

non-democratic contents. To North Americans and European, most forms of political violence equate terrorism. But in Latin American or African countries, political violence is used to gain independence from a violent oppressor. Can the FLQ's call for an independent Quebec be fairly compared to the African National Congress' struggle against apartheid?

Godbout is clear, though, in making one point – terrorism, like most events depend on communications and a mass audience. Journalists, he explains, become key players in its transmission. Without them and a powerful media system, terrorism has less of an impact. Godbout twists this point in one sequence probing two Canadian journalists who witness a destructive Paris bombing. The two are perplexed when Godbout asks if they thought first of their photo assignments or of helping the burning victims.

**En Dernier recours** is an analytical documentary raising a number of subtle issues. In one sequence, former Parti Québécois minister Bernard Landry is asked if he felt threatened during the Denis Lortie assault on Quebec's National Assembly, an incident in which seven people were killed. Landry answers a blunt no. "We are all hostages of terrorism... the arms race is an ongoing form of violence." Godbout makes a clear point of this to highlight American and Soviet militarism.

The film's final sequences cover a Vancouver-based group who have bombed and sabotaged Canadian military-industrial targets. But unlike other forms of terrorism or armed struggles depicted in the film, the Vancouver group raises an interesting distinction – their targets, rather than people or innocent victims, are military installations and weapon sites. As Godbout illustrates, are these anti-war militants really terrorists?

Today, military arms and production have become the world's largest industry (\$800 billion annually). Governments, many of them democratically elected, actively promote and support wars. The American Constitution, itself a much-heralded example of justice, guarantees the right of individuals to bear arms. This mass proliferation of weapons has made violence an intrinsic tool in relations between people and states. Unlike the title of Godbout's film, arms and violence have become more than just a last resort. Rather, as **En Derniers recours** effectively depicts, they've rapidly become an effective first choice for those both in and out of power.

**Robbie Hart** •

## Don Shebib's The Climb

Don Shebib has come a long way since his triumphs with **Goin' Down the Road** and **Between Friends** in the early '70s. Since that time, **Goin' Down the Road** has consistently been listed as one of the 10 great Canadian films, and Shebib carries it around with him rather like Orson Welles used to carry **Citizen Kane**. It has become both a blessing and a curse. A source of pride for those committed to the notion of a distinctive Canadian cinema, **Goin' Down the Road** lingers as a reminder of a great talent gone to waste.

In over a decade, Shebib has directed only four features, the last one being **Running Brave** with Robbie Benson in 1983. Disputes with the producers caused Shebib to withdraw his name from that film, which had only limited theatrical release. Since then, he has been active in TV, mostly directing episodes of **The Edison Twins**, **Night Heat**, and **Danger Bay**. Shebib's struggles with the Canadian industry and the CFDC (now Telefilm) have become as famous as his earlier successes.

**The Climb**, his latest foray into feature filmmaking, is an old-fashioned piece of macho action-drama. It stars Canadian-born Bruce Greenwood from TV's **St. Elsewhere**, with a Canadian supporting cast that includes Kenneth Walsh, Ken Pogue and Tom Butler. However, there is nothing Canadian about **The Climb** subject matter, and in many ways it harks back to the bad old tax shelter days when the deal was more important than the film. It has none of the freshness and vitality of recent English-language Canadian productions, and suffers from a thin, one-dimensional script.

The film is based on the true story of a 1953 German expedition to conquer Nanga Parbat, a treacherous Himalayan peak, described in the film as "the most beautiful mountain in the world". Although not as high as Everest, Nanga Par-

bat became an obsession with the Germans after it claimed the lives of 31 members of a German climbing party in 1932. The script concentrates on Hermann Buhl (Greenwood), a famed mountaineer whose reckless and determined ambition leads him into conflict with the team's bureaucratic leader, Dr. Karl Herrligkoffer (James Hurdle). Whereas Herrligkoffer is climbing for the glory of the German nation, Buhl climbs for himself and the mystical challenge of the mountain.

As they proceed slowly up the icefields, news arrives of Hillary's conquest of Everest. Disappointed and confronted with rebellious porters and dwindling supplies, Herrligkoffer decides to retreat before making it to the top. Buhl disobeys orders to return to base camp and makes the final assault alone, without oxygen or support. After a full day's climb, exhausted and hallucinating, he makes it to the top. Unable to climb down in the dark, he has to spend the night there, keeping himself awake in freezing temperatures. His survival is a credit to his fierce determination, and in the context of the film, miraculous. The ghost of one of the dead climbers helps him down the mountain the next day!

Shot by Richard Leiterman, Shebib's brilliant cinematographer for both **Goin' Down the Road** and **Between Friends**, **The Climb** does manage to communicate some of the mystical allure of mountaineering. The scenery (**The Climb** was filmed on location in Northern Pakistan and the Columbian icefields in Jasper National Park) is glorious and there is plenty of man vs. landscape imagery. Much of it is repetitious, but it is stunning nonetheless.

However, the film is curiously lacking in any real suspense, and the acting is uneven, at best. The oddity of having the Germans speak in accented-English while carrying a German-inscribed plaque to their dead comrades strains the credibility of all the performances.

Shebib's direction is conventional and somewhat stilted. He relies too heavily on the drama of the inert mountains to compensate for the lack of drama in the performances. The conflict set up between Buhl and Dr. Herrligkoffer seems strained and all too predictable. **The Climb** is a film that certainly will have tremendous support from those who

take this sport seriously, but it does very little to enhance the declining reputation of Shebib as a director of merit.

**The Climb** was produced by Wendy Wacko, an emerging, Alberta-based independent who has become an adept deal-maker. The film was originally financed by CTV, the BBC and Telefilm as a 60-minute drama. By stretching things, Shebib, Wacko and Leiterman produced a feature, but the material and direction still suggest a 60-minute drama.

**Wyndham Paul Wise** •

## Marquise Lepage's Marie s'en va-t-en ville

**Marie s'en-va-t-en-ville** sounds like the title of a fable or a folktale. And indeed it is the story of a country innocent who comes to the city.

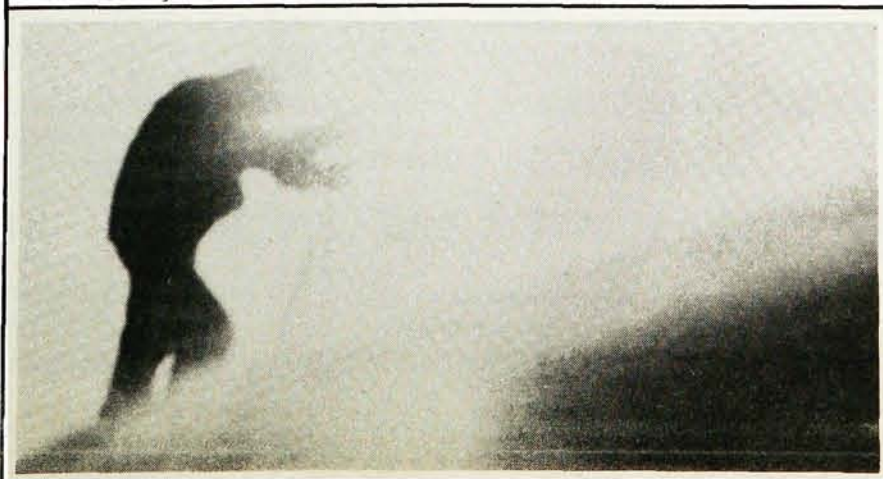
In the folktale, the youngest son or, in this case, daughter leaves home and goes to seek her fortune. After many trials and tribulations she wins out and obtains her heart's desire. In this first feature by Marquise Lepage, we have the story complete with wicked sibling – a brother who sexually harasses our heroine – and a mother who is too busy with the other children to give her youngest adequate love and protection.

In Québécois culture, the country usually represents simpler and more wholesome values than the city. But in this film some sort of reversal of this traditional structure is taking place. Maybe it is because Marie only comes from the suburbs. For, as in the folktale, the innocent finds true love and happiness when she leaves home. There is none of the *misérabilism* of the Québécois films of the '70s here; everything is up-tempo.

In some ways, **Marie s'en-va-t-en-ville** is a gem. It has tight scripting, good acting, nice visuals and nice music. For a first feature, this is quite an achievement. And yet the film disappointed me. Even though I believed in the two main characters, the situation itself seemed incredible and robbed the film as a whole of credibility. Maybe I'm too cynical, but it's hard to believe in the old stereotype of the whore with the heart of gold; would a prostitute (Sarah) really take on the responsibility of caring for a 13-year-old runaway (Marie)?

Once one gets past this incredible situation one can see that the film is dealing with themes that are preoccupying many women filmmakers at present. The relationship between an older and a younger woman is recurrent in many of these films. In **High Tide**, an Australian film by Gillian Armstrong, a nightclub singer comes across the daughter she abandoned 14 years before. Painfully she comes to a realization of the sterility of her present existence and decides to

• Because they are there, mountains cause frostbite and death



**EN DERNIER RECOURS** A Jacques Godbout film with the collaboration of Janine Kriber and Werner Nold d. Jacques Godbout sd. ed. Roger Boire sd. mix. Adrian Croll admin. Joanne Gallant, Monique Lavoie, loc. man. Michael Dandavino d.o.p. Jean-Pierre Lachapelle assisted by Serge Lafortune sd. Richard Besse sc./ research Janine Kriber sc. ed. Werner Nold m. François Dompierre titles Louise Overy cam. Jean-Pierre Lachapelle asst. cam. Serge Lafortune sd. Richard Besse spfx Louid Craig p. Eric Michel. A National Film Board of Canada Production. colour 16mm running time 70 min. 40

take her child back and assume the burden of love and responsibility this entails.

There is a similar theme in this movie. Sarah is also alone, living a sterile, unloved and unloving existence. It is through caring for Marie that she comes to realize this and, at the end of the film, we are led to believe that she will give up this way of life.

The film is about two people in need, meeting, fulfilling each other's needs and furthering each other's growth. Marie is very naive and believes Sarah when she tells her that she works as a waitress. Like the young woman in Léa Pool's *Anne Trister*, the relationship becomes sexual but in this film, in keeping with the lighter tone, the issue of lesbianism is avoided. There are scenes which surely suggest this possibility and Sarah's apartment has a sensuous, womb-like quality with its deep-blue walls, the pink satin sheets and the black shawl embroidered in gold which hangs on the wall. But the film firmly stays away from any sexual innuendos and, instead, concentrates on Marie's playing different sexual roles as she tries on Sarah's make-up, jewelry and clothes. Just the sort of thing a young girl would do.

Tied in with the typical adolescent's



• Frédérique Collin and Geneviève Lenoir in the city

concern with external sexual codes is the prostitute's use of these codes to attract her customers. Much is made of a series of wigs that Sarah wears. She is no longer young and attractive, and when the villain of the piece (a pimp I presume) snatches off her wig, she looks naked and pathetic. It is at this point too that Marie realizes that Sarah is a prostitute. The fantasy fades and Marie must come to terms with the reality, which she does easily enough for such an innocent. I suppose that her previous experiences with Sarah have prepared her for this. But, I find it hard to see it this way.

Prostitution seems to be taken al-

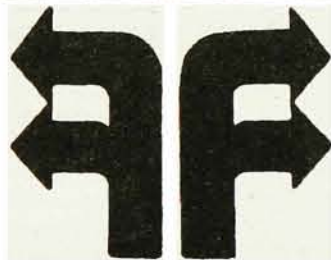
together too lightly in the film. Especially repellent is the scene where Sarah runs out to turn a trick so that she can buy some fancy clothes for Marie. Godard used prostitution as a metaphor for how we must all sell our souls and our bodies to survive in a modern society. Perhaps there is some of this idea here. If so, it is kept at such a trivial, comedic level that the metaphor becomes perverted and loses its tragic intonations.

It is true that Sarah is redeemed through her love and care of the young girl, as in *High Tide*, and I suppose that these films might signal a need in our so-

ciety. Maybe women have come to realize the emptiness of too much freedom. After the return to the mother in feminist theory, perhaps we'll get the return to the daughter. In any case, in both these films (as in *Anne Trister*), the men seem external to the main drama. In *Marie s'en-va-t-en-ville*, all the men we see (the brother, the pimp, the customers) are definitely the enemy. But again here, a potentially tragic subject is trivialized by a light-comedy approach. Perhaps one should see this film as feminist theory diluted for mass consumption. The film is partly funded by Radio-Canada and it will fit nicely into their schedule.

Mary Alemany-Galway •

**MARIE S'EN VA-T-EN VILLE** sc. Marquise Lepage with the collab. of François Bouvier, Pierre Foglia, Micheline Lanctot, Jacques Leduc d. Marquise Lepage consult. Meah Beaudry asst. d. René Pothier, Catherine Didelot cont. Marie La Haye d.o.p. Daniel Jobin asst. Michel La Veaux sd. Marcel Fraser art. d. François Séguin hair/make-up Micheline Trépanier ward Nicole Pelletier prod. man. Roselyne Laverdière lighting Alex Amyot grip Marc De Ernst ed. Yves Chaput sd. ed. Marcel Pothier m. Michel Rivard sup. p. Claude Cartier prod. man. Simone Leroux prod. asst. Marcel Simard, Danielle Charlebois exec. p. François Bouvier. A Productions du lundi matin production dist. Les Films J. A. Lapointe Inc. Int. Sales Films Transit Inc. colour 35 mm running time 80 min. l.p. Frédérique Collin, Geneviève Lenoir, Denis Levasseur, Robert Boivin, Geneviève Filion, Viviane Pacal, Louise Richer.



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