but the splitting of the glaciers and the
blinding, white on white snow storm
raise this modest, low budget film to
epic proportions.

The film is chock full of biblical
references converted into Eskimo folk-
lore. There are the non-believers praying
to the golden walrus calf and the eating
of unclean whale blubber during the
pilgrimage to the promised land in muk-
luks. But this Exodus of the North
really exists on the level of personal
human drama with Alexandra Stewart
playing a moving Ruth, and John
Vernon as the fiercely credible
Johnocifat. Intriguing as the idea is
though, I'm not sure that this film will
convince very many people that the
Eskimos are really Jewish but as the
sun sets on the five month long sabbath
and you see their ghostly silhouettes
against the oil lamps, you get the
spooky feeling that the great Canadian
North has many secrets still to be told.

— Ron Blumer

**Black Christmas**

*Directed by Bob Clark, Produced by
Gerry Arbeid, script by Roy Moore from
"Stop Me... photography by Reginald
Morris [of the Paper Chase], music by
Carl Zittter."

I was relieved when I noticed the small
U.S. flag sitting on the detective’s desk
at Police Headquarters. It made Black
Christmas look like an American movie.
Also, the kind of crowd that would go
to it always bolt abruptly once the film
ends, they’d never notice the combined
financial credit after the titles to
Famous Players and the Canadian Film
Development Corporation, or that in
fact this was a typical sell-out Canadian
film. And they wouldn’t need a U.S.
flag to identify its national character
either.

Robert Fulford tells us that in Barry
Lord’s Maoist criticism of Canadian art
Lord identifies works that colonized
people create to buy status and profit
for themselves by helping the imperial
power exploit their fellow colonialists,
as ‘comprador’ art.

That’s Black Christmas. Politically,
it’s a browser’s syphonic effort to
slide up to lower U.S. taste for cheap
thrills and fast cash.

As Jean Paul Belmondo said to Jean
Seberg at the end of Breathless: “C’est
vraiment dégueulasse.”

The strangest thing about seeing this
anti-female stock horror caper at the
Imperial in Toronto was the incredible
juxtapositioning of it with a reasonably
clever, highly female-oriented 1972
NFH short, L’oeuf by Clorinda Warny,
full of surreal effects and montages
relating to eggs and life. Someone must
have noticed they both dealt with the
female.

The combination was about as sensi-
tive as that ad in which a chicken
encourages you to eat at Colonel San-
der’s.

Black Christmas is well located and
photographed. It features a sorority
house where, one by one, accompanied
by what women prefer to think of as
harmless though sick-minded obscene
phone calls, all the little ladies get their
comeuppance for being lovely, young,
well-to-do and/or liberate. And the
most suspicious male is of course artis-
tic. A pianist.

The satisfactions of a film in which
upper middle-class females, sharp and
sexy, are terrorized and brutally or grues-
omenously destroyed can be easily seen
to appeal to all misogynists, insecure
and frustrated men, and a thwarted and
denied working class who resent college
kids, liberated women, intellectual and
particularly artistic males, and, quite
possibly, the expense of Christmas.

The performers came in for a shaking
from Toronto critics, but actually they
were quite acceptable in their roles.
Abandoning any social, sexual, moral or
political critical attitudes, toward the
movie, the females had the edge in
performance. Margot Kidder particu-
larly gave life and vivacity to her charac-
terization of the cynical sorority sister,
while Andrea Martin (super in
Cannibal Girls) was humorous, touching, warm,
silly and sympathetic to a fault. Even
Marian Waldman’s guzzling sew-
mouthed house mother, wildly over-
done, and American Olivia Hussey as an
affected snob-sister, worked hard to try
to capture both the silliness and scar-
iness of the plot.

Canadian males shouldn’t go un-
noticed either. I found it sad, life does
go by so fast, to see Doug McGrath, a
male who can literally reel sex, rele-
gated to a sexless stereotyped boob-cop
role. But he made it a pleasure anyhow,
and with James Edmond, as a father
who acts somewhat more bewildered
than quite necessary (was he ever told
the plot?) and Art Hindle and Les
Carlson, the Canadian contingent did
what they could, which was basically,
lie low.

Keir Dullea played the paperback
pianist with anguished sensitivity rather
suitably, but finally the only performer
came out on top was the heavy breath-
ing garbled telephone voice(s), which
gives you some idea of whose alter ego
invented the script.

— Natalie Edwards

**Child Under a Leaf**

That glossy world pictured in consumer
magazines and in sunny Sunday Sup-
plements, with the fur throws, white
deep pile rugs, forever green plants, and
wide glass walls leading into flagged
gardens; that wonder-world of buxom
healthy women in impeccable white
outfits, with the fur throws, white
depths, with handsome sensitive males
standing nearby holding a Chivas Regal,
and maybe a baby or a cat or dog
triumphantly settled by the latest in por-
celain fireplaces; well, that world of fad
and fashion and fancy comes to a sort
of life in Child Under a Leaf, a new
semi-Canadian film by George Bloom-
field.

Photographed with centrespread
skill by Don Wilder (Paperback Hero)
the woman is Dyan Cannon (Bob and
Carol and Ted and Alice), the lover,
Donald Pilon (The Pyx, True Nature of
Bernadette, etc.), the baby Julie
Bullock and the husband Joseph
Campanella. The emotion-nudging
music is by Francis Lai, known pri-
marily here for his work for Love Story
rather than his many Claude Lelouch
scores.

This is another CFDC backed film
made blatantly for the U.S. market,
calculated with such care that commer-
cial slots and easily cut censorable
scenes are practically marked with
dotted lines, ready to be clipped out for
TV. Unlike Black Christmas, it doesn’t
place an American flag in sight, and in
fact, to satisfy nationalists, perhaps, an
Information Canada sign can be briefly
glimpsed in one street scene.

Other than that there is nothing to
offend the American TV viewer with a
sense of the foreign, especially once
Micheline Lancot’s French Canadian
accent has been removed, and another

Margot Kidder in “Black Christmas”
voice dubbed in.

Bloomfield, five years ago produced works like Eloise and Abelard, and Pinter's The Basement for CBC-TV, works that demanded the creation of a highly romantic, dramatic or logically illogical world. Here he once again attempts to construct an unreal dramatic world, but unfortunately his writing doesn't provide him as director with sufficient dramatic strength or logical coherence to carry his moralistic tragedy.

The story of the eternal triangle plus baby-makes-four seems designed as a luscious slick sad story in the women's weepy vein, but lacks the detail, honesty of perception, and style that made most of those underrated forties' films so successful.

Dyan Cannon, used, tanned, practically a personification of California, is the woman who has everything: husband, home, dream cottage, artistic lover, little dog and, best of all, a pretty baby. The moralistic message of the movie suggests she can't keep it all: the burden of mother love requires some sacrifices and decisions.

The potential subjects here are exciting and relevant. How much do children restrict sexual adventure? What duties and responsibilities are essential? Greed, and possessiveness for objects, creatures and loved ones can indeed lead to disaster, and a contemplation of the interlocking uses people make of each other under the banner of love could provide the film with a fascinating examination of contemporary means and morals.

Unfortunately the characterizations are as superficial as the décor. We seem to be watching made-up people in a made-up place, and the surface gloss is so hard we cannot feel the pulse or smell reality anywhere. As a result it is difficult to care what happens to these people, and even the death of a puppy dog or a baby is as uninvolving as a made-up place, and the surface gloss is so hard we cannot feel the pulse or smell reality anywhere. As a result it is difficult to care what happens to these people, and even the death of a puppy dog or a baby is as uninvolving as a newspaper item. This fictitious world with its unbelievable romanticism, is, in fact, unbelievable.

Don Wilder's photography reveals to us a world that is glossy, commercially pretty and totally false. No amount of subtle acting, plot repair or charged direction can dispel the influence of the visuals as designed and photographed, unless they are calculated for ironic contrast. And when the characters are as glossy and unreal as the environment, there is no contrast. Thus the design of the film, the conflicting art styles purport to be by artist Pilon for instance, the meaningless photography, and the motivational holes in the story (big healthy babies that age don't die instantly from a bit of cotton in their mouths for example) weaken the film drastically.

There is always, however, a favorite scene for me in every film I see. In this it is Al Waxman's hilarious gunshop proprietor leafing through a magazine of sexy pictures, expressing disbelief, amazement and delight in turn. At least the voyeurism and eroticism are frankly enjoyed for what they are and not hypocritically delivered as art. It's a refreshing moment.

The second funniest scene was unintentional, and involves Pilon and Cannon driving their white sports car to their special field to make love. She jumps out and in one swift gesture disrobes and flings her arms up in a gay mother earth come-and-get-it pose. Inspired, he whisks off his shirt (no buttons) but then suddenly sits back down in his car. To take off his shoes and socks? To hide his genitals? No. To drive the thirty feet or so over to her.

Now how much more California can you get?

— Natalie Edwards

Child Under a Leaf

It's all very tragic. The old Greeks would have loved Child Under a Leaf with its grand and noble passions and classic themes of Life, Death and Retribution. Of course, the details of Child Under a Leaf are long removed from antiquity, although the story has a certain timelessness. It's a tale of two lovers, their affair and the man who comes between them. In years past, it might have been written in rhyming couplets: For never was a story of more woe. . . Than this of Joseph and his Domino.

She's married. He's not. Together they have a child, a baby girl. The problem is her husband. Who else. He's