

David Clanfield. *Canadian Film History*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987. 136 pages. \$9.95.

David Clanfield has written the first book of Canadian film history that deals with the subject from its beginning in the late 19th century to its accomplishments in our own time.

This is no mean achievement in a field where few have dared to venture. As it is the only book available on the subject, it is of great interest to anyone involved in the study of Canadian film and should therefore be looked at with a critical eye.

Clanfield seems to address a central question, "How did Canadian film develop as a distinctly national form of cultural expression?"

Hence, the structure of the book – six chapters, tracing the development of Canadian film in a generally chronological order. The last chapter, on animation and experimental film, points to a bias in the author's point-of-view: animated and experimental films are left out of the chronological history because Clanfield sees the main line of development of Canadian film as moving from documentary to fiction.

Thus the first chapter, "From Origins to Grierson: 1896-1939," deals with the rise and fall of the early feature film industry and the ascent of the documentary. The next two chapters deal with the history of documentary film, English-language and French-language respectively, since 1939. The fourth chapter examines the outgrowth of the Québécois fictional film from its roots in the documentary movement. Chapter five then deals with the English-Canadian fictional film since 1939. Here again, the link between fiction and documentary is examined. In addition, Clanfield looks at some English-language filmmakers who have been formed by influences other than the documentary such as those trained in dramatic production at the CBC (Paul Almond, Norman Jewison). However, by this time we have reached page 96 of the book's 128 pages. The main thrust of its historical analysis is already completed.

CBC drama, like the experimental and animated films, are included so as not to be left out, or because they could not be left out. This kind of problem, I suspect, usually develops when one uses the 'organic growth' model for film history. All these bits and pieces just can't be fit in.

It is true that the link between documentary and fiction is at the core of much of the critical writing on Canadian film, as Clanfield himself points out. However, he follows this bias rather than taking a fresh look at Canadian film history. On the whole, the book seems to suffer from a reliance on secondary sources rather than basing itself on original historical or critical

thinking. Sources for most of the critical opinions given are cited. But even when this is not done, the criticisms are somewhat familiar.

The book, however, does answer its central question, "How did Canadian film develop as a distinctly national form of cultural expression?" It does this first by tracing the development from documentary to fictional film but also by following the struggles of Canadian filmmakers with the American domination of the industry and by charting the role that the Canadian government has played. Being the history of a national cinema, the book does try to deal with the interaction of social, political and cultural factors in the making of that cinema. It does this fairly well in some places. But the book as a whole suffers from its length: 128 pages is simply not an adequate length. One could quip that maybe we do not have much of a national cinema to write about, but I think this is not so. Peter Morris's *Embattled Shadows*, which deals with only the very beginnings of Canadian cinema, is twice as long.

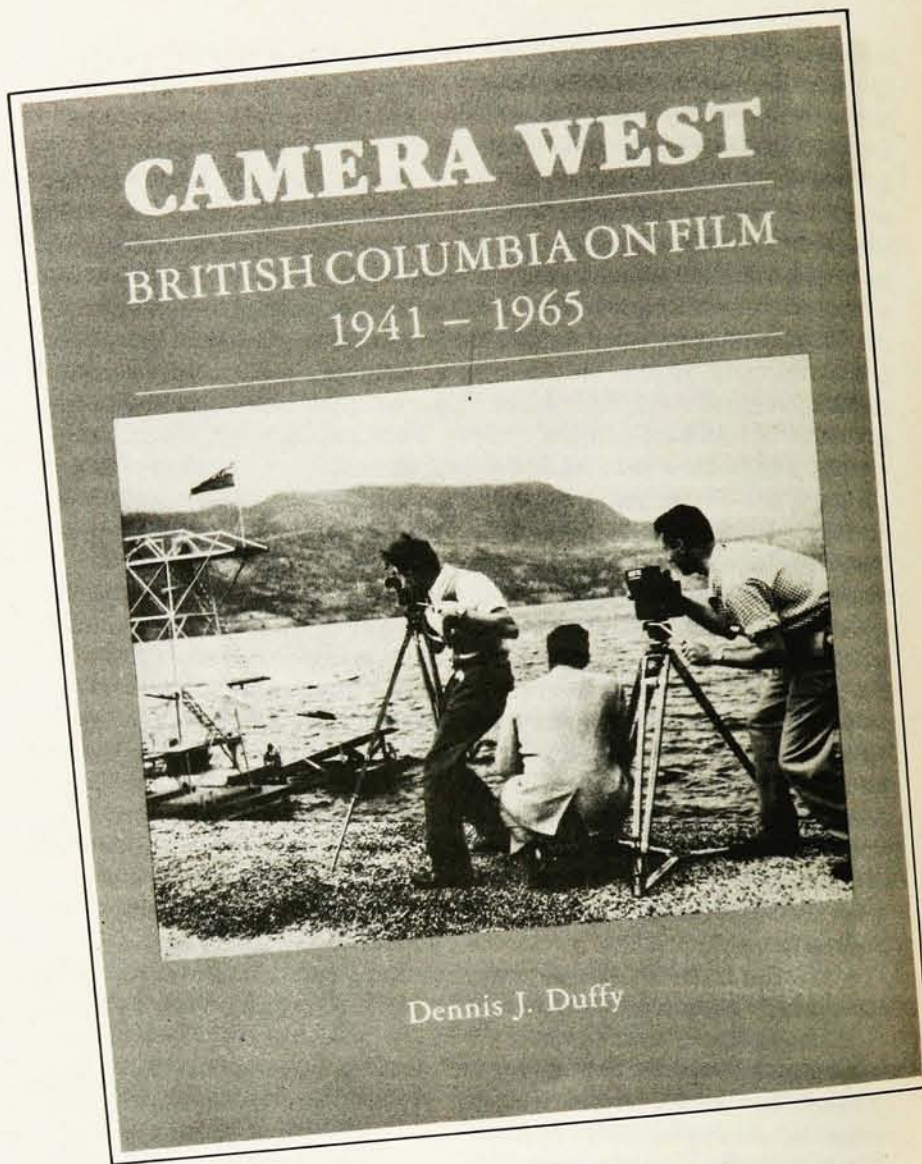
The short length of *Canadian Film History* means that there is little space to explore most areas with enough depth to clarify the interaction of the historical factors involved or to give us a critical understanding of the works of the filmmakers. Although many filmmakers are mentioned, only a few lines of description is usually given for each of the films. On the whole, it is a useful guide to the study of Canadian film history – all the bases are touched. But the real book is still to be written.

Mary Alemany Galway •

Dennis J. Duffy. *Camera West; British Columbia on Film, 1941-1965*. Victoria: Provincial Archives, Sound and Moving Image Division.

Plus ça change... While assembling material for this B. C. edition of *Cinema Canada*, we received a review copy we received a review copy of *Camera West; British Columbia on Film, 1941-1965*. It clearly demonstrates that the challenges faced by filmmakers in the late '80s are not unique to either the region or the time. To wit:

"The first incursion of Hollywood film crews, in the 1920s, was drawn primarily by the varied scenery... In the 1930s they set up a branch plant here and made features of dubious quality, taking advantage of Canada's membership in the British Empire to exploit the British quota restriction on imported films... (it) was revised in 1938 to exclude films made in the Dominions. The immediate result was that there was no



longer any advantage to shooting in Canada, except for the scenery, and the Hollywood studios generally found it simpler to shoot in the U. S. A. anyway."

Substitute the cheap Canadian dollar for the quota system and you'll understand the concern that today's U. S. investment could also disappear into the sunset.

Duffy also documents the now-you-see-it, now-you-don't business of television:

"In 1960 KVOs-TV Bellingham (Washington) established a film unit in Vancouver to produce commercials for its Canadian clients... In 1963 it became Canawest Film Productions, a KVOs subsidiary... Around 1965, the Hanna-Barbera studio in Hollywood contracted Canawest to produce episodes of various cartoon series. (They) included *Abbott and Costello* and *The Beatles* and ultimately required a staff of 90 animators and artists... Canawest closed down in 1977 when the Canadian government's Bill C-58 removed the tax exemption formerly allowed on advertising purchased through American companies."

Camera West reaches back to the work of B. C.'s first locally based commercial cinematographer A. D. 'Cowboy' Kean, "an ex-cowpuncher who

got his start in movies filming the Vancouver Exhibition and the departure of troops for Europe during World War I." It covers the heyday of CBC-TV production including the landmark *Cariboo Country* series (which is now being considered for revival), the struggles of the West Coast NFB offices and the meagre contribution made to filmmaking by private broadcasters. Duffy concludes:

"What is becoming clearer today is the existence of two separate streams of filmmaking in the province: one that might be called the film 'industry'... and a second, burgeoning independent stream."

The book is divided into two sections, the first being the quite readable historic overview. The remainder is an exhaustive filmography detailing all that is known of the 1,082 film projects ever shot in B. C. Duffy has also dug into the still photo archives and found wonderful pictures of early filmmakers at work in the most adverse conditions.

Further information is available from Derek Reimer of the B. C. Provincial Archives at (604) 387-6262.

Mark O'Neill •