

goes far to argue for the validity of the study. Although their introductory essay is shorter than Handling's, it covers the range of Leiterman's work, while presenting a sophisticated discussion of his camera technique. In both their essay and the interview, the authors are highly conscious of Leiterman's interaction with directors such as King, Shebib, Fruet, Markowitz and Wieland. As a result, we get both new information and a new perspective on the production of major films from *A Married Couple* to *The Far Shore*.

In the interview, Leiterman presents himself as a quietly creative professional, as eager to discuss the concepts behind his work as he is to recount his widely varying shoots. Like Shebib, he is impatient with a lack of professionalism in some of his collaborators. Unlike Shebib, he acknowledges the talent he has found and, parenthetically, notes that he was just as happy that Shebib left him alone during the shooting of *Between Friends*.

If there is anything bothersome about the interview, it is Leiterman's conclusion that he would not like to find himself a 50 year old cameraman. The statement is a sad commentary on the lack of appreciation that he has been shown for his consistently superb craftsmanship. An equally sad commentary is the difficulty Reid and Evan-chuck had in compiling the filmography. It is as if no one ever thought it worthwhile to keep records of a cameraman's career.

It may be hoped that future volumes in the CFI's series will expand upon the ingenuity of exploring Canadian cinema through the perspective of figures other than our nascent auteurs. Possibilities that come to mind are: a group study of the Unit B producer/directors (Daly, Koenig, Kroiter, Low); a volume on the Canadian avant-garde; an overview of the Canadian docu-drama; television features; political film, etc. Beyond this, the most important work to be done in English-language film criticism is that of providing access to Quebec cinema. If the CFI series must, for some reason, continue to focus on individuals, the individuals it should be focusing upon are people of the calibre of Lefebvre, Carle and Jutra. An even more useful service would be to begin the process of translating the discussion of cinema in Quebec as found in the first issue of *Découpage* to the present. It would be a formidable undertaking, requiring, no

doubt, several carefully edited volumes. Yet the end product would not only change our understanding of the majority of this nation's films, but would also serve as a model for coming to terms with the problematical unities of the English Canadian, cinematic endeavour.

Seth Feldman

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Embattled Shadows

by Peter Morris

Toronto: McGill-Queen's Press, 1978,
352 pages, cloth \$21.95, paper \$10.95.

Long overdue but well worth the wait, English Canada at last has its own history of filmmaking to 1939. Peter Morris' *Embattled Shadows* is a pioneering work in its field and will be useful to both Canadian film students and the general reader. The historical questions it raises also create a necessary perspective on the debate over the preservation and expansion of the Canadian film industry.

Embattled Shadows ambitiously tries to cover nearly a half-century of struggle, success, and failure in Canadian film. Thankfully, it does not fall back upon cheap sentimentality nor does it appeal to xenophobic nationalism to explain struggle and failure. Not surprisingly, we discover that success in film, infrequent as it was, seemed to be linked to the Canadian natural environment and its decisive effect on the individual. In the early years, this naturalism seemed to offer the world its window on Canada. The young nation, however, was wrestling with a British colonial tradition which militated against a specific Canadian identity. And simultaneous attempt to digest a population bulge of some two million immigrants between 1900 and 1914 did little to instill a sense of national place or self.

The fundamental question which Morris probes throughout is why Canada never centralized a monopolistic structure in its film industry. The answer, he implies, lies probably more in what Canada did *not* have than in what it did have. It lacked home markets and dense clusters of population. Also, in

the absence of a theatrical tradition, it failed to keep sufficient talent in Canada to make a viable industry. Then, significantly, there were problems in attracting sufficient capital to finance production. Add the final burden of inaccessibility to foreign, i.e., American, markets and one is left with a conclusion Morris reluctantly describes as, "a pretty cogent case for not attempting production in the first place."

Morris traces the history of Canadian film by relying heavily upon two trade publications, *Canadian Moving Picture Digest* and *Moving Picture Worlds*. They are at once the strength and the weakness of the book, for while they provide for a chronological narrative, they may have prevented the author from opening the structure to allow for a wider interpretation. For example, one wishes for a more substantial analysis of Canadian propaganda films in the First World War. The role of Max Aitken (later Lord Beaverbrook) on behalf of the Canadian Government would have been a fascinating story, especially his connection with propaganda newsreels. Such newsreels were typified by a combatant's style that encouraged a heavy-handed and racist characterization of the enemy along with battle sequences that were staged to glorify war.

Even a comment on Canada's *Victory Loan 1918*, a film tag available for viewing from the National Film Archives, could have led to a more detailed discussion of the war propaganda film during this century's first world war. (The film tag shows a Canadian nurse dying a heroic death as her hospital is destroyed "under the merciless bombs of the Hun.") Thus, the author might have argued that the 1919 film treatment of the Red Scare in Canada, *The Great Shadow*, fits into a specific tradition of film propaganda generated by the Great War. Its abuse of communion and its vilification of Bolsheviks, in general, nodect a natural successor to the Hun-hating propaganda which preceded it.

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In his treatment of why Canadian production failed to perpetuate itself, Morris demonstrates that Canada's production in the twenties faltered because of a tendency of promoters to "skim the cream" off of the production companies. Such unscrupulous practices by individuals with get-rich-quick mentalities played no small role in discouraging Canadian investment. To this dismal picture was added the spectre of Hollywood's giants, well along in their bid for complete vertical integration, squeezing out the independents, with only 75 percent of all films at this time reaching the screen.

The author wonders why the Canadian Government failed to become involved in private film production, especially since they were anxious to promote trade and tourism in their official films. Was it, he asks, Government's refusal to support the existence of anything outside their own bureaucratic circles or a sense that there was already sufficient private enterprise in the film industry which determined their policy? There is a simple historical explanation which may answer his question. Traditionally, Canadian Governments have not considered it legitimate to compete with private capital or to show profits, but to use state enterprise to facilitate the investment of further capital, often foreign, in the private sphere. Thus, it was not proper for Government to do more than to provide moral encouragement for private film production. Perhaps reluctant Canadian capitalists, having learned a costly lesson at the hands of unprincipled promoters, cannot be blamed for avoiding high risk enterprise like commercial film.

Morris quotes part of a revealing letter from Ray Peck of the Government Motion Picture Bureau which explains why the Government encouraged establishment of a Hollywood branch plant here in the thirties. A brief explanation of the Paramount/Famous Players stock manipulation deal of the early thirties would have sharpened the overall focus of this section, along with a description of blind, block and advance booking abuses. Still, the evidence remains indisputable: Canada preferred to continue its long-established role as a colonial pawn.

This is not to understate how mediocrity dogged Canadian film production in the interwar year. Morris touches an important point when discussing Canadian encouragement of a derivative Hollywood style; the quality of the films offered little that would earn them the chance for distribution or acclaim. One Canada began seeing itself as it was, rather than as a carbon copy of America, something began to jell. *Nanook of the North*, *The Silent Enemy* and *The Viking* revealed a self image which made Canadians curious about their relationship to their environment and survival. Thus the author correctly identifies the documentary and the documentary-drama as the "quintessential Canadian film form." His claim, however, that Robert Flaherty's approach seems more relevant to Canadian film than John Grierson's direct influence on Canadian documentary is most contentious. While he notes that Flaherty portrayed primitive traditions, and the former majesty and character of peoples whose lives were being changed by the intrusion of modern civilization, he seems to ignore the fact that it was a way of life which no longer existed. The romantic exotica of Flaherty's approach had little relevance to Grierson's indelible documentary stamp and his ability to interpret workaday Canada, its shirtsleeves rolled up, to itself and to the world. Such was the British tradition Grierson would transplant in structuring the National Film Board of Canada. But that story begins in 1939 where this book ends.

Significantly, Morris has broken ground in a rich new area of study and has provided the framework from which to build an understanding of this important aspect of Canadian social history.

Embattled Shadows was preceded by the ever popular NFB/CBC production, *Dreamland*. The book puts much needed flesh on the skeleton of that film. Its concluding assertion that it is to the documentary tradition that the Canadian film industry must look in the future seems fair enough. Few could deny that it has been primarily through documentary that Canadians have discovered and held steady the mirror they use to define themselves.

Gary Evans

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