here are a small-time con on a 36-hour leave from the world and left accounting cultured loner, a man who shut himself off from the world and left accounting cultured loner, a man who shut himself around like a baseball pen­nant. He's decided to use the occasion of his thirty-fifth birthday and this short­term freedom to pay off some debts, but nothing comes off quite the way he planned - when it comes to the crunch, he can't pull his trigger on the ex­partner who did him dirty, and he can't pull it on himself. His almost childlike despair and his utter loneliness finally win Michele's sympathy, and two polar opposites begin to explore some com­mon ground.

This friendship of circumstance de­velops into an unusual bond, even over those little moments when motivation and believability are severely tested. One such case is Michele's almost immediate forgiveness of Johnny after a brutal attack - it's problematic and a little sentimental, but it still speaks through, maybe because the whole movie is so subtly sentimental from beginning to end. That fact works in its favour, as do the myriad other tones and elements that make up the film. Gilles Renaud has quite a task before him: Johnny is none too bright and rather unappealing, but Renaud still evokes a strange sympathy for the character as he stumbles about in blind desperation. The contrasts between this working class Québécois and the somewhat erudite Frenchman are beautifully drawn in a wine-tasting lesson in a fancy restaurant is warm and funny, and Jean Yanne's performance is a master­work of subtlety - he extracts as much im­material limbo before her body gave up the ghost was, I felt too easy an explanation for it all. If a story is to have credibility, retroactively justified, but as the rug of what appeared to be a new understanding of my own experience, to reality as I un­derstand it. It is quite possible that one objective of Latitude 55 was to lead us from the apparently familiar to the palpably mysterious, even mystical, and thus to a new understanding of our own reality, but as the rug of what appeared to be real was continually pulled out from under me I became merely suspicious and, increasingly curious to see how the filmmakers would explain themselves. The final revelation, that the film's event had not been physically real at all, but had taken place in the heroine Wanda's mind, or in some other im­material limbo before her body gave up the ghost, was, I felt, too easy an explanation for the inconsistencies of the film.

Latitude 55 opens with Wanda (And­rée Pelletier) trying to start her car in a blizzard. The slow pace of this scene indicates that this is not an adventure film: there is plenty of time for Wanda to light a flare, wash a few pills down with whisky, time in to several radio sta­tions, and then to fall asleep to the sound of Bach's Fifth Brandenburg concert on a portable tape deck. Some time later, Wanda is rescued by a man who carries her back to his isolated cabin, thaws her out, feeds her, and provides accommodation until when­ever the blizzard might be over. At first, Josel (August Schellenberg) seems just a Polish potato farmer, an apparently simple, earthy World War Two refugee, who has a few strange possessions: a metronome for timing his eggs, a storage room containing an akon and a jester's costume. Wanda is merely puzzled by him - until the time Joseph lies in the grip of a nightmare, thrashing and yelling in Catholic Latin. When he wakes he angrily, tearfully asks, "Who are you?" - the question which is the film's main­spring.

The remainder of the film takes place inside Josel's cabin, does not include any other characters which, along with the film primary reliance on language to convey its meaning, suggests that it might have been presented more effec­tively as a stage play, and consists mainly of questions and answers made by each character to elucidate the other's past. Their motives differ: Wanda tries to solve the puzzle of Josel's true iden­tity, while Josef increasingly assumes the role of mentor or confidential gun, whose statements are intended to have a enlightening or therapeutic effect. Wanda, we learn, is 30, married to a "man of the cloth," the deacon of an anglophone Albertan and a Québécois, and works appraising the products of remote Albertan farmers to determine which will receive government assis­tance. Her life, she is made to realize, has been repressive and pretentious. Wanda's and Josef's increased intimacy leads by way of sex, experimental role reversal, and cutaways to hand-held camera shots of snowy woods, a native Indian tripod from which dangles some mysterious object, and Josef's face - made up variously as a woman, a Polish potato farmer, an apparently on a portable tape deck. Some time later, Wanda is rescued by a man who carries her back to his isolated cabin, thaws her out, feeds her, and provides accommodation until when­ever the blizzard might be over. At first, Josel (August Schellenberg) seems just a Polish potato farmer, an apparently simple, earthy World War Two refugee, who has a few strange possessions: a metronome for timing his eggs, a storage room containing an akon and a jester's costume. Wanda is merely puzzled by him - until the time Joseph lies in the grip of a nightmare, thrashing and yelling in Catholic Latin. When he wakes he angrily, tearfully asks, "Who are you?" - the question which is the film's main­spring.

The remainder of the film takes place inside Josel's cabin, does not include any other characters which, along with the film primary reliance on language to convey its meaning, suggests that it might have been presented more effec­tively as a stage play, and consists mainly of questions and answers made by each character to elucidate the other's past. Their motives differ: Wanda tries to solve the puzzle of Josel's true iden­tity, while Josef increasingly assumes the role of mentor or confidential gun, whose statements are intended to have an enlightening or therapeutic effect. Wanda, we learn, is 30, married to a "man of the cloth," the deacon of an anglophone Albertan and a Québécois, and works appraising the products of remote Albertan farmers to determine which will receive government assis­tance. Her life, she is made to realize, has been repressive and pretentious. Wanda's and Josef's increased intimacy leads by way of sex, experimental role reversal, and cutaways to hand-held camera shots of snowy woods, a native Indian tripod from which dangles some mysterious object, and Josef's face - made up variously as a woman, a Polish potato farmer, an apparently

---

**REVIEWS**

---

**John Juliani's Latitude 55**

Having heard almost nothing about Latitude 55 before seeing it, I had few expecta­tions upon entering the theater: the title conjured images of the north, but not the far north: of wilderness, but not complete wilderness. As the film unravelled, I found that the expectations which arose in me spontaneously in response to the development story were being systematically thwarted, which is as it should be with a well-told story.

But by the end of the film I felt that the filmmakers, director John Juliani and co-scenarist Sharon Alles, had taken this technique too far, had, by presenting scenes over more mysterious and strange, left themselves no fully credible ex­planation for it all. If a story is to have maximum effect, it must directly relate to my own experience, to reality as I un­derstand it. It is quite possible that one objective of Latitude 55 was to lead us from the apparently familiar to the palpably mysterious, even mystical, and thus to a new understanding of our own reality, but as the rug of what appeared to be real was continually pulled out from under me I became merely suspicious and, increasingly curious to see how the filmmakers would explain themselves. The final revelation, that the film's event had not been physically real at all, but had taken place in the heroine Wanda's mind, or in some other im­material limbo before her body gave up the ghost, was, I felt, too easy an explanation for the inconsistencies of the film.

Latitude 55 opens with Wanda (And­rée Pelletier) trying to start her car in a blizzard. The slow pace of this scene indicates that this is not an adventure film: there is plenty of time for Wanda to light a flare, wash a few pills down with whisky, time in to several radio sta­tions, and then to fall asleep to the sound of Bach's Fifth Brandenburg concert on a portable tape deck. Some time later, Wanda is rescued by a man who carries her back to his isolated cabin, thaws her out, feeds her, and provides accommodation until when­ever the blizzard might be over. At first, Josel (August Schellenberg) seems just a Polish potato farmer, an apparently simple, earthy World War Two refugee, who has a few strange possessions: a metronome for timing his eggs, a storage room containing an akon and a jester's costume. Wanda is merely puzzled by him - until the time Joseph lies in the grip of a nightmare, thrashing and yelling in Catholic Latin. When he wakes he angrily, tearfully asks, "Who are you?" - the question which is the film's main­spring.

The remainder of the film takes place inside Josel's cabin, does not include any other characters which, along with the film primary reliance on language to convey its meaning, suggests that it might have been presented more effec­tively as a stage play, and consists mainly of questions and answers made by each character to elucidate the other's past. Their motives differ: Wanda tries to solve the puzzle of Josel's true iden­tity, while Josef increasingly assumes the role of mentor or confidential gun, whose statements are intended to have an enlightening or therapeutic effect. Wanda, we learn, is 30, married to a "man of the cloth," the deacon of an anglophone Albertan and a Québécois, and works appraising the products of remote Albertan farmers to determine which will receive government assis­tance. Her life, she is made to realize, has been repressive and pretentious. Wanda's and Josef's increased intimacy leads by way of sex, experimental role reversal, and cutaways to hand-held camera shots of snowy woods, a native Indian tripod from which dangles some mysterious object, and Josef's face - made up variously as a woman, a Polish potato farmer, an apparently
Bruce Elder's 
Illuminated Texts

Canadian film has always had a tendency to vacillate between two extremes. On one hand, there is a preference for films about little people in little situations becoming smaller. On the other, there is the wish to break out into epic forms, to make huge canvases with larger-than-life heroics. From Back to God's Country to Silence of the North, the stuff of epic just barely eludes us. Eventually, the artist is punished for his hubris.

Bruce Elder's new film, Illuminated Texts, seems to exist at both ends of this stage dichotomy. It is, as far as possible, an individual work. Aided by an array of home-made electronics and optical printing devices, Elder pieced together the work in the solitude of his living-room/studio. But, more importantly, the film brings together the many facets of a single perspective. We are never allowed to forget that everything we see is the meditation of one man alone in his room.

The solitary nature of Illuminated Texts is brought home in the film's opening passage. Elder, portraying a professor (which he is) of mathematics (one of his many avocations), welcomes a student into his apartment. Together they read their respective roles from Xeroxed scripts of Ionesco's The Lesson. The professor becomes increasingly perturbed as the student stumbles over the fundamental concepts of addition and subtraction. Slowly we begin to sympathize with the student. In fact, these building blocks of mathematics are not only illogical but inhuman and, finally, as threatening as the rage they induce. Like the hero in Godard's Alphaville, we are reminded that we can't know what 2 + 2 are until we know the meaning of "plus."

It could be said that the remaining three hours of Illuminated Texts is about the meaning of "plus." Working out of his dramatic prelude, the film - the organization of its elements - is work made possible by a computer. Before each sequence, we see Elder's editing instructions typed up on a multi-colored terminal. The implication is that the breath and complexity of the 4000 shots to unfurl before us are made possible only by this mechanized hand.

This said, we are asked to avoid the facile conclusion that the film is a cold, structural exercise meant to distance us from the final reading of its individual images. There is, in the film, above all, a passion and one spoken texts as counterpoints to the sensory experience to the filmmaker as screen. Elder's vision looks back from a spot well down that path. The technological complexities of his chosen art are continuously acknowledged. The "plus" in this film - the organization of its elements - is work made possible by a computer. Before each sequence, we see Elder's editing instructions typed up on a multi-colored terminal. The implication is that the breath and complexity of the 4000 shots to unfurl before us are made possible only by this mechanized hand.

This said, we are asked to avoid the facile conclusion that the film is a cold, structural exercise meant to distance us from the final reading of its individual images. There is, in the film, above all, a passion and one spoken texts as counterpoints to the sensory experience to the filmmaker as screen. Elder's vision looks back from a spot well down that path. The technological complexities of his chosen art are continuously acknowledged. The "plus" in this film - the organization of its elements - is work made possible by a computer. Before each sequence, we see Elder's editing instructions typed up on a multi-colored terminal. The implication is that the breath and complexity of the 4000 shots to unfurl before us are made possible only by this mechanized hand.

This said, we are asked to avoid the facile conclusion that the film is a cold, structural exercise meant to distance us from the final reading of its individual images. There is, in the film, above all, a passion and one spoken texts as counterpoints to the sensory experience to the filmmaker as screen. Elder's vision looks back from a spot well down that path. The technological complexities of his chosen art are continuously acknowledged. The "plus" in this film - the organization of its elements - is work made possible by a computer. Before each sequence, we see Elder's editing instructions typed up on a multi-colored terminal. The implication is that the breath and complexity of the 4000 shots to unfurl before us are made possible only by this mechanized hand.

This said, we are asked to avoid the facile conclusion that the film is a cold, structural exercise meant to distance us from the final reading of its individual images. There is, in the film, above all, a passion and one spoken texts as counterpoints to the sensory experience to the filmmaker as screen. Elder's vision looks back from a spot well down that path. The technological complexities of his chosen art are continuously acknowledged. The "plus" in this film - the organization of its elements - is work made possible by a computer. Before each sequence, we see Elder's editing instructions typed up on a multi-colored terminal. The implication is that the breath and complexity of the 4000 shots to unfurl before us are made possible only by this mechanized hand.

This said, we are asked to avoid the facile conclusion that the film is a cold, structural exercise meant to distance us from the final reading of its individual images. There is, in the film, above all, a passion and one spoken texts as counterpoints to the sensory experience to the filmmaker as screen. Elder's vision looks back from a spot well down that path. The technological complexities of his chosen art are continuously acknowledged. The "plus" in this film - the organization of its elements - is work made possible by a computer. Before each sequence, we see Elder's editing instructions typed up on a multi-colored terminal. The implication is that the breath and complexity of the 4000 shots to unfurl before us are made possible only by this mechanized hand.

This said, we are asked to avoid the facile conclusion that the film is a cold, structural exercise meant to distance us from the final reading of its individual images. There is, in the film, above all, a passion and one spoken texts as counterpoints to the sensory experience to the filmmaker as screen. Elder's vision looks back from a spot well down that path. The technological complexities of his chosen art are continuously acknowledged. The "plus" in this film - the organization of its elements - is work made possible by a computer. Before each sequence, we see Elder's editing instructions typed up on a multi-colored terminal. The implication is that the breath and complexity of the 4000 shots to unfur...