

"anyone with a lick of sense [would] want to sneak *out* of a bad movie."<sup>124</sup> The mere existence of such everyday ethical dilemmas, and their prosaic recognizability, should reassure cinephiles everywhere that the practice persists even if we still dream of a more enriching cinema. Alexander Kluge spoke for many when he claimed, "I love to go to the movies: the only thing that bothers me is the image on the screen."<sup>125</sup>

## CHAPTER NINE

### Cinemagoing as "Felt Internationalism"

In his beautiful short essay "Upon Leaving a Movie Theatre," Roland Barthes describes the prehypnotic state one falls into at the start of a cinematic event.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that moviegoers get ready for dreaming, with the theater acting as a mechanism to keep us at the twilight between sleep and consciousness. Darkness helps promote that sense of bodily loss, one that keeps audiences prepared for the experience of departure from the ordinary. The film is a lure, he writes, for an ideological and unconscious process of organizing the world as we rest calmly before the screen. It is evident that it is equally a lure that moves populations from one location of their neighborhood and city to another, drawing people out to experience that intensely personal twilight together. The elaborate theme lobbies of megaplexes sustain the sense of departure initiated by the screen images. To be sure, they are not darkened environments in which one loses sight of the strangers in one's presence. But, even with their colored lights and cacophony, the intermedia turmoil of cinema complexes broadcasts their singularity and uniqueness. Here is a set of technologies, practices, and shared engagements that cannot be found anywhere else. A trip to the cinema, the passage through the lobby and the consumption of food, drink, and games, is part of the preparation for the screening—preparation for that filmic twilight—like an urban and architectural trailer for movie watching.

Production, distribution, and exhibition, as the broad divisions of the film-industry apparatus, present a narrative path for the film commodity as it moves from conception to consumption. Clearly, the mechanics of the film business

involve not only the making of movies but also their delivery to an audience, the gathering up of that audience, and the provision of a site for the film encounter. The latter moment of consumption is a death of sorts. When its exchange value has been expended, so has a commodity's life from an economic perspective, hence the concurrent obsession with the various subsequent media "reincarnations" of the work. The path of a motion picture text molds each stage via a revisitation to earlier phases, so that a film gets "re-produced," "re-distributed," and "re-exhibited" time and again. As cross-media stakes intensify, whether through ownership or coventures, so too has the experimentation with commodity forms and the paths they take. Such a transmission or narrativized approach to the life of the film should not steer us away from the construction of that audience, that is, the making of the consumer, citizen, fan, and spectator. Delivery, distribution, and exhibition of film to some segment of the population might be understood best as the shaping of that segment. And as this book has contended, this shaping is not the province of textual conventions alone but of spatial and temporal ones. The "where" and the "when" of film are crucial components in the formation of audiences, whether imagined as the product of local practices or as manifestations of international popular taste. My concentration on the establishment of an industry common sense about this, and its ramifications for popular cultural life, stem in part from an impression that the powerful elements of the formation of the location and context of cinemagoing have been underplayed in film theory and analysis.

The organization of people at film events is evidence of communion. Miriam Hansen's use of Kluge's alternative public sphere is one example that takes the meeting of strangers at a film screening as holding the germinational potential of becoming a public. Moreover, some filmgoing events and habits offer a wedge of resistance unavailable to some populations elsewhere. Importantly, Hansen highlights the historical efforts to put a halt to the variability of film crowds and, in effect, to audiences' ability to transform themselves into a fully realized public. Indeed, the complexity of this question makes Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge critical of the potential uses of the "public sphere," seeing the ephemeral qualities and locations of the contemporary environment as a mark of individuation rather than of community. In the end, they suggest that

what we think of as the public sphere is in fact a relation to the sphere of production. They write,

*it cannot be considered to be unified at all, but rather the aggregate of individual spheres that are only abstractly related.* Television, the press, interest groups and political parties, parliament, army, public education, public chairs in the universities, the legal system, the industry of churches are only apparently fused into a general concept of the public sphere. In reality, this general, overriding public sphere runs parallel to these fields as a mere idea, and is exploited by the interests contained within each sphere, especially by the organized interests of the productive sector.<sup>2</sup>

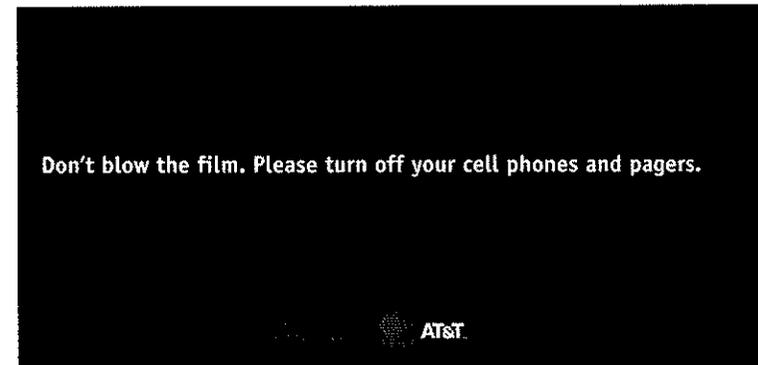
Furthermore, it is precisely the ephemeral nature of film audiences that makes them productive illustrations of contemporary social existence. People move through cinemas to sit momentarily in the presence of others, retaining thoughts of similar situations unfolding elsewhere, and move back through the streets to domestic life. The fleeting arrest of that movement is a point of imagined relation to an unseen population of resting, consuming bodies. Cinemas are sites for the mobility and flow of bodies, texts, and money. They are also sites for the materialization and conceptualization of shared ideas about mobility and flow. Looking at them in this way, we can begin to grasp the remarkable changes that have already installed themselves in contemporary civic life, as exemplified by the miniaturization of the theme park and its incorporation into the cinematic exhibitionary complex. Resting momentarily, balanced between the "safety" of home and the public of crowds, the film audience—that abstract creature of industrial and cultural discourse—might be apprehended as an intermediary between our private and public selves.

Often public spaces have been seen as infused with the possibility of messiness and unruliness. The cinematic sphere, contrarily, it would appear, offers the opportunity to glimpse the orderly and servile nature of a population. The policing of ushers, the presence of security cameras, the regiment of scheduling, and the overt appeals to decorum in film trailers (feet off the seat in front, no talking, cell phones and pagers off, etc.) are indices of the intense interest in encouraging civility and reducing the prospects for impromptu (and econom-

ically unproductive) interventions. Hansen has suggested that the 1990s saw an unusual amount of talk and enforcement of how one was to comport oneself at movies.<sup>3</sup> Famous Players has taken to having employees introduce each screening under a spotlight with a litany of “dos and don’ts.” And probably the biggest budget announcement ever designed exclusively to install a code of silence played in Canadian theaters in the middle of that decade, produced by the agency Gee Jeffrey and Partners for Rogers Cantel Telecommunication (figures 14, 15, and 16). Winning Clio, Cannes, and Andy awards for advertising, other wireless communication companies used versions of the trailer, including BT Cellnet in the UK, Vodaphone in New Zealand, Telstra in Australia, and Telefonica in Spain. In a military setting, it presents a scene of emergency in which a young white hero arrives to dismantle a noise-sensitive nuclear device. He performs the delicate operation with sweaty-browed concentration, but something goes wrong. A beeping sound starts the countdown. Just before the device blows, obliterating the characters and presumably the entire city, the frantic hero demands to know the source of the sound that triggered the bomb. In his final words, his assistant states, “It came from the audience,” to which the hero replies, “What kind of jerk lets their cell phone go off in a movie?”

The advertisement elicits a momentary confusion. It presents itself as a trailer for a coming attraction, using signs of high production values to evoke a big-budget action film, including sweeping lights, fast camera movement, and a relatively large number of extras to create the spectacle of nuclear panic. A patchwork of technological commodities, from cordless microphones to a laptop computer, provides a link with the primary object of attention, the cell phone. The breaking of its realism by the interference from the audience here results in nuclear devastation. It is a humorous—at least in the first viewing—depiction of the dire need for the regulation of cinemagoing behavior. It might not be criminal for a spectator to let a cell phone ring during a movie, but it might be explosive for realist narrative.

Every screening wants to announce itself as another exercise in bourgeois civility, or an individually embodied comprehension of a cooperative silent crowd. This is not to suggest that such efforts to police and propagate a discourse of comportment are successful. Given what appears to be an obsession in controlling and limiting social interaction during a cinemagoing event, one



**FIGURES 14–16** Stills from trailer discouraging cell phones in cinemas. By permission of Gee Jeffrey and Partners, Rogers Cantel Telecommunication.

might conclude that the opposite is the case and innovative alternatives to "good" cinematic behavior abound. But the qualities of this investment by exhibitors and distributors are telling. As discussed earlier, one of the arguments about the formation of cinema spectatorship has to do with predictability and control, a sort of industrial standard of audience generation and comportment. In the current dominant incarnation of standardizing mechanisms, the themed cinematic institution of the megaplex or the upgraded multiplex, and the accelerated international cinema text, pursue knowable audiences across the globe.

This book has attempted to document how the impulse to seek out and shape an ideal standardized audience has been retooled yet again for a global cinema environment. In the process, the relations among media and contexts have been redrawn, one key element of which has been an augmenting sense of coordination and simultaneity across locations. One of the theoretical challenges advanced here has been the following: where are the spaces for agents of cultural politics in light of evidence of cultural simultaneity?

As has been put forward throughout, there is no necessary reason why simultaneity must equate homogeneity. The dispersion of spaces and sites, the intermedia mutations of cultural commodities, and the polysemic nature of signs all indicate that it would be a profound and presumptuous misstep to think that cultural artifacts harbor their own essential meaning effects. For too long, the speedy critical glide to this premise has made for some lazy claims about global culture. Instead, Ien Ang's discussion of capitalist postmodernity as a chaotic system is instructive. She points out that "chaos" does not signal an absence of structure or lack of order, but that our historical context, and our globalizing tendency, is one of radically indeterminate meaning.<sup>4</sup> The structures of theatrical exhibition contribute to global cultural economic forces as well as a *sensibility* about the global. There is, of course, work to be done to maintain and promote diversity in cultural life; attacking transnational culture as a matter of course, however, is a dead-end strategy.

Cees Hamelink twenty years ago warned about "cultural synchronization."<sup>5</sup> And yet, despite a passionate and detailed analysis, Hamelink's dependency theory cannot account for the variable functions of that international culture, concluding that the forces of synchronization must be arrested in order to

promote cultural dissonance. Alternatively, Benedict Anderson indicates that a modern concept of simultaneity resides at the cultural roots of nationhood. He writes of how the novel and the newspaper provided a national communal consciousness that harbored a sense that events were taking place coincidentally, as was people's awareness of those events. He proposes, drawing from Walter Benjamin's "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," that "meanwhile" floats above such cultural forms, allowing people to grasp not only the words on the page but the way those words presume simultaneous consumption.<sup>6</sup> On these grounds, synchronization in cultural life *produces* forms of community, which for Anderson are nations. Contrary to Hamelink's assessments, international cultural simultaneity spawns new transnational communities that reside in people's imaginations and have material consequences for the organization of popular existence. I can think of no better embodiment of such transnational imaginings than cosmopolitanism.

The age of the megaplex has its antipode in earlier arguments for the perfect spectatorial situation. Peter DeCherney comments on the ideal movie theaters advocated by Seymour Stern and Harry Allan Potamkin in the 1920s and 1930s, which embraced a "streamlined continuity model as an alternative to the baroque designs and multimedia presentation of the palaces."<sup>7</sup> The clean, uncluttered auditorium with nothing to interfere visually with the viewer, they reasoned, encouraged a more immersive, individual relationship with the screen. Today, prestige screens (Ex-Centris in Montreal) and nominally adult venues (Alliance Atlantis Cinemas) adopt aspects of this, in which the tastefully sparse is a response to the megaplex clutter. And yet, as DeCherney mentions, Siegfried Kracauer responded differently, arguing that the elements of "supplementation" to the screen—music, illumination, live performance, and decor—help to create, in Kracauer's words, a "homogeneous cosmopolitan audience."<sup>8</sup> This supplementation served a productive function by distracting and interrupting the concentration of that cosmopolitan audience. As Kracauer wrote of the movie palaces' external and surface bombardment of the senses, "Like *life buoys*, the refractions of the spotlights and the musical accompaniment keep the spectator above water."<sup>9</sup> It is opportune to speculate on a similar affirmative potential for the oft-mentioned gaudiness and trashy muddle of today's cinemas. The supplementation of midway distraction one experiences at megaplexes

might, like the movie palaces, pilot audiences away from individual interpellation toward wider senses of community. Just as the cinema complex stirred reconstitutions of public and private life, it also helps initialize a contemporary brand of cosmopolitan public to which Kracauer alludes in his essay on movie palaces. He reasoned, "in pure externality, the audience encounters itself; its own reality is revealed in the fragmented sequence of splendid impressions."<sup>10</sup>

Several cultural theorists approach cosmopolitanism as a point of entry into a model of political life. The concept captures a sense of competence with the contemporary and a connection or empathy with difference. The cosmopolitan person imagines a global breadth for his/her habitus. Ulf Hannerz writes, "Cosmopolitans can be dilettantes as well as connoisseurs, and are often both, at different times,"<sup>11</sup> and then wonders about how this alters when international movement is not necessarily a defining feature of cosmopolitanism any more. Moreover, cosmopolitanism is taken by some as a possible alternative to the restrictions of national or local communities. On this point, John Hartley describes a postmodern public sphere of media images and Arjun Appadurai wants to name a transnational public.<sup>12</sup> All are fairly careful to avoid a stable trajectory whereby the cosmopolitan culture lifts one out of the local; instead, the notion describes an importing, as much as an exporting, mechanism. But their reinvestment in the very term "public" is telling, reminding us that thinking of political agency requires some site—or imagined point—of commune. Here, Timothy Brennan's intricate study is particularly instructive. Detailing the mobilization of cosmopolitanism as an obstruction to emerging formations of nations and states, Brennan reveals the pitfalls such globalism has had for critical theory's ability to help us understand contemporary cultural politics. Where others have championed cosmopolitanism as a conceptual negotiation of new global political agency, Brennan cautions us about the way its current form may redirect us from other key struggles for community and may carry with it what are not international ideals but American ones.<sup>13</sup>

Such an indispensable lesson, one that essentially turns on scholarly discourse, can be supplemented by bringing cosmopolitanism as a structure of feeling—or a "felt internationalism"—into full relief. Steering away from the treatment of cosmopolitanism as a worldly view from above, Bruce Robbins compellingly imagines it as a "collective, engaged, and empowered" brand of in-

ternationalism, one characterized by continuities between local and global commitments.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, he questions a tendency to pit nationalism against globalism, as though the two are in battle for people's affiliations and emotional attentions. Rather, he proposes that "the forms of global feeling are continuous with forms of national feeling. This implies that, though the potential for a conflict of loyalties is always present, cosmopolitanism or internationalism does not take its primary meaning or desirability from an absolute and intrinsic opposition to nationalism. Rather, it is an extension outward of the same sorts of potent and dangerous solidarity."<sup>15</sup> A line of attack that runs through this book is a class critique of the misguided binary option of globalism and nationalism. He notes in close detail the operations of a jet-setting intelligentsia that result in a disparaging view of the nationalist commitments of the broader population. And yet he documents an emerging discussion of a "popular cosmopolitanism," a shared and easily accessible sense of worldliness, that holds significant weight in the everyday life of people.<sup>16</sup>

I can think of no more apt characterization of Canadian cinemagoing, where commercial screens inhibit for the most part a Canadian film presence but offer an encounter with an international scene. The Canadian national-popular, such that it is, includes a continuing reorganization and reappraisal of skirmishes with and glorifications of international culture. In the context of a sense of Canadian cultural absence, one of the strategies has been to present a cosmopolitan face, that is, to celebrate worldly sophistication, or, in effect, to live elsewhere. Here, I arrive at a general conclusion about the motors and effects of transnational culture, namely, that *popular cosmopolitanism needs to be taken seriously as a pervasive mode for negotiating and managing reigning ideas and experiences of global economies and cultures*. It is a structure of feeling about senses of allegiance and affiliation—about being in step—with imagined distant and synchronized populations. Popular cosmopolitanism can be continuous with, and can be incorporated into, senses of nationhood. It is a mode internal to existing national boundaries and obviously does not make them disappear magically. Where many critics can only see international popular culture engulfing and suppressing domestic expressions, there remains a rich popular knowledge about a contemporary multinational culture, or what Simon During might describe as a fledgling form of global popular, one that

could serve dominant discourses of national community or could offer a foothold for an alternative.

The politics of such a turn are far from set in stone, for there is ample evidence of both rightist and leftist critique rooted both in forms of nationalism and internationalism. In this respect, while identifying the way cosmopolitanism *and* nationalism play into efforts to smooth the logic of world capital, Robbins perceptively highlights the overwhelming presence of anticapitalist convictions in the antiglobalization movement, itself a community with a highly developed international consciousness. He goes further in suggesting that the romance involved with a certain brand of leftist politics can become a dominant form of American nationalism, especially among a privileged class of intellectuals and scholars.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Canadian critics have been notoriously uniform in their apprehension of popular cosmopolitanism as a problem to be attacked and ridiculed, yet they have actively championed other strains of international awareness. The result has been the domination of left critique by a narrow band of rhetoric, squeezing out other progressive possibilities that might give full due to popular practices and understandings.

Returning to the lessons of Gramsci on the national-popular is edifying, for among his writings is a battle with the implications of new forms of internationalism, especially for the making of a progressive historical bloc. He recommended that putting together a class of democratic political agents necessitates an engagement with the everyday language of people. This vernacular may consist in pieces of cultural life that spring from unlikely and far-flung sources. For pundits of an autonomous and authentic national culture, these popular pieces of cultural life may be seen as illegitimate, especially if those pieces arrive from other shores. Yet, and at times seemingly against his own better judgment, Gramsci advised a genuine scrutiny of the stockpile of materials that are part of popular everyday consciousness. Such an analysis will lay bare the thinking of a time and place and will provide the raw resources required to tap into that thinking. As Marcia Landy puts it,

Gramsci's conception of language is divided between normative and "spontaneous" or "immanent" linguistic practices. The normative linguistic practices relate to traditional practices. The sources of conformism and of inno-

vation are identified by Gramsci as radiating from the schools, the church, elite and popular writers, theater and film, radio, popular songs, public assemblies, and local dialects. . . . Hence one must be aware of these many lines traversing and feeding into language in order to effect any change.<sup>18</sup>

From exactly these varied media sources emanates a widespread sentiment of connection and participation in a contemporary transnational moment. This "felt internationalism"—that is, the potential condition for a global popular—is not evenly distributed and has multiple appearances, but it exists as a powerful organizing feature of ordinary cultural life.

As an international and internationalizing formation, the contemporary film industry ignites the global circulation of culture. Among other outcomes, the apparatus of the lived space of cinemas arranges a localized encounter with a transnational commercial film culture. A moviegoing public seems to be beckoned into a cosmopolitan demeanor. What, then, are the implications of the public consumption of a slice of that global cultural traffic of images and sounds in those regulated cinema spaces? What relations of the local and the global are articulated in the megaplex? The cinema complex is but one urban and suburban intersection of the two, where the proximate and the distant collide. Emphasizing the metropolitan experience at the root of global culture, Saskia Sassen proposes, "globalization is a process that generates contradictory spaces, characterized by contestation, international differentiation, continuous border crossings. The global city is emblematic of this condition."<sup>19</sup> The cinema entertainment complex is a now visible component of the global city environment. The examination of cities has appeared as an unsettling category between the abstractions of local, global, community identity, and national identity. Most certainly, as Sassen puts it, "A focus on cities allows us to capture not only the upper but also the lower circuits of globalization."<sup>20</sup>

Given the history of the relation between cities and cinema,<sup>21</sup> and in the context of the developments I have elaborated throughout this book, *Megaplexes and the upgraded multiplex are among those lower circuits of globalization.* Corraling screens across continents into coordinated openings and closings of films paints an image in which the variegated traces of cultural expression connect people to geographically distant and temporally synchronized com-

munities. Cinema complexes are sites for an encounter with one dimension of global cultural traffic. The "everywhere" of the current cinema accents this role of motion picture theaters further. Ulf Hannerz describes cosmopolitanism as "a mode of managing meaning" about city and national space in light of ideas about globalization.<sup>22</sup> "We often use the term 'cosmopolitan' rather loosely, to describe just about anybody who moves about in the world."<sup>23</sup> This feeling of movement has less to do with global mobility than an image of travel. "A more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other."<sup>24</sup> So, what does it mean to be cosmopolitan without intercity mobility but instead with what Friedberg calls a mobilized visuality? Indeed, we have the exoticization of certain zones in the city, to which the megaplex is one contributor. Especially salient, here, is the fact that the "making special" of entertainment/consumption zones is a process employed by cities in disparate countries.

Importantly, moving from city to city in Canada and the United States, one expects to encounter essentially the same film events and similar show times, locations of theaters, and concession offerings. The consistency across city film cultures includes the conventionalized signs of "alternative" cinema culture (local repertory screens, cine-clubs, festivals, and film co-ops). Thus difference in one strata of continentalist film culture can be mapped more prominently *inside* a particular city than between cities. In this respect, the current cinema does not indicate geographical distinctiveness (e.g., between cities) as much as it does temporal particularity. We may want to think of the flexible landscapes of urban life, in which film texts and events appear as markers we share of various seasons, events, and memories.

The film landscape has a manifold semiotic operation. Theatrical releases and the cinema complexes themselves are billboards that promote the television broadcasts, videotape and DVD releases, repackaged novels, new game software, soft drinks, fast food, new music, and Web sites. Moreover, they reference the boundless range of human emotion (friendship, romance, pleasure, animosity, embarrassment, tedium, hopefulness, despair, and so on). They produce an atmosphere for social life, adorned with each new release. Advertisements for future commodity forms and situations for collective conduct share this atmosphere. Seeing the film landscape as a series of billboards

allows us to identify the dual dimensions of consumer and cultural practice without collapsing the two together. Lawrence Grossberg and Meaghan Morris have elaborated on the billboard metaphor "to describe the multiple effectivity of cultural practices."<sup>25</sup> Grossberg continues,

Billboards are neither authentic nor inauthentic; their function cannot be predefined, nor are they distributed according to some logic of the "proper" organization of space or the "proper" use of place. They follow what Morris calls a "logic of the next." And they perform, provoke, and enable a variety of different activities: they open a space for many different discourses and practices, both serious and playful, both institutional and guerrilla. . . . They manifest complex appeals that draw us down certain roads, open and close alternative routes, and enable us to be located in a variety of different ways at different sites and intersections where we can rest, or engage in other activities, or move on in different directions.<sup>26</sup>

Grossberg's argument draws us to regard the locations of culture as points of process and movement rather than containment. As that cultural landscape is itself in transit, any mode of critique is doomed if it does not address the everyday forces of volatility, as well as the everyday tactics to manage them.

Most striking is that what developed in exhibition and distribution after 1986 was not a radical departure but rather something that accented what was already percolating. The contemporary cinema complex is a suitable enframe-ment of Raymond Williams's distinctions between residual, emergent, and dominant practices. Attention to this manifestation alerts us to sedimented cultural forms and practices in addition to freshly developing ones.<sup>27</sup> The industrial drive to coordinate, control, and mark off one site of cultural consumption from another relies on existing operating assumptions, leaving people with a recognizable field of cultural activity. Moments of upheaval in the cultural industries deserve close consideration not for their novelty but because they allow us to peek into reigning discourses; the critical intent is not to fetishize the newest technology but to take advantage of the shift in process to witness how industry agents make the argument for changes in their standard operations, with their objective of reconstituting and solidifying points of economic advantage.

Questions about these organizing features of film culture remain. What are the implications of living with cultural institutions that grow from and presume some imagined, internationally invested audience? What does it mean to live with a transnational cultural politic but to have to work politically with decidedly noncosmopolitan modes of governance (for instance, perhaps, municipal governments)? I want to speculate tentatively on two observations, ones that I think illustrate the contradictory and at times confounding situations with which we must tussle. The changing practice of "going to the movies" has generated some freshly dominant notions. For example, the industry's reliance on opening weekends as a rapid source of revenue and as a predictor of future success rests on a widespread acceptance of the value of such openings among cinemagoers. Exhibitors and audiences alike note, often with frustration, the uneven distribution of cinemagoing through the week, an inequality that initial release dates only accent further. If they tend to be the most crowded and the most expensive of cinemagoing occasions, why don't more people avoid opening weekends? The answer lies beyond the organization of the work week, if only because there are subsequent weekends for most film releases. I am convinced that there is added sign value that involves a collective sense of being up-to-date, being the first on the scene. Opening weekends allow the material and sensory experience of commune. One goes to the first showings of a theatrical release precisely to be with strangers and to be part of that crowd. The current cinema's coordination of release dates across the continent, and beyond, fosters an imagined and temporally bound sense of similar crowds elsewhere. It may be but a minority for whom this newness is salient and who have the means to act accordingly, but it is financially attractive enough to drive a dominant industry strategy. The added value of attending new releases stems from the possibility of being contemporary along with a large, dispersed population. The mass crowdings on opening weekends is not solely a symptom of the supreme loss of will to consumer agendas. Indisputably representing a consumerist "being in the world," the crowded opening is also an adjunct to "being in the know" about contemporary cultural life.

And yet, in contradistinction to this mark of sociability and collectivity, representations of moviegoing appear to signal the failure of that collectivity. The abandoned drive-in and the decaying movie palace have become clichéd

signs of the passing of an era and of the betrayal of promises for a better community context. Recent depictions of cinemagoing emphasize the chaos of the practice. In a now-classic episode of *Seinfeld*, an evening out at the multiplex becomes a night of frustration as friends miss meeting one another, as they go into the wrong theaters, as they spend too much money, and as they don't even see the movie they wanted to see and end up walking out. The opening sequence of *The Trigger Effect* (David Koepp 1996) depicts the movie theater as a site of the breakdown of civic life and an intimation of impending violence, where the slightest encounter may turn into a physical confrontation. The threat of the movie house is taken even further in the opening of *Scream 2* (Wes Craven 1997), where a trip to the washroom at the opening of a horror film becomes a gruesome murder. *Poetic Justice* (John Singleton 1993) presents a drive-in drive-by assault.

These two sets of observations announce the correspondent inclinations toward affiliation and demise that cinemas signify. They may appear contradictory in the first instance, but they are perfectly consistent as expressions of hope and concern. The impression of collectivity betrays a reverie about, or a desire for, commune. And the expectation of an ensuing chaos heralds a sense that collectivity must struggle to exist and requires labor to come into being, and that social life is being hijacked by less than communitarian impulses, like the profit motive. Presently, cinemas can signify a feeling of loss and despair about public life. They linger as talismans of an alternative public sphere that might have been but has not developed as yet. Even so, with every expression of sociability as people seek out an encounter with that supposedly chaotic crowd, there is a dream of global collectivity. Such reveries are not idle distraction.

They are the notional sensibilities on which social and political life flourishes or withers. The experience of the moviegoing crowd, produced through the discursive constructs of industry common sense and new practices of cinemagoing, consists in a local subjectivity lurching toward a felt internationalism, however erratically and fitfully. What is to be made of this felt internationalism is another matter, one that has not been predetermined and written in stone.

As this study has underscored throughout, talk of globalization references the mobility of culture, capital, and people. And though this talk may present a

sweeping and uniform impact of globalization, it is not a totalizing flow. In point of fact, this international mobility is just as responsible for new kinds of fixity and exclusion as it is for social and economic movement. Put simply, not all capital flows equally, not all people are set in motion across the planet in the same circumstances, and not all cultural forms enter the realm of global exchange. The industrial will to orchestrate commodities and markets leaves us with a multitiered environment as it unevenly circulates forms and establishes zones of consumption. This unevenness extends to the velocity of culture, such that audiences confront varying speeds for the arrival and departure of cultural forms. Consequently, these dynamics fix in place a core of popular texts, while other works find themselves as part of a "minor" cinema, eking out parallel, noncommercial and alternative venues. More broadly, a root impact of global flows is the production and administration of spatial and temporal differences in cultural life. Indeed, the content of the divisions, ones that set the parameters for the formation and expression of alliances among people, matters less than the sheer fact of the divisions.

The terms of the reconfiguration of cinemagoing charted here are an emerging international simultaneity in and acceleration of the current cinema, a revaluation of the space and time of new film events, an orientation of the cinema complex that responds to other occasions for audiovisual consumption, a dedifferentiation of zones of social activity and intermedia consumption, and, given the prominent place a range of "screen" technologies have in cinema locations, a public display value of new technology. The reconfiguration of cinemagoing has also included a reformation of the links between intermedia and international culture, and between those of the economies of industrial consolidation and the experiences of globalization. A dominant industrial discourse repeatedly proposes "family" as the principle orientation for the megaplex and the upgraded multiplex, and to this end we see some of the films themselves revealing an amusement park ideal. Consistent with the design and architectural embodiment of this ideal, the "ride film" has appeared as the presumed ideologically neutral narrative form suited to such an environment. The focus of this study, however, has not been on the textual ramifications in film but on issues of popular constituencies related to screen traffic. As entertainment destinations, cinema complexes play a part in the establishment of

new lines of spatial and temporal difference in public life. Each aspect is a product of an industry common sense that informs a discourse of an international popular audience. The provisionally settled common sense produces, and is a product of, an image of community that articulates the proximate and the distant. Ultimately, this evidence has been read to suggest that a national-popular is not in opposition to international life but arises within an idea of a global-popular.

In closing, it is worth remarking on the nostalgic tone of megaplexes. They are rife with allusion to a golden era of the cinema<sup>28</sup> and of civic life, at times drawing analogies with "the main streets of old."<sup>29</sup> Behind the impressively lengthy escalators at Toronto's Famous Players Paramount, near the facilities reserved for corporate functions, and hence going unnoticed by most patrons, is a gentle note of historical awareness. There, a set of attractive architectural photographs dating from the 1920s of the Paramount Theater in Times Square, New York City, adorns the walls. Nearby is a section of the wrought iron railing, including the Paramount logo, from that site. Though the original theater has been shut, this relic has become adornment for a new megaplex, however much it may clash with the rest of the environment. As pronounced in the opening line of Disney's Family Channel film *Phantom of the Megaplex* (Blair Treu, 2000), "History can slam right into the present and totally blow your mind." The film follows the Andy Hardy-like exploits of a young assistant manager of a twenty-six-screen suburban megaplex preparing for a Hollywood opening night. Built on the site of an old movie palace, the megaplex appears to be haunted by an old cinemagoer who might have been trapped inside and killed when the original cinema was razed. The gentle high jinks of the phantom, and the presence of Mickey Rooney as a former employee who hangs around to "help out," remind the characters of an era in which the wonder of cinema held a central place in community life. But, of course, the film illustrates the continuation of that community as the megaplex becomes a place for youth employment, for dating, for dropping off children, for the volunteer labor of seniors, for meeting celebrities, and for generally rallying together to solve a mystery.

Such fantasies of community do not alter the fact that as contradictory spaces, cinema complexes are only ever semipublic and operate through a series

of regimens of behaviors. Cinemagoing is not merely sitting and watching; it involves an application of a set of ideas about and skills in contemporary sociability. Yet, even as cinema complexes invite dreams of collectivity and agency, they are sites that survey, police, and discipline public comportment. They represent the dominance of ideas about partial gating and theming, safety and difference, in a space for the participation in and experience of global cultural life. Such zones mark a tacit agreement that public membership in a transnational context has a price for admission.

## APPENDIX ONE

### Screens per Million Population

Nation	1996	1997	1998
Iceland	191.0	186.6	165.2
Sweden	132.3	132.1	131.3
USA	113.5	119.9	128.3
Norway	90.8	92.0	89.2
Australia	69.9	78.2	86.1
Azerbaijan	93.0	89.8	85.8
France	78.1	80.0	81.1
Canada	67.9	76.0	81.0
New Zealand	77.5	81.2	78.1
Switzerland	69.7	73.8	75.8
Spain	60.1	65.4	75.4
Estonia	121.2	75.5	73.5
Ireland	60.9	65.2	70.6
Czech Republic	72.6	72.2	69.6
Finland	63.7	62.9	64.5
Denmark	61.7	60.9	62.7
Hungary	54.5	58.1	61.1
Austria	52.3	52.5	56.3
European Union	51.0	53.0	55.6
Slovakia	62.1	54.9	54.6
Slovenia	49.5	46.1	53.8
China	57.6	55.3	53.1
Germany	49.5	50.4	51.4

## APPENDIX 1 (continued)

Nation	1996	1997	1998
Luxembourg	39.4	63.0	50.7
Israel	51.4	51.4	50.7
Belgium	43.4	46.8	48.9
Lithuania	48.5	48.6	47.6
Singapore	46.5	47.4	46.3
UK	37.9	40.6	44.8
Italy	40.6	41.9	43.7
Latvia	54.2	44.8	42.7
Portugal	29.3	29.7	35.9
Taiwan	36.2	34.8	34.6
Cyprus	32.8	31.1	33.4
Croatia	31.2	31.5	33.4
Netherlands	28.2	32.3	29.5
Hong Kong	28.9	29.1	29.3
Greece	26.8	26.7	26.5
Mexico	17.8	21.4	24.4
Argentina	14.7	17.7	23.2
Poland	21.5	21.5	21.6
Uruguay	21.0	20.3	19.5
South Africa	19.9	18.5	18.7
Romania	16.4	15.2	16.6
Japan	14.6	15.0	15.8
Malaysia	15.6	15.7	15.5
Philippines	14.7	14.3	13.7
Venezuela	12.3	13.6	13.6
India	14.2	13.9	13.5
Bulgaria	17.4	14.1	12.7
Serbia	13.0	12.0	12.4
Korea, Rep [S]	11.5	11.0	11.6
Chile	10.8	10.8	11.1
Russia	12.8	11.5	11.1
Brazil	9.6	10.0	10.9
Indonesia	11.0	10.9	10.5
Jordan	10.1	9.9	9.6
Bahrain	9.3	9.1	9.0
Turkey	6.3	7.8	8.2

## APPENDIX 1 (continued)

Nation	1996	1997	1998
Colombia	7.7	7.9	8.0
Morocco	6.9	6.9	6.7
Qatar	7.1	6.9	6.6
Thailand	4.4	5.9	5.8
Yemen	5.3	5.2	5.1
Peru	4.8	4.6	4.8
Iran	4.6	4.5	4.3
Myanmar	3.7	3.7	3.6
Kuwait	3.4	3.3	3.2
Ethiopia	0.8	0.7	0.7

Source: "World Cinema Fails to Keep Up with USA; Global Spending Now Close to \$17 Billion," *Screen Digest*, September 1999, 22.