

Canada in Moving Images: Forward

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The essays I have selected for this edition talk about representation of contemporary Canada through moving images. The film authors—Denys Arcand, Deepa Mehta, Atom Egoyan and Robert Lepage—reflect the themes and preoccupations within Canadian national sensibility. Their films directly or indirectly show the ongoing global collisions and conflicts intertwined with local misunderstandings and personal differences. As a film space, Canada remains close to the imperial power south of its borders and is inevitably drawn into its force field propelled by video game jargon—“war on terror”. As a consequence of its geopolitical situation, Canada has to respond to the global matrix of new colonial conquests by multinational companies and their re-branding of nation states to fit their financial interests. The films respond to these global forces from a typical Canadian position, a parochial position. Although the conflicts are observed from the outside, the characters cannot avoid being personally and emotionally drawn into them.

Canadian fictional film identity is founded in storytelling that is conditioned by the country’s harsh climate. The position of the narrator is similar to that of someone telling stories from the comfort of a room with a fireplace whilst looking at the snow outside the window. There are many different stories in the room since there are many different people in the room, who all have something they want to remember. Likewise, in these essays, ‘Canadiannes’ is represented through collisions with languages, time, memories, and family or actual war, partitions and destructions—these conflicts are seen from a space that is open to various influences, where different points of view coexist. These views are presented in the films and constitute the fabric of the film narrative. In this way, Canadian cinematic space—as detailed by Arcand, Mehta, Egoyan, and Lepage—is polyvalent and offers multiple perspectives. These film ‘talk back to the centre’ challenging the Empire and its language and singular interpretation of the world. Their sensibility is very different from the national politics of the US film industry, and reflects Canada’s position, which is open to a plurality of voices that do not subscribe to one dominant vision or interest group. This is a vital aspect of Canadian film—it can be independent from fashionable doctrines and it can be a space for a plurality of views that

freely coexist, looking at the madness of the hegemonic centre from the outside, but yet being very close to it.