

REVIEWS

Gwynne Dyer's

War

"The media are not ways of relating us to the old 'real' world: they are the real world, and they reshape what remains of the old world at will" - McLuhan

Gwynne Dyer's documentary essay series *War* was without a doubt one of the more intelligent discussions of the complexities of contemporary global tensions. Beginning Oct. 2 over seven highly informative Sunday evenings on CBC television, international affairs journalist Dyer's often cynically amusing, at times depressing, yet always knowledgeable commentary, provided, against the background of battlefields, expert testimony and documentary footage of military exploits, some understanding of the problems of modern warfare.

From a general overview of the rise of total war, waged by mass armies, officered by military management, to an examination of the longevity of specific conflict dynamics (the Mideast), to current armed stalemates (Western Europe) and beyond to the nuclear dilemma and what to do about it, Dyer, assisted by a production team of largely young filmmakers, probed many facets of the modern military juggernaut.

The series culminated in a final warning that if the planet is to survive, a solution other than war must be found. Dyer suggests that such a solution can only be holonomic, that is, one involving a world-body possibly like the UN. All in all, the series was a splendidly written, intelligently literate treatment of some of the big questions by documentary filmmakers - relative newcomers to the bizarre world of television.

Yet within a week of *War's* ending Nov. 13, all of the series' patient effort of elaboration seemed to dissipate in the hysterical media fallout from the American made-for-TV melodrama *The Day After* as the U.S. indulged in symbolic mourning for the lost images of a more hopeful world. The ensuing deluge swept up people like Gwynne Dyer, suddenly much in demand for his thought-provoking series, only to transform him into an advocate of the solutions in 20 words or less so favored by the medium of television. Those who had earlier been impressed by Dyer's sagacity in the *War* series might have been struck by certain thoughts about the workings of television, which retrospectively offered another perspective of the *War* series itself.

For the high-profile (1,023,000 viewers per episode) appearance of a documentary series on a medium from which it has largely been eradicated raises questions about the real limits of the documentary as a means of reflection upon the world, especially when contrasted with television's extraordinary powers of symbolization. If the National Film Board, for one, thinks that television is going to save its filmmakers, greater thought should perhaps be given to the message of the medium itself.

In the light of *The Day After*, the *War* series appears as an outstanding example of the literate, pre-electronic mind

utterly foreign to television, yet which stubbornly endures in the dying Canadian tradition of the documentary film. This "documentary mentality" graphically illustrates McLuhan's adage that the content of one medium is often the content of another. In the case of *War*, the content was Dyer's text, a non-fiction form of written expression that operates on the stated contrast between the rigorous, the seemingly logical, the central point of view, alternating with unstated absences, blindneses, and apocalyptic terrors. For instance, that a major documentary series on contemporary warfare could overlook the role of the information media in the preparation and waging of war, despite the recent controversy over the Falklands, has to be taken as (deliberate?) blindness since raising the question might have put into doubt either the 'truth' of the documentary or the omniscience of Dyer's argument.

If there is any truth or omniscience on television, it is that the medium is playing to an invisible crowd. And to the viewer, television watching is itself a distracted form of play: an aesthetic-imaginative experience produced by an image-dispensing machine indifferent to the distinction between a 'serious' documentary such as *War* or a 'trashy' melodrama like *The Day After*. For Freud says somewhere that in imaginative works we seek compensation "for the impoverishment of life": the imaginative mode makes it possible for us to reconcile ourselves with death. We die imaginatively yet we survive, ready to die again just as safely. Yet the difference between *The Day After* and *War* can be stated more precisely in that the former can display the realistic appearance of an imaginary event (the nuclear destruction of Lawrence, Kansas) while the latter hesitates before the 'imaginary' event of a real appearance (that the missiles you see can indeed be used). The one manages to make death visible and so (perhaps) imaginatively dispels it; the other cannot make death visible and because of death's absence only makes it more terrifying.

Yet the *War* series' greatest strength

was to, again and again, show that electronic technology has reduced both soldiers and potential victims to people sitting in front of TV screens: the former looking at the screens in the hope that nothing will happen, the latter doing the same in the hope that something will. Dyer's series attempts to show on television that nuclear warfare is the limit of the image: the terrifying blackness beyond which the camera cannot go, the point at which the image regresses. Indeed to convey something of Hiroshima's ground zero, the series showed paintings by survivors - paintings and text. The content of one medium is the content of another.

One could thus say that the text-content of the *War* series became the image-content of *The Day After*, a made-for-TV film that roared in, commercials and all, where Dyer feared to tread. It allowed one to see the terrifying unknown or something akin to it, no matter how meretriciously done. In this sense, the difference between *War* and *The Day After* is that the latter could posit television, while the series could not, and so the series' impact would be vaporized by television itself. ABC knew exactly how to play an hour-and-a-half film into a week-long media-event; in the case of *War*, seven hours of film produced only a dull half-hour with Patrick Watson. *The Day After* allowed (American) television to do what it does best: to focus all attention upon itself and display its power to summon forth statesmen and generals from the brink of the Apocalypse. *War's* far more potentially probing point simply drifted off into the ether.

The danger - and perhaps there is one - is that something like *The Day After* fear of nuclear death. The danger would be that, by transforming the unthinkable into the viewable, it becomes the image equivalent to the concept of "limited or winnable nuclear war", the strategic creation of those whom Dyer calls "the military metaphysicians" that is at the heart of much current Western anti-nuclear agitation, including at the origin of the *War* series.

McLuhan used to hope that television,

by heightening the visibility of human frailty, had the power to make nuclear weapons self-liquidating. Whatever their flaws, certainly both programs appealed to the power of television's ability to reshape the old, 'real' world. And if that is the effect of such programs, then television can truly hope to yet replace the Bomb as the ultimate weapon of our time.

Michael Dorland ●

WAR (Series) title Don McWilliams, Caroline Leaf **mus.** Larry Crosley **mus. rec.** Louis Hone **sup. sd. ed.** Bernie Bordeleau **re-rec.** Jean-Pierre Joutel, Adrian Croll **post-sync. exf.** Ken Page, c.f.e. **unit admin.** Carmel Kelly, Bob Spence **p. coord.** Claire Stevens **post-p. coord.** Grace Avrih **res.** Elizabeth Klinck **film res.** Donna Dudinsky **series dev. & edit. d.** Gwynne Dyer, Michael Bryans **presented by** Gwynne Dyer **series p.** Bill Brind, John Kramer **exec. p.** Barrie Howells **p.c.** National Film Board of Canada **Film 1: The Road to Total War d./p.** Barbara Sears **sc.** Gwynne Dyer, Barbara Sears **loc. d.** Douglas Kiefer, Michael Bryans, Tina Viljoen, Marrin Canell, Paul Cowan **ed.** Hannele Halm **cam.** Douglas Kiefer, Paul Cowan, Kent Nason, Jean-Pierre Lachapelle, Michel Thomas-D'Hoste **sd. rec.** Hans Oomes, Bev Davidson, Richard Besse **sd. ed.** Bernie Bordeleau **Film 2: Anybody's Son Will Do sc.** Gwynne Dyer **d./cam.** Paul Cowan **co-d./ed.** Judith Merritt **2nd cam. op.** Michael Mahoney **sd. rec.** James McCarthy **loc. man.** Richard Bujold **sd. ed.** Bill Graziadei **Film 3: The Profession of Arms sc.** Gwynne Dyer **d.** Michael Bryans, Tina Viljoen **ed.** Tina Viljoen **add. loc. cam.** Douglas Kiefer, Paul Cowan **cam.** Douglas Kiefer, Paul Cowan, Susan Trow, Kent Nason, Andy Kitzanuk, Savas Kalogeras **sd. rec.** Hans Oomes, Bev Davidson, Art McKay, Yves Gendron, Jacques Drouin, Raymond Marcoux **sd. ed.** John Knight **p.** Michael Bryans, Tina Viljoen **Film 4: The Deadly Game of Nations sc.** Gwynne Dyer **d./cam.** Paul Cowan **ed.** Robert Fortier **2nd cam. op.** Michael Mahoney **sd. rec.** Yves Gendron, Shuki Zuta **add. photog.** Savas Kalogeras **sd. ed.** Jackie Newell **Film 5: Keeping The Old Game Alive./cam./p.** Douglas Kiefer **sc.** Gwynne Dyer, Barbara Sears **ed.** Joan Henson, Richard Todd **sd. rec.** Hans Oomes, Bev Davidson **sd. ed.** Bernie Bordeleau **Film 6: Notes on Nuclear War sc.** Gwynne Dyer **d./ed.** Tina Viljoen **add. loc. d.** Douglas Kiefer, Marrin Canell, Michael Bryans **cam.** Douglas Kiefer, Kent Nason, Jean-Pierre Lachapelle, Don Virgo, Barry Perles **sd. rec.** Hans Oomes, Bev Davidson, Richard Besse **sd. ed.** Bill Graziadei **p.** Tina Viljoen, Michael Bryans **Film 7: Goodbye War d.** Donna Dudinsky, Judith Merritt, Barbara Sears **sc.** Gwynne Dyer, Barbara Sears **add. loc. d.** Tina Viljoen, Douglas Kiefer, Paul Cowan, Michael Bryans **ed.** Judith Merritt **cam.** Douglas Kiefer, Paul Cowan, Kent Nason, Susan Trow, Martin Duckworth **sd. rec.** Hans Oomes, Bev Davidson, James McCarthy, Yves Gendron, Richard Nicol **sd. ed.** Noel Almey **p.** Donna Dudinsky **dist.** National Film Board of Canada **color** 16 mm **running time:** 7 x 56'50"

● Times of the sign: WWI soldiers, during a semiological pause, in the first episode of the seven-part documentary series, *War*



Bob Clark's A Christmas Story

Some years ago, about the time of *Black Christmas* and *Murder By Decree*, it was thought Bob Clark might have gifts as a director of thrillers. Ever since then, however, with *Tribute*, the two *Porky's* films, and now *A Christmas Story*, an adaptation of Jean Shepherd's "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash," it has become apparent that Clark is little more than a talentless hack, with no ability for anything save a connection with the densely corrupted sensibilities of America's teenaged movie audience.

A Christmas Story follows the attempts of young Ralphie (Peter Billingsley) to con his parents, Mother (Melinda Dillon) and The Old Man (Darren McGavin), into giving him his dream Christmas Gift, a Red Ryder model air rifle. He is constantly rebuffed by his mother, his teacher and even the store Santa Claus, all of whom tell him that "You'll shoot your eye out," which is the film's first of many errors. The line, as I recall from my youth, is "You'll shoot someone's eye out," which goes with those two other great maternal adages, "Come down from there or you'll break your arm," and "Put on your rubbers or you'll catch double pneumonia." The BB gun seems to be the one area where parents are not worried about the kids' own health.

Anyway, *A Christmas Story* no doubt is intended to evoke the lovely sort of Christmas films that were popular in the late '30s and early '40s, films like *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *Miracle on 34th Street*, but it fails to approximate any of them, for the simple reason that Clark is a heavy, thudding oaf of a director.

If we remember anything aside from the warm feelings generated by a film like *Meet Me in St. Louis*, it is the extraordinary subtlety of the playing of actors like Judy Garland and Margaret O'Brien. In *A Christmas Story*, the playing couldn't be any broader if the film had been shot in Panavision. Darren McGavin, a generally good actor, plays the role of the splenetic head of the family like a Nebraska insurance salesman auditioning for the roadshow company of Mr. Magoo. Melinda Dillon has some effective moments as Mother, but Peter Billingsley, the pie-face, wide-eyed, bespectacled hero of the piece, seems to have spent his early childhood being dropped on his head.

While this broadness of playing, combined with an extensive use of the distorting powers of the fisheye lens might seem to be a reasonable way to adapt Shepherd, whose literary style consists of the canny exaggeration of petty events into epic comic conflicts, it is not, because the satiric ideal in the cinema is quite different. Playing this broadly defeats the innately realist basis of the cinema - a faithful adaptation of Gulliver's Travels would be almost impossible in any sort of live action film. The exaggeration involved would simply be unbelievable, whereas a literary figure can push things much farther, simply because the mind is more supple when supplying its own images as opposed to the cinema's images.

The one thing the film has going for it is the beautiful production design of Reuben Freed, a loving recreation of the film's early '40s period. When I visited



● Reuben Freed's production design steals the show in *A Christmas Story*

the set while the film was in production at Toronto's Magder Studios, I was immediately struck by the wonderful house that had been constructed in the studio. On a dolly near the front door was a box filled with old appliances - toasters, waffle-irons, Waring mixers. It was evidence of care and taste, and made one tremendously nostalgic. It is unfortunate that the film does not live up to its art direction.

I have never been one to complain about the arrival of American productions in this country, nor about the Americans who work in the industry. Of these, Clark is certainly one, and he has been working here for a decade. But the time has come to say "Yankee go home."

John Harkness ●

A CHRISTMAS STORY* d. Bob Clark p. Rene Dupont and Bob Clark sc. Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown and Bob Clark, based upon the novel *In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash* by Jean Shepherd d.o.p. Reginald H. Morris, C.S.C. p. des. Reuben Freed ed. Stan Cole mus. score Carl Ziffner and Paul Zaza post-p. sup. Ken Heeley-Ray cost. des. Mary E. McLeod assoc. p. Gary Goch cast. Mike Fenton, Jane Feinberg, Marci Liroff NY/Chi. cast. Marcia Shulman, Joanne Pasquito, P.K. Fields (asst.) Tor. cast. Karen Hazzard p. man. Marilyn Stonehouse 1st a.d. Ken Goch cam. op. Harald Ortenburger sp. efx. Martin Malivoire make-up Ken Brooke hair James Brown ward. Lynda Kemp sc. sup. Blanche McDermaid art d. Gavin Mitchell set dec. Mark Freeborn cam. asst. Gordon Lagevin sd. mixer Alan Bernard sd. boom man. Malcolm Rennings asst. ed. Rick Cadger, Neil Grieve sd. sup. Ken Heeley-Ray sd. rec. Joe Grimaldi, David Appleby dialog. ed. Wayne Griffin sd. efx. ed. David Evans, Steven Cole asst. sd. ed. Ann Heeley-Ray, Gudrun Christian, Tom Hanrath mus. eng. Frank Morrone gaffer Chris Holmes key grip Ron Gillham props master J. Tracy Budd prop. man. Ken Clarke const. sup. Bill Harman p. acct. Joanne Jackson p. office co-ord. Suzanne Lore loc. man. Cindy Morton, Michael MacDonald Cleveland co-ord. David Craig 2nd a.d. Don Brough 3rd a.d. Alan Goluboff p. sec. Denise Mulvey stills Shin Sugino unit pub. Janice Kaye children's coach Charles Northcote asst. art d. Carmi Gallo l.p. Melinda Dillon, Darren McGavin, Peter Billingsley, Ian Petrella, Scott Schwartz, R.D. Robb, Tedde Moore, Yano Anaya, Zack Ward, Jeff Gillen, Colin Fox, Paul Hubbard, Les Carlson, Jim Hunter, Patty Johnson, Drew Hovevar, David Svoboda, Dwayne McLean, Helen E. Kaider, John Wong, Johan Sebastian Wong, Fred Lee, Dan Ma, Rocco Bellusci, Tommy Wallace.

* Not a certified Canadian film

George Cosmatos' Of Unknown Origin

Some jobs and situations are best described with the words "tense boredom". Cops, nurses, truckers, and soldiers all spend time scanning their environments for the first signs of trouble they know is coming. The trouble and the fact that they must remain constantly alert combine to create tension. Put yourself at the wheel of a small car on a freeway, late at

night, in a heavy snowfall, without a companion or a radio: tense boredom. Or, worse, subject yourself to a viewing of *Of Unknown Origin*.

The tension of the film comes from the conflict between an executive and a rat that has invaded and is slowly destroying his Manhattan brownstone. Now, a rat may sound like a dandy little tension-generator. It's a traditional foe of humanity and a common object of fear. It's also small and quick enough to hide in all sorts of unlikely places and jump out with fangs a-flashin', which it does, thus providing *Of Unknown Origin* with a number of effective suspense-and-shock sequences. Unfortunately, once it's done that, there's nothing for it but to scuttle back into the darkness and get ready to jump again. This lends a certain sameness, that is to say boredom, to the suspense and, since we know that rat and hero are fated to battle it out at the climax, attempts to vary the suspense by the introduction of a cat and leg-hold traps are spectacularly unsuccessful. At the first sight of each, we know the rat will kill the cat and the trap will chomp the trapper. And events prove us right.

Furthermore, a rat lacks the awe-inspiring qualities of, say, King Kong or Bruce the shark. Director George Cosmatos and cinematographer René Verzier have tried to pump up the rat with the sorts of extreme close-up, partial view and ultra-short shot so effective in *Alien*, but, since we already know what rats look like - small, brown and typically rodentoid - and what they do - gnaw and scuttle - the hype doesn't work. What it does achieve is irritation and a heightened viewer awareness that the rat just doesn't have the star power to carry the movie.

Fortunately for the rat, it doesn't have to. That's Peter Weller's job and he plays Bart Hughes, competently, as an intelligent, warm-hearted, very likeable, supremely balanced individual. Unfortunately, for us, that isn't how the character was intended. Brian Taggart's script (from Chauncey G. Parker's novel, "The Visitor") tells us that Hughes is ambitious, desperate for more money and far more deeply in love with the



● *Of Unknown Origin's* Peter Weller and Shannon Tweed: a film about twits and rats

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.

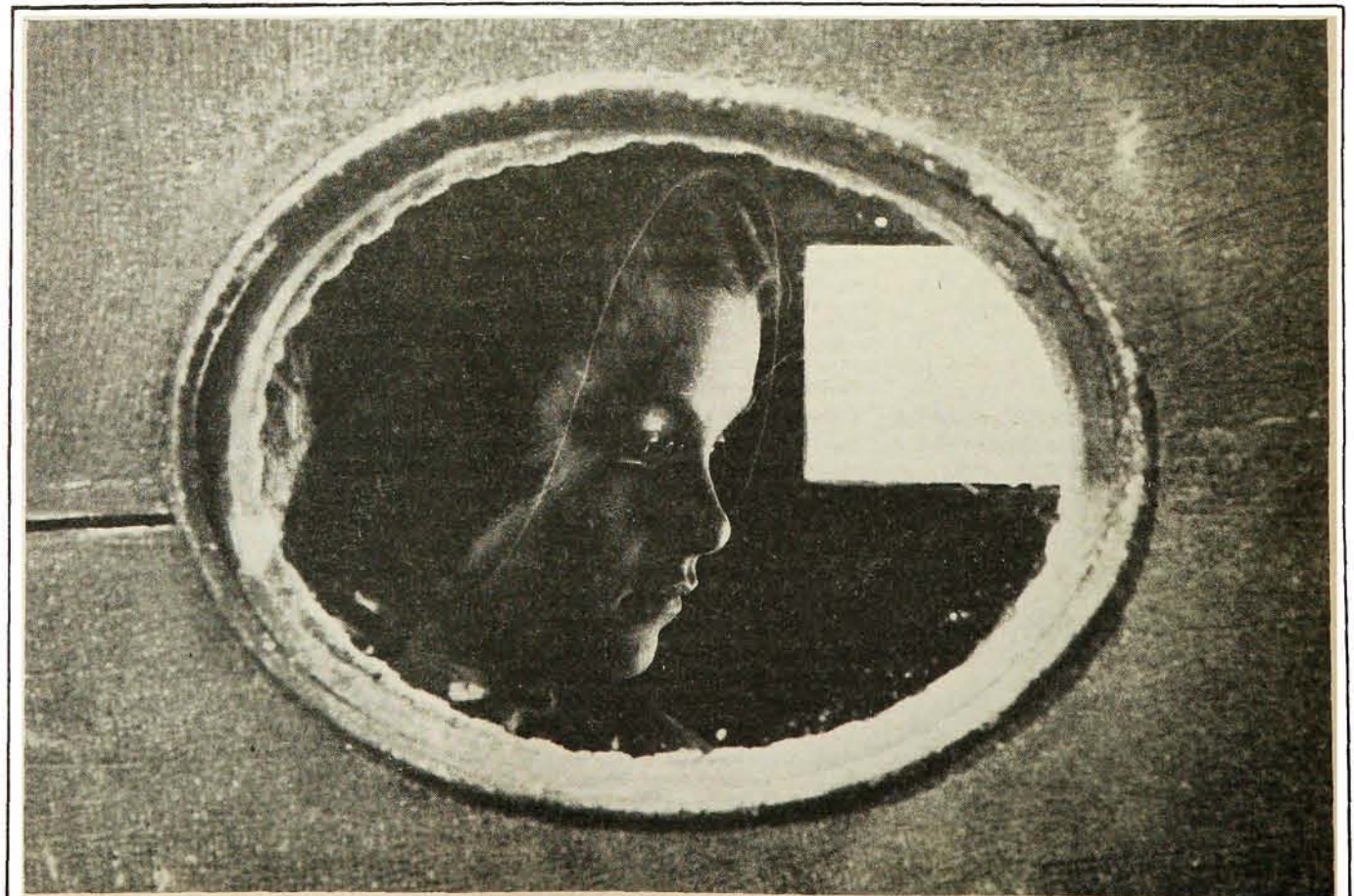
Kamouraska runs about 200 minutes, chopped into four episodes of 50 minutes. Each is "topped and tailed", as it were, with reminders of the previous episode and teasers of the next one. How much better served would the film (and the audience) be if *Kamouraska* had been shown complete, in one evening, 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 ●

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 Ariel, 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 Optical 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. l.p. 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.

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. l.p. Genevieve Bujold, Richard Jordan, Philippe Léotard, Marcel Cuvelier, Suzie Baillargeon.



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

Robert Enrico's

Au nom de tous les miens

For those who lived through the real Holocaust, watching the 1979 television miniseries *Holocaust* was nonetheless traumatic. In once-occupied countries like France, the showing of the series became a subject for furious debate, vociferous denials that the Holocaust had ever taken place and a resurgence of anti-Semitism. Some film producers felt there was a need for more films about the terrible wartime martyrdom of the Jews of Europe, and began casting about for stories. The France-Canada coproduction *Au nom de tous les miens*, which recently had its world premiere in Montreal, is one of these films.

Martin Gray (Majcek Grayewski) is a 58-year-old Warsawian, and a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, the Treblinka death camp, the Polish underground, the Soviet Red Army, and various business endeavors in the U.S. and France. In 1970, while living in the south of France, Gray's wife and family were killed in a forest fire, and Gray, after contemplating suicide, turned instead to writing. His 1971 autobiography, "Au nom de tous les miens" ghostwritten by French novelist and presidential cultural advisor Max Gallo, would sell 35 million copies worldwide and be translated into 19 languages. Gray held onto the film rights for 10 years, until French producers André Djaoui and Jacques-Eric Strauss and Franco-Italian film director Robert Enrico persuaded him they could make a film that would be faithful to the book's message of life.

Au nom de tous les miens thus faithfully Gray's story, beginning with his family's forced move into the Warsaw Ghetto, his adolescent discovery of black-marketeering and his descent into the inferno, in a chronicle of horrors that would not cease until Gray's desertion from the Red Army in its victorious rampage across Germany. While the postwar years would find Gray living a more or less normal life, that normality would be shattered by the second holocaust that consumed his immediate family — his grandmother, parents and younger brothers having died in the first. The film concludes with its beginning, where a shattered Martin Gray (played by Michael York strongly resembling Gray himself) resolves to tell the story of 'those I loved', the film's English title.

The book is a very slick commercial product: a page-turner, propelled along by ceaseless action. The film, while not quite as slick, is nevertheless on a respectable par with television's standards of big-screen fare: lots of sound and fury, tolerable amounts of blood and gore; feats of courage; in short, the Cecil B. De Mille version of history. Only the scenes involving Treblinka (elaborately reconstructed on location in Hungary) transcend these limitations to achieve something closer to the real horror of the events.

Despite competent performances by York (who also plays Gray's father, one of the organizers of the insanely heroic 1944 Warsaw uprising), and Macha Meril (Gray's mother), the weaknesses of *Au nom de tous les miens* are those of the book as well. The young French



● Descent into the Nazi inferno: *Au nom de tous les miens'* Michael York and Macha Meril arriving in the Warsaw Ghetto

actor, 24-year-old Jacques Penot, who plays the young Martin Gray, struggles valiantly to carry a very big part that's almost beyond him. Through no fault of his own, for the biggest mystery of the film (and the book) is that Gray himself is little more than someone who somehow survived through terrible experiences. It's never clear, either, why it was important to survive or how he was able to. He just did and lived to tell the story.

If Gray's message boils down to life at any price, that seems like pretty threadbare optimism. The film appears less concerned with overtly making a statement other than to show, perhaps, that when many people are swept up by cataclysmic events, some do make it through.

Given the origins of the film and Martin Gray's own dedication to the cause of public awareness of what the Holocaust meant, *Au nom de tous les miens* leaves something to be desired. But if you assume a public that knows nothing about what transpired in Europe during the years 1939-1945, then the film is at least a point of departure.

When considered from the vast American know-nothingness, such lingering traces of an educational purpose do nonetheless manage to reflect favorably on Canada's participation in the making of *Au nom de tous les miens*, even if the point of it all remains an American TV sale or Majors deal. Associating Canadian filmmaking, even remotely, with the European tragedy, confers a kind of much-needed dignity on those Canadians involved with the production. Enough, surely, to conclude that the experience can, will and should be repeated.

Still, one of the amusing games that

can be played with Canada's not especially amusing official coproductions (another kind of game played by producers and bureaucrats in tall buildings) is called Guess What's Canadian In This Officially Canadian Film. In this round, the clue is that *Au nom de tous les miens* had 20% Canadian participation, so you shouldn't set your expectations too high.

Time's up. If you answered "Not bloody much", you're right. Of Canada in this two-hour film one finds a three-minute interior sequence set in a Montreal apartment that's actually supposed to be in New York, as well as the odd brief exterior also masquerading as the good, old US of A. Informed sources report that there's hope a little more Canada (where two months of shooting took place) may yet appear on the six-hour miniseries slated to hit the box this spring.

Happily, there's another side to the coin. While there may not be much of Canada on-screen, Canadians behind the camera and behind the desks have done more than their 20% worth to bring this film to a theatre near you. Remarkably sharp eyesight is required to read the minuscule print at the bottom of the made-in-France presskit, but it does inform one that the film's Canadian executive producer was Los Angeles' own Pierre David; that Claude Héroux (the other half of the team that recently brought us *Going Berserk*, an authentic piece of L.A. Canadiana) was the Canadian producer; that Montreal production company Les productions mutuelles was one of the co-producing parties, along with Canadian dollars from the CFDC and Radio-Canada. And now, Canadian independent distributor René Malo has brought the completed

film home, so to speak, to recoup some of the \$2 million Canadian that went into the making of *Au nom de tous les miens*.

Michael Dorland ●

AU NOM DE TOUS LES MIENS d. Robert Enrico **exec. p.** André Djaoui (Fr.), Pierre David (Cda) **p.** Jacques-Eric Strauss (Fr.), Claude Héroux (Cda) **sc.** Robert Enrico, Tony Sheer, based on the book by Martin Gray and Max Gallo **mus. comp.** Maurice Jarre **a.d.** Stéphane Loison (Fr.), Attila Monos (Hungary), John Fretz (Cda), Angelo Pastore (Fr.), Frank Ruszczyński (Cda), Jérôme Enrico (Fr.) **coach** Louise Vincent **cont.** Monique Champagne (Cda) **cam. op.** François Catonne **focus** Bernard Noisette **cam. assts.** Michel Sourieux, Pascal Rabaud, Pascal Ridao, Yvan Brunet (Cda), Jonathan Goodwill (Cda) **sd.** Claude Hazanavicius (Cda), Harrik Maury **sd. stage** Jean Neny, Jacques Thomas-Gerard **ed.** Patricia Neny **sd. ed.** Michèle Neny **assts. sd.** Aurore Camp, Michel Klochendler **dubbing** Daniel Couteau **art d.** Jean-Louis Poveda **p. des.** François de Lucy (Cda) **asst. art d.** Jean-Pierre Lemoine, Tivadar Bertalan (Hung.), Jeffrey Goodman (Cda) **res.** Naciba Sator **props.** Marcel Laude **cost. des.** Corinne Jorry **dressers** Christine Guegan, Michele Richer **stillsmen** Egon Endrenyi (Hung.), Pirooska Mihalka (Cda), Yves Mirkine **make-up** Phueng Maître, Michèle Dion (Cda), Sandor Matrai (Hung.) **hair** Constant Natale (Cda) **key grip** André Atellian, Marc de Ernsted (Cda) **gaffers** Jean-Claude Le Bras, Don Caulfield (Cda), Ferenc Katai (Hung.) **firearms** Bela Gajdos (Hung.) **stunts** Pierre Rosse **assoc. p.** Maurice Genoyer, Denise Di Novi (Cda) **p. man.** Francis Peltier, Peter Ivanov (Hung.), Roger Héroux (Cda) **p. admin.** André Mennecier, Serge Major (Cda) **loc. man.** François Ouimet (Cda), Ildiko Vegvari (Hung.) **p. assts.** Sylvia Montalti, Monik Nantel (Cda) **p. sec.** Thérèse Prigent, Solange Cazier-Charpentier, Patricia Cahill (Cda) **cast. d.** Ginette D'Amico (Cda) **cast. Toronto** Deirdre Bowen (Cda) **Filed on location in** France, Hungary, Canada, and the U.S. **p.c.** Producteurs Associes, TF1 Films Production (Fr.), Les productions mutuelles Ltee (Cda), with the participation of Societe Radio-Canada and the Canadian Film Development Corp. **dist. Europe:** Cinema International Corp. **dist. Québec:** Les Films René Malo Inc. **lp.** Michael York, Jacques Penot, Brigitte Fossey, Macha Meril, Helen Hughes.

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MINI-REVIEWS of short films this month are from The National Film Board of Canada, seen at its Ontario Region Office in Toronto but, of course, available across the country. All were released in 1983.

LAUGHTER IN MY SOUL

An affectionate look at Jacob Maydanyk who, in 1912 at 19, came from the Ukraine to work on the railroad. He was no ordinary immigrant - he expected to get rich and then continue his art studies in Paris. He's now 90 and, in the church goods store he has operated in Winnipeg for over half-a-century, he reminisces about the experiences of the early immigrants, and the creation of his ethnic cartoon character. "Shteeff" was the Archie Bunker of his day, and his "dulia" (thumb between first and second fingers) has for centuries been his countrymen's sign of defiance.

A celebration and remembrance of the Ukrainian heritage, incorporating Jacob Maydanyk's humorous and spirited tales; archival material and some of the original "Shteeff" cartoons; all woven together with lively music.

d./sc. Halya Kuchmij **cam.** Allan Kroeker **sd.** Leon Johnson, Barry Lank **ed.** Wolf Koenig, Rosemarie Shapley **sd. ed.** André Galbrand **narr.** by John Colicos. **col.** 16mm, 27 1/2 mins.

THE AWFUL FATE OF MELPOMENUS JONES

The young curate is timid, truthful and polite. On the first day of a six-week vacation he visits friends. Unable to say goodbye, he partakes of 11 cups of tea. He stays to dinner and, again, tries to depart. Being unable to tell a lie, he admits to his hostess that he hasn't anything else to do. So he stays and stays, feels bound to pay for board and lodging, and then, the end of his vacation rolls around...

Delightful pastel-shaded animation from Gerald Potterton and rhythmic ragtime composed by Eldon Rathburn wittily project an early short story by Stephen Leacock.

d./anim. Gerald Potterton **mus.** Eldon Rathburn **sd. ed.** John Knight **narr.** by Mavor Moore. **col.** 16mm, 8 mins.

THE PLANT

A winsome fantasy of a kind young man who is surprised to find a small plant struggling through the snow in his front garden. He transfers it inside, pots it, and gives it a home. The plant thrives on his loving attention. It reacts favourably to music and sways to the flute, it has its picture taken, and it grows - and grows - and grows. It becomes bolder, turns on the radio, drinks wine, snaps on the lights, and thus begins the big take-over!

Lush animation and the acting talent of Ghyslain Tremblay combine to make a clever and charming *bon-bon*.

d./cam. Thomas Vamos **co-sc./d. anim.** Joyce Borenstein **ed.** Suzanne Allard **mus.** Pierre F. Brault, Michel Robidoux **sd. ed.** Alain Sauvé, Michel Motard. **col.** 16mm, 13 mins.

IT'S JUST BETTER (From Children In Canada series)

"Chores keep you healthy and strong," states Shawn Peter Dwyer. He lives on Cape Breton with his mother and nine of his sisters and brothers - the complete family is 14 strong. All the kids have chores, the privy is outside, and the well is in the garden. There are sheep in the barn, and an old pick-up truck to get them to the ferry for access to groceries and supplies. Shawn's father is an alcoholic, but he visits every month when he can - "I really like him and love him."

An unsentimental, warm little glimpse of a close to the earth way of life. At 10, Shawn sees some of its advantages quite clearly: "There's lots of love in a big family. You've always got people to play with."

d. Beverly Shaffer **cam.** Kent Nason **ed.** Donna Read **mus.** Chris Rawlings **sd. ed.** Jackie Newell **col.** 16mm, 15 mins.

ALoud/BAGATELLE

Earl Birney hooting and tooting through his sound poem: "To Swindon from London by Britrail", with accompanying archive footage of old trains and serene English countryside. Jazzed up with optical techniques and rapid editing, this great little giggle is reminiscent of Reginald Gardiner and his train impressions. But *Night Mail* and Auden it ain't.

d./ed. Donald McWilliams **cam.** James Aquila **piano:** Françoise Gélinas **anim. cam.** Raymond Dumas **loc. sd.** Douglas Berry. **col.** 16mm, 6 mins.

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