Chapter One

Introduction: Trans-Pacific Mobility and the New Immigration Paradigm

The Commission concludes that the old paradigm of permanent migrant settlement is giving way to temporary and circular migration
Global Commission on International Migration 2005: 31

Following two years of consultation and analysis, the Global Commission on International Migration reported back to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in October 2005 (Martin and Martin 2006). Its report sought to organize and, through its own influence, disseminate to a governance and policy audience a new understanding of international migration that departed from an established paradigm. Conventional understanding, familiar to the administrators and theorists of new world settler societies, has spun a linear narrative of immigrant departure from the homeland, followed by the serial processes of arrival, settlement, citizenship and assimilation within the enveloping arms of a single nation state. But it has become apparent that this tidy arrangement has decreasing purchase in an era of unprecedented global mobility, labour flexibility and household dispersal. Transnationalism has become an umbrella term to describe the contemporary hyper-mobility of migrants across national borders, both those who are poor, sometimes undocumented, and merely tolerated or worse, and also those who are skilled or wealthy and eagerly solicited by nation states. Transnational migrants maintain connections in both their nations of origin and destination by e-mail, internet and telephone, through travel, economic ties and remittances, and in continuing social and cultural relationships. For a minority, political activity sustains contacts and commitments, especially when facilitated by the enfranchisement of dual citizenship.

Alternating periods of residence in origin and destination countries are variable, in some instances seasonal or short-term, while others again are part of a careful life plan of repeated movement that coincides with significant

status passages. The prospect of movement is always latent, ready to be triggered by a family decision or an external event. So migration as described in the UN Commission's text becomes more temporary, more circular, more flexible, than the conventional paradigm imagined. Mobility is not only shaped by immediate economic gradients, but also by other household projects that may well require the family itself to be globalized, dispersed among at least two nations, with periodic departures and reunions of family members. A fraught illustration of such transnationalism became evident during the war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006. As nations speedily assembled an armada to rescue their expatriates in Lebanon, transnational citizens of Canada and Australia proved unexpectedly numerous. Canada discovered 40–50,000 citizens living in Lebanon in July 2006, almost double the number of American nationals, while Australia, with 25,000, enumerated more citizens in this formerly francophone nation than France (Saunders et al. 2006). Both states had small missions in Lebanon and were surprised and administratively overwhelmed by the scale of their populations. In appeals for a speedy registration prior to evacuation, and in a context of difficult communications, close to 40,000 Lebanese residents contacted the Canadian embassy in Beirut claiming citizenship. Some were on holiday with family members, but others were living more continuously in Lebanon and many were employed there. The Canadian state discovered an unanticipated transnational colony that it had obligations to rescue in precarious war conditions.[1]

Meanwhile in Hong Kong there are repeated estimates of more than 200,000 Canadian citizens among the former colony's population of some seven million.[2] They have travelled to Canada, lived temporarily, and have chosen to return, at least for now, but have not eliminated the prospect of a further trans-Pacific move in the future.[3] Returnees are primarily middle-class and upper middle-class; some are affluent business people, or less commonly, professionals. Their numbers include well-educated 1.5-generation[4] and second-generation young adults from Canada who have re-located to Hong Kong to begin their working careers. Hong Kong returnees share their transnational behaviour with similar if less numerous elites in Taiwan and smaller groups from South Korea. This cohort, some of them wealthy millionaire migrants who live, for now, either in Canada or East Asia, are the subject of this book and exemplify to a tee the new paradigm of temporary and circular migration.

Geographies of Transnational Migration

The literature on transnational migration is now large, interdisciplinary, and becoming global,[5] as migration itself links ever more national origins in the global south with primarily metropolitan destinations in the global

north, creating what Steven Vertovec (2006) calls a condition of 'superdiversity' in the gateway cities of Europe, North America and Australasia.[6] The earliest research, by anthropologists, identified repeated international movement and frequent communication by Mexican and Caribbean migrants between their home countries and the United States (Rouse 1992; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Basch et al. 1994). Cross-border social networks were also economic channels as significant flows of remittances from savings were sent home by migrants to their families, priming local economic development; contacts might also become political networks as Caribbean and Central American politicians carried their election campaigns to expatriate populations in American cities.

These social networks, projected onto space, shape the important concept of a transnational social field, where 'migrants, through their life ways and daily practices, reconfigure space so that their lives are lived simultaneously within two or more nation-states' (Basch et al. 1994: 28). The porosity of national borders and the repeated mobility of migrants passing through them, documented and undocumented, give rise to a sense of a changing spatiality: nations have become 'unbound', migrants 'deterritorialized' and 'ungrounded', citizenship itself is conditional and flexibly incorporated into migrant biographies. The coherent profile of a world (and subjective identities) tightly organized around nation states as containers of national citizens seems to be unravelling. Some argue that this is nothing new; the great European migration to the 'new world' between 1880 and 1930 had also included much coming and going, with a significant fraction of immigrants returning to their homeland (Foner 2000). But this interpretation, while respected, has not prevailed; the scale of cross-border transactions permitted by cheap travel and electronic communications together with various innovations (including the status of dual citizenship) define a substantially novel phenomenon.

Early ethnographic interpretations of transnationalism were challenged in a damaging criticism for including a sampling bias (Portes et al. 2002). By highlighting only observations of transnational behaviour from small samples, and disregarding migrant cases where such linkages were not sustained, researchers were 'sampling on the dependent variable', thereby inflating the scale of transnational activity. In contrast, Portes suggested, and implemented, standardized measurement across large samples, to demonstrate the extent of transnationalism and permit comparative surveys across world regions. With these stringent requirements, transnationalism remained a significant feature, though the incidence of political and economic activities was shown to be less extensive than social transactions. This literature demonstrates the advantage of both extensive and intensive methods, adding the discipline of large samples that ease validity concerns to the interpretive depth of ethnographic study, a model that I will attempt to follow in my own mixed-methods approach.

In contrast to transnational corporate capitalism, migrant transnationalism is regarded as 'transnationalism from below' (Portes et al. 1999), a term disclosing two emphases. First, it implies a level of active agency among migrants, in contrast to the economistic language of labour flows that has prevailed in the globalisation and world cities literature (Smith 2001). Second, there is also a sense of migrants as transgressors, undercutting the authority of the state in their movements and flexible use of citizenship (Ong 1999), or their participation in cross-border non-governmental organisations that operate as transnational advocacy groups (Smith 2001). Indeed some cultural theorists have romanticized the hybrid identities of migrants for providing a cosmopolitan in-betweenness with a superior position for adapting to a globalizing world, though Mitchell (1997a) has deflated some of the excess from this discourse on hybridity.

While transnationalism presents a fundamentally geographical imagination of here, there, across, and between, the use of spatial terms, such as social field or social space, transnational circuits or cross-border spatialities, has often been metaphorical and loosely defined. An important theoretical objective of this book is to carry forward the beginnings made by geographers in burrowing more fully into the concrete places and imagined spaces of transnationalism.[7] This specificity is all the more necessary because globalization theory, in presenting an alternate 'transnationalism from above', commonly evokes abstract spaces of flows and networks that comprise 'a system of variable geometry and dematerialized geography' (Castells 1996: 359). Such abstract spaces, in Castells' influential thinking, have prevailed over the empirical 'spaces of places' that include particular nations, cities and neighbourhoods (Murray 2006). Transnationalism from above alludes to electronic communications and dramatic real decreases in transportation costs that have achieved time-space compression in a shrinking world, minimizing it seems the effects of distance and the play of geography for global economic actors. The footloose transnational corporation has also benefited from the growth of free trade and the reduction of national protectionism to rove globally. The transgression of borders means the weakening of the nation state, encouraging a post-national argument wishing 'to make a decisive break with state-centrism' (Sklair 2001:16).

All of this leads to a distinctive conceptual geography. As Michelle Huang (2004: 2) has observed, 'The utopia of globalization is a flexible, fluid and mobile space, an open space that knows no boundaries.' She cites Henri Lefebvre's (1979: 293) characterization of space under capitalism: 'Capitalist and neocapitalist space is a space of quantification and growing homogeneity, a merchandized space where all the elements are exchangeable and thus interchangeable… Economic space and political space thus converge toward the elimination of all differences.' In this scenario we approach political economy's international level playing field, the 'flat world' thesis popularized

by Thomas Friedman (2005). This strong view of globalization sees the growing homogeneity of global culture and the rising substitutability of locations in the undifferentiated sameness of global economic space. The global has become a surface of sameness, while it is the local that contains some residual differentiation (Appadurai 1996; Abu-Lughod 1999: 417–8).

In contrast to this line of thinking, my interpretation will emphasize the continuing importance of geography in transnational migration in several important respects. First, the social field stretching from East Asia to Canada is not a uniform surface of sameness but acutely differentiated. Indeed geographical variation becomes a significant problem for immigrants to address. *Contra* Lefebvre's space 'of growing homogeneity', distinctive political regimes, varying economic regulation and diverse cultural traditions among national jurisdictions create challenging spatial differentiation. Moreover the separate Canadian and East Asian staging posts in the social field offer variable attractions at distinct stages in the life cycle encouraging the circulation of households at well-defined status passages, including the phase of career development, the period of children's education, and the time of approaching retirement. The characteristics of the two shores of the social field also impact family members in separate ways, for while men tend to follow a gravitational pull back to Asia, women prefer the opportunities available in Canada, and young adults may differentiate the field according to the gradient of fast and slow, often preferring the buzz of Hong Kong to the 'laid back' character of Vancouver. While the social field is unified by movement and purpose, it is a unity of dissimilar parts, expressed in a slogan circulating among the Chinese-Canadian population of Vancouver in the 1990s, 'Hong Kong for making money, Canada for quality of life'.

Second, time-space compression has not exhausted the role of distance even for the typically well-heeled migrants we shall be meeting. If distance measured in time or cost is less of a barrier than it once was, there are new metrics where separation exerts significant costs. The transnational family is often the fragmented family, with members dispersed on opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean. In its purest form, the astronaut family[8] includes a husband and father working in East Asia while his wife and children are living in Vancouver, Toronto, San Francisco or Sydney. Visits occur, two to four times a year for a few weeks on each visit, but the abiding relationship is long-distance. The emotional distance of separation becomes a major bone of contention, and often triggers a crisis point in family life. Women are left as single parents in an unfamiliar environment, children are freed from patriarchal direction, and men face the loneliness and temptations of isolation in East Asia. The meaning of distance moves to a new register, and one that is vital for family well-being.

Third, place matters as migrants embody the cultural traits of their regions of origin in moving across the social field. Regional or national

attributes and dispositions are embedded in migrant lives and carried with them to new settings. Besides such obvious cultural traits as language or food, there are others that are borne from East Asia to Canada. Important in the story of millionaire migrants will be the fundamental significance of the meaning of property and property relations. The over-determined centrality of real estate in capital accumulation in Hong Kong in particular would become a major – and conflictual – part of the meeting of newcomers and long-established residents in Vancouver. A distinctive feature of the cultural geography of East Asian immigration has been the fashioning of a distinctive urban landscape reflecting an Asian modernity, sometimes conflicting with nostalgic white settler preferences for Euro-Canadian heritage. Landscape interpretation is a sophisticated part of the geographer's art (Duncan and Duncan 2004) and landscape would become a significant source of friction between new arrivals and the long-settled.

These three themes underscore some of the pervasive and substantial geographical dimensions of transnationalism that we shall frequently encounter in the following pages. Far from a mere metaphorical presence, geography is an abiding – and not always welcome – constituent member of any transnational social field.

The Globalizing State, the Business Migrant and the Neo-Liberal Stage

Two principal players will occupy the transnational spatial stage in this account, the nation state and the enterprising migrant. The stage itself has been significantly re-set by national and international neo-liberal policy regimes since the 1980s. Neo-liberalism has been defined as 'a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade' (Harvey 2005: 2). The institutional framework of neo-liberalism has been assembled by nation states that are either willing directors of a globalizing enterprise policy or else believe that there is no alternative to its imperatives. Such an ideology lauds individual entrepreneurial skills and we will see that in immigration policy this fixation has extolled that imagined mover and shaker, *homo economicus* or rational economic man (sic),[9] incarnate as the business immigrant, an exemplary figure with a long and successful résumé played out in various global settings. Policy in many states has steadily moved toward prioritizing economic migrants, and Canada has refined its talent hunt not only for skilled workers but also business people with entrepreneurial skills and discretionary financial capital.

By and large globalization theory has not been kind to the nation state. The state's fixed borders appear as limitations, an indication of immobility on a mobile globe, arbitrary barriers in a world that strives to be barrier-free. The current neo-liberal regime with its elevation of free markets is often portrayed as requiring a general rolling back of the power and reach of the state. In migration research, as elsewhere, the nation state focus has come under attack at a time when transnationalism has made every geographic border and many legal impediments disputable (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Yet the nation state shows itself to be more enterprising than it is often given credit for, and one of the theoretical aims of the study is to challenge its eviscerated condition in much globalization theory. Its reach extends beyond national borders, while rapidly evolving policy tries to engage the gyrations of global economic and social processes. The state's active participation in controversial trade liberalization or social policy restructuring facilitated the globalization project from the start. Its sponsorship of neo-liberal policies in the 1980s reinforced market disciplines, weakened national borders, and consolidated a system of valuation emphasising the price mechanism (Harvey 2005). As the welfare state withdrew its universal safety nets, so it prioritized the self-sufficient citizen who can go it alone. In a market-saturated governance regime, consumption becomes the major citizenship virtue, the act reproducing the system; the 2007–09 credit crisis provided a devastating lesson of how the loss of purchasing *power* can drive the system into recession and dysfunction.

Neo-liberalism is an abiding conceptual and empirical presence in the account that follows, a force field in which subjects act (Peck and Tickell 2002; Mitchell 2004; Harvey 2005; Peck 2006). It is no accident that transnationalism across the Pacific has arisen during the neo-liberal period that has so powerfully directed Canada's Asia-Pacific strategy over the past quarter-century. A transparent economism shaped the official construction of the Pacific Rim in the North American imagination, naked boosterism characterized government trade missions there in the 1980s and 1990s, increasingly preferential treatment was offered immigrants with class advantage and citizenship itself was commodified – all confirming the power of the market as the unit of understanding and practice, and therefore as an important component of the conceptual scaffolding of this study. But as the literature on the governmentality of the modern state reveals, neo-liberalism up close is as much an ambition as an achievement, and its policies and procedures may have discursive cohesion in political declarations and bureaucratic manuals but are far murkier and corrupted when it comes to daily implementation. The calculations of the state are both more contingent and less transparent than their pronouncements proclaim.

So the state while ultimately preoccupied by what lies within its borders, is fully capable to reach beyond its borders and play if imperfectly the

globalization game. For in its attempts to recruit millionaire migrants, the state has acted as if the world is borderless. It has assumed the end of geography, that Thomas Friedman's (2005) 'flat world' is an adequate description of global space. But as geographers know from the earlier adventures of spatial analysis with its own level playing field, the idealized isotropic plain with its substitutability of locations is only a theoretical assumption, not an empirical actuality. So when the state assumes the existence of capitalists *sans frontières*, that skill sets are perfectly portable, allowing a successful businessman in Hong Kong or Taiwan to become *ipso facto* a successful businessman in Canada, it is overlooking geographical differentiation, the fundamental spatial breaks in culture, politics and society that intervene and provide barriers, most obviously in the disabling complexity of different languages.

Neo-liberal ideology has worked its way into all policy fields, including immigration (Arat-Koc 1999; Ong 2003). In an era of dwindling birth rates, and with the spectre of a declining labour force, immigration bureaucracies are pro-actively recruiting migrants who can be self-sufficient and require little in return from the state. The rapid escalation of temporary migration in Australia, Canada and other countries represents a flexible response to seasonal and short-term labour needs. The nation state bears minimal responsibility for those who toil transiently within its borders, limiting the citizenship rights of temporary workers (Bauder 2006). While the intake of permanent residents landing in Canada has been relatively stable at 200,000–250,000 for over a decade, temporary migration is rising rapidly and in 2007 for the first time temporary foreign workers plus foreign students exceeded the numbers of new permanent residents (CIC 2008). Temporary migration is part of the UN's new immigration paradigm, and as we shall see later, a number of business immigrants landing as permanent residents in fact hold much shorter time horizons for their Canadian sojourn.

In another sign of the growing preference for self-sufficient citizens, Canada's tripartite commitment to humanitarian protection, family reunion, and labour force replenishment in immigration selection has moved steadily toward economic migrants (Arat-Koc 1999). The share of all immigrants and refugees landing in Canada through the economic streams rose from 39 percent in the 1980s to 58 percent in 2000–06, while proportions in the family and humanitarian categories fell. Careful selection processes screen out economic migrants unless they are well educated and adaptive skilled workers, for assessments confirm that skilled migrants speedily make net economic contributions to their 'host' societies.[10] Canada is part of a competitive global marketplace for skilled workers (Wong 2003), or as they are disarmingly called in Singapore, 'foreign talent' (Yeoh 2006). While immigrant-receiving countries like Canada, Australia and the United States have historically been successful in recruiting skilled workers, other competitors are now making their pitch (Mahroum 2000; Salt and Millar 2006). The European Union promises to harmonize its recruitment of skilled workers

through a 'blue card' programme that will position it more advantageously in 'the global war for talent' (Collett 2008), while India and China are leading other Asian countries in repatriating their skilled workers from North America and Europe (Iredale et al. 2002).

Even closer to the core of neo-liberal ideology than the talent hunt for skilled workers is the recruitment of business immigrants, those who not only have human capital derived from successful entrepreneurial experience, but also abundant financial capital to replicate their successes elsewhere. Some 30 nations around the world have business immigration programmes, intending to entice footloose entrepreneurs and investors to re-locate their transformative energies to a new national project of economic development (Tseng 2000).[11] The carrot inducing their migration is the promise of citizenship and the enhanced quality of life of advanced societies, assets that may well be inaccessible for these migrants through other immigration entry classes. The neo-liberal commodification of citizenship implied by Canada's business immigration programme (BIP) has not escaped attention (Harrison 1996), achieving one version of the contemporary 'capitalization of citizenship' (Rose 1999). With abundant capital, personal funds of more than a million dollars, as well as a history of successful entrepreneurial activity in their homelands, the business immigrant as *homo economicus* is a trophy acquisition in a neo-liberal policy regime, top prize in the skilled immigrant stakes (Ley 2003). Not merely self-supporting, the business immigrant has both the skill and the wealth to add value, to create jobs for others, and provide tax revenues for the state.

The extravagant economic development in turn of Japan, the four tiger economies, and China has focussed attention on Asia Pacific as the primary contemporary incubator of *homo economicus*. Largely unregulated regional economies have seen dramatic rates of growth, and spectacular examples of entrepreneurial success. Acumen in capital accumulation has been associated with the 'bamboo networks' of overseas Chinese business families. These families are globally networked (Yeung and Olds 2000), cosmopolitan capitalists (Hamilton 1999), territorially ungrounded (Ong and Nonini 1997). Among Canada's business immigrants from 1980 to 2001, 30.6 percent originated in Hong Kong and 14.4 percent in Taiwan – with a far higher share of both groups in Vancouver.[12] The encounter of the overseas Chinese business immigrant and the neo-liberal immigrant-receiving state is seemingly a meeting of minds and interests, with prospects for spiralling mutual advantage.

Conceptual Themes and Variations

There are other theoretical fields besides the neo-liberal stage and its two principal players that contextualize the spatiality of state and immigrant projects. Precisely because the homunculus of *homo economicus* presents an

all too partial sense of the complex identities of millionaire migrants, we have to engage other conceptual categories. Inevitably in the broad canvas of this narrative, such conceptual fields as the global city, cosmopolitanism, citizenship and multiculturalism appear, but other than summary statements I resist the temptation to move down the alluring view corridors to engage them fully; in part I have done so elsewhere, and do not want to pursue undue diversions from the principal narrative. Other fields cannot be sidelined. Family embeddedness is an additional key quality of identity, and it is important to disentangle the differential status of husband, wife and child in transnational space (Waters 2002). Geographic separation introduces strains on the family unit as the astronaut husband in East Asia and the 'left behind' family members in Canada are significantly uncoupled, with their occasional meetings bearing the weight of lives lived in different places. Moreover, even when the family remains intact in a single place, de-skilled males feel the dislocation accompanying migration differentially, and more painfully.

Nor do immigrant families ever arrive in an empty land. Canada is still widely regarded as a European settler society even if that description is less quantitatively accurate with each passing census. Migrants from Asia encounter not only a geography but also a history, and up to the 1940s Canada's history was that of a colonial plural society with a racialized hierarchy and separation between its constituent units. The Chinese in particular suffered virulent racist marginalization, containment and exclusion (Anderson 1991). Some authors fail to see significant breaks between past and present, and the dimension of race and the literature of critical race studies is an important area of theoretical engagement in the discussion that follows, particularly in Chapter 6.

So insights from theories of the globalising neo-liberal state and its exemplary actor, *homo economicus*, gender and family studies, and critical race studies are each part of the scaffolding upon which this interpretation of transnational relations across an expansive geography will unfold. Perhaps framing is a better metaphor, for while scaffolding is removed from a completed building, the frame remains though it is concealed beneath the final construction. So too in this narrative the theoretical and conceptual armature, while shaping the account, will serve as backdrop, guiding the discussion but not dominating it.

China Moves

If the twenty-first century is indeed to be the Chinese century,[13] then the awakening of the ancient empire is emblematized by the dynamic of people on the move, people remaking the human geography of the national territory

(Fan 2007). Internal migration in the People's Republic of China represents the largest flow of households in the contemporary world. The extraordinary pace of urbanization in major cities like Shanghai, surely the poster child of present mega-city growth in the developing world (Olds 2001), is matched by the creation, from almost nothing, of new urban centres in the special economic zones along the coast. Shenzhen in the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province, adjacent to Hong Kong, was a small town in the 1980s but by 2005 claimed to be the centre of an urbanizing region of 10 million people. Over four million had been resident for less than a year while over eight million did not have a *hukou*, or household residency permit, a legal definition of residential rootedness (Shenzhen Data Communication Bureau 2005; also Lin 1997; Wang and Meng 2004). Travelling in urbanizing China, one can understand Aihwa Ong's awed reaction that visiting these explosive cities was 'like being caught up in the eye of the greatest typhoon in the history of capitalism' (Ong 1999: 43).

The rapid modernization of China and its growing ambitions have created opportunities but also anxieties in nearby satellite territories. Capitalists and the rising middle class in Hong Kong and Taiwan, while huge investors in the Mainland (Hsing 1998; Olds 2001), have also been apprehensive of the scale of Chinese aspirations. A resolution to the middle-class dilemma of simultaneous eagerness and wariness in engaging China commercially has been to seek safe havens around the Pacific Rim, should circumstances require a sudden strategic retreat. Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, amongst others, have provided accessible sanctuaries through student visas and immigration programmes welcoming skilled workers and business people, while a portion of the Hong Kong middle-class was permitted to take advantage of ex-colonial linkages to Britain. Some of these trans-Pacific migrants were temporary movers from the start: Mak (1997) writes of some Hong Kong employers holding positions open for valued staff during the two year residency in Australia required for citizenship eligibility. But other migrants drawn by quality of life, educational assets, and personal freedoms in the West are prepared to move beyond the sojourner model with plans for permanent residence… perhaps.

The Mainland itself has also become a source of trans-Pacific migrants with the onset of liberalizing tendencies leading to the 1985 emigration law. Canada has benefited from these reforms with the arrival of large numbers of skilled Chinese engineers and IT workers, though many have experienced difficulty in securing appropriate employment and some are considering return migration (Teo 2007). As well as these regular movements, unknown numbers of undocumented migrants have departed Fujian Province in particular for hazardous journeys to the United States, the famed 'Beautiful Country' (Chin 1999), or even Europe (Pieke et al. 2004).

Occasionally, smugglers' itineraries are routed through Canada. In summer 1999, four decrepit vessels landed 599 bemused migrants on the remote British Columbia coast (Mountz 2004). Twenty years earlier, equally impoverished arrivals, Vietnamese boat people, many of them ethnic Chinese, completed a publicly-funded journey from refugee camps by air to Canada after their own desperate escapes on the South China Sea (Beiser 1999).

These distinctions among ethnic Chinese are complemented by a huge range of past experiences and future life plans, so that any view of a unitary Chinese diaspora as either an objective phenomenon (Wang 1999) or an internalized source of identity (Ang 2001) is compromised by deep ambivalence. Aihwa Ong (1999:111) adds, 'Sometimes we forget we are talking about one-quarter of the world's population', while Wang Gungwu (1999:123) writes that place and practice introduce so many variations that 'being Chinese is not simple'. Among overseas Chinese, local conditions will create many regional traditions of 'Chineseness', and great uncertainty whether these could be trumped by an over-arching diasporic identity. Instead, Ien Ang proposes a more hybrid position, an identity shaped both by here and there, past and present, in effect 'an unsettling of identities' (Ang 2001: 16). Ethnic essentialism – not merely specifying authentic or unvarying cultural tropes, but also homogenizing (including mapping) populations on the basis of language or place of birth – is always contingent, a classificatory act that is both demonstrable fact and convenient fiction.

Consequently the self-designated Chinese-Canadian population of 1.22 million enumerated in 2006,[14] some 3.9 percent of all Canadians, is highly diverse in length of residence, in immigrant or Canadian-born status, in country of origin, in socio-economic status, immigrant class, capacity to speak English or French and homeland experience. The total is perhaps modest in a global diaspora recently estimated at 33 million, but significant as part of the seven million listed outside Asia (Ma 2003). The varied national backgrounds of ethnic Chinese in Toronto in 2001, over 80 percent of them foreign-born, include 43 percent born in Hong Kong, 34 percent in China, 7.5 percent in Vietnam and 4 percent in Taiwan, with the remainder coming from all corners of the world (Lo 2006). Hong Kongers and Taiwanese are more suburbanized, with modest spatial overlap, while Vietnamese- and Mainland-born (some of the latter former residents of Hong Kong) are more heavily located in Toronto's central city. Among the immigrants who claim Chinese ethnicity and moved to Canada between 1980 and 2001, the distribution of schooling is bi-modal; 39 percent had nine years of education or less, while 43 percent had post-secondary education. Their citizenship was diverse. Over 70 percent originated in China, Hong Kong or Taiwan, but in all they 'were citizens of 132 countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe' (Guo and DeVoretz 2006: 283).

So to speak of a Chinese-Canadian population – let alone community – is to speak conventionally, engaging in a practice that is as much purposeful as it is true. It is in this sense that we employ official statistics, that tell us a good deal, but less than we may infer. Census data disclose considerable spatial concentration in the residential pattern of Chinese-Canadians; in 2001, 73 percent lived in the census metropolitan areas (CMAs) of Toronto (410,000) and Vancouver (343,000) that housed in contrast just 22 percent of all Canadians.[15] Split almost equally between the two CMAs, more than 280,000 members of this population comprised Chinese-speaking immigrants who landed during the 1990s (Statistics Canada 2003). These recent arrivals were even more spatially concentrated, with Toronto and Vancouver assembling 82 percent of the national total. Imputing intentionality, it is perhaps understandable for a mobile transnational population to be highly clustered in Canada's two most cosmopolitan cities, with excellent air connections to East Asia.

This book is about the encounter of people and place, wealthy overseas Chinese, originating mainly in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and transnational residents or sojourners in Canada's two major gateway cities. While noting events in Toronto, the primary focus is Vancouver, the preferred destination of wealthy migrants. However, with their diffuse diasporic identity, both here and there, our attention cannot be confined to static statistical and cartographic displays of two cities, for this is a story about life lines, a broader pan-Pacific field including not only East Asia, but also similar places in Australia, New Zealand and the United States that will be referenced comparatively throughout. We now move to four vignettes that introduce and distil some of the themes to be developed in greater complexity in the following chapters. The first episode confirmed the strength of transnational linkages between distant sites, displaying, in this case brutally, the effective geographical proximity of two world cities, Toronto and Hong Kong, within a pan-Pacific socio-spatial field.

SARS: Toronto Goes Global

In large cities today a number of candidates present themselves for iconic status as harbinger of globalization. Not for want of trying, Toronto has never snagged one of the global spectacles, the Olympics or a World's Fair, events that provide a defining moment in the evolution of a metropolitan identity, a breaking out from the regional and national to universal visibility. Instead, salient events for Toronto might include the proliferation of international banks arriving in the 1980s, the escalating world-wide immigration the same decade, or in popular culture perhaps the success of the Toronto Blue Jays as baseball's 'World Series' champions in 1992 and

again in 1993. More sombre, but for my purposes more pertinent, was the highly contagious outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that immobilized the city for several months in 2003 and brought it unwelcome global attention (Ali and Keil 2006, 2007; Duffin and Sweetman 2006). Transmitted by a Toronto victim who returned from a visit to Hong Kong in February that year, SARS caused 44 deaths and between 375 and 438 infections over the next several months (Naylor 2003). Estimated losses to the city of close to $1 billion ensued, principally from impeded travel. Like never before, Toronto became captive to global scrutiny, subject to travel advisories and effective quarantine from the World Health Organization, and stigmatized as the North American epicentre of the disease in widely disseminated media and global internet maps. It took a sensational event supplying an equivalently loud world signal, a vast benefit concert at the end of July headlined by global masters of spin, the Rolling Stones, to declare the all clear and bring back Toronto from its pariah status into the network of hyperlinked world cities.

A medical doctor introduced SARS, a virulently infectious disease, to the Metropole Hotel in Hong Kong on a family visit from nearby Guangdong Province in February 2003 (Leung et al. 2004). Highly contagious, the disease was transmitted to 12 other hotel residents who acted as carriers during the next few days in travel to Vietnam, Singapore, Ireland, Germany and Canada. The returnee to Toronto, an elderly woman, became ill and died just over a week later. By then family members were contaminated and the infection circulated among patients and health care staff, many of them immigrants, at Scarborough's Grace Hospital in suburban Toronto. An infected cluster formed around a diasporic Filipino religious community in Toronto; earlier a nurse's aid carried the virus in a family visit to the Philippines. A second outbreak erupted at North York General Hospital, as Toronto's north and northeastern suburbs, home to Canadians originating in East and Southeast Asia, formed the regional epicentre of the disease.

The SARS outbreak highlighted several important themes in the redefinition of time and place in the global city. The first is the expansion of experienced space for many to a unified social field that transcends national political borders. Guangdong, Hong Kong and Toronto became effectively next-door neighbours, with medical professionals anxiously seeking the interactions among the three places that shaped the incidence of SARS infections. Cross-border routes joining scattered hubs, as well as sedentary place-based roots, define the social geography of the world city (Clifford 1992, 1997). So the fixed and sometimes segregated maps of urban ethnic groups are only the first approximation of life-worlds equally characterized by movement and discontinuity, by loyalties and materialities commonly in flux, by identities lived there as well as here. A transnational household

continually re-values the advantages of home and away, not just in memory but also in ongoing planning; it is constantly connected.

Second, accompanying the expansion of networked space is the compression of time through the instantaneous electronic transmission of information and capital between nodes across this interlocking field. Virtual simultaneity in the movement of goods and people by air travel (Dodge and Kitchin 2004) permitted SARS to travel from East Asia to central Canada in less than a day. The proximity of places has been enhanced by greater transportation affordability as well as by savings in time. The large reduction in transaction costs, lowering the barrier of distance, has extended mobility to larger numbers of travellers, while thickening the network connectivity of formerly isolated places (Kasper 2000). Among a sample of some 1500 immigrants in Vancouver, most from Asia, over 40 percent maintain contact with their country of origin at least weekly, primarily by telephone and e-mail, a quarter fly home once a year or more often, over one-fifth own a home or other property in their native land (Hiebert and Ley 2006).

Third, in contrast to the frequently celebratory discussion of the networked globe, SARS was a reminder that to be globally connected means exposure not only to life lines but also to less welcome networks, including disease, drug cartels, and terrorist cells.

Fourth, new spaces are being incorporated into the networked globe. The Toronto SARS outbreaks were concentrated in suburban hospitals, the metropolitan setting of growing proportions of recent immigrants. The older model of inner city sites of arrival and residence, adjacent to the downtown railway station or the docks, is being bypassed. Today many immigrants enter and leave a city repeatedly by air, and for some of them proximity to the suburban airport is desirable. But the suburbs have other assets. Downtown and inner city neighbourhoods in gateway cities have been increasingly claimed as the employment and housing markets of global rangers engaged in private and public corporate activity, so that poorer immigrants are commonly displaced to the housing stock of cheaper suburbs, the new location of industry, warehousing and routine service activities that have themselves re-located from the expensive post-industrial core. Middle-class migrants also find advantages in suburban home-ownership, so that in many gateway cities, including Toronto and Vancouver as well as Los Angeles, New York and Washington, the *ethnoburb*, a district of concentrated immigrant settlement, has become a new feature of suburban life (Li 2006).

Finally, SARS implicated issues of spatial scale and shifting jurisdictions. The disease was presented in the Naylor report (2003) as typical of contemporary 'Viruses without borders'. Invoking Marshall McLuhan, the report expressed the inevitability of contact in a global village where time-space

compression facilitated the fast transmission of disease as well as information. Explicit here is a global scale of interaction that overrides local places. But a global innovation never lands in empty space. The arrival of SARS in Toronto was challenged, resisted and eventually overcome by the co-ordination of medical professionals working for public agencies and three levels of government.[16] There were false starts as the disease, difficult to diagnose, was initially mistaken for flu or tuberculosis; the certified cause of death of the first victim was misdiagnosed as heart failure. Misrecognized, the disease was also initially underestimated, with less than adequate precautions drawn up to protect health workers and the at-risk public. But after a turbulent spring SARS was vanquished, and the Rolling Stones came to town.

SARS was a global threat, locally resisted, and the terms of engagement were themselves geographically variable. Two SARS carriers from the infection at Hong Kong's Metropole Hotel also landed in Vancouver, scarcely surprising as the city is Canada's principal gateway to Asia, receiving four times as many air passengers daily from Hong Kong and China as Toronto (Skowronski et al. 2006). But disease outcomes were very different. A highly infectious 'super-spreader' did not aggravate Vancouver's outbreak, while public health professionals, more familiar with contagious diseases from East Asia, made a faster assessment of the gravity of the outbreak and contained it. There were only five cases, four of them carried directly from Hong Kong, and no deaths. The uneven geographies of SARS in Toronto and Vancouver exemplify variable scale effects contributing to quite different outcomes. Local contingencies still matter.

Re-directing Orientalism

In contrast to the hypermobility within transnational fields illustrated by the diffusion of SARS is the seemingly exaggerated stasis of ethnic settlement, fixed on the map, rooted in the urban landscape. Vancouver's Chinatown is among the oldest in North America (Lai 1988). Scarcely ever welcome before 1950, tolerated only at the margins of society, controlled through an invidious Head Tax from 1885, and excluded altogether by the Chinese Immigration Act from 1923 to 1947, the story of the Chinese in Canada has followed a well-told new world genre of racialized outcasts in a white settler society (Ward 1978; Anderson 1991; Li 1998; Roy 2003). Such a narrative has provided an almost ideal type for critical race studies, for Chinatown and the Chinese formed a seamless and mutually constitutive fusion of a marginalized place and a crudely stigmatized identity. The Vancouver enclave endured two white riots in 1887 and 1907, the second from a mob who poured out of a meeting of the Asiatic Exclusion League (*sic*), smashing property and roughing up residents. Chinatown the place consolidated,

sharpened and reproduced the representation of a people apart, a people of minimal entitlement in Kay Anderson's (1991) aptly chosen words. Chinese-Canadian literature has also pursued this spatial genre (Khoo 2003), in autobiographical and historical novels like *Jade Peony* (Choy 1995) in which a Chinese life-world, though vibrant, is internalized and contained in a claustrophobic space of a few blocks.[17] While some authors have properly challenged the sense of disempowerment and victim status often evident in these representations, few have broken loose of the magnetic, rooted and static allure of Chinatown itself.

And yet… walk today down Pender Street, the spine of Vancouver's Old Chinatown, past buildings like the home of the Chinese Benevolent Association (1909), the long-time workshop of the now-departed *Chinese Times* (1902), and its neighbour, the Chinese Freemasons' Building (1901), temporary home of Dr. Sun Yat–sen (Figure 1.1). Moving beneath the self-conscious new Chinatown Gate, we pass the Dr. Dorothy Lam Building, a legacy to a remarkable family, and head office of the resourceful immigrant settlement agency, SUCCESS. The Lam Building fronts the site of a one-time warren of former shacks and bunk houses in Canton and Shanghai Alleys, on land originally scavenged from False Creek's tidal marshes. Pender Street today is an outdoor museum, meticulously orientalized by a well-meaning multiculturalism where design, colour and landscape texture are prescribed by a planner's rule-book.

But suddenly critical race studies confront the material and seemingly colour-blind articulation of global capitalism.[18] Continuing a short distance west on Pender, leaving behind the mummified landscape of Old Chinatown, we observe an altogether different district, the confident new build of condominiums in International Village – España was branded and marketed in the most recent buildings on offer. We are on the edge of the vast Concord Pacific Place (Figure 1.2), orchestrated by Hong Kong's billionaire Li family, a fleet of high rise towers lying at anchor on the two-kilometre long waterfront site of the former world's fair, Expo 86, and more recently joined by a younger and smaller Toronto sibling, Concord CityPlace, under construction on former downtown railway lands.[19] Pacific Place is a popular landing strip for empty nesters, professional singles and a new cohort of wealthy East Asian immigrants.

The landscape contrasts of this district and its other are profoundly ironic. Behind us, to the east, in a Chinatown landscape of slowly decaying ethnic stuff, some might identify the last gesture of Orientalism, sustained and promoted by three levels of government in the designated Chinatown Historic Area. Ahead of us to the west the massive economic power of contemporary East Asia takes its cues if not from a concocted Occidentalism, then from an alternate Asian modernity (Ong 1999). International Village strikes exactly the right chord: the horizon here is expansive not claustrophobic, the mobile

Old Chinatown

Figure 1.1   Pender Street, Chinatown, 2008

Figure 1.2   Part of Concord Pacific Place (left to right), fronting Vancouver's downtown peninsula, 2008 (Photo by Mark van Manen, reproduced by permission of the *Vancouver Sun*)

liberal internationalism that is at the heart of modernity, the market, even democracy itself. The juxtaposition with the contained parish of Old Chinatown is striking, for Concord Pacific Place – note the peaceful hands across the Pacific allusions in its name – is fully cosmopolitan, outward looking, the world its investment oyster, its very first towers in the early 1990s advertising high-speed internet linkages as a prominent sales feature. For such capitalists *sans frontières* routes seemingly trump roots. They, perhaps more than anyone else, live out in their daily lives a 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller and Urry 2006). The oppressed victims of critical race studies meet freewheeling *homo economicus*, agent of a globalizing Chinese modernity.

As old Chinatown expresses Canada's exclusionary past and essentializing multicultural present, Pacific Place and CityPlace manifest one face of the nation's future. Concord Pacific and the Li family are here by invitation, as part of Canada's own aspiration to be a full partner of the Pacific Rim economy. Recently arrived Chinese-Canadians cannot convincingly repeat the post-colonial aphorism that 'we are here because you were there'. Their entitlement is even stronger: 'we are here because you invited us'. They are not merely tolerated by the state, but welcomed, valued as the harbingers of global enterprise (Ong 2006).

As early as the 1960s, British Columbia politicians were casting an eye to the economic potential of the Pacific Rim nations. Federally, the liberal internationalism of the Pearson and Trudeau years assembled the legislative and diplomatic infrastructure to establish a trans-Pacific network. Subsequent trade missions by municipal, provincial and federal delegations to East and Southeast Asia, hopped between Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, Shanghai, Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo, putting out the message that Canada, and especially its Pacific province of British Columbia, were open for business. Meanwhile, an ideologically driven British Columbia government assembled an investment-friendly environment, provoking tough labour struggles through the recessionary years of the early 1980s. A familiar ingredient in this neo-liberal economic agenda was Expo 86, a six-month long world fair sponsored by the provincial government with federal and corporate aid. Expo was a transparent and successful culmination of an extended foray into the Pacific arena, an appetizer to entice trade, investment, tourists and potential settlers (Ley and Olds 1988). Sale of the entire property by the provincial government to the billionaire Li family at the close of the fair, in preference to a local bidder, was a logical conclusion to a decade of courting East Asian capital. The *entente cordiale* across the Pacific was further cemented by the appointment of David Lam (husband of Dorothy Lam), an early immigrant from Hong Kong in 1967 and subsequently a successful real estate millionaire and generous philanthropist, as Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, the Queen's official representative in the province.[20] The same year, 1988, Li Ka-shing purchased the Expo site.

Geopolitical events in East Asia aided Canada's Pacific Rim strategy. The Chinese in Southeast Asia were wealthy, but often threatened, minorities (Ang 2001; Rigg 2003). Successful entrepreneurs in Hong Kong included bourgeois families that had fled Shanghai ahead of the Communist army and were worried in light of the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 that planned for the repatriation of the British colony to the Mainland in 1997. Their anxieties were much aggravated by the harsh suppression of student reformers in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Periodic sabre-rattling by the Mainland government in the Taiwan Strait, including provocative exercises in 1995 and 1996, unsettled wealthy Taiwanese households who could see the benefits of portfolio diversification and passport insurance. And in South Korea the instability of living with the wild card of North Korea as nearest neighbour encouraged the same global scanning for safer havens.

In this uncertainty the attentions of Canadian trade missions were of considerable interest, and not only for investment purposes. Canadian immigration had expanded away from its European-preference origins, as reforms in 1962 and 1967 welcomed global arrivals and the announcement of multiculturalism in 1971 emphasized that all were welcome. Moreover, further immigration revisions in 1978 and 1986 appeared tailored to the needs of anxious ethnic Chinese capitalists in East and Southeast Asia. The Government of Canada assembled a Business Immigration Programme (BIP) whose express intent was to recruit wealthy immigrants to advance economic development in Canada either through active entrepreneurialism or more passive investment (Ley 2003). In the neo-liberal commodification of everything during the globalizing 1980s, financial capital with entrepreneurial experience offered a passage to Canadian citizenship.

Between 1980 and 2001, almost 330,000 immigrants landed in Canada through the BIP, making the Canadian programme the most successful in the global immigration marketplace, far ahead of competing programmes in Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Wong 2003). Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea accounted for over half the business immigrants landing in Canada, and three-quarters in British Columbia. This cohort of economically privileged newcomers, some of them fabulously wealthy, contributed a new genre of millionaire migrants.

Travelling Agents

If Wayson Choy's *Jade Peony* provides the novelist's reconstruction of a Chinatown-bound past, then Clara Law's film *Floating Life* (1996) is a much fuller representation of a diasporic and cosmopolitan present. Australian-made, the film is synchronous with Law's own departure from Hong Kong to Australia the year before. As the title suggests, *Floating Life* presents the

antithesis of the settled parochialism of old Chinatown. It is about the unsettled nature of living between cultures, of re-location as an often traumatic adventure, as a family switches roles from insider to outsider, from host to stranger (Mitchell 2003). In the film, while a family friend moves to Vancouver, the Chen family selects Australia, the earlier destination of a daughter, while the oldest son remains in Hong Kong and a second daughter migrates to Germany. Scattered between three continents the family exemplifies the 'bamboo network' of the contemporary Chinese diaspora. Family dispersal achieves the spreading of risk and the maximizing of overall opportunity. It is this same spatial strategy that is often associated with the expansion of Chinese family firms, as sons are despatched to potential markets to develop a new outpost for the family business. Hamilton's (2000: 72) observation that 'the personal quality of many [overseas] investments reflects the combination of centralized patriarchal control … and of the entrepreneurial importance of external *guanxi* networks … for creating economic opportunity' was perfected in Li Ka-shing's decision to groom the business acumen of his son, Victor, fresh out of Stanford University, by placing him in charge of Vancouver's Concord Pacific project with an entourage of tested managers and business allies to add local knowledge, while his other son, Richard, was despatched to Toronto to test his own business mettle (Mitchell and Olds 2000; Olds 2001).

Such Canadian episodes are part of a broader narrative of travel and entrepreneurship. Canada's Business Immigration Programme is matched by competing schemes in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and other island states, by countries in Latin America, and by a more half-hearted initiative in the United States – all told, close to 30 nations have been trawling for *homo economicus* (Tseng 2000). Aided by the new profession of immigration consultants, briefs on the details of immigration policy in different countries are carefully reviewed as middle-class families from East Asia scan the international immigrant market. If Canada, with the largest number of BIP landings, seems to have played its hand with some finesse, it is in considerable measure because Canadian entry requirements have been liberal and its proximity to the United States made eventual onward migration to 'the beautiful country' an accessible option. The story I shall tell then is not simply a Canadian story; the migrants could have moved elsewhere, some of them will, others will return to their place of origin. A comparative eye sees migration to Canada as one realized link in a network of locational possibilities and not necessarily the only or final outcome.

Michael Peter Smith (2001) has properly challenged the inert role of human actors in globalization theory, their reduction before the master narrative of global political economy. His position is abundantly substantiated in the global scanning of wealthy and middle-class migrants leaving the

cities of East and Southeast Asia. Their motives for migration are frequently complex, even contradictory. For many, geopolitical anxiety prescribes the desirability of a second passport as 'insurance policy', a term widely used by this population (Wong 1999). For others, the placement of a child in a western school or university provides a toehold that may draw other family members (Waters 2006, 2008). In Vancouver, San Francisco, Sydney and Auckland in particular, the celebrated scenery and quality of life are significant attractions for those near retirement. In all of this, the role of economic opportunity, as we shall see later, can be more ephemeral in selection of a destination than host states expected or wanted.

The networked family has well-researched strategies toward space and time, stations and seasons. Citizenship entails two years of residence in Australia,[21] three in Canada; business-class entrepreneur immigration to the United States has required an investment of at least $500,000 and the creation of 10 jobs, while its Canadian competitor has usually involved an outlay of about $150,000 with the necessity of only one employee. Compared to the Canadian programme, its American equivalent has been heavily under-subscribed. Life cycle timing also matters greatly. There is a point in a child's schooling when movement to a western education is regarded as more favourable; for career development, young people are commonly drawn back to East Asia; as retirement years approach the Canadian quality of life becomes more attractive.

In this synchronization of stations and seasons one can see the careful weighing of options by the travelling family, the deployment of human agency to optimize family objectives, negotiating and where necessary evading containment by national governments. In a neo-liberal era *homo economicus* is cast as a heroic figure and the Chinese business family is highly regarded. Ong (1999: 133–4) has noted how Chinese-American businessmen in California are well aware of their resourceful reputation, with a special skill in trans-Pacific deal making, and are not embarrassed to take advantage of their calling. But Ong also deconstructs the benevolent myth of the Chinese family as a business corporation, laying bare the incivilities of *guanxi* and the bamboo network. It is a regime predicated upon a patriarchy that can be very demanding of the emotional resources of spouses and children. Employees and kin do not necessarily share the freedom of the master, as Ong (1999: 116) detects 'the violence and exploitation' that narrow the agency of others. As immigrant women learn new gender roles in the West, challenges to patriarchy can lead to awkward family relations (Waters 2002). Nor is the role of an absentee husband inevitably one of dominance. Within the fragmented family, particularly the so-called astronaut household with paterfamilias working in East Asia while his family is domiciled overseas, vulnerability rather than victory is an abiding trope. Electronic contact is always virtual contact and does not

allow important forms of effective action and affective understanding to be articulated. For a family's emotional security, the pursuit of economic agency can be a Faustian bargain for all its members.

Murder and the Media

In a circumscribed village society news is shared interpersonally. In a global society interpersonal interests still shape the selection and interpretation of information but sources from distant places are invariably the media, for mediascapes provide one of the constitutive elements of the global order (Appadurai 1996). Although Appadurai's theses on cultural globalization have been challenged, he is surely right to emphasize the role of media in shaping the identity of peoples and places. In an electronic age, mediascapes mould the imagination of other places as potential migration destinations (Teo 2003). Yet the media are never innocent, and consciously and unconsciously project the intentionality of the society (and government) in which they are embedded. The Mainland Chinese television series, *Goodbye Vancouver*, filmed on location in the city beneath grey skies, composed a deliberately lugubrious future in Canada for university graduates and potential emigrants in China who had become obsessed by the city's emancipatory potential. The media both reflect and reproduce the social interests that they explicitly and implicitly represent.

The social construction of the news has been an abiding issue in examinations of immigration, for 'mainstream media' are typically embedded in mainstream interests. They under-report immigrant-specific news, while coverage is often shaped by unsympathetic categories such as immigrant crime (Dunn and Mahtani 2001). The real estate investment in Vancouver accompanying the arrival of wealthy immigrants from East Asia from the mid-1980s attracted concerted media attention, repeatedly highlighting the 'monster house', a large new property constructed for wealthy new Canadians to the maximum permitted size and typically unresponsive to pre-existing neighbourhood design tastes (Ley 1995; Mitchell 2004). While there were real differences of opinion about house styles, the adoption of the vernacular term, the 'monster house', by seemingly authoritative media cast the discussion in an unflattering idiom for new residents. What does one make of such headlines as 'How we saved Shaughnessy from monsters' (Ohannesian 1990), or 'A monster problem in Shaughnessy' (Griffin 1992), with their capacity to entangle place and identity as tightly as the stigmatizing caricatures of Old Chinatown? Sun (1998: 147) deconstructs the metaphor as a 'concrete dimension to the traditionalist Orientalist image of the Asian as an inscrutable, mysterious and ugly ethnicity'. But Sun is not writing as a neutral observer either, and has perhaps over-interpreted historical

continuity in the monster house idiom with earlier more pernicious categories, a flattening of mainstream imagery revealing the author's own positionality (Sun 2002).

The viewpoint and interests of the immigrant are effectively embedded in the ethnic press. With an ethnic Chinese population of 380,000 in Greater Vancouver in 2006, there is considerable competition among local editions of the Hong Kong dailies *Sing Tao* and *Ming Pao* and the Taiwanese-based *World Journal* (Leung 2006). The significant national television and radio empire of the Fairchild Media Group, based in the Vancouver ethnoburb of Richmond, offers Cantonese and Mandarin coverage to a Vancouver television audience of over 240,000 daily. These are only the largest players in a mediascape with its own capacity to sustain and reproduce distinctive social realities.

Immigration stories featured prominently in both the English- and Chinese-language press in the 1990s, reflecting distinctive community interests. In a celebrated case they offered their own very divergent accounts of the mysterious figure *homo economicus*, so divergent that their conflicting accounts led to mutual recrimination. An unsolved murder occurred in a high status westside neighbourhood of Vancouver in 1997. The victim was an entrepreneur who had entered Canada from Hong Kong through the BIP. Living in a wealthy district, apparently with a Mercedes in his garage, he had been shot in his own driveway before dawn one morning while leaving for work at one of the Chinese-language newspapers where he had a job as *an early morning delivery boy*. The status incompatibilities of the case were incomprehensible to Canadian-born readers who were not ethnic Chinese. Why would a wealthy entrepreneur be delivering newspapers? Familiar caricatures speedily occupied the information gap. The English-language press extrapolated from the premeditated murder by someone who clearly knew the victim's pre-dawn movements. Was he indeed a victim or was he also a member of a criminal subculture, whose posture as a simple deliveryman was in fact a cover for more sinister activities? Journalist Kim Pemberton's (1997) scare quotes around 'paperboy' in the title of her page one story in the *Vancouver Sun* threw doubt on this job status, while the remainder of the second part of the title, 'paid cash for $1 million home', pressed home the incongruity and raised suspicions of undisclosed money sources. So too Moira Farrow's (1997) subsequent story picked up the thread of pursuing this mysterious 'money trail' while challenging the Chinese-language press for 'bullying' the mainstream media.

For the Chinese-language media responded to these innuendos with unusual robustness, pointing to an altogether different interpretation of events. In a flurry of some 20 stories, they rejected the 'phobic reporting' in the *Vancouver Sun* and the factual error that the house had been paid for by cash (*Ming Pao* 1997a). They lamented the effects of the tone of the *Sun*'s

stories on the victim's widow. An emergent Chinese-Canadian civil society, including the broadcast and print media, the Director of the Coalition of Chinese Canadian Associations, and Lilian To, leader of SUCCESS, the large Chinese-Canadian settlement agency, formed a protective circle around the family demanding a full apology from the *Sun* newspaper. They presented their own account of the family's circumstances. The victim had sold a taxi licence in Hong Kong to finance the family's move to Canada. As a business immigrant he ran a part-time ginseng business, but also delivered newspapers to make friends. Because of his poor English he could not find a good job for 'it is not unusual for a rich immigrant to hold a minimal job and maintain a high standard of living' (*Ming Pao* 1997a). Integration problems often include downward mobility and the need to take on menial jobs. Apparently extravagant consumer wealth can veil miserable Canadian income, for an immigrant whose entry to Canada depends on his wealth may be asset rich but earnings poor.

In the limited intersection of the two language solitudes few non-Chinese speakers heard this riposte. For news collection, selection and reception were all conducted in a fully social context where facts and fictions coalesced and were sheltered behind familiar story lines. This is unfortunate, for, as we shall see, there is much to learn from *Ming Pao*'s account.

Millionaire Migrants: The Journey Ahead

The confusion of Anglo-Canadian reporters was understandable in light of the events they were investigating. For a decade they had been socialized to the fabulous wealth leaving East Asia and landing in Canada. The very high profile sale of the Expo site was common knowledge and had raised the visibility of the billionaire Li family to a North American audience. The rapid inflation in the regional housing market coincided with the Expo deal and the substantial growth of immigration from Hong Kong and Taiwan, carrying Vancouver house prices to a position above Toronto's as the most expensive in Canada. In the midst of all this, suggestion that there was no immigrant 'money trail', indeed not even much money, was too big a mind-bender to contemplate.

Of course the profile of the millionaire migrant is an unfamiliar one. The typical immigrant story is one of initial relative poverty, hard work and slow but steady upward mobility culminating in the purchase of a home in the suburbs – an assimilation narrative that still exercises considerable sway in the United States and elsewhere (Clark 1998). The only capital that such immigrants can initially assemble is the social capital of the extended family or ethnic community. The contrast of immigrants with substantial financial capital overturns conventional categories. It has certainly caused some

re-examination of national policy expectations. For the assimilation paradigm also anticipates the containment of the immigrant by the nation state and his/her reconstitution as a national citizen. But the transnational migrant with mobile identities who eludes the possessive arms of the state has undercut this traditional assimilation model.

For transnational migrants, cross-border networks provide access to assets and resources not restricted to the territory of a single nation state; in our case they comprise connections and flows between the nodes of a social field that criss-crosses the Pacific Ocean. In Chapter 2 the establishment of that field is discussed with the rise in the 1960s and 1970s of the concept of the Pacific Rim in the imagination of Canadian politicians and business elites. In a notable reversal of geographical mythologies, the 'Gold Mountain' projected onto North America by nineteenth-century Chinese migrants was relocated to a supposed El Dorado in East and Southeast Asia sought by late twentieth-century North Americans. Expecting to find new trade and investment opportunities in the context of post-1973 recessions and growing federal deficits that disabled the welfare state, Canadian missions crossed the Pacific to drum up business, while governments made legislative and institutional adjustments in Canada so that investors and immigrants would have a soft landing. British Columbia and its principal *entrepôt*, Vancouver, became increasingly incorporated into a Pacific Basin system of flows as growing tonnages of raw materials moved westward, while imports and foreign direct investment, at first principally from Japan, entered the province. These economic linkages were accompanied by rising numbers of people from East Asia, with many arrivals, particularly from Hong Kong and Taiwan, landing as business immigrants and seemingly sustaining the neo-liberal developmental paradigm.

Chapter 3 moves from aggregate flows to intersubjective meanings, the intentionality of business immigrants as active agents. Transnational networks are not limited to the much-discussed circuitry of flows, measurable movements of capital, people, information and commodities. They also reflect and shape lines of meaning, the experience of lives lived; they invoke memories, hopes and social relationships across a distended social field. Business immigrants brought with them impressive resources of human and financial capital. Nonetheless they approached the economic development agenda flourished by Canadian governments with considerable ambivalence and some anxiety. Departure from the bull markets of East Asia to the slow if steady returns and high taxation of Canada was a dubious economic proposition, and migration was seen much more as a project to maximize family objectives: geopolitical security, educational options for children, quality of life for the nuclear family and often ageing parents. Canada was one of several possible destinations, and with the advice of immigration consultants, the international market was scanned with care. So began an

intricate two-step between the state and the immigrants as the state sought to control and contain the immigrants as national citizens, while newcomers sought to maintain their circular motion between their money-generating station in East Asia and their consumption station in Canada.

Business immigrants were required to place passive investments in venture-capital funds for a fixed period, or else to engage in active entrepreneurial activity. Chapter 4 traces the economic success of this group who qualified for landing in Canada on the basis of their homeland business achievements. Relations with the state again move to centre stage, for the federal department, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, monitored the economic activity of business migrants as a condition of their entry. Field research indicates surprising lapses among these business households, out of character with their public persona and past performance as *homo economicus*. One conclusion is that the economic otherness of Canada presented serious barriers to immigrant business success. There is no explanatory alternative here but to retain aspects of methodological nationalism, for despite the flattening out claims of globalization theorists, local geographies continue to matter profoundly. The economic culture of Canada was unfamiliar, even without the additional barrier of the English language. Many saw the investment required as the necessary cost of citizenship; like the Canadian state they regarded the business programme as above all a business transaction. Common to all insurance, passport insurance was also measured in the hard currency of the market.

Hong Kong residents in particular have been embedded in an economic culture where property has loomed large in wealth acquisition. Early arrivals in Canada like David Lam had made their fortunes in real estate, and if any reinforcement was needed of the potential of the Vancouver property market there was the lesson of Li Ka-shing's twenty-year commitment to build out the Expo site. Chapter 5 reviews the embodied meaning of property transported from Hong Kong to the Vancouver land market. The historic enclave of old Chinatown was unattractive to the cosmopolitan and quintessentially modern sensibilities of the new immigrants, and has been avoided. New large houses, luxury downtown condominium units and suburban malls more adequately integrate the relationship between place and identity today for affluent Chinese-Canadian families. The buying and selling of Vancouver property was also a transnational enterprise with sales occurring at weekend marts held at top-end hotels in Hong Kong, Singapore and Taipei. Real estate agents and companies with bi-national connections lubricated sales with international buyers. The net effect of capital seeking property from the super-charged land markets of East Asia was the marked inflation of house and condominium prices in Vancouver and its inner suburbs, a causal connection that was vigorously contested in the real estate conflicts to follow.

Immigrants and investment never touch down in empty space, and the property market takes new arrivals to neighbourhoods whose land use planning is managed by municipal governments responsive to local citizens and their priorities. Chapter 6 deals with the vexed question of the reception of wealthy immigrants by the Canadian-born, for the deployment of their wealth in the urban land market caused some controversy. Both in Vancouver and Toronto there was concern at the creation of ethnoburbs where Asian-themed malls offered an unfamiliar presence not necessarily perceived as welcoming to long-settled residents. Moving into long-stable elite neighbourhoods, the preference of East Asian immigrants for large new houses led to widespread demolition of older properties, a steep upward price movement, and resentment at the disruption of an existing elite sense of place. The adjudication process by local government stretched the conciliatory capacity of multiculturalism to the limit. An important issue here is the motivation of local resistance. While critical race theory has identified racism among the long-settled as the primary motive, my own emphasis incorporates also the intersection of class and status dimensions, offering a more intricate construction of whiteness than often appears in anti-racist literature.

Immigration involves an uneasy tension between there and here, between routes and roots. Chapter 7 examines the early development of a civil society within the new Chinese-origin enclaves of Vancouver and Toronto. The family remains the basic ontological unit, but family life is agitated by the unsettling of traditional certainties. *Floating Life*, expounds a critic of Clara Law's film about a Hong Kong family in Australia, 'is fraught with anxiety and a sense of trepidation if not outright dread' (Teo 2001). The role of paterfamilias is confused by the difficulty of achieving economic success in Canada and by subsequent absence associated with astronaut status. The wife's position as child carer brought her into a broader Canadian context particularly in school relations, but some vulnerability with the absence of her partner. Children typically acculturate faster, and their superior language facility to their parents brings uncomfortable role reversal. Beyond the family unit, Chinese-Canadian organizations help to salve the anxieties of newcomer status. Though the older clan and hometown associations are in decline, the new supports of business and cultural organizations, immigrant churches and other places of worship, and immigrant service organizations, notably SUCCESS, with its dozen offices and national reputation, offer significant balm to the injuries of transnational life. These associations provide avenues to integration, a growing sense of belonging, participation, and identity re-configuration, and for a minority to philanthropy and esteem inside Canada. But for many others, notably millionaire migrants and their children, the lines across the Pacific remain open.

Chapter 8 examines not the conventional myth of return but rather its repeated enactment in the eight or nine daily scheduled passenger flights

that depart from Vancouver International Airport for Hong Kong, China and Taiwan.[22] Different families vary in their deployment of routes vs. roots as household strategies, but many have returned to their place of origin; estimates in Hong Kong repeatedly cite in excess of 200,000 residents who hold Canadian passports. What can we say about the meaning of citizenship associated with these movements? Is citizenship indeed pragmatic and flexible (Ong 1999) or is there a sense of belonging that complicates transnational flows? Certainly, field research in Hong Kong indicates that the closure implied by return is as limited a concept as a linear model of assimilation (Ley and Kobayashi 2005). More accurate is 'return for now', as there is always the prospect of moving back from East Asia to Canada, as opportunities variously defined at different points in the life cycle favour first one side and then the other of the trans-Pacific social field. The millionaire migrant articulates par excellence the Global Commission's new paradigm of international mobility characterized by temporary and circular movement.

The chapters that follow aim to give flesh to this paradigm in charting the trans-Pacific life lines of wealthy migrants originating in East Asia. They act within, against, and through such global contexts as economic neo-liberalism, continental geopolitics, and the long-range interdependence presumed by globalization. The politics they engage remain primarily national, as nation states seek to project themselves onto a global stage, scanning for new sources of capital and skilled labour in an era when economic and demographic energy is no longer limited to the historic North Atlantic axis. But as we shall see, this expanded trans-continental reach promises rewards but often incurs penalties. Global ambitions can run aground without local knowledge. Cosmopolitanism can imperil social relations that require proximity and rootedness.

A Note on Origins and Methods

Today authors often come clean with an outline of the back stage preparations that led to a front stage text. Research for this volume began sporadically around 1990. My primary research concern then was a comparative study of inner city gentrification, which continued until book publication in 1996. But as a social geographer with an interest in older inner city neighbourhoods, I could not escape the extraordinary developments in the Vancouver housing market. Taking several months off from gentrification research in the early 1990s, I followed the conflict associated with the remaking of the City's older elite neighbourhoods, not far distant from my own, as wealthy immigrants from East Asia bought property, usually large new mansions built following the demolition of an older

European-style house and the clearance of its trees and mature plantings. The destruction of a venerable landscape destabilized the relationship of place and identity for the old elite, leading to the so-called battle over monster houses re-told with their own spin by media in several countries. My interpretation of these events (Ley 1995), required attendance at public hearings, reading hundreds of letters sent to the City Council and Planning Department and some interviews. Soon after, I became co-director of a large research initiative, the Metropolis Project, a long-term, federally funded, interdisciplinary study of immigration and urbanization.[23] For more than a decade my principal research focus has been the wealthy families from East Asia who confound so many caricatures about immigrants. A series of projects on housing markets, labour markets, the role of education in migration, transnational behaviour and family pressures, immigrant churches as service hubs and apparent return to East Asia followed over the next decade, some conducted with students and colleagues. From start to finish the project that unfolds in this book has been carried out over a period of some 15 years.

Methodology has ranged widely and included participant observation in public hearings, school events, meetings and the encounters of neighbourhood and city life, together with structured and unstructured interviews (including focus groups) with some 250 immigrant households. Added tools have been landscape observation and interpretation and cartographic analysis. Selective use is made of a telephone survey of some 1,500 immigrants in Vancouver undertaken in 2001–02 for a project in which I participated. Interviews and focus group meetings were undertaken with some 60 returnees in Hong Kong with my colleague at Queen's University, Audrey Kobayashi. Newspaper files have been kept for a dozen years, including translations of Vancouver's three Chinese-language dailies. Several federal databases on immigration have been valuable, including detailed material available from small area analysis in the Census of Canada, published every five years. Also essential have been the Landed Immigrant Data System (LIDS), compiled from a landing card completed by all immigrant households, and the longitudinal Immigrant Data Base (IMDB) that links landing cards with tax files for all immigrants landing in Canada since 1980 who submitted a tax return. Other sources such as planning documents, consultants' reports and house price data have been used where relevant. I have benefited from an outstanding literature on the earlier history of the Chinese in Canada, and incisive research on the diaspora around the Pacific Basin, as well as from additional interviews and results reported in several probing student dissertations – all to be acknowledged in turn. The intended outcome is a triangulation of methods, with intensive qualitative research providing understanding while framed by the extensive bounds of quantitative sources that offer a wider validity to findings.

Most scholarly publications have covered the experience of Chinese-Canadians to 1947 with the repeal of the exclusionary Chinese Immigration Act, while a smaller literature assesses the period up to 1980. Since then primary emphasis has understandably been given to the extraordinary gyrations in the regional housing market in the late 1980s and early 1990s accompanying extensive migration of wealthy migrants from East Asia and substantial movements of off-shore capital into local property investment, events detailed and theorized in Katharyne Mitchell's (2004) sophisticated treatment, *Crossing the Neoliberal Line*. These events merited the attention given them, but this book reviews a longer period, the quarter century after 1980. This extended duration permits a more measured historical interpretation over the longer term – for example moving beyond the animated 'monster house crisis' to a discussion of its eventual resolution, leading to a new status quo in the city's wealthy older neighbourhoods. A longer time horizon also permits the important issue of life cycle transition to be followed through distinctive milestones and status passages, together with migrants' shifting positions in the transnational social space that comprises their geographically extended lifeworld.

A second departure from current literature is that while including the precipitous events in the land market, my attention also includes the entry of immigrants into the labour market and the surprising outcomes of their business ventures. The book considers the shaping of a civil society, particularly the evolution of family life and the role of such institutions as schools, immigrant churches and non-government organizations. The issue of reception, 'the warmth of the welcome', is clearly important and relations with the different levels of the Canadian state, as well as Canadian citizens, are significant issues to review. Above all the mobility of millionaire migrants needs to be emphasized, both in the painful separation of astronaut families, and then in the often vexed transnational question of re-location, back to East Asia, and perhaps back again to Canada.

Transnational research needs understanding at multiple sites, and this project included two field visits to Hong Kong (and a short trip to Taipei) as well as familiarity with Canadian events. I am not a Chinese-speaker, and while I agree with Ien Ang (2001) that this failure does not paralyze research, it does lead to a distinctive authorial position outside the innermost reaches of a language group. Attempts to remedy this arms-length status have included using key informants, Chinese-language newspapers in translation[24] and home-language interviewing by bilingual research assistants. Of course many recent middle-class migrants from Hong Kong are themselves English-speakers, but among Taiwanese this facility is less common. My hope is that these efforts together produce a study with enough empirical dexterity and conceptual depth to interpret the dynamism of an enterprising transnational population in the places they shape, and are shaped by.