

house he renovated himself than with anything else, including his wife and son (Note to "Playboy" freaks: Shannon Tweed, as the wife, performs a small, simple part competently, has some presence and more beauty than prettiness). Equally unfortunately, Taggart contents himself with telling us about these traits in the dialogue and doesn't set up any scenes that bring them to life. One scene - Hughes chiding his son over a messed-up carpet - is written and played so mildly that the focus is father-and-son, rather than man-and-furnishings. It is almost as if somebody decided the character's likeability, "rootability" in current Hollywood jargon, had to take precedence over the logic of drama and character.

The result is that Weller's playing tends to mesh with Taggart's scenes and leaves his dialogue out in the cold, which makes the whole premise ludicrous. There is no way to believe that this man would ever tip over into obsession with killing a common household pest at the expense of the most important, make-it-or-break-it assignment of his career, nor to believe he would behave so stupidly once committed to killing the rat. It takes a real moron to keep sleeping at home and to walk about unarmed and without protective clothing once he's been attacked.

What all of this adds up to is severe boredom. *Of Unknown Origin* is a very slow movie. Time is spent setting up Hughes and detailing his transformation from civilized executive to primitive killer and it's clear that Cosmatos and company wanted to make a serious movie about character transformation, about the fragility of our thin veneer of civilization. Since they trashed their character from the start, we're left with tedium, relieved briefly by the comedy and street-wise rat expertise of Louis del Grande and Keith Knight, while we wait for the destruction.

Which is a dud. The results of a rat's gnawing are messy but not spectacular. The spectacle is reserved for the climax, in which Hughes smashes his home apart in a heartfelt attempt to club the rat to death with a baseball bat. However, since Verzier has chosen to light the home with the gloomy shadows of a horror movie and, since Cosmatos and editor Robert Silvi have rendered the climax largely in choppy, fast close-up, we never really get to see much destruction or get much sense of something that was beautiful and is no longer.

One has only to think of the wonders of character disintegration worked by Polanski in *The Tenant* and in *Repulsion*, with only Catherine Deneuve and a dead bunny, to realize that *Of Unknown Origin* could have been a superb movie. One of Bunuel's prissy, fastidious bourgeois heroes, in a well-lit home, in a pristine, bourgeois city - Toronto over Manhattan - could have worked wonders: comedy to tragedy and horror, moral and spiritual decay, redemption with power in it. That it didn't happen seems to me to indicate a triumph of commercial thinking over dramatic instincts. Or, to paraphrase Paul Bartel's classic line in *Hollywood Boulevard* ("This ain't a movie about the human condition; this is a movie about tits 'n ass"), *Of Unknown Origin* ain't a movie about the human condition; it's a movie about twits 'n rats.

Andrew Dowler ●

Claude Jutra's

## KAMOURASKA

(1972 - 1983)

Claude Jutra's *Kamouraska*, restored to its original structure and length by the director, and presented exclusively on Superchannel pay-TV - what excitement this announcement stirred in the veins of a multitude of film devotees! *Kamouraska* was screened some half-a-dozen times in November and December, in four episodes on consecutive nights, and dubbed into English.

The gorgeous images, the delicately shaded performance of Genevieve Bujold as Elisabeth Tassy, the claustrophobic atmosphere of the period, and the passive/submissive role of women, are all there as Jutra meant them to be in the first place.

Generally, most sequences have been expanded and, in addition, the complete scene has been reinstated (in episode 3) where Elisabeth (Bujold) and her doctor lover (Richard Jordan) walk through a flower-dotted field in high summer. They fantasize a duel, with the doctor triumphantly killing Elisabeth's husband Antoine, and liberating their love. Expanded details of the doctor's ride to finally kill the husband, in an amateurish but somehow believable way; the last, wild, headlong journey back to Kamouraska in the now bloodied sleigh; the creaking and jingling harness; the frozen landscape and glaring white snow; all add clarity and beauty.

In spite of all this richness, enthusiasm is considerably dampened, mainly because the English-dubbed dialogue is horrible, jarring and anachronistic. At one point, Antoine's old mother remarks: "I expect he lives it up a bit now

and then", while the maid Aurelie says: "Your affair with the doctor - I'm dying to know what happens", and, to boot, one of the aunts has a definite British accent.

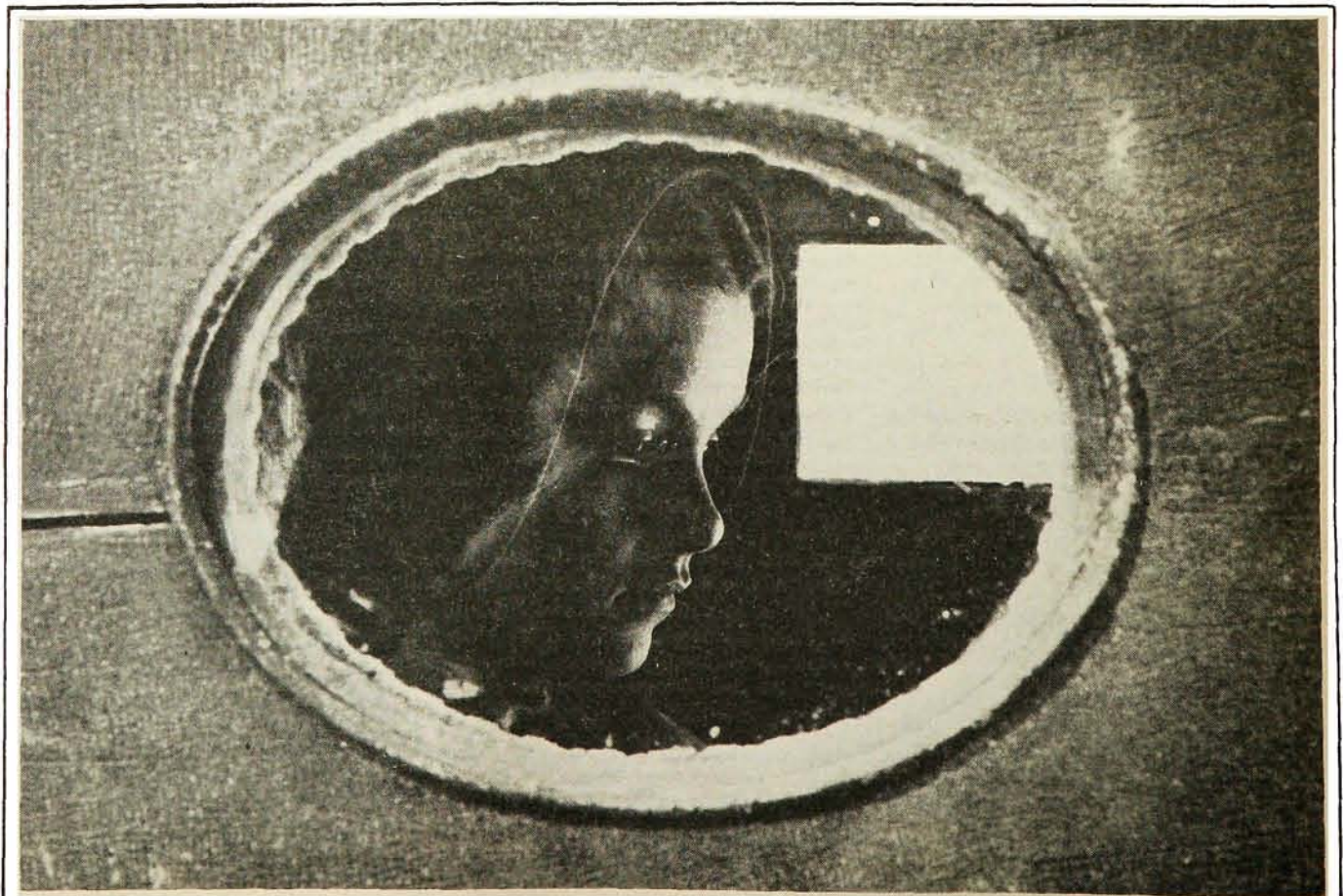
*Kamouraska* runs about 200 minutes, chopped into four episodes of 50 minutes. Each is "topped and tailed", as it were, with reminders of the previous episode and teasers of the next one. How much better served would the film (and the audience) be if *Kamouraska* had been shown complete, in one evening, as a special presentation. The rhythm and flow would be sustained, the build-up of the story to a richly tactile and climactic far more exciting. With the French language restored and English sub-titles, it would surely be sublime. The film was designed as a whole, to be seen and savoured in one sitting. After all, *Nicholas Nickleby* ran for some eight hours, so why not the much shorter *Kamouraska*? An opportunity badly missed (and botched) by Superchannel.

However, *Kamouraska* will be screened again during 1984 and everyone who cares for film, Jutra, Quebec and Canadian film should see it. Bujold is superb, Philippe Léotard as her husband ably projects a larger-than-life swine, Richard Jordan as the doctor/lover is woodenly handsome, while Camille Bernard has a small triumph as Antoine's blindly devoted mother.

Patricia Thompson ●

**KAMOURASKA** d. Claude Jutra sc. Anne Hébert. Claude Jutra, based on the novel by Anne Hébert d.o.p. Michel Brault ed. Claude Jutra sd. Serge Beauchemin mus. Maurice Le Roux p. Pierre Lamy, Mag Bodard p.c. Les productions Carle-Lamy Ltee, (Cda), Société Parc Film (France) An 80% Canada-20% France coproduction (1971), with the financial participation of the CFDC, France Film, Famous Players, Film House and UPF/Paris. Col., 35mm running time: (film version) 119 mins., (re-edited for pay-TV) 239 mins. Lp. Genevieve Bujold, Richard Jordan, Philippe Léotard, Marcel Cuvelier, Suzie Baillargeon.

**OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN** d. George P. Cosmatos exec. p. Pierre David p. Claude Héroux sc. Brian Taggart, based upon the book "The Visitor" by Chauncey G. Parker mus. Ken Wannberg d.o.p. René Verzier ed. Robert Silvi p. des. Anne Pritchard p. sup. Roger Héroux sup. sd. ed. Leslie Hodgson post-p. sup. Bill Wiggins 1st a.d. John Fretz a.d. Frank Ruszczyński, Michael Sarao unit man. François Ouimet cam. op. René Verzier cont. France Boudreau asst. to d. Denise Di Novi gaffer Jacques Fortier best boy Claude Alarie cameramen Serge Ladouceur, Peter Benison elect. Gilles Fortier, Normand Viau, Jean Courteau, Jean Trudeau, Marc Charlebois, Claude Brasseur art d. Rosemarie McSherry art d. co-ord. Tina Boden set dec. Serge Bureau set dressers Violette Daneau, Jean-Baptiste Tard, Denis Hamel, Tom Coulter, Abraham Lee, Maurice Tremblay, Barbara Shrier prop. master Jacques Chamberland asst. prop. Jean-Vincent Fournier cost. des. Paul-André Guérin ward. Hazel Pethig-Côté, Louise Gagne, Laura Drew make-up Michele Dion, Chantal Ethier hair Constant Natale, Martin Menard focus pullers Denis Gingras, Paul Gravel, Glen MacPherson loaders Jean-François Pouliot, Christine Pelletier, Patti Morein key grip Marc de Ernsted grip Jean-Maurice de Ernsted sd. Don Cohen boom Eric Zimmer asst. ed. Chantal Bowen, Teresa de Luca stills Piroška Mihalka sculptors P. Karen Langshaw, Peter Dowker, Peter Borowsky sp. efx. make-up Stephan Dupuis sp. efx. Jacques Godbout, Louis Craig stunts Marie-Patricia St-Laurent, Jean Lysight mus. sup. David Franco sd. efx. ed. Peter Burgess dialog. ed. Al Streeter Foley Terry Burke asst. sd. ed. Kerry Kohler, Gary Daprato, Haydn Streeter animal handling sup. Bob Tschanz animal trainer Robert Dunn cast. Deirdre Bowen, Ginette D'Amico asst. cast. Rosina Buccì pub. Paratel admin. Serge Major p. acct. Gilles Léonard, Pierre Guevremont asst. acct. Mable Arial, Nathalie Laporte p. sec. Patricia Cahill asst. to exec. p. Monik Nantel const. co-ord. Harold Thrasher const. crew Jak Oliver, Michael Devine, Serge LaForest, Frank Digiacomo, Larry Lamont, Marc Rainville p. assts. Frank D'Amico, Linda Ekdahl, Robert Ditchburn, Maurice Boyer, Michel Martin, David Bailey, Geoff Bowie, Brian Campbell, Marilyn Majerczyk, Paul Hotte, Michel Boyer, Pierre Tessier, Nicholas Koppen, Richard Carrière mixing Film House sd. re-rec. Paul Coombe, Michael Hoogenboom rec. eng. Dick Lewzey orchestrator Albert Woodbury lab. Film House titles Film Titles Ltd. opticals Groupe Film Opticals color timer Christopher Severn neg. cut. T'n T. Services Ltd. Ms. Shannon Tweed's ward. furnished by Bob Ore International watches Moug furs Montreal Master Furrier prod. with the participation of the Canadian Film Development Corporation and Famous Players Limited p.c. A Pierre David and Lawrence Nesis presentation running time 89 min. dist. Warner Bros. Lp. Peter Weller, Jennifer Dale, Lawrence Dane, Kenneth Welsh, Louis Del Grande, Shannon Tweed, Keith Knight, Maury Chaykin, Leif Anderson, Jimmy Tapp, Gayle Garfinkle, Earl Pennington, Jacklin Webb, Bronwen Mantel, Monik Nantel, Aimée Castle, Jesse Grasis, Tara O'Donnell.



● Genevieve Bujold in Claude Jutra's re-edited version of *Kamouraska*, restored in its original 200 minutes