

William Sorochan's
Chimera

Chimera is an interesting departure from the acceptable norms of documentary filmmaking. It presents a traditional theme (the search for one's cultural identity) and reinvests it with a unique visual language that gives the film broader scope and wider meaning. While not entirely successful, the film's virtues outweigh its flaws. Director William Sorochan is an interesting addition to the Canadian film scene.

Chimera is a 103-minute experimental documentary that, at its best is reminiscent of the works of Michael Snow and James Benning. The film is made up of 47 stationary sequences, each lasting from one to two-and-a-half minutes, exploring man's relationship with his environment. The film was shot in rural Alberta over a six-month period in 1986.

Due to its unique form, the viewer goes through numerous emotional responses towards the images presented - joy, sadness, intrigue, boredom, frustration, action. One of the film's flaws (or virtues) is that you can never pigeonhole where the director is coming from. This is somewhat irritating when viewing the film but adds to its resonance and power when looked back upon. The soundtrack accompaniment is Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* as performed by Glenn Gould, and it is here where the film becomes problematic. Bach's intellectual approach is at odds with the emotional imagery, creating an irritating paradox which detracts from the final presentation. One feels that the director felt obliged to add this soundtrack and the viewer can sense the uneasiness in this marriage. The flow is truncated, it's too herky-jerky for immediate acceptance, resulting in an alienating

effect. However, this effect may have been imposed by the filmmaker for a reason, which, if true, adds to the enigmatic nature of the work.

The film's strength is its visuals, and it is for them the director should be commended. Each sequence is carefully balanced and framed for maximum emotional response. The prairies, always somewhat stereotypically portrayed as loving sunsets and waving fields of grain, are depleted in a natural, straightforward manner which eschews pretty pictures and relies on truth (both ugly and beautiful) to communicate the unique beauty of this region of Canada. It is this aspect of the work that tends to bring across the emotional understanding that the director tried to express. It is in his images that the director creates a dialogue with his viewer, never digressing to unnecessary staginess or preaching. The film is full of cinematic wonders and it's unfortunate that the uncertain structure of film and music takes away from this virtue. The film is somewhat similar in the visual aspects to the works of the great American film director Anthony Mann; it will be interesting to see if Mann's emotional manipulation of images can be duplicated by this director if he decides to embark upon narrative filmmaking.

Chimera lives up to its enigmatic title. There is a lot to belittle, yet, it's hard to get the beauty of this film out of your head. The more you think about it, the more you forget about disliking this film, concentrating more on the warmth the film successfully conveys. It might be best classified as a minor work from a potentially major artist. G.H. Lewmer ●

CHIMERA *pid/ed/cam* William Sorochan. *Neg. Ed/ Lenka Svab. Mus.* "The Well-Tempered Clavier-Book 2" by Johann Sebastian Bach performed by Glenn Gould. Made possible through the assistance of: NFB PAFPS Program, Alberta Cultural Heritage Foundation, CBS MASTERWORKS, Dept. of Radio and Television-Univ. of Alberta / Apple Canada Inc. *Running time:* 103 min. Colour, 16mm. A FAVA production *dist.* Film and Video Artists Society of Alberta.



From *Chimera*, Alberta director Bill Sorochan's feature-length experimental documentary



Jack Huggins is *Mr. Nobody* in Lyn Wright's film about elderly abuse

Lyn Wright's
**The Elderly
at Risk**

Mr. *Nobody* and *A House Divided* are the first two films in Lyn Wright's trilogy about the abuse of the elderly produced by the National Film Board. As North America greys, and as the baby boomers grapple with their own aging and dying parents, the elderly are emerging from the long shadows of the North American youth culture.

Mr. Nobody is Jack Huggins, reclusive and eccentric. We first see him slowly hobbling up a steep concrete sidewalk. It's a long walk as he moves through patches of sun and shadow. He advances towards us framed on one side by lush greenery and a flower bed; on the other by an endless row of cars parked against the curb. Finally, he turns to take his last few steps, the most difficult ones, to the front door of his home.

Jack Huggins' life has been difficult, much like the walk we just witnessed. After many years of

cares for his aging and ailing parents, Jack is on his own, ready for some relief. Instead he is faced with a barrage of well-meaning but misplaced intervention for refusing to conform to our notion of 'the golden years.'

Jack has a hobby. He collects things. He spends hours roaming the city streets and parks searching for discarded treasures. He does this in spite of warnings by nurses and doctors that he must stay off his swollen and infected feet. He rescues abandoned cats and kittens. He also rescues discarded junk: old radios, TV sets and other electrical appliances.

He collects much more than he can deal with. His home becomes a storehouse packed with hoarded items from bottles and papers to television sets and pieces of wood. Neighbours concerned about the fire and health hazards call in the Health Department. Jack is slapped with cleanup orders he can't or won't comply with. Finally, he is shipped off to a hospital where he is forcibly sedated and certified incompetent. To top it all off, his estate is taken over by the Public Trustee.

"I never owed a cent," Jack protests, "and now I'm being treated like Mr. Nobody. Just Mr. Nobody out on the street."

The film raises interesting questions about public care. To what extent does society have the