

it hurts us more than it hurts you"). He is sentenced to two years, two months, two days, two hours and two minutes in the infamous Children's Prison on Slimers' Island ("from which no brats return"). In the custody of the scaly Master Fish (Guy L'Ecuyer) and the beak-nosed Mistress Fowl (Joy Coghill), he is taken to meet the warden, the Hooded Fang (Alex Karras), a roaring former wrestler who determines to break the boy of his duplicative habit. However, Jacob, with the aid of the representatives of Child Power, The Intrepid Shapiro (Marfa Richler) and The Fearless O'Toole (Thor Bishopric), is able to discover that the terrible creature is himself quite the child, and so is able to liberate the small prisoners.

It is to Ted Flicker's credit that he does not try to embroider this fairly simple fable and its message that the sensitivities of children should be respected, with any great flashiness, even if it does mean a rather uncinematic reliance on Richler's essentially verbal humor. Where he does use effects, it is with restraint, as in the trial scene, where Francois Protat's low angle photography heightens Jacob's feeling of insignificance before the implacable Adult Law. The design of the Children's Prison, though it could be criticized for looking too artificial, is a suitable surreal experience for a child exposed to animated cartoons and television commercials, while the jeans-and-jersey uniforms of Child Power form a link to Jacob's siblings' games in the prologue (again, the same persons double the roles), and the comic heroes they (and Richler) dote on. The only effect that really does not work is the gray makeup on the child prisoners, which makes them look uncomfortably like Romerian zombies.

Since the film is so verbal, Flicker and Gulkin were fortunate to be able to get the ideal person to play Jacob in Stephen Rosenberg. Neither too cute, nor too clever, he is justification enough for having the film made in Montreal, when one considers how a Disney child like Sean Marshall or a "personality" like Jimmy Osmond would have done it had it been shot in California as originally planned. Thor Bishopric and especially Marfa Richler (daughter of Mordecai) are outstanding among the 200 or so Montreal area children who appear alongside Stephen. Of the adult characters, the Judge, Master Fish, Mistress Fowl and

Mister Fox (Claude Gai), the head guard and saboteur of toys, are all creations worthy of Lewis Carroll. But Alex Karras is much too broad in his characterization of the Hooded Fang to be either menacing or pitiful, and this is a major weakness in Flicker's treatment.

By far, the greatest problem with *Jacob Two-Two*, aside from the Slime Squad, is in the variable quality of the sound. Some voices like the children's and Alex Karra's are relatively clear, but others like Guy L'Ecuyer's and Victor Desy's (who is not well used as the hapless lawyer Louis Loser), are almost hopelessly blurred. The songs are impossible to understand, and Lewis Furey, in an attempt to be gentle and innocent, winds up sounding like Cat Stevens instead.

Michael Rubbo's Solzhenitsyn's Children Are Making a Lot of Noise in Paris

d. Michael Rubbo, special collaboration Louis-Bernard Robetaille, sc. and narr. Michael Rubbo, ph. Andraes Poulsson, adnl.ph. Michael Edols, Michel Thomas-D'hoste, asst.camera Serge Lafortune, ed. Michael Rubbo, asst.ed. Stephan Steinhouse, loc.sd. Joseph Champagne, sd.ed. Andre Galbrand, asst.by Danuta Klis, re rec. Jean Pierre Joutel, Adrian Croll, unit admin. Janet Preston, exec.p. Arthur Hammond, p. Marrin Canell, p.c. The National Film Board, (year) 1979, col. 16mm, running time 87 minutes, 21 seconds.

While the rest of the world is struggling with its own changing nature, and the attendant angst and excitement, we, here in Canada, are looking for heroes. In no area is the search more intense than in the media. Media and culture, the right hand and the left, scrutinize and are scrutinized. Film is no exception. Indeed there is an implicit certainty in some circles that if Canada develops a feature film industry all will be well in this land.

That is quite a responsibility for the cultural artifact, the film, and for its maker. Think of it. A film is made, finally screened, on television or in a

It should not be thought that the film of *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* is a disaster, for the large audiences of children that have seen it during the matinee-only-screenings which Gulkin arranged as an interesting experiment that also saves money, are quite attentive to the story. There is little of the restlessness that is usual in the auditoriums when Disney films play. But there is also too little of the excitement found in the book. It would seem that the familiar problems of lack of time, money and co-ordination continue to bedevil the attempts of Canadian filmmakers like Harry Gulkin to translate literature into cinema.

J. Paul Costabile

theatre. It's like a sheep slaughtered at Delphi — inwards to be examined and analysed for portents of portents. First glimpse must reveal Canadian content. A sigh of relief then with the work of a Peter Pearson. Mine it, mine it for deep meaning. It is after all certifiably a national product. Very self-conscious. Often self-righteous. What of the subtle, non-overtly Canadian work of Michael Rubbo? It doesn't take place in Canada. The ideas aren't Canadian in any particular way. No wonder. He's Australian. Yes, dismiss him. Well, he does work for the National Film Board. They're all aesthetes and Communists. They, he, are of no account.

This very process has, in the past, lost to us, great artists. John Grierson immediately comes to mind. It would be shameful, if the same attitude, prompted Michael Rubbo to leave Canada.

In the past ten years Rubbo is responsible for at least two films that can rightly claim and have received recognition beyond our borders, *The Sad Song of Yellow Skin* (1971) about the Vietnamese interface with the West during the Vietnam War and *Waiting for Fidel* (1974) about an attempted interface between a Canadian capitalist and his guide, politician Joey Smallwood and Fidel Castro. In both films Rubbo, as narrator or visual participant has placed himself as filmmaker in the unusual position of explorer.

He admits interest, curiosity, sometimes bewilderment, but never the distant sophomoric or all-knowing sensibility that has in the past lent the label dogmatic, or more subtly, educational,

film, and in its way, a courageous film. Rubbo, by poking his camera into the entrails of contemporary political thought, de-mythologizes the canonized experiments in Communism. Whether they be Leninists or Maoists. Does that mean that Rubbo implies advocacy of Democracy? Does it mean that there are limits to the potential of Government involvement in the private life? Or is he asking the question, "Can we live with the anxiety democracy promotes in individuals?" His own behavior in the film suggests the latter is a possibility. Certainly the figure of Solzhenitsyn, what he stands for, is the only positive element in the film.

Which brings me back to Michael Rubbo, the National Film Board and the Canadian audience. This film was produced in Canada, and one can be very proud that such a film could be made in this country. The film is mature, probing and satisfying on an intellectual as well as aesthetic level. And yet there is a question about the life of this film here in Canada.

It is appalling to learn that this film has already been sold to PBS in the

United States and shown at the Film Forum in New York. It has yet to be shown here except for screenings at universities and at the Grierson Seminar in Orillia. They love Mike Rubbo in the U.S. and embrace his work. Apparently we don't. One doesn't know who we are, but we exist, because Rubbo's films have met a lot of resistance here in Canada. He sent the film to the U.S. first because he's had too much non-response to his films at the CBC and because his films are only routinely distributed via district offices of the NFB. Apparently the CBC is not alone. The film was raked over the coals at this year's Grierson Seminar.

This is very sad given the filmmaker and his work. Rubbo is a major artist. Perhaps the reason, to harken back to the beginning of this review, is his interest in international subject matter, lack of overt Canadian content. If this is so, the loss is ours. Next year Michael Rubbo will be filmmaker in residence at Harvard University in Boston.

Kenneth Dancyger

Diane Létourneau's Les Servantes du Bon Dieu

d. Diane Létourneau with the collaboration of the Petites Soeurs de la Sainte-Famille; resch. Diane Létourneau, sc. Louise Carrier, ph. Jean-Charles Tremblay, asst. ph. Pierre Duceppe, ed. Josée Beaudet, sd. Serge Beauchemin, lighting Jacques Paquet, lighting asst. Denis Hamel, p. Claude Godbout, Marcia Couëlle, p.c. Les Productions Prisma with la SDICC, Radio-Québec, and L'OTEO, col. 16mm, (year) 1978, running time 90.

In art, death is rarely represented as a peaceful closing of the eyes.

Diane Létourneau's 90 min. documentary *Les Servantes Du Bon Dieu* (The Handmaidens of God), filmed among the nuns of the convent of Saint-Famille in Sherbrooke, Québec, is above all a film about passing on. It is about a dying order of women. Their convent, established in the 1890s, now faces closure because the sisterhood cannot attract youthful recruits. The average age of the sisters of Saint-Famille is 60.

The film reveals the tranquility of their aging. No words, written or spok-



Two "petites" sisters of the Sainte-Famille
photo: Yves Ste-Marie

en, can transmit the humility and serenity we witness in the eyes and faces of the nuns whom we meet in this film. In

our jagged age, it is a provocative confrontation.

The sisters of Saint-Famille were organized and still function primarily as a domestic service organization for the priesthood. In the film we see them at their daily duties and dedications, laundering, cooking, cleaning. Theirs are simple lives, lived with deliberation and a good deal of humor.

No one could fail to be captivated by some of the spunky, guileless old ladies who make their debut in *Les Servantes du Bon Dieu*. One feisty octogenerian tells us that she adopted a black habit, when most of the others wear white, because she likes black, always has, then gets up and shuffles off camera. There is zest also to the two nuns who live in the garage, to be closer to the automobiles for which they are responsible, who we find in serious discussion about the relative merits of the Pontiac and Chevrolet!

The nuns are curiously natural, though sometimes shy in front of the camera. But it is the qualities we least expect to find among such women, namely their independence of mind and firm pride of vocation, that make them so attractive.

One senses that Létourneau was herself surprised by the personalities she encountered. Through a series of interviews, which we soon realize are of the same format (why did she join the convent, at what age, is her work satisfying?) we discover the wealth of character among the women living in this religious collectivity. The interviews also reveal something about conditions for Québec women early in the century when the choice of a religious vocation often meant the only access to a career and life outside the home. (Until the Quiet Revolution, religious societies had responsibility for education and health care in Quebec, and many women made prestigious careers in these areas.)

In the end, however, the repetition in the interviews becomes tedious, and works against the tension of discovery. The director's zealotry in one area underlines a curious gap in another.

On one level, Létourneau is fascinated by the simple satisfaction with which all the work in the convent is done. There are languid shots of hands meticulously folding linens and ladling soup, silent views of women at work dusting some part of the sanctuary. Yet when the cardinal, speaking for the priests to whom the service is rendered, says with uneasy dignity, that the first quality of the nuns is their faithfulness