

Indians. Apparently, the idea for the film came from the Manitoba Métis Federation but I see no signs of Métis collaboration in the credits. Even Flaherty tried to show us the Inuit's past way of life through the eyes of Nanook and with the collaboration of Nanook. Certainly, he achieved a greater authenticity. Perhaps this film could also have profited from this type of collaboration.

The premise of the dream, as the motivation for Ikwe to accept her marriage to a white man, was hard for me to believe. I also found it incredible that these apparently warm and innocent people would barter off their daughter for a few muskets. However, the development of the relationship between Ikwe and her Scottish, fur-trader husband is believable enough once the situation has been accepted. Even though very briefly sketched in, what unites them and what separates them becomes very clear. The tensions engendered by the differences between their two cultures leads to their final rupture and Ikwe goes back to her tribe. With her, she brings death in the form of smallpox which kills off her whole village except for her Métis daughter. This ending, like the beginning, seemed too arbitrary and basically just an easy way for the film to make its point, i.e. of the survival of the two cultures in the Métis.

The Wake is set in 1985 and the events take place in and around the Medicine Creek Métis Settlement in Northern Alberta. Perhaps it is the contemporary setting that has made it possible for the director to convey a stronger sense of actuality to the audience. The events jump off the screen and communicate a strong sense of life as it is lived with all its ambiguities and conflicting emotions. One of the first scenes in the film is worth relating to prove this point. At a wake for an old man which takes place at the reserve, Joan, the heroine, meets her estranged husband and punches him in the stomach, only to sit and laugh with him a few moments later. She then turns from him in pain and anger when she realizes that he has somebody else.

Every scene seems to have some of this ambiguity in it, so that the audience is constantly kept on its toes trying to size up the situation. This is even more true in terms of the central conflict which involves the relationship between the whites and the Métis. This conflict evolves in two parallel stories; that of Donna, who is running for Mardi-Gras Queen at the local high school, and that of Joan, who falls in love with a white cop.

The election of Donna becomes a minor political issue and serves mostly to show how the whites and Métis in this 'integrated' high school are separate and opposed cultures. The conflict between the two cultures appears even more severe when we witness how the white cops deal with a family crisis within the reserve. Donna's mother is a diabetic, an alcoholic and sleeps around with white men. We see one hiding his face as Donna comes home. When her mother sinks into a coma and has to be taken away, Donna refuses to let the cops and social workers in so as to keep her brothers and sisters together. Joan, her cousin, is asked to come and help. As she is trying to reason with her, the cops brutally barge in.

Neither society looks very good in

these scenes and we are almost ready to sympathise with Crawford when he tries to justify his actions to the younger cop, Jim. "I could tell you stories," he says. "Stories about kids so abused that they didn't even know their own name." But then he adds, "They're not like you and me." Here the essential racism of the man shines through. It is Jim who gets caught in the middle of this conflict since he falls in love with Joan and sympathises with the Métis.

The conflict comes to a head when four of the Métis teenagers fall through the ice and drown after being chased by the cops. Here again we are faced with an ambiguous situation. The kids are certainly acting in a crazy and irresponsible manner. The cops see them crash through the ice but Crawford tells Jim that there's only three feet of water and they leave. We never know whether he really believes this or not.

The center of the drama, however, is not Crawford but Jim, who lies to Joan about his involvement in the tragedy. Even when she does find out the truth, he doesn't have the guts to come out with a public statement about it since it would jeopardize both his and Crawford's job. Basically, he opts to support the white society at its most oppressive and destructive so as to keep his place in the power structure. The decision is his and through this decision the scriptwriter shows us that the working-out of the conflict between the two societies is both a personal and a social responsibility. In **Ikwe**, on the other hand, the author of the story seems to minimize the white's responsibility for that conflict since the destruction of the Indians is attributed primarily to a natural phenomenon (smallpox) and an unavoidable destiny (the dream).

What shines through in both films is the strength of the Métis women, especially Ikwe and Joan, to carry on against all odds. This in part could be attributed to the excellent choice in actresses (Hazel King and Victoria Snow, respectively) that the director has made. Both of the roles are played by Métis women and the quality of their performances is heightened by the strength of their beauty. The performance given by Diane Debassige as Donna, the troubled teenager, is also highly praiseworthy in its sensitivity and courage.

Mary Alemany-Galway •

DAUGHTERS OF THE COUNTRY
A four-part dramatic series from the National Film Board of Canada

IKWE p.d. Norma Bailey sc. Wendy Lill d.o.p. Ian Elkin ed. Lara Mazur art d. Jane MacLeod orig. m. John McCulloch prod. man. Connie Bartnick asst. d. Roman Buchok loc. sd. Richard Patton ward Marie Melanson props Michelle Convey asst. cam. Charles Lavack gaffer Frank Raven key grip Bill Mills sd. ed. Gloria Thorsteinson Foley Andy Malcolm re-rec. Clive Perry studio admin. Cyndi Farcand exec. p. Ches Yetman, Michael Scott l.op. Hazel King, Gladys Taylor, Geraint Wyn-Davies, Patrick Bruyere, William Ballantyne, Vicky Klyne, Marion Moneyas, Jamie Hardisty, Sarah Peebles running time 57 min. +1 sec. colour 16mm, VHS

THE WAKE p./d. Norma Bailey sc. Sharon Riis d.o.p. Ian Elkin ed. Lara Mazur art d. David Hewlett m. Ron Halderson prod. man. Connie Bartnick asst. d. Jack Clements loc. sd. Leon Johnson ward. Charlotte Penner props Michelle Convey asst. cam. Charles Lavack gaffer Frank Raven key grip Bill Mills sd. ed. Gloria Thorsteinson, Wayter Klis foley Andy Malcolm re-rec Clive Perry studio admin. Cyndi Farcand exec. p. Ches Yetman l.p. Victoria Snow, Diane Debassige, Timothy Webber, Michelle Thrush, Chris Henderson, Cynthia Alcorn, Darrell Ducharme, Jean Paul, Frank Adamson running time 57 min. 48 sec. colour 16mm, VHS

ADVANCED
POLITICAL
MONTAGE

Julian Samuel's
Red Star Over the Western Press

When the fierce little playwright was storming around Berlin laying the plans that would explode conventional theatre, he never once said that challenging, political art had to be confused, or messy, or awkwardly self-reflexive. And yet to the scores of filmmakers who tend to trip over their ideology on the way to the editing bench, being 'Brechtian' so often means being wilfully obvious and clumsy. Montreal videomaker Julian Samuel's new tape, **Red Star Over the Western Press: Archive: Algeria 1954-1962**, quickly falls into this trap. Work like Samuel's makes you realize that Brecht really wasn't so much robbed by his interpreters. He was mugged.

Red Star is based, in part, on Frantz Fanon's **The Wretched of the Earth**, which documented the horrors of French imperialism in Algeria, and the North African nation's struggle for independence. Fanon's book was to the French presence in Africa what Arthur Koestler's **Darkness at Noon** was to Stalinism: its most caustic literary scourge, an indictment of the colonial license which turned so easily into state-sanctioned terrorism. Unfortunately, what Samuel does to Fanon's work rates as an act of terrorism itself.

Samuel throws Fanon's words to actors who act up more than they act. Then he intersperses these acted segments with his own armchair interviews with academics on the subject of media bias. There's also some very powerful newsreel footage of the Algerian rebellion from 1954 to 1962. And footage of the aftermath of race riots in Newark and Detroit. And some vaguely defined connections made between the Algerian situation of the '50s and the "Zionist Colonization of Palestine." In short, there's an overabundance of material, perhaps meant to match the purposefully (and justifiably) excessive tone. There's nothing wrong with excess as a strategy,

and no sophisticated viewer would ever say that a work of art need follow only one line. But excess and eclecticism together can too easily undermine any attempt to convey a coherent message.

The problem seems to be that Samuel isn't quite sure who or what his target is. Is he attacking imperialist oppression (the French in Algeria, Afrikaners in South Africa, whites in Detroit), or is his real object the Western media's representation of that oppression and the resulting resistance movements? And why just Western media? Do the television and print reports coming out of the eastern and southern hemispheres avoid the biases of European and North American news? Or is it the hegemonic rule that the Western news agencies enjoy that makes them a worthy target? We never know, because the tape never makes these things clear. In fact the only thing that's made really clear is that Samuel doesn't like the CBC any more than he likes Charles de Gaulle.

Fair enough. But the problem with the tape is that Samuel never fully addresses the issues he brings up; he throws together ideas without developing their implications. What does Zionism have to do with French colonialism? What does 'O Canada', the soundtrack in a casualty count text-crawl, have to do with the Algerian war? Isn't it simplistic to reduce all forms of nationalism to one horrific conclusion? And why do we spend so much time watching two white academics (McGill graduate student David Hogarth and Carleton film professor Will Straw) talking about the Western media's treatment of 'Third World' revolution?

Ironically, Straw indirectly points out one of the tape's contradictions. "The systems of bias," he observes, "are partly the desire to go to authoritative voices." Hogarth and Straw do function as sources of authority within the tape, despite Samuel's rather callow attempt to subvert Hogarth's words by overlaying Algerian atrocities over his image as he talks. And their "expert" analyses of media ideology are more penetrating than anything Samuel and his video-effects generator can manage.

In the end, it's the effects that rankle. More often than not, they simply don't work; usually, they're overdone. The breaking down of image clarity through slow motion and freeze-frame is sometimes interesting, but having a text-crawl change colour, then turn sideways so the text becomes the imprisoning

bars of the French tricolour, is just hokey.

So meet the new Brecht. Despite Samuel's revolutionary intentions, **Red Star** remains divorced from true political action. Enthralled by technology, today's Brechts find solace in hitting their audiences over the head with clunky formal devices — all in the aim of liberating history from the shackles of realism.

Cameron Bailey •

RED STAR OVER THE WESTERN

PRESS A Julian Samuel Films Ltd. Production p./d./ed./ researched Julian Samuel *dramatic sequences* — cam. Michael Keeffe sd. Debra d'Entremont other sd. Radio McGill, Kerry Fantie, Steve Wilson m. Motility by Michael Horwood, Edith Piaf, François Hardy, *titles* Montage Eclair *contributions* by J. Doray, Matthew Sanger, Natasha Mukerjee, President Johnson, General de Gaulle, Arshad Shah, Bilal Ahmad, Harold Weaver, Bruce Ferguson, Mohammad Rezi Pahlevi, Christine Parlour, Dave Hogarth, Tom Waugh, Jacques Soustelle, Will Straw, Brendan Weston, Colin Tomlins, Richard Flint, Prim Video, National Film Board of Canada, Alpha Video and Film, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Universal Newsreel, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., Algerian Embassies: Ottawa, London, Washington, National Film Television and Sound Archives, Ottawa, Palestine Information Centre, Ottawa *funding* The Canada Council, The People of South Lebanon, The Institute of Palestine Studies, Washington D.C. *rental* Julian Samuels Films Ltd (514) 284-0431

more of him and smothers him with a pillow (no great loss there). Eunice manages to conceal the crime, and, on her aunt's suggestion, takes a job as a housekeeper in 'America' — the location is unspecified, but it looks a lot like Kleinberg, Ontario.

George and Jackie Coverdale are initially delighted by their super-efficient, workaholic English servant. He (Ross Petty) is a well-to-do doctor (in the novel he was a manufacturer) and she (Shelley Peterson) is an aspiring hostess. They also have two children in their late teens from their previous marriages, George's daughter Melinda (Jessica Steen) and Jackie's son Bobby (Jonathan Crombie).

Although Eunice seems to fit into the Coverdales' lives, her handicap, and her obsessive desire to conceal it, soon leads to a series of mishaps which arouse George's suspicions. She also comes into contact with Joan Smith (Jackie Burroughs), the wife of the local postmaster, and another unstable personality. It is Eunice's relationship with Joan, an ex-prostitute-turned-religious fanatic, that leads to the story's fatal climax.

Although the ending is changed, the screenplay sticks quite close to Rendell's novel. It could lend itself rather well to the type of radical analysis that Robin Wood and his associates in *Cineaction* specialize in. The Coverdales are almost archetypically bourgeois, while Joan and Eunice are equally archetypically proletarian, and both are oppressed and repressed. The violence at the end can therefore be almost foreordained.

But such attempts to attach such weighty themes to **The Housekeeper** are forced, because of the flaws which Ousama Rawi allows to show in the film. To be sure, there is ample precedent for treating a psychopathic character sympathetically. Hitchcock is the touchstone, in such films as **Shadow of a Doubt**, **Vertigo** and **Psycho**, and in the '70s he was followed by films as varied as **Sisters**, **Taxi Driver** and the 'bad seed' pictures like **Carrie**, **The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane** and

Holy Terror. But **The Housekeeper** cannot stand with them.

Though Rita Tushingham struggles gamely with the role of Eunice, she often degenerates into a series of tics and expressions. The hallucinations which Eunice experiences under stress are especially poorly done. The opening sequences of Eunice as a child have a certain crude vigor, but the effect is dissipated. Most of the other characters veer into cliché. Neither Ross Petty nor Shelley Peterson seem to be able to see that playing superficial characters is different from playing superficially. Jackie Burroughs, on the other hand, is encouraged to go over the top in portraying Joan's madness.

Tom Kneebone, as Joan's ineffectual husband, has a change of pace from the breezy Noel Coward characters he is best known for, but the part is very secondary. As the step-siblings more than platonically devoted to each other, Jessica Steen and Jonathan Crombie are adequate, but their subplot, which was quite understated in Rendell's book, is here quite distracting.

The fate of **The Housekeeper** — three less than spectacular weeks in Cineplex-Odeon's smaller Toronto houses — suggests that the thriller is not a genre in which Canadians excel. Rawi's work certainly shows kinship with such films of the '70s as **The Disappearance**, **Tomorrow Never Comes**, **Blood Relatives** and **Jigsaw**. On the other hand, **The Silent Partner** and **Pouvoir Intime** show what can be done; all it takes is some imagination.

J. Paul Costabile •

THE HOUSEKEEPER A Rawfilm Inc./Schulz Productions Presentation. A Castle Hill Release. d. Ousama Rawi p. Harve Sherman Based on the novel "A Judgment in Stone" by Ruth Redell sc. Elaine Waisglass line p. Jim Cole exec. p. David Pady. Ousama Rawi, Harve Sherman d.o.p. David Herrington ed. Stan Cole m. Paul Zaza l.p. Rita Tushingham, Ross Petty, Shelley Peterson, Jonathan Crombie, Jessica Steen, Jackie Burroughs, Tom Kneebone, Peter MacNeill, Donald Ewer, Joyce Gordon, Aisha Tushingham *running time* 96 minutes

Ousama Rawi's

The Housekeeper

In the book trade, an author like Ruth Rendell is what is known as a 'good read'. As one of several designated successors to Agatha Christie as the Queen of the English Mystery, she has a loyal following and a good critical reputation. Unfortunately, what makes a good read does not always make a good view, as this adaptation of Rendell's **A Judgment in Stone** (under which title it was shown in a somewhat longer version at the 1986 Festival of Festivals) is testimony.

Veteran cinematographer and director of commercials Ousama Rawi makes his feature debut with **The Housekeeper**. He has a high-profile cast, headed by his wife Rita Tushingham and Jackie Burroughs, and he has Rendell's darkly compelling story of a repressed English servant who becomes a killer largely because she cannot read. Yet, in spite of the fact that the film has some intriguing points, it is largely a failure. Its commercial chances were not helped by Cineplex-Odeon's less than enthusiastic promotion and the dull ad copy that gave the plot away ("she cooks, she cleans, she kills").

Growing up in a working-class neighborhood in '50s London, Eunice Parchman (Aisha Tushingham) is ridiculed and humiliated by her schoolmates because she suffers from dyslexia and is unable to learn to read. Some 35 years later, Eunice (Rita Tushingham) is a quiet, withdrawn woman with a sweet tooth, still living at home with her abusive father. One day she finds she can take no



• If only it were Rita Tushingham — the hammy housekeeper

Barbara Boyden's

Those Roos Boys and Friends

The names of Len and Charlie Roos don't exactly come trippingly off the tongues of Canadian film archivists or those of us passionately devoted to the early days of movies. Indeed, Barbara Boyden, the director/producer of this captivating documentary, was unaware that she had stepped into family footsteps in her choice of profession. But, having learned that her uncles were intrepid newsreel cameramen and filmmakers, she followed the Roos boys' trail for five years to come up with a delightfully personal glimpse of a rough-and-tumble life in the infancy of film.

Oh my, they were a right pair, those Roos boys! Charlie, the older, took a lot of portraits — Buffalo Bill, Chief Sitting Bull, and those cute ones where you put your face over a cut-out body. Len was a real goer — taking daredevil shots for the moving picture news, hobnobbing with the young Prince of Wales, going to Australia — and forever telling everyone how smart he was.

Charlie Roos made at least 16 one-reel comedies for his own company, Atlas (formed in 1913), with titles such as **Parsons Slips a Cog** and **Booming Fifi**. He roped in his small son as an actor, and Bud Roos today reminisces on screen about his adventures as a tiny thespian with sister Dorothy. Betty Boyden, Len Roos's daughter (and the filmmaker's Mum) talks about the difference between the two brothers: Charlie was very kind and home-loving while Len wanted to impress and take all the credit.

Len and Charlie Roos made **Self Defence**, "the war's first feature" says the narration (indeed, the *only* war feature made in Canada during the First World War — see D.J. Turner's *Index of Canadian Feature Films 1913-1985* reviewed on p.). It was shot in Galt in 1916, and depicted "the invasion of Canada by the Huns."

Charlie also made a number of agricultural films, (**Buttermaking In New Ontario**, **Stumping in New Ontario**), recorded the raising of the largest barn in Ontario in 1929 and, somewhere in the early 1920s, was manufacturing tyres and treads! Bud joined his father Charlie in making talking pictures and, among other things, they filmed contests to find stars, while still turning out industrials. There's some fascinating footage of a documentary on Lockewedge Shoes and Dr. Mahon Locke who practised foot manipulation, turning his Williamsburg, Ontario, hometown into the Canadian Lourdes.

Len Roos went to Australia in 1924 and is remembered Down Under for his snappy clothes, especially trekking into the Outback in his plus-fours! He was invited back to that country in 1926 and with an American director, Norman Dawn, took over the silent film, **For the Term of his Natural Life**, with Len as director of photography. Clips from this film include some tinted shots, and snip-