative positions (Wertenstein 1995).

John Hill (1994b) suggests that if *specific* cinemas are contested categories, so is the category of cinema itself. In other words, when we talk about “cinema,” what exactly are we talking about? A cinema comprises three main

components: the structures of film production, the textual characteristics of film, and the distribution and exhibition of films. These three components have permitted film scholars to make analytical distinctions between, for example, cinema in Europe and European cinema, a distinction that may hide as much as it reveals about cinema's sense of place. Given Hollywood's dominance of European cinema screens and the major studios' investment in runaway production, Hill suggests that "it could be possible for there to be a successful European film industry which is nonetheless neither making nor showing European films" (54-5).

Ireland is one such example: "Since the 1930s, the state's support for film production has usually been limited to addressing problems of unemployment through encouraging foreign capital to invest in films in Ireland" (Rockett 1994, 128). Kevin Rockett points out that well-known "Irish" films like *My Left Foot* (1989), *The Field* (1990), *The Commitments* (1991), *The Playboys* (1992), and *Far and Away* (1992) were produced largely with British and American money. The Irish government established a film office in Los Angeles in 1995 for the purpose of promoting Ireland as a location for runaway production (Dwyer 1995).

Hill (1994a, 5) argues that Hollywood is not simply a parallel "other" that can be ignored in the analysis of indigenous cinemas. He suggests that it may be useful to think of Hollywood less as a national industry than as a global cinema, which Europeans – and Canadians – have both helped to create and have integrated into their own popular culture.<sup>4</sup> For example, when Irish filmmakers began to construct their own "cinematic Ireland" in the wake of numerous Hollywood images of their country, they were compelled to develop a film form better suited to the films' thematic preoccupations, constituting "an attempt to re-imagine Ireland" (McLoone 1994, 168).

Stephen Crofts (1993, 61) lists seven varieties of national cinema in an attempt to acknowledge that there is a wider range of cinemas than is typically signified by that term: "Not only do regional and diasporic cinema production challenge notions of national cinemas as would-be autonomous national businesses. So, too, Hollywood's domination of world film markets renders most national cinemas profoundly unstable market entities, marginalized in most domestic and all export markets, and thus readily susceptible, *inter alia*, to projected appropriations of their indigenous cultural meanings." One of the seven varieties Crofts identifies is regional/ethnic cinema, a category that includes, for example, Catalan, Québécois, Welsh, Aboriginal,

Maori, native American, Chicano, and Afro-American filmmaking. Unfortunately, Crofts does not elaborate on the particular sense of “national” these cinemas evoke.

In a similar vein, Tom O’Regan opens up the category of national cinema analysis about as far as it will go without rendering it altogether meaningless. For O’Regan (1996, 4), a national cinema is “a film milieu made up of antagonistic, complementary and simply adjacent elements, which are to be made sense of in their own terms.” This accounts not only for the varied motivations of local filmmakers, but also for the presence in the same milieu of the transnational commercial film industry.

If Crofts and O’Regan call into question the way national cinemas are conceived and analyzed, they stop short of rejecting the frame altogether. They maintain the hegemony of the national, a classification that cannot account for the possibility that certain sub-national jurisdictions may constitute cinemas obeying alternative spatio-temporal dynamics, with distinct histories, laws, institutions, traditions, and funding mechanisms, cinemas integrated within industrial networks operating both intra- and internationally. What such criticism points to, instead, is a category crisis. Too many cinemas today defy the national category, because the production community is not a national community in any sense of the term, or because nations have too many cinemas for the term to have meaning, or because filmmaking in any one nation is increasingly intertwined with transnational networks of finance, production, distribution, and exhibition.

The film industry in British Columbia certainly cannot be understood within the national cinema frame. It doesn’t fit. If the idea, proposed by Tom O’Regan, is to make sense of particular cinemas “in their own terms,” then it is necessary to set aside prefabricated conceptual frameworks, such as “national cinema,” and allow the characteristics of these cinemas to establish their own terms of understanding. That is what this book sets out to do.

## **CINEMA AND GLOBALIZATION**

This category crisis also calls into question conventional understandings of “place,” the physical and social environment in which film and television production occurs, and the relationship between filmmaking and its site of production. The framing of cinema as national cinema is particularly vulnerable in an era of globalization.

Scholars who have engaged with the phenomenon of globalization from

a number of disciplinary perspectives maintain that globalization has reconfigured our senses of space and place. They underline, further, the significant role the mass media play in the complex process of how we imagine and construct ideas of place, as well as the related notions of community, culture, society, nation, and identity. Far from rendering place irrelevant or inconsequential, however, such scholarship encourages a radical reconceptualization of place in the context of intensified global social relations. This reconceptualization implicates culture as well as place: "Globalization pulls cultures in different, contradictory, and often conflictual ways. It is about the 'de-territorialization' of culture, but it also involves cultural 're-territorialization.' It is about the increasing mobility of culture, but also about new cultural fixities" (Robins 1997, 33).

The contemporary world is characterized by the compression of time and space. Social relations extend further than ever before, with greater frequency, immediacy, and facility. The term "globalization" refers to the increased mobility of people, capital, commodities, information, and images associated with the postindustrial stage of capitalism, the development of increasingly rapid and far-ranging communication and transportation technologies, and people's improved access to these technologies. Globalization has increased and facilitated intercultural contact across an array of social sites, from the workplace to the supermarket, from the bus stop to the living room.<sup>5</sup>

The term "globalization" is unfortunate because it suggests that *all* significant social relations now occur on a global scale. What the term more properly refers to, however, is an intensified *interrelation* of social activity on local and global scales, rather than their opposition (Massey and Jess 1995, 226). Rob Wilson (1996, 318) applies the more useful term "global/local interface." Doreen Massey (1992, 6) describes this interface as follows: "Each geographical 'place' in the world is being realigned in relation to the new global realities, their roles within the wider whole are being reassigned, their boundaries dissolve as they are increasingly crossed by everything from investment flows, to cultural influences, to satellite TV networks." She adds that the social relations that constitute a given locality increasingly extend beyond that locality's borders, no longer contained within any given place (7).

Of course, international migration is not new, nor is the mobility of capital or the global circulation of cultural products. What is new about

globalization is its intensity: the expanded reach and the immediacy of contemporary social relations. Migration, whether regional, intranational, or international, voluntary or forced, has become a more common experience. Russell King (1995, 7) notes that few people in the Western world today live their entire lives in the same place. King remarks a trend to an increasing diversity of migrant source countries and a change in the push and pull factors of migration. Push pressures in developing countries are increasing, as poverty, overcrowding, political instability, and environmental degradation reach intolerable levels, and people have acquired at least some knowledge of living conditions in the industrialized world. As a consequence, migrants from the margins have moved to the centres of economic and political power. At the same time, pull pressures have changed. The decline in manufacturing has reduced the need for traditional migrant labourers, while the growth of the service sector has increased the demand for highly skilled workers, resulting in what King calls “a new breed of executive nomads who, whilst quantitatively much less important than the mass labour migrations of the past, nevertheless wield enormous influence over the functioning of the global economy” (22-4).

The increased mobility of capital, of course, is not unrelated to the issue of migration. Corporations are becoming transnational. They are less rooted to their “home” territories than ever before, seeking greater productivity and improved access to international markets wherever these advantages can be found. In the economic realm, David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995, 109) insist that globalization organizes production and markets on a world scale. Nowhere has capital been more successful at penetrating world markets than in the cultural sphere. Morley and Robins argue that two key aspects of the new spatial dynamics of globalization are, first, technological and market shifts leading to the emergence of “global image industries,” and, second, the development of local audiovisual production and distribution networks (1-2). The authors refer to a “new media order” in which the overriding logic of corporations is to get their product to the largest possible number of consumers (11).

But if, as Stuart Hall (1995, 27) notes, satellite television is the epitome of transnational forms of mass communication, “the most profound cultural revolution has come about as a consequence of the margins coming into representation.” He argues that within the global mediascape, story tellers and image makers have won the space to assert their own particularity: “The

emergence of new subjects, new genders, new ethnicities, new regions, new communities, hitherto excluded from the major forms of cultural representation, unable to locate themselves except as decentered or subaltern, have acquired through struggle, sometimes in very marginalized ways, the means to speak for themselves for the first time” (34).

Media images also serve as a reminder of how far our social relations stretch, and the extent to which those relations are technologically mediated. Morley and Robins (1995, 141) observe: “The screen is a powerful metaphor for our times: it symbolizes how we exist in the world, our contradictory condition of engagement and disengagement.” The perpetual flows of people, capital, goods, services, and images that characterize globalization carry significant implications for how we experience and imagine place, how we define community, and how we constitute identity. Globalization renders actual borders more porous and metaphorical boundaries passé. But with all this movement and intermixing, how can we retain a sense of local particularity (Massey 1991, 24)?

Globalization has not caused place to lose meaning so much as it has intensified struggles over the meaning of place and thereby *exposed* the extent to which “place” is a social construction. Places are vulnerable to reification, the perception that they are something other than products of human activity. However, places have no natural boundaries, nor are they in any way naturally confined in scale. If places have boundaries at all, these boundaries have been drawn by social actors: “Geographers have long been exercised by the problem of defining regions, and this question of ‘definition’ has almost always been reduced to the issue of drawing lines around a place” (Massey 1991, 28).

As noted above, the various flows we associate with globalization are not new. Globalization has, however, both increased the traffic – human, material, electronic – across some borders, and reconfigured others. For example, the free-trade agreement between Canada and the United States was an attempt to facilitate trade across the border that divides the two countries. Although the legal boundary remains, the meaning of the border has changed, at least as far as trade relations are concerned. Satellite television, on the other hand, ignores terrestrial boundaries altogether, and is confined instead only by the satellite “footprints” that mark the limits of a satellite’s transmission.

The heightened permeability of borders has been met, among some, by

the desire for a more rooted sense of place. Scholars are in some disagreement over whether relatively isolated, cohesive, and homogeneous communities ever existed, or if they did, how far back in history we need to go to find them. Massey (1992, 8) rejects inherited notions of a “singular, fixed and static” identity of place by arguing that “‘places’ have for centuries been more complex locations where numerous different, and frequently conflicting, communities intersected.” She maintains that “it has for long been the exception rather than the rule that place could be simply equated with community and by that means provide a stable basis for identity.” The identity of a place “does not derive from some internalized history. It derives, in large part, precisely from the specificity of its interactions with ‘the outside’” (13).

Although there is disagreement as to the genesis of the relationship between space and place, there is consensus that place can no longer be thought of as a simple “enclosure” for community, identity, or culture. Gillian Rose (1995, 88) notes that place has been a privileged component of identity formation: “Identity is how we make sense of ourselves, and geographers, anthropologists and sociologists, among others, have argued that the meanings given to a place may be so strong that they become a central part of the identity of people experiencing them.” Places, and the experiences we associate with places, both as individuals and as members of a group, inform memory and our sense of belonging. This sense of belonging is critical to understanding the relationship between identity and a particular locale. “One way in which identity is connected to a particular place is by a feeling that you belong to that place,” as Rose points out (89). We might, therefore, detect different senses of belonging between native residents of a place and migrants. Such migrants as refugees and exiles, who have not moved of their own free will, may feel little sense of *appartenance* in their new place of residence (96). Rose argues, “Increasing flows of ideas, commodities, information and people are constantly challenging senses of place and identity which perceive themselves as stable and fixed. The increasing interdependence between places means that, for many academics at least, places must be seen as having permeable boundaries across which things are always moving. Identities, too, more and more often involve experiences of migration and cultural changing and mixing” (116).

Culture is another means by which identities of place are constructed and sustained. Stuart Hall (1995) argues that we tend to imagine cultures as “placed” in two ways. First, we associate place with a specific location where

social relationships have developed over time. Second, place offers cultures “symbolic boundaries,” which separate those who belong from those who don’t. At the same time, “there is a strong tendency to ‘landscape’ cultural identities, to give them an imagined place or ‘home,’ whose characteristics echo or mirror the characteristics of the identity in question” (182). However, Hall adds, “the ways in which culture, place and identity are imagined and conceptualized are increasingly untenable in light of the historical and contemporary evidence” (186).

While one impact of globalization has been the diminution of “place” as the basis for identity or culture, postmodern thinking and improved networks of transportation and communication facilitate the imagination of communities based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or class. Proximity, in other words, is not a necessary element of identity formation. If culture and identity are not confined to a particular place, it follows that any one place is not confined to a single culture or identity. This has precipitated localized struggles over immigration, language, urban development, architecture, and foreign investment. Mike Featherstone (1996, 66) remarks that “cultural differences once maintained between places now exist within them.” For example, “The unwillingness of migrants to passively inculcate the dominant cultural mythology of the nation or locality raises issues of multiculturalism and the fragmentation of identity.” Massey (1995, 48) argues that the way places are defined – by media reports, by local government policies, by development proposals – “can be important in issues varying from battles over development and construction to questions of which social groups have rights to live where.”

Identities of place are always the subject of dispute. Often they are achieved through the construction of “Others,” which creates a sense of community insiders and outsiders (Rose 1995, 104-5). Or claims to a specific identity may be based on a particular reading of history: “In this sense, what is being named or interpreted, is not just a space or place, but a place as it has existed through time: what one might think of as an *envelope of space-time*” (Jess and Massey 1995, 134). Such contestation occurs, not as an occasional battle, but as a continual process on a range of geographical scales (172).

The conventional container of identity and culture that has come under greatest challenge from the reimagining of community has been the nation-state. Questions of citizenship have been increasingly dissociated from questions of identity (Morley and Robins 1995, 19). The emergence of trading

blocs in Europe, Asia, and North America, and the prevalence of both international and sub-national cultural networks, have undermined the primacy of the nation-state in contemporary conceptions of community, identity, and culture: “The nation-state, in effect, having been shaped into an ‘imagined community’ of coherent, modern identity through warfare, religion, blood, patriotic symbology, and language, is being undone by this fast imploding heteroglossic interface of the global with the local: what we would here diversely theorize as the *global/local* nexus” (Wilson and Dissanayake 1996, 3).

### **THE PLACE OF THE MEDIA IN SOCIETY**

The communications media have their own role to play in “dis-placing” and “re-placing” community, identity, and culture, given that the media have historically been important tools in constructing accepted notions of community on both symbolic and material levels. To be more precise, five specific roles can be ascribed to the media in how we imagine community: first, they are the media of *encounter*, putting us in touch with one another via mail, telephone, e-mail, or fax; second, they are the media of *governance*, enabling the central administration of vast spaces and dispersed places; third, the media *represent* community by depicting actuality and by creating fictionalized “sociological landscapes”; fourth, the media *construct* communities of audiences, based on diverse criteria ranging from physical proximity to shared tastes in popular music; and fifth, they create *rituals* through which readers and spectators imagine themselves as part of a communal audience.

While face-to-face interaction – on the street, in the park, at work, at school, at public meetings, at the corner store – remains central to social relations in even the most globalized of environments, proximity no longer binds us to community. Communications technologies like the cellular telephone, fax machine, and personal computer bind social spaces and enable people to maintain regular and frequent contact. This is particularly so as these technologies have become more accessible in terms of cost, ease of use, and availability, and as these media have entered the private sphere of the home. The instantaneousness with which technologically mediated conversations can be held approximates face-to-face communication. As the boosters of the digital age delight in telling us (e.g., Negroponte 1995), such media enable us to maintain social relations over great distances, and their increasing sophistication minimizes the obstacles implied by physical separation.

Similarly, as Harold Innis argued, communications media enable the

centralized governance of a political community on the scale of the modern nation-state, and the centralized administration of a transnational corporation of intercontinental range. Both national governance and global capitalism require efficient means of communication to establish a coherent agenda, disseminate instructions and information, monitor the activities of remote departments, and receive reports from local managers in the field. This is a relationship of power in which an authoritative body exercises control over social space and the social order (see Drache 1995, xlv-xlvi).

The third role the media play in how we imagine community is through representation. They create what Benedict Anderson (1989, 35-6) calls a “sociological landscape” or “socoscape” in which their narratives are set. As Anderson’s terminology indicates, these settings are both peopled and bounded. If, historically, the eighteenth-century novel and newspaper taught people to imagine community on the scale of the nation, contemporary socioscapes present us with communities that are imagined in any number of ways. The population of these settings and the location of their boundaries either reinforce conventional notions of community or propose new social horizons.

In addition to representing communities, the media also construct them out of audiences and markets. The newspaper provides a particularly good example, in that newspapers are designed to address various kinds of community. They may serve a community of geographical proximity, such as the *Vancouver Sun* on a metropolitan scale and the *East Ender* on a neighbourhood scale. They may serve a particular community contained within a locale, such as *Le Soleil* for Vancouver’s francophone community, or *Sing Tao* for Vancouver’s Chinese community. Or they might serve a community bound by a common interest in computers (*Vancouver Computes*), cinema (*Reel West*), environmental issues (*B.C. Environmental Report*), business (*Equity*), or alternative music (*Loop*). All of these communities are plural and can therefore be further distinguished; most subscribers to Vancouver’s two daily newspapers will be Vancouver residents, but they can probably be differentiated on the basis of various demographic criteria. This, of course, is how newspapers operate as commercial enterprises: they assemble audiences to sell to advertisers (Smythe 1982, 25-8). Federal funding mechanisms for broadcasting and film are good examples of how the Canadian state has attempted to use media to construct an imagined community on a national scale.

Finally, the media produce widely shared rituals of readership and spectatorship. When we sit down to watch the six o'clock news, we can imagine millions of others doing the same thing at the same time, even if the news they are watching is on another channel. Similarly, when we sit down to read the newspaper over morning coffee, we can imagine ourselves as a community of newspaper readers, even if, again, we are not all reading the same paper. These rituals take their most obvious form in cinema spectatorship, in which a group of people gather to watch a film, and thus literally form an audience as community, if only for a couple of hours (Shohat and Stam 1996, 153-5).

As a medium of representation, cinema, specifically, offers us pictures of our physical and social world, showing us where we live, with whom we share community, and from whom we are different. Cinema offers us depictions of history, stories that explain to us how we got here and why our community is the way it is. When we participate in its production, cinema brings us together as cultural workers, people who participate in the representation of their social world, people who determine their own social horizons. If this cultural work is devoted to depicting a given place, it also defines that place by becoming one of the things cultural workers there do. Place, then, is not simply rendered symbolically, but is embodied by a film's characters and the film workers themselves (see Relph 1986).

In light of the above, this book seeks to transcend "the national" as the determining category in its analysis of the film industry in British Columbia. It asserts that any given cinema is a social construction whose particular definition is contingent upon a nexus of historical, economic, political, and cultural forces. What the term "cinema" signifies in any specific context is the result of choice, struggle, negotiation, and compromise, processes that are often overlooked. These processes of definition privilege one particular film form – such as animation, documentary, experimental, or feature – over others, favour one form of governance – such as private enterprise or public service – over others, and identify specific social roles for cinema – such as entertainment, education, cultural enlightenment, or nation-building.

As a socially constructed institution, a given cinema is defined across a number of sites. I have identified four that have shaped in fundamental ways the feature film industry in British Columbia: provincial film history, the economic structure of the commercial cinema, federal and provincial film policy, and film practice. Each of these is a site of the production of

meaning, creating particular understandings of cinema and place, and I approach each differently.

It is important to clarify one matter from the outset. While, in popular discourse, the term “film industry” typically refers to all forms of audiovisual production, and while the convergence of the film and television industries prompts some reflection on conventional analytical borders between these media, I want to maintain a distinction between film and television in this book. Film and television remain distinct industries in Canada from the perspective of their histories, their regulatory environments, and their funding mechanisms. These three areas are especially pertinent to this study. The fact, for example, that television exhibition is regulated through Canadian-content quotas renders television a far more inclusive medium than cinema. This theme of inclusion/exclusion from the film industry is a key element of both the film industry in British Columbia and this book. Similarly, the fact that the television industry in Canada is governed by national broadcasters (such as CBC, CTV, and Global) distinguishes it structurally from the regional orientation of feature film production. Again, the regional aspect of film production is central to this study.

Chapter 2 describes the history of filmmaking in British Columbia from the late 1890s to the early 1970s. Drawing on both primary and secondary sources, this history reveals that the defining characteristics of British Columbia’s feature film industry today have been in place for over 100 years. These characteristics – an emphasis on foreign location production, provincial government intervention, an industrial conception of cinema – only became decisive advantages to British Columbia when the commercial film industry based in Hollywood began to externalize production in the postwar period. Besides documenting the early history of film production in the province, this chapter sketches the context out of which British Columbia’s feature film industry emerged in the 1970s, and establishes a sense of continuity between the history of filmmaking in the province and British Columbia’s contemporary cinema. I argue that British Columbia’s historical inheritance is a perception of cinema as a medium, not of cultural expression, but of regional industrial development.

Chapter 3 builds on this theme by applying a political-economic analysis to the feature film industry. All film production is governed to some extent by economic factors. Film is both a capital-intensive and labour-intensive medium, and thus even the most modest film project demands some form of

funding, whether in the form of investment, loan, subsidy, or barter. Feature film, as cinema's predominant commercial form, is especially implicated by the transnational industry that organizes cinema as a form of commodity production. Hollywood's dominance of this industry has had a profound influence on normalizing particular forms of cinema and thus on the circulation and projection of individual movies. As Albert Moran (1996, 6-7) writes, "With the increasing transnationalization of film production, of motion picture financing, the articulation of a long chain of distribution outlets and their domination by the [Hollywood] majors, and the growth of independent producers who themselves frequently act as brokers between filmmakers and the principal distributors, the system now exists whereby national film making is, through a series of commercial linkages, also a part of Hollywood." When it opted to develop a feature film industry in the 1970s, British Columbia mobilized a distinctly industrial strategy in which, to support Moran's contention, British Columbia's cinema became part of Hollywood. Chapter 3 argues that the opportunity to develop a feature cinema in British Columbia was a product of both national and international factors: British Columbia's exclusion from Canada's national cinema, concentrated in Ontario and Quebec; and British Columbia's inclusion in Hollywood's transnational audiovisual production.

Chapter 4 employs political history and social discourse analysis to assess the policy initiatives undertaken by the BC government since the 1970s to develop a feature film industry. The policy process establishes guidelines, regulatory instruments, funding vehicles, and institutions that become integral to film production by directing resources in certain directions with identifiable aims. More specifically, policy also stakes out the degree of state intervention a government chooses to exercise in the regulation of a cultural practice. Policy discourse constructs a privileged notion of what cinema is, and delineates film production in particular ways. Discourse can be defined as "an area in which knowledge is produced and operates, both openly and in a less than overt way. It fixes norms, elaborates criteria, and hence makes it possible to speak of and treat a given problem at a particular time" (Miller 1993, xiv). Social discourse analysis situates discourse within the broad framework of society and culture, emphasizing "the relationships between discourse and social structures" (Van Dijk 1997, 22). The chapter demonstrates that the economic opportunity represented by foreign location production was well suited to Victoria's industrial perception of cinema and its

long-term objective of expanding and diversifying the province's recession-prone, resource-based economy.

Any attempt to conceptualize the relationship between cinema and place in the context of an analysis of British Columbia's feature film industry would be incomplete without reference to the films themselves. Chapter 5 considers a sampling of feature films produced in British Columbia since the late 1970s. The method of textual analysis employed here is governed by the question of how the films depict British Columbia, and how these depictions speak to the province's sense of place. While foreign service productions almost always appropriate British Columbia within "America," denying the province its sociohistorical particularity, a number of British Columbia's indigenous films reassert the region's distinctiveness.

To my knowledge, very little analysis in film studies has been devoted to the implications of location filming for the rapport between story and setting, and what little there is foregrounds aesthetic rather than political or cultural concerns. If locations are mentioned at all, they are most commonly treated within larger discussions of *mise en scène* (e.g., Giannetti 1993). Charles Affron and Mirella Joan Affron (1995) have gone some distance in rescuing the study of set design from a general neglect within film studies, and they include examples of locations within their larger analysis of the degrees of intensity with which film sets establish time, place, and mood. Yet even they treat locations as simply another type of film set. In a too-brief article, Bernard Nietschmann (1993) argues that geography should matter in film production, but too often does not. In films shot on location, Nietschmann insists, setting is reduced to background, contributing nothing to the content of the film – "all is context, not content" – and suppressing the meaning and power of place (5). Locations are thereby rendered irrelevant: "When a place is shown or seen as just a location for a story or as but pretty scenery, there is a dislocation between people and nature, between image and experience, between the screen and geography, and between the director and the audience" (7).

Chapter 6, finally, concludes that British Columbia is particularly well suited to what Doreen Massey (1991) has termed a "global sense of place," which conceives of place as a meeting ground or intersection – for international flows of people, capital, commodities, and images – rather than as a clearly bounded cultural enclosure. Such a sense of place is critical to understanding the BC film industry, which is itself built upon a complex interface

between transnational and regional/local regimes of production. In this way, the film industry in British Columbia can be seen as very much a cinema of its time and place.

Together, these chapters tell the story of the rapid rise of the film industry in British Columbia, and they position this industry as both a model for commercial film production in the twenty-first century and as an industry whose basic characteristics have deep roots in a province that has always perceived cinema as, first and foremost, a medium of regional industrial development. If this book treats British Columbia as a unique case in many respects, I aim nonetheless to demonstrate that the film industry in British Columbia is part of a growing and widespread phenomenon in which cinemas around the world – and outside Quebec and Ontario within Canada – are based predominantly on location service production. In so doing, I seek to contribute to film studies debates over the category of national cinema, the framing of cinema as industry, and the relationship between cinema and place, regardless of where in the world these debates occur.