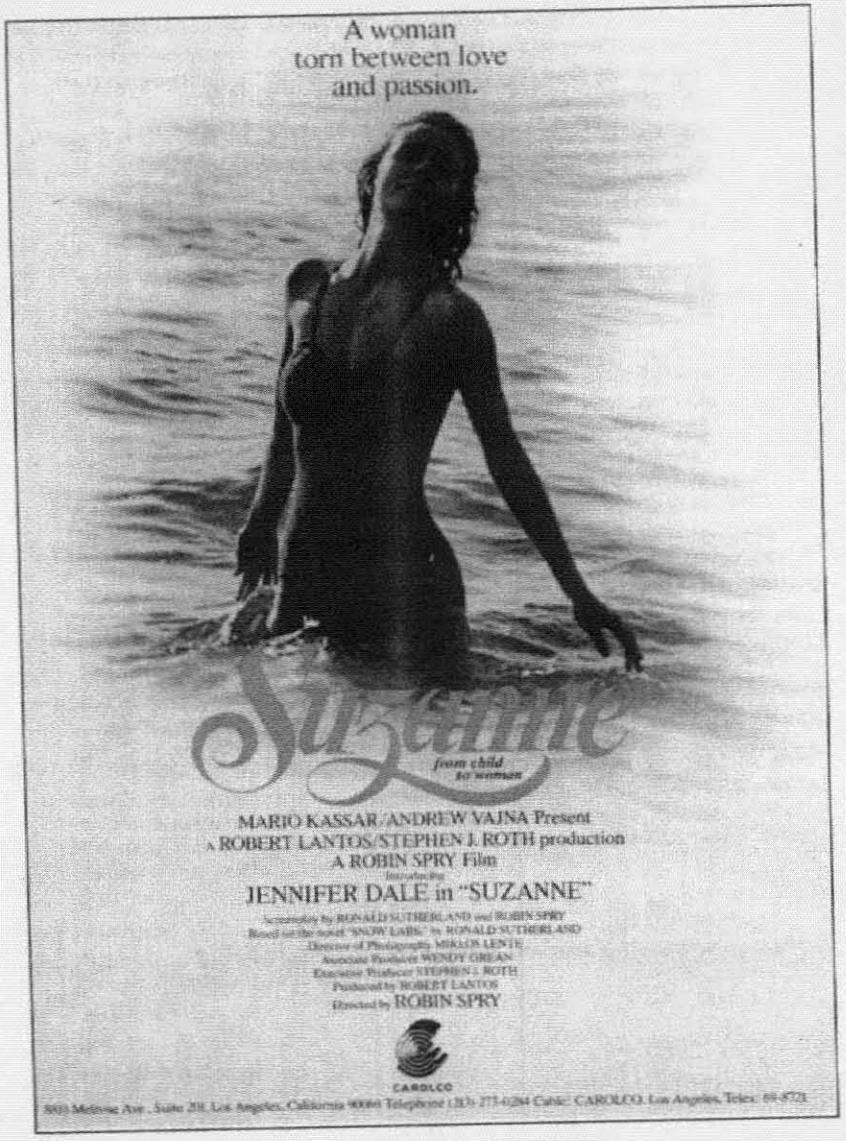


Poster for Robin Spry's *Suzanne*, featuring Jennifer Dale as Suzanne.

PETER URQUHART

YOU SHOULD KNOW SOMETHING–*ANYTHING*–ABOUT THIS MOVIE. YOU PAID FOR IT.

Résumé : Les nouvelles politiques du gouvernement canadien à la fin des années 70 ont mené à une remarquable croissance de production cinématographique souvent appelée le « Boom des abris fiscaux ». Selon le mythe populaire, les films réalisés pendant cette période sont tous des navets à l'américaine. L'auteur de cet article remet en question cette perspective en suggérant que le nationalisme culturel des critiques et historiens a oblitéré un bon nombre de films qui méritaient notre attention. Dénonçant les ramifications limitatives de la position critique établie, l'auteur analyse trois films de l'époque–*Suzanne*, *Yesterday* et *Hot Dogs*–qui, loin d'être des clones hollywoodiens, traitent allégoriquement des rapports Québec-Canada.

The latest edition of James Monaco's popular American textbook, *How to Read a Film*, contains a thirty-one-page "chronology of film and media," and the first entry for 1979 reads, "Canada and Australia emerge as film powers."[1] The description in an undergraduate film textbook of Canada as a "film power" should be startling to anyone with even a cursory knowledge of Canadian film history. Even those who are well acquainted with this history have evidently chosen to ignore or downplay Canada's briefly-held powerful position in world cinema production, since the prevailing characterization of the Canadian cinema has been one of failure and absence.[2] The year Monaco cites as the moment of Canada's accession to cinematic power marks the height of what has become known as "the tax-shelter boom." In 1979 seventy certified-Canadian feature films were shot, more than in any other year and a very large number for Canada by any measure.[3]

Beginning from the position that there is a received wisdom on the tax-shelter boom, I examine what the literature reveals this received wisdom on the period

to be, and then pose some questions about it. My goal is to demonstrate that culturally nationalist biases endemic to Canadian film studies have had serious historiographical consequences. It is my contention that these biases have resulted in a limited, skewed, and inaccurate perception of what actually constitutes the Canadian national cinema, by rendering numerous films invisible—specifically the films of the tax-shelter boom, which remain more or less ignored up to the present. Redressing this situation should help to produce a fuller, more accurate understanding of what exactly constitutes a Canadian national cinema, as well as demonstrate the consequences of such historical blind spots. I argue that all the films of the tax-shelter boom need to be taken into account and, further, that certain titles that have been made invisible can be shown to be representative of attitudes associated with specific times and places of importance in Canadian history and culture. Noting that the height of the tax-shelter boom coincided with Québec's "sovereignty association" referendum in May 1980, I conclude by suggesting how three of the invisible films of the period can be read in terms of the contemporary debates over Québec's future in Canada.

THE RECEIVED WISDOM

December 15, 1980. Prime Minister Trudeau, in black tie, a blood-red rose ever so slightly wilted on his satin jacket collar, looked pensive. A journalist had gestured toward the ballroom. Taking in the fur, the diamonds, the hairdos, the journalist had commented, "Your government is in some sense responsible for all this." The prime minister smiled. "It is amazing what a few tax laws can do," he said. Then he added, with a shrug, "There are now many Canadian films. But there aren't too many good ones, are there?"[4]

Jay Scott's anecdote sums up the conventional take on the anomalously inflated productivity in the Canadian film industry during the boom: that the investment-encouraging tax shelter provided by the "Capital Cost Allowance" worked extremely well, but also that a huge majority, if not all, of the films produced under this scheme were wretched.[5] Could it be that these films are underregarded or unacknowledged because they do not meet a certain taste standard of Canadianness? All we seem to know about the period can be summed up in such generalizations as the one Jim Leach offered in his 2002 Martin Walsh Memorial Lecture: "[T]he infamous Capital Cost Allowance Act of 1974 encouraged tendencies already present in the film industry to produce films that imitated the narrative structures of Hollywood genres and did their best to conceal any signs of the nation in which they were filmed. In these films...it was Canada that disappeared."[6] That is the habitual, but not entirely accurate, characterization of the tax-shelter-boom period. I do not accuse Leach of doing anything other than repeating the received wisdom on the period, and I select this example only because of its recentness, its high profile, and the nodding reception which greeted this familiar and therefore apparently accurate claim.[7] If it is true that many films of the period hid their Canadian origins, it is also true that many did not. Yet these have been erased from Canadian film history because of their association with the period in which they were made.

What does the success (many films produced, some even commercially successful) and the failure (bad films, insufficiently "Canadian" in character, mostly unprofitable, a number unreleased) of the tax-shelter boom tell us about the ways in which the Canadian cinema has been understood? Popular cinema (or at least cinema in the popular idiom, successful or not) has long been considered integral to other national cinemas. Even setting Hollywood aside, we could note that the French, Hong Kong, and Italian cinemas' genre cycles have received due consideration, while the usual conceptions of the Canadian national cinema have, with few exceptions, ignored the popular, focussing instead on the alternative formats of documentary and experimental filmmaking, and, for the past thirty years or so, on the auteur-driven art cinema. In the case of Québec's distinctive national cinema, however, Bill Marshall and André Loiselle have both recently shown the popular to be an integral part of that film culture.[8]

A CERTAIN TENDENCY OF CANADIAN FILM STUDIES

Efforts to specify a Canadian "national cinema" have usually resulted in a canon of nationalistic works, predominantly in the art cinema idiom. Andrew Higson, in his article, "The Concept of National Cinema," describes this tendency as "a criticism-led approach to national cinema, which tends to reduce national cinema to the terms of a quality art cinema, a culturally worthy cinema steeped in the high-cultural and/or modernist heritage of a particular national state, rather than one which appeals to the desires and fantasies of the popular audiences."[9]

A glance down the list of "Golden Reel Award" winners for the highest Canadian box-office take in a given year reveals numerous films, popular by the award's definition, that almost without exception are ignored by Canadian film scholarship—to mention only two examples: *Heavy Metal* (1982, Gerald Potterton *et al.*) earning $2.2 million gross in Canada, and *The Care Bears Movie* (1986, Arna Selznick and Charles Bonifacio) which took in $1.85 million.[10] It can be argued that these films do not rate attention because they fail to "fit" the critical definition of what constitutes a Canadian film. Insufficiently arty, angsty, or auteurist, these films do not satisfy the criteria established by cultural nationalists. Mirroring the discourse across scholarship on cultural production in Canada, the study of film has, in the main, participated in the post-war, left-nationalist program forcefully articulated in such documents as the Massey Commission report, which speaks directly of a fear of mass culture. Films in the popular idiom, genre films with American stars, for example, are seen not to qualify as "Canadian." This common-sense claim demands unpacking and scrutiny.

Here are some sources of the received wisdom. Written by the duly celebrated Canadian film historian, Peter Morris, *The Film Companion*, an encyclopaedic reference volume on the Canadian cinema, perfectly represents the sort of casual dismissal of the films of the tax-shelter boom in the extant literature. Elsewhere, Morris has been an especially astute observer of the historiographical consequences of cultural nationalism, especially as this motivation affected canonization, but there seems to have been something so common-sensical about assuming the badness of the tax-shelter-boom movies that they resist Morris's usual perspicacity.[11] For example, in a remarkable passage from his entry on the Capital Cost Allowance, he writes that "most of the films made (including the not inconsiderable number never released) were designed for a mass-market, North American audience, not a Canadian one, and usually involved Canadian cities masquerading as American ones and stories set 'no place.'"[12] Later, Morris grudgingly admits that "a few films, if hardly Canadian in any real sense, did extremely well at the box office internationally."[13] What exactly differentiates a "mass-market, North American audience" from a Canadian one appears to be a question that does not trouble Morris in the slightest, nor does the matter of what makes a film Canadian "in any real sense."

The certified-Canadian films of the boom had to meet exactly the same Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office dictates to qualify for the tax shelter as did any other Canadian film, with points awarded for the national citizenship of the producers, director, stars, and other personnel, and with provisions stipulating the Canadian incorporation of the producing firm.[14] As to the notion of a setting necessarily having to represent itself—a strangely recurrent beef about popular film in Canada—there are countless reasons why a filmmaker might prefer to set a film somewhere other than where it was actually shot. One might test the question by asking whether such decisions affect the status of films from outside Canada. Are Hollywood runaway productions somehow not American when Montréal plays Montréal, as in the recent Frank Oz caper picture, *The Score* (USA, 2001)? Should the Vietnamese (or the English, for that matter) be up in arms over Stanley Kubrick's staging of the Vietnam War in dreary England for *Full Metal Jacket* (UK, 1987)? Why have few complained about Spain's masquerade as the American West in Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns? Doesn't suburban Montréal resemble suburban Pittsburgh—which Montréal plays, for example in *Crunch* (Canada, 1979, Mark Warren)—in many significant ways?[15]

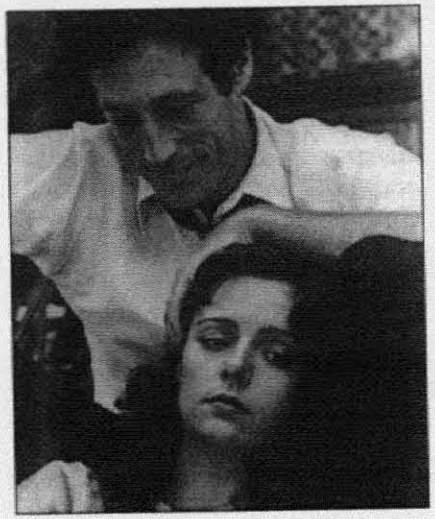
Peter Rist's recently published *A Guide to the Cinema(s) of Canada* is also encyclopaedic in form. Like Morris, Rist makes a prefatory acknowledgment that no work can be exhaustive in its coverage. Yet, it is notable that he makes absolutely no mention of the numerous films produced at the height of the tax-shelter boom. In fact, aside from *Heavy Metal*, *Porky's* (1981, Bob Clark), *Meatballs* (1979, Ivan Reitman), and *The Grey Fox* (1983, Phillip Borsos), all the other films made throughout the tax-shelter years are ignored as well.[16] This exclusion might be accounted for simply because the three biggest hits of the era —*Heavy Metal*, *Porky's* and *Meatballs*—have come to stand, *in toto*, for the more than one hundred films made during the whole of the boom. *The Grey Fox*—a "high-quality" (if not a high-profit) film and the first feature by a prospective auteur—is generally not associated with this cycle of production at all.

I would suggest that the apparent willingness to habitually ignore the vast majority of tax-shelter films is more likely the result of a combination of wish-fulfillment (if we pretend they don't exist, they'll disappear), shame, and nationalist elitism, which holds that these genre films are, in Morris's words, "hardly Canadian in any real sense." Later in his preface, Rist admits to relying heavily on Morris's *Film Companion*, which Rist calls "indispensable" and "an absolutely key research source." This lineage illustrates clearly how film history depends upon the methods and presumptions of the writers of that history, how the repetition of received wisdom can become self-perpetuating, and how the premises that underlie considerations of cultural value and historical significance contribute to a skewed account of what actually constitutes feature filmmaking in Canada.[17]

The received wisdom is so common that nearly every book on Canadian film explicitly or implicitly participates in its perpetuation by either largely dismissing, or simply ignoring, Canadian films made in the popular idiom. Manjunath Pendakur's *Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of Canadian Film Industry* and Gerald Pratley's *Torn Sprockets: The Uncertain Projection of Canadian Film* are particularly dismissive of genre filmmaking, and when films in the popular idiom *are* considered by scholars of Canadian cinema, they are distinguished by their supposed scarcity. Recent works including *Canada's Best Features*, *North of Everything: English-Canadian Cinema Since 1980*, and *Gendering the Nation: Canadian Women's Cinema*, while occasionally evoking the popular, tend to concentrate on Canada's well-established auteurist art cinema.[18]

Interestingly, while Canadian film scholars have habitually ignored, excluded, and systematically made these films invisible, a flourishing and devoted interest in them proliferates in lively fan communities on the Internet and in fan-oriented publications. Of the latter, one that devotes considerable attention to the tax-shelter-boom films in general, and to the 1979 films in particular, is Michael Weldon's well-known reference work on cult films, *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*. It includes discussion of at least seven Canadian features from 1979, including *Death Ship* (1980 Alvin Rakoff), *Terror Train* (1980, Roger Spottiswoode), *Prom Night* (1980, Paul Lynch), *Scanners* (1980, David Cronenberg), *Tanya's Island* (1980, Alfred Sole)—all shot in 1979—and *City on Fire* (1979, Alvin Rakoff), a disaster film shot in 1978, but released in the summer of 1979.[19] Weldon's entries, in the zippy, fannish style characteristic of the book as a whole, take as given the cultural value of these films as pop texts and note several features that might make them interesting, not only to cult movie fans, but

also to scholars of styles of Canadian cinema.



Georges (Gabriel Arcand) and Suzanne (Jennifer Dale) in *Suzanne*.

An examination of the tax-shelter-boom films that grants them cultural value can lead down some fascinating paths. First of all, while it may be true that Canadian locations masquerade as American ones more often than not, and that teen sex comedies, such as *Pinball Summer* (1979, George Mihalka), or horror films, such as *Prom Night*, do not contain any overtly "Canadian" imagery or themes, the recurrent thematic preoccupation with "selling out," evident in the tax-shelter-boom films, is striking. Again and again, films of the period return to conflicts between earnest, maybe even "good," citizens and nefarious, commercial interests, where what may be seen as an "American" way of life is juxtaposed with somehow more genuine concerns, for example in *Nothing Personal* (Canada-USA, 1980, George Bloomfield), *Agency* (1980, George Kaczender), and *Dirty Tricks* (1981, Alvin Rakoff). In several others we actually find conflicts between art and commerce, presented most directly perhaps in *Fantastica* (Canada-France, 1980, Gilles Carle) and *Deadline* (1980, Mario Azzopardi), both of which can be seen as thematically enacting the tensions and struggles borne by a national film policy torn between conflicting industrial and cultural goals.[20]

One reason film studies values the notion of national cinema is that it offers critics and scholars the opportunity to discover relationships between films and the ideological and cultural tendencies, historical events, and specific geographical locations of the country in which they were made. This premise lies behind the dismissal of many of the tax-shelter-boom films since, as films that masquerade as American, and with no discernible treatment of Canadian themes, they are presumed not to be significant as artefacts of Canada itself. Even if all of the tax-shelter-boom films exhibited these characteristics, it would still behoove scholars of the national cinema to take account of them and consider what their existence says about Canadian life or Canadian film culture.

In exposing the limitations of a criticism-led approach to the idea of national cinema, Higson provides an alternative, synoptic model, which takes account of, among other features, the films a nation's citizens actually go to see. It is this controversial position that would allow the commercially-calculated feature film production exemplified by the tax-shelter boom to take its rightful place in the

Suzanne and Nicky (Winston Rekert) in *Suzanne*.

history of Canadian film culture. It may be true that relatively few films of the boom proved popular in the marketplace. However, the broader point of this paper is that Canadian film history unduly marginalizes films in the popular idiom, with or without box-office success, and that this historiography has consequences for canon formation, for a full understanding of the Canadian film culture, and arguably even for the future of Canadian cinema, insofar as historical "knowledge" potentially influences future film policy and funding decisions.

Contrary to the received wisdom, a number of films of the boom are not bad knock-offs of Hollywood genre pictures, but are concerned specifically with national themes. Given that the tax-shelter-boom years included the May 1980 referendum in Québec on "sovereignty association," the little attention paid to contemporaneous films that deal with québécois nationalism remains startling.

SUZANNE

Robin Spry's *Suzanne* (Canada, 1980) deserves close analysis in this respect. That the film has received zero scholarly attention is surprising for a number of reasons, not least of which is that it was the first privately-produced feature for Spry, a celebrated National Film Board documentarian, best known for his tense documentary, *Action: The October Crisis of 1970* (1973). Given its thematic consistency with Spry's well-known and much-discussed documentary, *Suzanne* invites an auteurist reading of its treatment of a bilingual, bicultural Montréal

and the difficulties and pleasures of French and English living side-by-side in Montréal's Plateau district. Furthermore, it stars well-known Canadian actors Jennifer Dale and Gabriel Arcand, was released widely, and reviewed by the popular press in Montréal and Toronto. Clearly, it bears none of the ugly marks conventionally associated with tax-shelter-boom films.

Suzanne makes explicit connections between the title character's identity crisis and the evolving senses of Canadian and *québécois* nationalism percolating immediately below the surface of 1950s and 1960s Montréal. Suzanne represents Canada, and in the same tradition as Barbara—the Westmount girlfriend who plays English Canada to boyfriend Claude's Québec in Gilles Groulx's *Le Chat dans le sac* (1964)—the character's outward traits and metaphorical trajectory are ambiguously treated by two filmmakers who are, to varying degrees, sympathetic to the idea, at least, of québécois nationalism. Groulx invites us to read his couple as a metaphor for the coupling of English and French peoples within the national boundaries of Canada. Claude and Barbara's ultimate incompatibility and separation is suggestive of Groulx's political stance on the destiny of Québec in 1964 and cries out to be read as political allegory. An allegorical reading of *Suzanne* has to be slightly less clear-cut, although, as with Groulx's film, such an approach seems absolutely necessary. Here we find the whole of the state embodied in one character, who is, as she says, "caught in the middle. I didn't know who I was: half-Protestant, half-Catholic; half-English, half-French...there must be more to me than just being split in two—always wondering who I am." This plain statement of a search for identity is made in a voice-over accompanying a shot of a poster for war bonds. The poster has been graffitied, "Pour les Canadiens: la Mort! For the English: Profits!"

While Spry's documentary may have demonstrated sympathy for québécois nationalism, *Suzanne* provides an incredibly conciliatory conclusion to problems in the relationship between French and English Canada (in stark contrast to the conclusion of Groulx's film). The plot involves Suzanne's relationship with Nicky, a local Anglo tough, and Georges, a kindly francophone academic aesthete. After being date-raped by Nicky, Suzanne has his child; Nicky goes to jail for a jewellery heist; and Georges agrees to marry Suzanne and raise the son as his own.[21] Upon his release from jail, Nicky tracks down Suzanne, insisting that he needs to be a part of his son's life, and pinning the blame for his own troubled life on his absent father. The film closes with Georges, Nicky, and the boy cheerfully playing catch in a sunny park, while Suzanne gazes benignly on. Although their relationship may be unconventional, they agree to get along for the common benefit for all, and especially for the future generation. This upbeat, conciliatory conclusion becomes all the more significant when one considers that the film was shot just before—and premiered just after—the "sovereignty association" referendum.

Gabrielle (Claire Pimparé) and Matt (Vincent Van Patten)—third and fourth from the left—partying at a club in *Yesterday*.

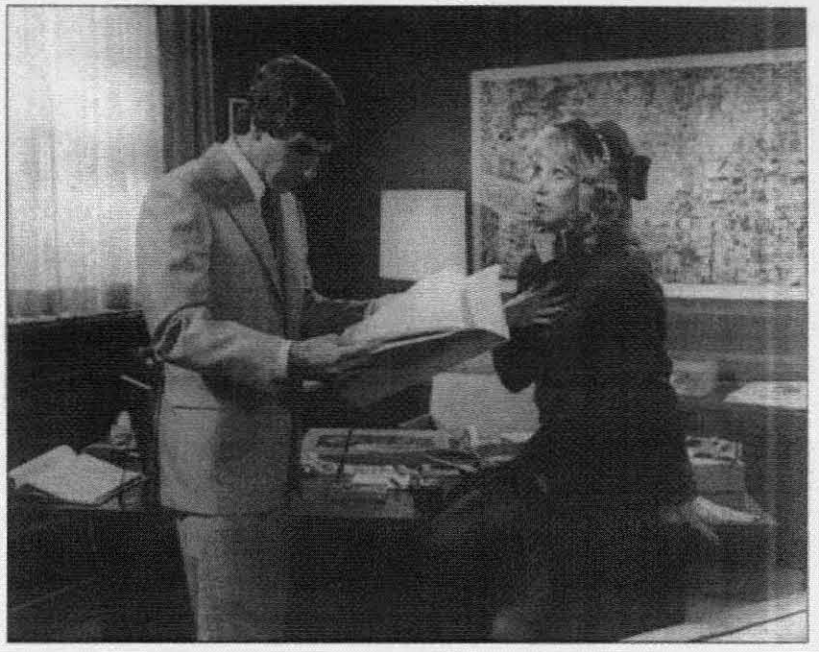
Because of its Canadian cast, undisguised Canadian setting, and the very fact of its release, *Suzanne* is not susceptible to the typical attacks on tax-shelter-boom films. It also seems to meet the criteria for critical attention by offering the opportunity for an auteurist reading. Furthermore, it contains some of the threads Peter Morris finds running through canonized Canadian films. For example, there is specific and sustained consideration of the "French fact" in Canada; there is also a variety of severely flawed male characters, including the main ones: a foolish bully and an emasculated wimp.[22] Another of Morris's criteria for canonization (and, hence, for recognition as an example of Canadian national cinema) is critics' celebration of what he calls "the winds of realism." Here too *Suzanne* meets the mark by following all the conventions of the historically realist film text.[23] Throughout, it shows careful attention to period detail. (Spry boasted that his art director and set dressers grew up in the Plateau in the 1940s and 1950s and, therefore, had an especially acute sense of the prevalent decors, textures, fashions, and so on.[24]). Despite all the reasons *Suzanne* might have attracted the attention of Canadian critics, it remains totally ignored in a canon formation that consistently celebrates auteur art cinema—no matter how inaccessible it may be for the majority of Canadian filmgoers—over films designed to offer the everyday pleasures associated with the consumption of popular texts.[25]

Matt and Gabrielle preparing to part for the holidays in *Yesterday*.

YESTERDAY

Another film strangely absent from Canadian film history is Larry Kent's *Yesterday* (1981).[26] With its nationalist thematic, it seems like a natural magnet for the attention of Canadian film scholars. Like Spry's film, *Yesterday* is a period piece specifically concerned with the difficulties of the French and English living together in Montréal at a time of heightened québécois and Canadian nationalism: 1967. Also, like Spry's film, *Yesterday* is by a celebrated Canadian filmmaker, thus inviting auteurist consideration.[27]

Again, a relationship between a French character and an English character living in Montréal serves as an obvious analogy for the political situation in Québec. *Yesterday*'s spin on this device is to resolve the relationships between the québécoise Gabrielle and the English boys she meets by ultimately attaching her to Matt, an American who has come to Montréal to study at McGill University. Setting the action in 1967 not only provides the opportunity to highlight strife between French and English at a particularly formative moment in the separatist movement, but also to send Matt off to Vietnam (while insinuating a rather strained equation of U.S. imperialism in Southeast Asia with English-Canadian domination of Québec's francophone majority).[28] The film's peculiar take on these relationships is everywhere evident; for example, the film opens with a hockey game between English McGill and French Université de Montréal, after



Detective McLean (Harry Reems) and porn star Stella Moon (Nicole Morin) in *Hot Dogs*.

which Gabrielle explains to a puzzled Matt (who has just arrived in Québec and asks, "Why can't the English and French just get along?") that the centuries-long history of the French-English relationship is "not just a school rivalry."

Kent, like Spry, can't seem to resist a somewhat sympathetic treatment of the revolutionary aspirations of *québécois* nationalists. For example, in an incident apparently designed to reflect badly on the moneyed McGill students, some of those students, shouting "the frogs are painting the campus gates," chase some separatist activists who have just graffitied the slogan, "100 years of English oppression," on the stone entrance to the McGill campus.[29] Ultimately, though, *Yesterday*, like *Suzanne*, concludes on a curiously forced and conciliatory note. Gabrielle, pregnant with Matt's child, receives word that Matt has been killed in action in Vietnam. However, three years later, she visits Matt's family in the States and learns that Matt was not killed, but severely maimed and perhaps psychologically damaged. Matt's grandfather tells her, "I guess he'd rather you thought he was dead." Nevertheless, Gabrielle and Matt and their child have a tearful reunion, suggesting, like the conclusion of *Suzanne*, that rapprochement between damaged and aggrieved parties, like making extreme compromises, is the only remotely satisfactory resolution to egregiously strained relations, especially when future generations are involved.

McLean and his "vice squad winners" in *Hot Dogs*.

HOT DOGS

One of the central myths about relations between the French and English populations of Canada rests on the imagined dichotomy, Toronto-Montréal. The former is staid, conservative, safe, boring, Protestant, and English. The latter is scandalous, bawdy, uninhibited, transgressive, Catholic, and French. While historical conditions, including different regimes of moral regulation with regard to such practices as liquor licensing, are concrete, if partial, explanations for these mythical reputations, there are other, more deeply ingrained, if imaginary, explanations for them. Chief among these is the notion that Latin-derived French Catholics are simply more "hot-blooded" than Toronto's repressed Protestants. Claude Fournier's *Hot Dogs* (1980) exploits this mythology in a comedy about a hyper-efficient moral crusader, Stuart McLean (played by porn star Harry Reems, obviously cast in the role because of the extra-textual "oomph" his reputation brought to the role), who, after having successfully "cleaned up Toronto," is appointed to head the vice squad in wide-open Montréal, where he quickly earns the nickname, "Mr. Clean."[30]

Here, in another film set unambiguously in Montréal, the setting and sympathetic, even loving, treatment of this cultural specificity is representative of English Canadians' fondness for exotic Québec. Seen this way, the film is about scandalous, lusty francophone Québec (as represented especially by the female lead, porn star Stella Moon, played by Nicole Morin) versus staid, moral English Canada (as represented by McLean), and the not-surprising message of the film is that sometimes the scandalous needs the staid as much as the reverse is also true. McLean's priggish, pathological fixation on morality and cleanliness (which is played for laughs) is held up to ridicule, whereas the film indulgently celebrates the wild, anarchic antics of the film's various moral offenders.[31] Gradually, McLean is worn down, and whereas earlier in the film he announces that "morality is the cornerstone of sound society," later on he admits (sounding like many English-Canadians mulling over the aspirations of *québécois* nationalists), "I guess I just don't understand our times." In a predictable conclusion, McLean gives in to his more "natural" desires, and the film ends when yet another idealized coupling of English Canada and French Québec is literalised in the marriage of McLean and Stella.[32]

IN CONCLUSION

Peter Morris has shown how cultural nationalism has coloured canonization in Canada, and others have begun to demonstrate how our idea of a Canadian cinema has very seldom included the popular.[33] William Beard's take on this paradox is instructive: "[I]t remains as difficult as ever to imagine a Canadian *popular* cinema that does not disqualify itself from Canadianness by its very popularity."[34] Robin Spry himself seemed mindful of this situation when he remarked while making *Suzanne*, "I have a reputation for making political and social documents, and I'm trying hard to prevent that label getting pinned on *Suzanne*. To me, it's a period love story that's about a girl who happens to be split culturally, linguistically, religiously."[35] A re-examination of the films of the tax-shelter boom that seeks to take account of them as they are—rather than as they are supposed to be according to the consensus of Canadian film scholars—should change our understanding of the contours of the Canadian cinema. Several of these films—previously absent from the historical record—respond to the threat of Québec separation by espousing a political stance of "national reconciliation." In doing so they exhibit signs of the "nation-building" function more usually associated with the Griersonian legacy than with the "sell-out" films of the tax-shelter boom.

NOTES

Photos from *Suzanne* courtesy of The Film Reference Library, Toronto International Film Festival Group; photos from *Yesterday* and *Hot Dogs* courtesy of la Cinémathèque Québécoise.

1. James Monaco, *How To Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia*, third ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 587.
2. For an excellent discussion of the concept and consequences of perceived "absence" in Canadian film culture, see Charles Acland, "Popular Film in Canada: Revisiting the

Absent Audience," in *A Passion For Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies*, third ed., David Taras and Beverley Rasporich, eds. (Toronto: ITP Nelson, 1997), 281-296.

3. There are many ways to count films made in a country. My "seventy certified-Canadian features shot in 1979" counts only those fiction features whose primary shooting took place in the calendar year 1979. A handful began shooting in late 1978, finishing in 1979, and a smaller handful began shooting toward the end of the year, wrapping in 1980. Most of the films shot in 1979 were, of course, not finished and released (or broadcast) until at least 1980, and several not until the years 1981-84. All parenthetical dates in this paper conform to the customary dating of a film by its release year.
4. Jay Scott, "Burnout in the Great White North," in *Take Two: A Tribute to Film in Canada*, Seth Feldman, ed. (Toronto: Irwin, 1984), 28.
5. The "Capital Cost Allowance" allowed a one-hundred-per-cent tax write-off for investment in three industries: new housing construction, oil and gas exploration, and certified-Canadian feature film production. It should be noted that the tax write-off was not entirely responsible for the tax-shelter boom, which was also encouraged by changes in the Canadian Film Development Corporation's investment strategy, and by the development of the private placement offer investment scheme for raising capital. For elaboration, see Ted Magder, *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 183.
6. Jim Leach, "The Reel Nation: Image and Reality in Contemporary Canadian Cinema," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 11.2 (2002): 7.
7. I characterize the reception of Leach's comment as "nodding" since, at the gathering of film scholars where it was made—the 2002 Film Studies of Canada conference in Toronto—it went unremarked and, furthermore, was repeated in the printed version of the lecture in this journal.
8. André Loiselle, "Subtly Subversive or Simply Stupid: Notes on Popular Quebec Cinema," *Post Script* 18.2 (1999): 75-85, and Bill Marshall, *Quebec National Cinema* (Montréal: Queen's-McGill University Press, 2001).
9. Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30.4 (1989): 36-46.
10. Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television, "The Genie Awards," http://www.academy.ca/academy/Awards/Genie/. I cite these two films as examples because both are popular Canadian films whose national origin is seemingly obscured by their distance from the national thematic of canonized Canadian cinema.
11. Exemplary of Morris's insights in this regard is his "In Our Own Eyes: The Canonization of Canadian Film," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 3.1 (1994): 30-38.
12. Peter Morris, *The Film Companion* (Toronto: Irwin, 1984), 55.
13. Ibid.
14. CAVCO was created by the federal government in 1974 in conjunction with the Capital Cost Allowance program to establish which film productions were eligible for the tax write-off. The points system for determining the Canadianness of a particular film was amended in 1980 and 1982, requiring higher degrees of Canadian participation, largely as a result of perceived abuses of the certification system during the tax-shelter boom.
15. These questions are meant simply to illustrate the complexity of the relationship of location to setting and to demonstrate that arguments claiming Canadian settings "masquerading" as other places are simply indicative of a national "sell-out" might not fully consider the myriad possible reasons behind such a choice.
16. Peter Rist, ed., *Guide to the Cinema(s) of Canada* (Westport, CN.: Greenwood, 2001).
17. There are many surprising exclusions in Rist's book, e.g, *The Rowdyman* (Canada, 1972, Peter Carter) and *Paperback Hero* (Canada, 1973, Peter Pearson), to name just two important titles. I acknowledge the anonymous reader's comments which brought this to my attention, but the larger point I am making concerns the lineage of received wisdom in published scholarship, specifically Rist's debt to Morris's encyclopaedia.

18. Manjunath Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990); Gerald Pratley, *Torn Sprockets: The Uncertain Projection of the Canadian Film* (Newark, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1987), Gene Walz, ed., *Canada's Best Features: Critical Essays on 15 Canadian Films* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002); William Beard and Jerry White, eds., *North of Everything: English-Canadian Cinema Since 1980* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002); Kay Armatage, *et al*, eds., *Gendering the Nation: Canadian Women's Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
19. Michael Weldon, *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film* (London: Plexus, 1983).
20. The boom itself is representative of long-standing arguments over cultural vs. industrial policy in Canada. Simply put, the industrial goals of the policy—to create a viable film industry that could make a contribution to the national economy, alongside the steel and pulp and paper industries, for example—were at odds with cultural policy, since the type of films that achieved international appeal and could lead to meeting the goals of the industrial policy, were not seen to make any valuable contribution to the cultural life of the nation. Films with cultural value needed to speak to Canadians, to tell specifically Canadian stories, and it was felt that this national specificity rendered the cultural film too parochial for international market success. See Pratley and Pendakur for elaboration of this argument.
21. The sexual politics of the tax-shelter-boom texts, a matter far beyond the scope of this paper, is another fascinating avenue for historical revision *vis-à-vis* the Canadian cinema. Many tax-shelter-boom films exhibit a machismo, grotesque sexism and even misogyny far beyond that usually attributed to the stereotypical meek Canadian male protagonist, and, ironically, contributed to the circular argument that explains their invisibility. They are not really Canadian because they don't fit the model—a model that cannot account for them.
22. Both are rather cowardly at times, too, in keeping with the paradigm explored in Robert Fothergill's "Coward, Bully or Clown: The Dream-Life of a Younger Brother," in *Canadian Film Reader*, Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson, eds. (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977): 234-49.
23. Morris, "In Our Own Eyes," 35.
24. Martin Malina, "Trumpets Needed, not Apologies," *Montreal Star*, 4 August 1980, D4.
25. See, as well, Peter Harcourt, "Introduction: The Invisible Cinema," *Cine-Tracts* 1.4 (1978): 48-9.
26. This film was released as *Yesterday* in English in Montréal and Tokyo, as *Gabrielle* in a French-dubbed version in Montréal, as *Scoring* in Toronto, and as *This Time Forever* for foreign sales and Pay TV after May 1982. See D. J. Turner, *Canadian Feature Film Index* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services/Public Archives of Canada, 1987), 291.
27. Kent's status as "celebrated Canadian filmmaker" was made concrete with a retrospective of his oeuvre at the Cinémathèque québécoise in 2001 and similar retrospectives at the Pacific Cinematheque and Cinematheque Ontario in the spring of 2003.
28. This period is literally "formative" in the sense that it immediately followed the high-profile, mid-1960s FLQ letterbox bombing campaign in Westmount and immediately preceded other key events, such as the formation of the Parti québécois by René Lévesque and others in 1968, and the incident at the 1968 St. Jean Baptiste Day parade in which Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was attacked by stone-throwing separatists.
29. While the national celebration of the centennial of confederation in 1967 might have motivated the slogan of "100 years of English oppression," it seems rather unlikely that a separatist radical would write graffiti in English, let alone select "100 years," given the far longer history of strife between English and French in Québec, as any separatist radical would surely know.
30. Reems is perhaps best known as the co-star of *Deep Throat* (USA, 1972, Gerard Damiano), but his credits include over 100 films, which, judging by the titles are

predominantly porn movies. See The Internet Movie Database, "Harry Reems," http://us.imdb.com/Name?Reems,+Harry+(I).

31. For example, Frank (played by Daniel Pilon), a Montréal vice squad officer, whom women find utterly irresistible, has sex with every female he meets, usually while on the job. This said, it must also be pointed out that not all "moral offenders" are championed by the film, as evidenced by the film's flagrant homophobia.
32. It should perhaps be noted that *Hot Dogs*, while produced in English (presumably for the international market, like so many of the other tax-shelter-boom movies), was directed by Claude Fournier, whose previous exploitation fare had proved controversial in English Canada and wildly successful in Québec, where it is said that one out of every three people (adults, presumably) saw Fournier's sex comedy *Deux femmes en or* (Canada, 1970) a decade earlier. See Morris, *The Film Companion*, 87. According to D.J. Turner, one of *Hot Dogs*' working titles was *L'Escouade en or*, referring directly to the title of Fournier's earlier film.
33. See Morris, "In Our Own Eyes," and Acland for examples.
34. William Beard, "Thirty-Two Paragraphs about David Cronenberg," in *North of Everything*, 148.
35. Malina, D4.

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JENNIFER VANDERBURGH

GHOSTBUSTED!

Popular Perceptions of English-Canadian Cinema

Résumé : L'étude du cinéma canadien s'attarde souvent à la question de la marginalité : la marginalité découle-t-elle des circonstances du cinéma canadien anglais ou notre cinéma est-il prédisposé à la marginalité en réaction contre le cinéma hollywoodien? La marginalité devient ainsi le facteur déterminant de ce qui est véritablement « canadien ». L'analyse comparative de la promotion et de la critique de *Ghostbusters* et *Videodrome* suggère que la perception et la caractérisation du cinéma canadien anglais sont profondément enracinées dans un cadre idéologique qui réifie cette marginalisation.

We do seem to have a problem producing good, entertaining, moderately budgeted Canadian films.[1]

Homi K. Bhabha argues that the current perception of nation represents a "symptom of an ethnography of the 'contemporary' within culture."[2] The perception of national cinema likewise serves as a signifier of public opinion within an ideological context. Consequently, the study of the *perception* of English-Canadian cinema, though relatively undeveloped, proves significant insofar as it makes visible the ideological framework and the discourses that inform it. While, for the most part, quantitative measures at the level of policy determine what constitutes an official Canadian production, the term "perception" functions here to imply that critical responses that take up the "Canadianness" of a film—after it is made—are often based on qualitative preconceptions of what "Canadian" qualities are and, by implication, what they are not.

In his groundbreaking article, "Public Policy, Public Opinion," Peter Morris identifies a central paradox for the public opinion of Canadian cinema: the

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