films which characterized the early days in Japan.

So an interest in bunraku need not be exotic. It can be theoretical as well. With the Bunraku puppet theatre, the spectators' attention is also divided in three. In front of them are the puppets—all three feet tall—of a remarkable expressiveness. Behind each of the principal puppets are three puppeteers who are fully visible to the audience (and while we can see the face of the chief puppeteer, his two assistants are masked). Finally, to one side of the puppet stage, there are two musicians—an again a narrator who is also a singer this time called a joruri and a samisen player whose strummed strumming is slightly, as if trying to slow it down. By showing us all these details, The Lovers' Exile by Marty Gross is both a documentary on the Bunraku theatre and a filmed version of a famous bunraku play—"Meido no Hikaku," which some people will know as the famous film by Mizoguchi, Chikamatsu Monogatari (The Crucified Lovers, 1954). Furthermore, in his own filmic art, Gross manages to duplicate and intensify the formal properties of the original bunraku drama. Working mostly in medium-shot and with a few long-shots, Gross has developed this division of three: the frozen faces of the puppets contrast with the impassive faces of the joruri to whom Gross, at key moments, cunningly cuts away. For at no point in the film can we see where the joruri are in relation to the puppets or, indeed, where the different sets are in relation to one another. If early Japanese film screenings displaced the spectators from their conventional relationship to the screen, so too in The Lovers' Exile, is the relationship of the spectators to the actions they are watching similarly held at bay.

Moreover, in the course of the film, we see three different joruri and three different samisen players. But (at least to Western ears), the sound remains the same. Thus the art of Chikamatsu and of the Bunraku theatre is eternal while in-...
A québécois film, still and always an act of faith."

"Briefly, A Wives' Tale, 73 coloured minutes where the sound and image belong to women."

"It is a different cinema, why hesitate to name it? It is a militant film, a feminist film, a tale of women."

— The filmmakers.

Barbara Halpern Martineau

A Wives' Tale won this year's Quebec Critics' Award and was recently nominated for a Genie as best theatrical documentary.

A Wife's Tale


Kish has Shouldered a positively herculean task—succeeded in the Board's story with shots from 60 films. Exclusion was the major challenge.

The Image Makers is a shortened and reworked version of the shortened-free compilation film aired a little over a year ago on the CBC. At that time, fragments from the films themselves, while edited and arranged with Kish's masterful touch, were supposed to represent what the present film refers to as 'the collective memory of a nation.' This new version, with narration by Kish and Madeleine Morton (and less skillfully edited), now has verbal cohesion, as the late John Grierson, founder of the Board, spoke the inspired opening and closing words about the organization's purpose: "To bring Canada alive to itself and to the rest of the world." What follows is an epicurean film buffet.

A select group of filmmakers comments periodically on the Board's past. Tom Daly and Guy Glower recall how, during World War II, they and other young Canadian filmmakers learned technique from Grierson's experience and imported new Canadian colleagues. Kish shows plenty of shot and shell but inexplicably misses the propaganda message hammered out repeatedly in the wartime shorts—there would have to be a brave new world based on internationalism, not nationalism, in the wake of victory. Postwar Canada spurned radical nationalism and lent support to the United Nations idea.

Kish asks Glover if the Film Board's act of faith has lasted. Glover, who co-produced four of the Board's films, refers to the Board's history of exploration, of prevailing and creating Canadian cultural life. It might have been appropriate if Kish had speculated about national mythology in this context.

As for the Board's non-commercial approach to film, one amusing sequence is about Hollywood being involved in a more extravagant and raving at an exasperated Mike Rubbo about how wasteful and uncommercial Film Board shooting is. It is common knowledge that the Board throws away 19 of every 20 feet shot. It is expensive exploration. But, that one remaining foot may reveal the subject for what it is rather than what the director thinks it should be—a fact that is essential to an understanding of how the Film Board's documentary tradition tries to reveal the truth behind the image.

There are many filmmakers who doubtlessly feel hurt because their work did not appear in The Image Makers. The French Unit, for example, received only cursory mention. If, exploration, propaganda and celebration of Quebec culture are all that's on the agenda, the English audience surely deserves a few more glimpses of the other Canada.

Also, films about Canadian authors, artists and politicians go unmentioned, as do the few but significant feature films. With several Oscars and world-wide renown, the animation unit could also argue for more screen time. Every claim for recognition is justified. But the line had to be drawn somewhere. The Board's 1975 catalogue alone has over 2000 titles in it.

The Image Makers salutes all NB filmmakers, past and present, each of whom can identify with founder Grierson's inspirational dedication— that the Board is here to bring Canada alive to itself and the world, to declare the excellences and strengths of Canada in respect to the present and future. There is some irony in light of this film tribute. Since 1980 the National Film Board has been telling the world about Canada—North America's best kept secret. Recent government budget slashing has brought the Board to its knees. As a key guardian and promoter of Canadian culture, the NFB deserves a larger perspective. It earns priceless national and international prestige for Canada. 0.0089 per cent of government expenditure? Perhaps The Image Makers will convince those who hold the purse strings to 'raise the Board and pass the hat.'

Gary Evans

The Image Makers


A glimpse of the good old days. Here, NBF cameraman, Lawrence Cherry.