Bruce Elder, *Lamentations*, and beyond

An interview
by Michael Dorland

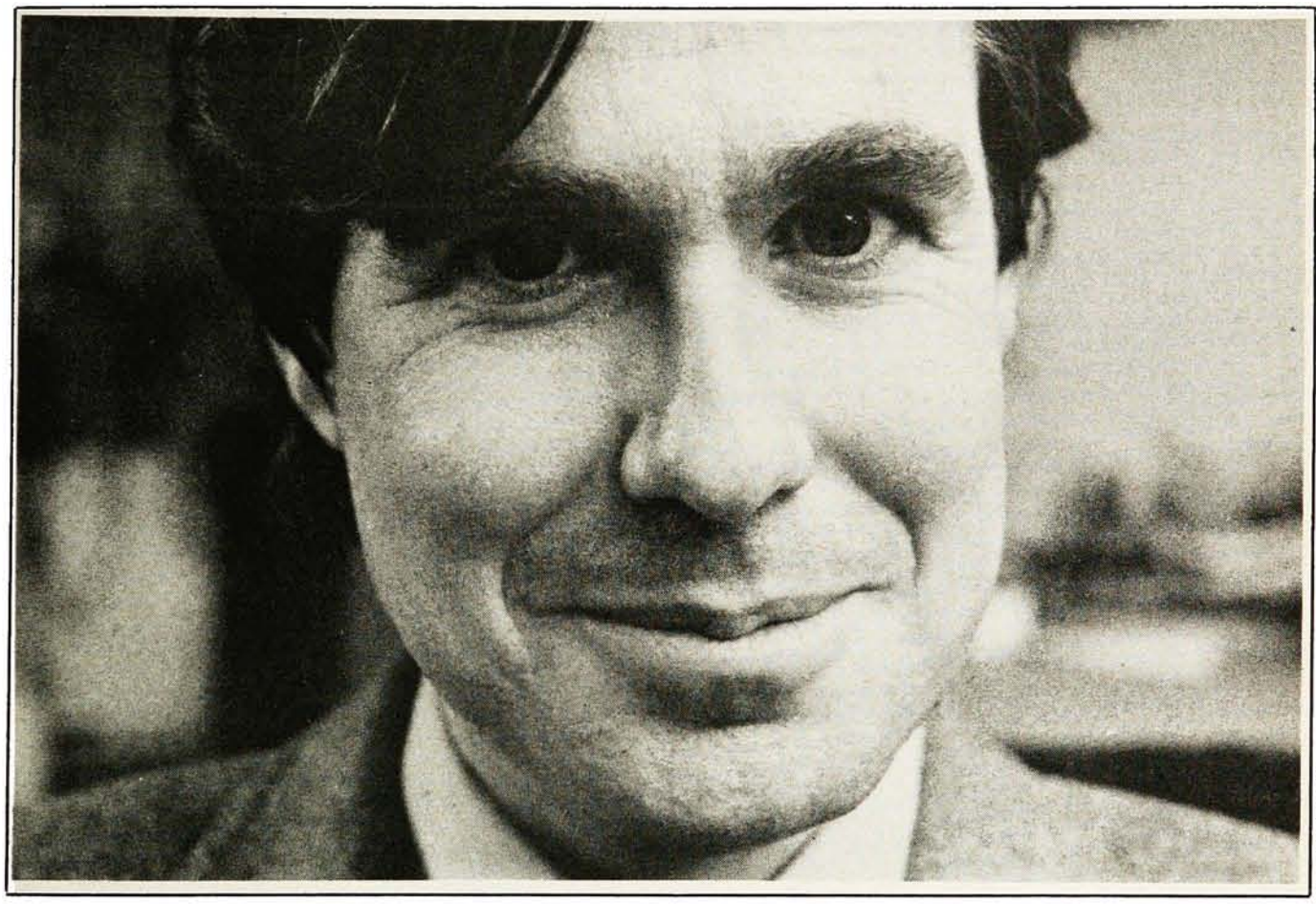


photo: Jim Smith

At the beginning of October, the Art Gallery of Ontario held a major homage to one of Canada's outstanding film artists, with a retrospective of the dozen film-works of R. Bruce Elder that concluded with the Canadian premiere of Elder's just completed eight-hour film-poem Lamentations.
Bruce Elder occupies a rather unique place in Canadian filmmaking by the breadth of totalization he aspires to. Both philosopher and filmmaker, Elder's films, particularly his more recent, combine in a distinctively Canadian synthesis the cosmic emotionality of a Stan Brakhage with the educative didacticism of a Jean-Luc Godard who might have studied Heidegger instead of Mao Tsetung. If Elder's films can be seen as sweeping attempts to save (Western) culture from itself, his writings (see, for example, Cinema Canada Nos. 120-121) are distinguished by their determination to localize Canadian experimental filmmaking within specifically Canadian artistic traditions.
In a country whose approaches to filmmaking are so overwhelmingly influenced by non-Canadian practices and traditions, Elder offers a necessary reminder that the truly universal does not bypass Canada, but can establish a home here as well as anywhere.
The following interview, with Associate Editor Michael Dorland, took place in Toronto.

Cinema Canada: *You and Michael Snow are the only Canadian film artists who have had retrospectives of this kind at the Art Gallery of Ontario?*
Bruce Elder: And Jean Pierre Lefebvre. Some years back, there was a program of his works when Peter Harcourt published his book on Jean Pierre.

Cinema Canada: *I meant in the experimental domain. Does that indicate to you that Canadian experimental film is finally getting something of the recognition that you, at any rate, feel it should be getting?*
Bruce Elder: In specialized screening centers outside of Canada, I think it's had a good reception already. I've taken programs of experimental films to Germany; I've arranged screenings of the films in several centers in the U.S.: in Los Angeles, in New York, and in Buffalo. I've been present at screenings of Canadian experimental films in London, and, I think, generally film artists here are recognized abroad as world-quality experimental filmmakers. Of course, we've had three, four Canadian experimental filmmakers that have received international recognition of the highest order – Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland, Jack Chambers, and Dave Rimmer are all recognized as among leading figures in the avant-garde cinema; maybe I am too. And that's not bad for a country whose population is something like 25 million. I think at home, though, the situation is dismal, just dismal.

Cinema Canada: *Is the recognition given Snow, Wieland etc., given as* Canadian *experimental filmmakers or as continuations of European or American traditions?*
Bruce Elder: No, the three or four that I've mentioned are generally thought to be American artists. Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland and David Rimmer all established their reputations working in New York. Only Jack Chambers has been recognized as a filmmaker whose works are distinctively Canadian, though I've wanted to argue that one can perceive in the works of all those people features that set their work apart. One recognizes that all of those people are working on issues that are rather outside of the mainstream of American avant-garde filmmaking, I think, and this marks their work as distinctively Canadian. I don't think that difference has been really perceived in the United States.

Cinema Canada: *Marginality as distinctively Canadian?*
Bruce Elder: I think they wanted to eliminate the differences, to level them out, and to make the works appear as American-type films. Snow's works are generally classified as structural films; he's classified as belonging to a group of filmmakers that include George Landon, Owen Land, Ernie Gehr, Hollis Frampton, Berry Gerson, and I think that the issues that the Americans – Gerson, Frampton, Landon – are dealing with are significantly different from those that Snow works with. And the issues that Snow has dealt with are issues that, I think, connect him to a tradition in Canadian art, an interest in landscape painting, and yet this difference hasn't been perceived. They've made him appear as an American filmmaker.

Cinema Canada: *Bringing it back home, that recognition is not the case here?*
Bruce Elder: I think that none of these people has had the acclaim in Canada that he or she deserves, and reputations in Canadian experimental filmmaking have mostly had to be established in the United States. It's one of the reasons why people want to be acknowledged in the United States – it means that at last they will be recognized in Canada. I don't think it's surprising that Chambers is the filmmaker, the Canadian experimental filmmaker who's been, I think, most seriously neglected, given the quality of his work. It's only been in the last few years that his films have been shown at all and this occurred only when a number of people in the United States were introduced to his films and took them up as a kind of cause. Stan Brakhage visited Toronto in '74-'75 and he asked me what Canadian films he should look at. I said: "You have to see *Hart of London*, you'll love it. It's a film that shares many features with your work" – the interest in the cycle of life and death, the interest in light, the kinds of printing techniques that film uses, are all reminiscent of Brakhage's own work though it's stamped with Chambers' individuality and with other features that make him recognizably Canadian. Anyway, Brakhage did take a look at the *Hart of London* and decided it was one of the greatest experimental films ever made. He took it around to programmers in the United States, wrote program notes for the San Francisco Festival, had it acclaimed in many places and has turned a few people onto the film and since then it's been recognized. But I can remember an art-critic friend telling me about this film, just two, three, four years after it was finished, and I went to a screening of the film and people were just outraged. They thought it was just a shocking, horrifying, dreadful film. It's only been since the Americans have recognized Chambers' importance that people here have taken him up.

Cinema Canada: *How do you account for the non-recognition in Canada, and how do you relate that to equivalent phenomena in, say, poetry, or Canadian culture in general?*
Bruce Elder: I think that one problem that experimental film has confronted is the problem of perception that results from what's believed to be a cultural imperative for Canada: that we develop an indigenous feature-film industry. It's believed that it's in the works of popular culture that our identity will be established, that our coherence as a nation will be founded and "high art" can wait. And, of course, experimental film is seen among the film community as paradigmatically "high art." Secondly, I think there's a cultural trait in Canada of timidity and experimental film is seen as vanguard, off-the-wall, crazy, and our cultural timidity works against the reception of experimental film as well.

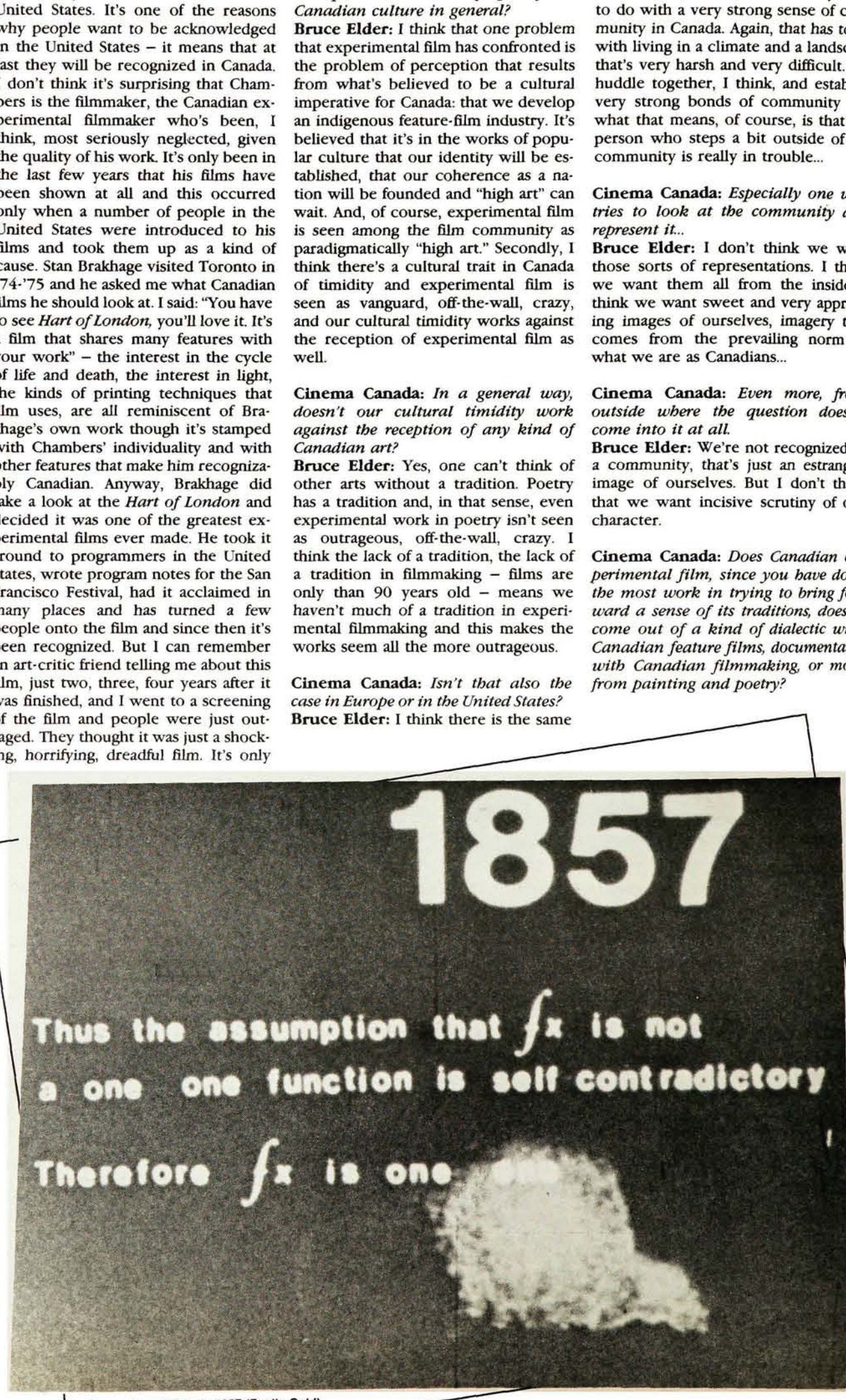
Cinema Canada: *In a general way, doesn't our cultural timidity work against the reception of any kind of Canadian art?*
Bruce Elder: Yes, one can't think of other arts without a tradition. Poetry has a tradition and, in that sense, even experimental work in poetry isn't seen as outrageous, off-the-wall, crazy. I think the lack of a tradition, the lack of a tradition in filmmaking – films are only than 90 years old – means we haven't much of a tradition in experimental filmmaking and this makes the works seem all the more outrageous.

Cinema Canada: *Isn't that also the case in Europe or in the United States?*
Bruce Elder: I think there is the same cultural timidity. I think that we are an extraordinarily timid nation – it's one of our outstanding feature as a culture. One sees the evidences of this timidity everywhere: The acute embarassement that parents so often demonstrate about minor childish misbehaviour in restaurants or whatever. I think actually it has to do with a very strong sense of community in Canada. Again, that has to do with living in a climate and a landscape that's very harsh and very difficult. We huddle together, I think, and establish very strong bonds of community and what that means, of course, is that the person who steps a bit outside of the community is really in trouble...

Cinema Canada: *Especially one who tries to look at the community and represent it...*
Bruce Elder: I don't think we want those sorts of representations. I think we want them all from the inside. I think we want sweet and very approving images of ourselves, imagery that comes from the prevailing norm of what we are as Canadians...

Cinema Canada: *Even more, from outside where the question doesn't come into it at all.*
Bruce Elder: We're not recognized as a community, that's just an estranged image of ourselves. But I don't think that we want incisive scrutiny of our character.

Cinema Canada: *Does Canadian experimental film, since you have done the most work in trying to bring forward a sense of its traditions, does it come out of a kind of dialectic with Canadian feature films, documentary, with Canadian filmmaking, or more from painting and poetry?*



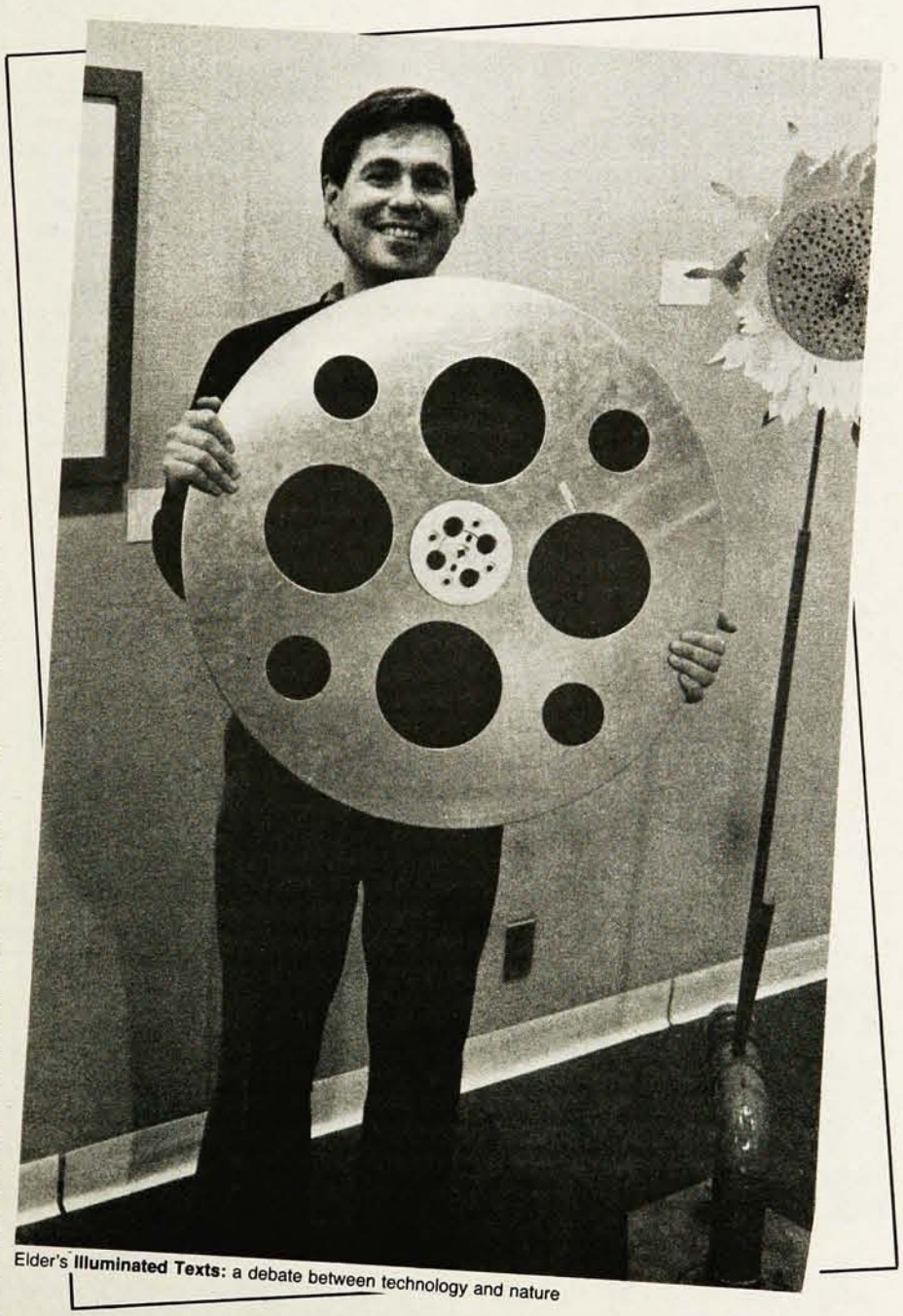
• Types of visual form in **1857 (Fool's Gold)**

Bruce Elder: I don't know that it's an either/or question. I think that one could find roots for features, some of our best feature and documentary and experimental fimmaking, in previous traditions of Canadian art. I think one way this arises is in the interest that Canadian filmmakers have shown in the nature of photographic representation. I would argue that, for example, the presence, in the body of work that has been produced by the National Film Board, of several films that make use of still photographs or that offer themselves as studies in photographic image-making, is no accident whatsoever. There are cultural reasons for that presence. I would argue that the frequently documental character of some of our feature filmmaking is, again, no accident. That derives from an interest in the nature of photographic representation and the reason why we are interested in photographic representation so very much has to do with the photograph's ability to answer, or to provide an indication of the way that certain questions about the relationship of consciousness and nature might be answered. And why these question present themselves so forcefully in the context of Canadian culture is something that's worth thinking of. I'd argue that we live in a climate in which the landscape, the indifference of nature to man is utterly obvious, and if nature is indifferent to man, we might also say, in a way, other than man, other than consciousness, then questions arise. Well, how can a mind know matter, how can a mind know nature if nature is so utterly alien to man and, in fact, hostile to man? And a photograph, I think, gives some indication of how this can be.

Cinema Canada: *The photograph is an answer to the question?*
Bruce Elder: It provides an indication of how those questions might be answered. A photograph is, on one hand, a product of nature, it's made by natural forces. You can, of course, simply set up your machinery and walk away and have photographs taken from now until you're blue in the face; nature will make the photographs for you. Yet, on the other hand, we know it's the product of the mind, of a vision, so it seems, in that way, to reconcile consciousness and Nature. Its structures are those of the outside world, the external world, the natural world, and yet its manner of presenting itself, I think, resembles the way that images appear in consciousness also. And so, it appears to have the capacity to reconcile consciousness, or to give an indication of how questions about how consciousness and nature can be reconciled might be answered.

Cinema Canada: *Is this particular to the still photograph? Is it the same with moving images?*
Bruce Elder: No, I think that one of the things that Canadian film artists have been interested in is the photographic basis of film. It might seem obvious that all film is based in photography. You sometimes refer to the cinematographer of the film as the director of photography. It's a photographic medium. Yet, in other countries, among experimental film artists, there was always been a strong movement to repudiate the photographic basis of the medium.

Cinema Canada: *But coming from stronger traditions in painting.*
Bruce Elder: In painting and a stronger modernist conviction – a belief that the nature of the medium must dictate these forms and structures of the works that are realized in that medium. Many of these artists have claimed, in fact, that a camera is an accidental feature of a film, that basically film is a projection of coloured light, that is modulated by frames passing by the light and at 24 frames a second, establishing a flicker. So there's been a number coloured flicker films; there have been hand-drawn films; there've been black-and-white flicker films dealing with the materialist base of the medium itself. Other artists have wanted to push film towards abstraction so it would more closely approach the conditions of a painting or of music. And there was never, in the history of the Canadian avant-garde, I think, any strong push in either of those directions. Always, the fundamentally photographic nature of the medium was affirmed, and, I think, that harks back to a tradition in Canadian painting itself, in which photography has been accepted, approved of, and painters have often tried to create paintings which take on some of the positive features of a photograph.



Elder's **Illuminated Texts:** a debate between technology and nature

Cinema Canada: *The showing of something, of a landscape.*
Bruce Elder: Exactly, the showing of something, and the feeling that what it is showing somehow mingles both, has both a subjective and an objective pole, that it reconciles both mind and nature; that it is a vision of a landscape, for example. It has a subjective and an objective pole. We know, for example, that during the period in which American art went abstract, Jack Chambers, working in London, Ontario, was painting from photographs and discovering ways to incorporate more and more of the features of a photograph into a painting. And finally, in one phase of his career, Chambers turned to film, to working with a camera, working in a photographically-based medium and he tells us it was his interest in photography, partly, that led him into film. It was also an interest in time that he couldn't work through in the paintings that he was doing. Even if you divide the canvas, even if you try incorporating several moments within a single canvas, still there is a sense in which a film can deal with time in a way painting cannot. But at least one of the reasons he was interested in film is that it was, he tells us, a photographically based medium.

Cinema Canada: *How long has it been since you yourself began?*
Bruce Elder: Not that long, a decade, I guess.

Cinema Canada: *Have you seen the situation of the Canadian experimental filmmaker change in that decade?*
Bruce Elder: I think there are more people now making experimental films than there were a decade ago, a decade-and-a-half ago when I began meeting experimental filmmakers, talking with them, writing about their work. But I think a good part of the production is much less serious, much less rigourous, much more frivolous that I've ever known it. Trendy, hip, silly... worthless. I don't say this of everybody, there are people doing real fine work... Richard Kerr and Phillip Hoffmann and Rick Hancox and Henry Jesionka do nice work; Barbara Sternberg; outside Toronto, Chris Gallagher is doing very fine work. It's not everyone, but there's such a large number of people who are just doing silly, trendy things.

Cinema Canada: *Does that frivolity have something to do with the general non-recognition?*
Bruce Elder: I wish it had something to do with a joyous affirmation but it doesn't. It's just a desire to be fashionable and to be a little bit outrageous. You know, there have been some interesting kinds of boiled-down Baudelairian cinema. Its roots are in the American underground in the early, 60s, and wonderful stuff, you know. Work like *Star-Spangled To Death,* or *Little Stabs At Happiness* or *Flaming Creatures* – the really outrageous, decadent, Baudelairian stuff. But unfortunately the people who are making these films today strike me as people from the suburbs who've come down to tour the downtown, the central core of big-town Toronto on week-ends and, let's say, their Baudelairian convictions are a little thin.

Cinema Canada: *So it's not coming out of any increased awareness of specifically Canadian traditions?*
Bruce Elder: All this stuff has very little to do with what I would argue are the central traditions of Canadian experimental filmmaking and it's one of the reasons why, I think, the work is essentially rootless and why it isn't going to be very strong and hearty and why it won't flourish. My regret is that it drains away so much of the resources for this kind of film. It's scandalous the kind of resources these people have received. I find, for example, in the work of Richard Kerr, or especially Phil Hoffmann, the kind of themes that I've been talking about are very much in evidence and their work is strong work. Phil Hoffmann's work is very much work about what it is to take a picture of some incident, of what happens to the relationship between the camera and the subject; it's very much concerned with the nature of photography, and with questions of time that one would expect people who are interested in photography to deal with. I mean a photograph is always from the past and one of his films is about trying to go back to the Beat period and resurrect it, so he can turn back to a photograph and resurrect the past, in a sense, and what he finds out, of course, is that past is unrecoverable.

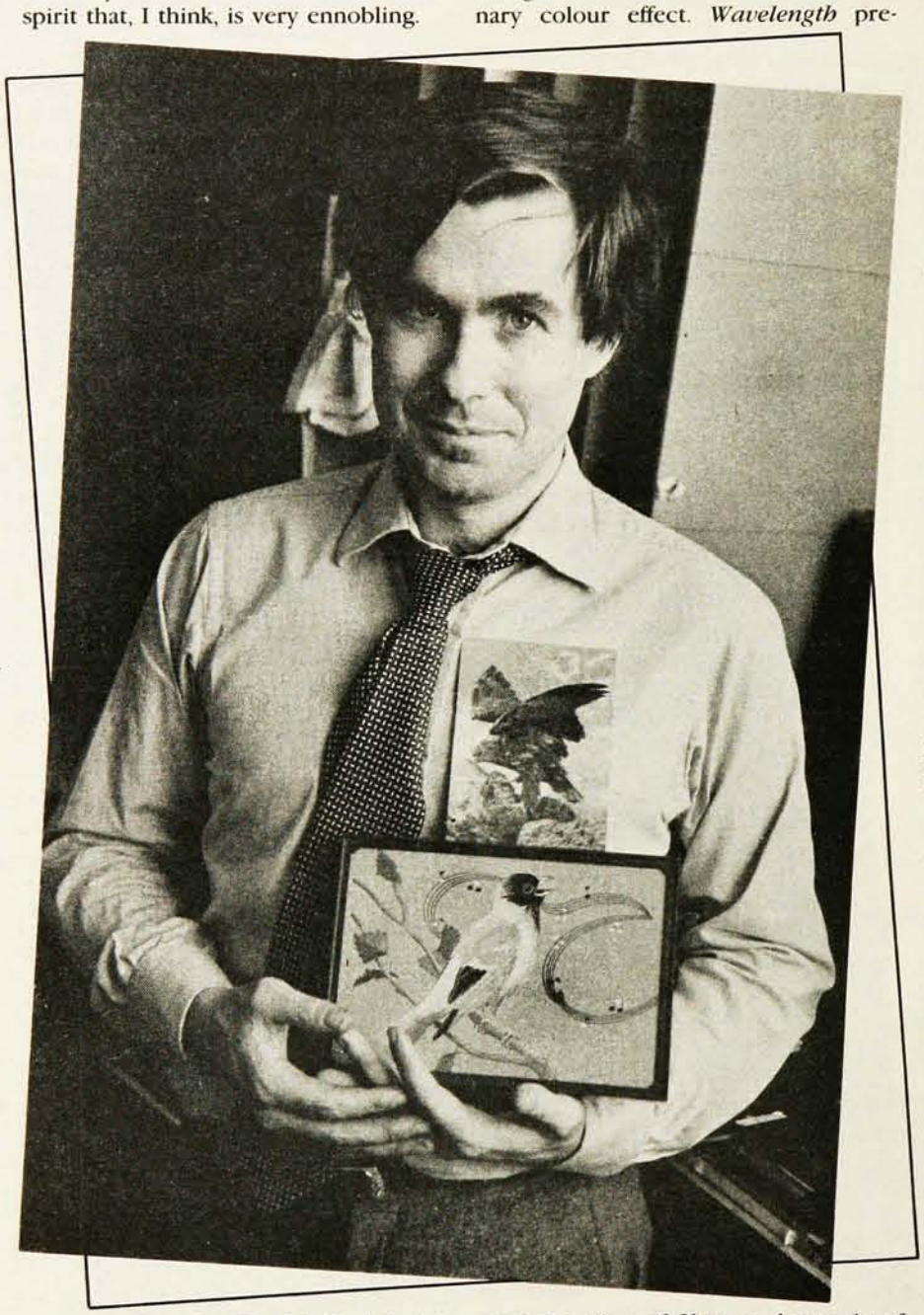
Cinema Canada: *Does that come from operating with an awareness of the traditions of Canadian experimental film?*
Bruce Elder: I think if you look at Jesionka's film, *Resurrected Fields,* what you see is, in some ways, an anthology of imagery from other Canadian experimental filmmakers, that indicates that kind of awareness. I would say that all of those people are aware of the work that's been done before. Kerr programs Canadian experimental film, Hoffmann teaches.

Cinema Canada: *Does a retrospective such as the one at AGO serve as an exposure to those traditions such as they pass through your work?*
Bruce Elder: I certainly hope that. What I hope for, I think, won't be realized; what, of course, one hopes is that people recognize that these are works that couldn't have been done anywhere but in Canada and fundamentally they are very, very traditional. I don't see myself as a very experimental filmmaker, I see myself as a real classicist, but I don't think that we are received that way at all; we're seen as outrageous and kooky. Possibly they are pleasurable, but the fact that these are works that are grounded in a long tradition and only have meaning within that tradition, is not something that will be recognized. Though it's true, it's real true.

Cinema Canada: *What brought you to film? To the extent that one is aware of that, was there some overriding influence that made you realize that's what I want to do, that's the kind of expression I want to pursue?*
Bruce Elder: I didn't develop an interest in cinema early, I had no interest in cinema till I want to university – and there I was caught up in the excitement of the '60s and helped program arts events at the university that I attended, McMaster University, arranging readings by poets, performances by musical groups, that sort of thing. We had what we called an arts festival and one of the ways we made money was to invite up underground movies. These were among the first screenings these films had in Canada. This took place before even the famous Sin City presentation of American avant-garde films in 1966, I suppose, '66 or '67 before than even. We knew with titles like *Pussy On A Hot Tin Roof,* and *Sins of the Fleshopoids* and *Hold Me While I'm Naked* and so on, so that we could sell out the houses, make a certain amount of money, and that money could go to pay poets, musical groups and whatever. And, of course, I went over to see the films we programmed and I thought they were extremely interesting, just very, very interesting films. But then too I saw the works of Godard around this time and one of the things that Godard convinced me of was that cinema could be a mode of philosophical discourse, that it wasn't just a medium of popular entertainment, but it could embody fairly serious thinking about fairly deep issues.

Cinema Canada: *Were these underground films* that, *were they serious?*
Bruce Elder: They were caught up in a movement towards, let's say, spiritual liberation movements, sexual liberation movements, personal liberation, liberations from the excess repressions of our society, free-speech movements – there was a real political thrust to that kind of filmmaking, not political in the sense of trying to establish a different government in some sea of power, but rather to, you know, kind of, I would say, spiritual liberation...

Cinema Canada: *The liberation of everyday life.*
Bruce Elder: Precisely – capture the joy of the body and the spirit, and chucking off excess repression. These were commonplace ideas in the '60s, associated with taking drugs. But they certainly did have a vision of man's spirit that, I think, is very ennobling.



Cinema Canada: *The kind of joyfulness of Henry Miller or somebody like that.*
Bruce Elder: Absolutely, that kind of affirmation of the body/self. And then, I saw the work of Stan Brakhage and that was, for me as for many people, an absolute turning point.

Cinema Canada: *Was what after Godard?*
Bruce Elder: Just after Godard. I didn't see Brakhage till, I suppose, around 1970 or so... And that was just another world that opened up then. Brakhage, I think, presented us with the most incisive surveys of consciousness in the entire history of Western art. Seriously, I believe that.

Cinema Canada: *What was the first Canadian influence?*
Bruce Elder: I saw *Wavelength* not long after it came out in 1968-69, I guess. I can't forget that first showing: people were shouting and screaming and yelling: take that thing off the screen, this is horrible, change the shot, enough, enough, it's horrible.

Cinema Canada: *Where was this?*
Bruce Elder: This was at McMaster University too, and I thought that it was just an absolutely remarkable film. And, of course, the first things that I thought about that film had to do with the way it was so very much involved with being in time and with the extraordinary colour effect. *Wavelength* presented a view of films as the study of being in time and light. It wasn't until I had seen it many more times that I began to recognize the film as the metaphor for consciousness and as a metaphor for narrative, but even that initial viewing of the film just swept me off entirely, I found the experience just hypnotic.

Cinema Canada: *Does Canadian experimental film begin with Snow?*
Bruce Elder: I think that Snow laid the groundwork for a distinctive Canadian experimental film. There were people who were working in film before Snow, people like John Hofsess at McMaster University, Burton Rubenstein here in Toronto, Ian Ewing was making ex-perimental films...

Cinema Canada: *Would you relate Norman McLaren to that at all, or was McLaren separate?*
Bruce Elder: Curiously the work that's been done at the Film Board, I think, had been kept very... I don't know whether it's just the result of institutional politics or what, but it's always separated itself from the mainstream and those who, I think, were working at the fringes kind of turned up their nose at Film Board work. One recognizes just how closely related the issues that Arthur Lipsett was working on in his films were to those of some of the other people working in related collage, experimental filmmakers working in collage-forms, but that wasn't perceived very strongly, very clearly in the '60s. They had an institutional endorsement and, by-and-large, the people who were making experimental films were, if anything, very strongly anti-institutional.

Cinema Canada: *Did this have to do at all with the fact of being in Montreal, and Toronto being another place?*
Bruce Elder: A Montreal poet was certainly adopted as the spiritual father to the movement, and that was Leonard Cohen. John Hofsess's movies included Leonard Cohen's poems. In the *Pleasure Palace* film, you have "the lovers, they are nameless", that poem is included. Ewing's *Picaro* includes a setting of a poem of Leonard Cohen, – so, it didn't seem to make much difference in that case.

Cinema Canada: *No, I mean in terms of Canadian filmmaking always being ghettoized, and so what was happening in Ontario was something else again.*
Bruce Elder: People did look out to find in other forms of expression, such as literature, did look to Montreal, did look for people working in other forms of expression, but in film we didn't. And I think it's partly that the people who were working there were fundamentally bureaucrats and not artists. I remember when Brakhage was up on that same trip, in '74, I guess, and he was just as cross as can be about the Film Board, claiming that you could see in Film Board films the evidence of bureaucracy, the evidence of a dehumanizing bureaucracy and that the films just smacked of death and, in a sense, I think that's real true. And, of course, as I say, in this period the spirit really was revolutionary, anti-institutional, antinomian, liberational.

Cinema Canada: *And yet at the same time there was an influence from the Candid Eye, was there not?*
Bruce Elder: I would say that, rather than an influence from the Candid Eye, that both the people working in the documentary forms and in experimental forms shared roots, but I am not sure that one influenced the other. They have common roots rather.

Cinema Canada: *How?*
Bruce Elder: Well, I think common roots had to do with feelings about the relationships, between, well, about the fundamental importance of representational imagery as a way of indicating the way in which certain questions about the relationship of consciousness and nature might be resolved, and an in-

terest there for landscape-art. Both the documentary and experimental filmmakers shared these issues.

Cinema Canada: *It's striking that given a certain commonality in terms of roots, there wasn't any kind of closer contact between the two. You can take the same sort of ideas in terms of other production forms, in terms of features and so forth, and you have the official industry which is bureaucratic and whatnot, and then you have the other people making films, yet they never find a meeting-place.*

Bruce Elder: Turn it around the other way. I can remember being with some Board people when a lovely, very exciting film by John Hofsess, the *Pleasure Palace* film, was being screened, a film I found really and truly entrancing. The Film Board sorts looked at this film and, at the end, pulled themselves off their chairs, sniffed haughtily, and said: Oh, what a shabbily made film, this is just imaginatively bankrupt, technically poor, sub-cultural nonsense. That was as much they'd say about it, and I was quite intrigued with the film, I tried to say: No, look, I find this interesting and that interesting. "No, no, this is just sub-cultural nonsense..." Well, it's the spirit which I would accuse the Board of still harboring, frankly.

Cinema Canada: *Is this not a function of having mechanisms that are officially mandated to create an official culture?*

Bruce Elder: Yes, it's bureaucratic filmmaking. Precisely. So, for example, a couple of years ago, I met with John Spotton (of the NFB) producing in the independant sector in Toronto and he asked me why I thought the independant filmmakers, some independant filmmakers, expressed some grievances with, some annoyance with the Board.

Cinema Canada: *You mean independant experimental?*

Bruce Elder: I mean broadly independant filmmakers, documentary, political filmmakers, experimental filmmakers and so on. The first thing I said was this: Well, look, the NFB has an official style, and they will support films that are going to ressemble films in that style, and they refuse any productions that don't possess, that don't ressemble films of that style. And he told me that was utter nonsense, just not true. And so I said, well, that's very nice to hear, but most of us find the budgets rather inflated, and he said: that's just not fair. I said, gosh, I can think of a documentary that I saw a couple of weeks ago, it was a moderately interesting documentary, an hour-long; I figure I could have done it for $25,000 and the Board's price for it was $250,000. It seems to be that the budgets are inflated by a factor of 10. And he said, this is nonsense, it is impossible to do a film, an hour-long film, for less than $250,000. So I said, well, I just finished a three-hour long film (*Illuminated Texts*) and so, I take it then, the minimum budget for that should be in the neighborhood of $1 million. He said: Oh, bare minimum, absolutely bare minimum. Well, I said, I did a three-hour film last year and I figure it cost me $100,000, maybe $125,000 to do. And in that figure I included a salary for myself for the year that I did; I didn't receive a salary; I was teaching and doing this at nights and at weekends, but I included in that figure a good salary for myself. So he said, $125,000, that's ridiculous. And he said, tell me, who shot your film? I said, well, I shot my film. You shot your film? Yes, of course.

Well, tell me this, who edited your film. I said, well, I edited my film. You mean, you shot your film and you edited the film? Oh yes. What did you do that for? I said I did that so that the film would look the way that I wanted it to look; I know how to shoot so that I get the results that I want, and I know how to edit my material so that it looks exactly the way I want it to look. But I included for myself a good salary for doing that sort of work. Well, who did the sound for the film? I said – actually somebody helped me for part of it – but I said I did (I did do a lot of it). You mean, you are telling me that you shot the film, you edited it and you did the sound? What do you think you are, the total filmmaker? I said: Look, I know how to do these chores and I don't see what the fuss is about. And then he said, you make sure you never come back to us for funding, because I can guarantee if you want to work that way, you are not going to get any money at all of the Film Board, just forget about coming to us for any funding because we don't support stuff like that. I pointed out that this is just what I said at the beginning: they have a way of making films, there is a style that they have; if you conform to that style, you have a chance of getting funding; you deviate from it and they are going to tell you that you really don't know what you are doing. It's that same kind of haughty sniffing that I saw in the room the day the Film Board people looked at Hofsess' *Pleasure Palace.*

So, I think that the spirit that experimental filmmakers carry with them is that they are really marginalized, that the Film Board's the enemy and the industry is the enemy. I don't really think that this is true. I have tried to point out that there are features that connect Canadian experimental films with other aspects of our film production and art, but I must say that's an unusually catholic view. The industry and the Board are mostly seen as the enemy.

Cinema Canada: *Does that bother you that that's the case, or is that something you learn to live with?*

Bruce Elder: Does it bother me what?

Cinema Canada: *That you have the various official film industries, private and public, and you have a more marginalized approach to film production which nontheless operates out of, if you want, a greater self-consciousness of what the filmmaking traditions particular to this country are.*

Bruce Elder: It annoys me no end. I am appalled that such a small portion of the funding for film goes to experimental film. I think that experimental film is, I honestly believe experimental film should be Canada's pride and glory in the film world and that if the cultural commissars of our country were at all conscious, they would be doing everything imaginable to tout Canadian experimental film abroad because on a few occasions that it has been sent abroad, it's been received very well. But nevertheless, experimental filmmakers receive a tiny, tiny, tiny slice of the financial action in filmmaking. The budget of the Film Board is $62 million dollars. The budget of the whole Canada Council media section is something like $2 million. So, I would guess probably, at the outside, that means a quarter of a million dollars for experimental films in the whole country: That's just a guess, but I'd say it's pretty reasonable. And when I can see people making the most dreary, appalling films that haven't a chance of either making money or doing anything else – just hopeless turkeys – getting five million dollars, $12 million, and people like Michael Snow scratching for money to make films, it just seems to me appalling, and it really is happening. I'll tell you another Film Board story, because it's absolutely germane here.

I was invited to lunch when Peter Greenaway came to show his films in Toronto. It was a Film Board lunch last November, and Arthur Hammond was speaking to Peter Greenaway and explaining the Film Board's policies and their support for independants and claimed that filmmaking of all sorts was supported by the National Film Board programs of support to the independants. I interrupted him and I said, I'm sorry, Peter, but that is not true, and I told him my John Spotton story. I told Peter that story and so he scratched his head – he's a very clever fellow – and he said: Arthur, have you ever given any money to Michael Snow? Arthur Hammond said no, but Michael Snow is beyond all of that, he doesn't need any support from the Film Board, he's got all kinds of money, he doesn't need money for making films from us. So I said, I'm sorry, that just is not true, I know that he scratches to get the money to make films and, in fact, he's been muttering about doing something that would involve actors and crew and he's never got it off the ground. And he seems just terribly concerned about finding the money – he really does need support. So Arthur said, well, if it's that bad, I suppose that I should say that he should come to us for help, he should come and see somebody – not me, of course – he should come and see somebody. So I said, why don't you help? So he said, okay, you tell Michael to come and see me about this production, so I said, okay, I'll do that. And then I went

Classical music in avant-garde clothing

When Bruce Elder was preparing to assemble *Lamentations* – a film whose footage had been accumulated over a long span of shooting – he did something unprecedented. He hired composer Bill Gilliam to create the music. In his previous films Elder had generated all the music used (or gathered it, as in *The Art of Wordly Wisdom),* with good results, particularly in *Fool's Gold, Sweet Love Remembered* and the howling last reel of *Illuminated Texts.*

In retrospect, what Elder needed in *Lamentations* was music that *remembers* – a score that could perform the structural tasks Elder's style customarily assigns to film music, and yet also be a music that would evoke the traditions to which *Lamentations* alludes in complex ways. Though Gilliam was already becoming known, quietly and slowly, through his successful collaboration with Luis Osvaldo Garcia and Tony Venturi on *Under the Table,* a movie composed delicately around a core of aural reticence bordering on silence, the composer had been most active in writing for dance pieces for Loretta Czernis and Maxine Heppner.

As it turns out, Gilliam proved to be an ideal choice for Elder's double intent in *Lamentations,* penning a baroque organ piece for the opening sequence, the theme of which is interwoven into the motet-style choral setting he wrote for the passage of Augustine's *Confessions* that the filmmaker wanted to accompany the long-making sequence that climaxes Part One, "The Dream of the Last Historian." Between these, however, Gilliam deftly handled the complicated modernist pieces that Elder, as he often does, ordered up to bed down his elaborate montage segments.

The requirements of Part Two, "The Sublime Calculation", were perhaps even trickier. As Gilliam himself explains, "What was needed was to build sound montages, and I mixed lots of live percussion, overlays of synthesizer and clangorous materials. The film becomes more and more abstract in Part Two and the music becomes more and more unhinged – except for the closing drum piece." Even when heard apart from the film – a startling experience of its structure, actually – the music traces the fall from unity into dissolution and then, suddenly, the recovery of eidetic rhythms. While never actually "forgetting" its basic order and elements, Gilliam abuses them, subjects them to a measured entropy. Best of all, though, is the way the composer juxtaposes live musicians (who include Toronto jazz player Ron Allen) and his battery of synthesizers.

"It was liberating. Elder let me go do what I wished to do," Gilliam says. But, still, "I took the traditional approach. My method for this film was not that of an avant-garde film composer but was quite classical. That seemed okay to Elder and the more we worked on *Lamentations,* the more my classical side came through." When asked what relationship his training in 20th-century music has with his movie-scoring, Gilliam explains that film music is an important vehicle for modern tonalities. "People are much more responsive to the dissonance and tonal variety of 20th-century composing when it is matched up with images than they are in a concert hall."

Bart Testa ●

up to go to the loo and Arthur announced that Michael Snow will never get a penny of support from the National Film Board. And that's what we're up against.

Cinema Canada: *You were saying earlier it goes back to a series of very conscious decisions to develop and support popular mass-forms of filmmaking. Given the prospect that this isn't very likely to change in the near- or long-term future, how do you feel about that?*
Bruce Elder: The prospects for change in this, I think, are very meager. I think all the indications are that the government is going to just shift support more and more toward what they envisage as popular culture. I find the whole wave of distinctions made here between popular culture and high art very, very curious indeed. Here, opera seems the paradigmatic high art, it's what toney people do when they want to really demonstrate just how wealthy they are. In Europe, opera is seen by-and-large as a vulgar art-form, it's just vulgar and impure. And how we arrive at these notions of what's popular and what's culture and what's high art is something that I think really demands serious scrutiny, but it ain't gonna get it here, let's not kid ourselves. But the indications are that there's going to be more funding for television, that there will be more stress on popular entertainment films. I found the comments by two people, by Peter Harcourt and Piers Handling in the controversy around 'The Cinema We Need' (*Cinema Canada* Nos 120-121) very, very interesting in this regard – chilling too, perhaps, in that Harcourt's position basically was that the '80s have not been too kind to experimentation in the arts. This is a time when popular culture, when all the support is going to be for popular culture – we may as well recognize that these are the realities of the '80s and buckle under. There's just no place for the kinds of personal cinema for which you argue. It may be artistic or may have aesthetic value, it may even be that if the questions were thought about more carefully that it would be recognized that there is a cultural value, but let's not kid ourselves. These are the '80s and we know what it's like in the '80s, and I think actually he's bang on about all of this. My attitude is to fight rather than buckle under, but it's an accurate diagnosis.

Cinema Canada: *Do you ever get the feel in your own work, whatever the legitimacy of the traditions you are operating out of, that this is a dying art-form? Isn't that the lamentations part of* Lamentations*?*
Bruce Elder: You are quite right. I think that the film's partly about the end of history, but it's also about the end of cinema and there is a comment to that effect in the film. There is a series of scenes of a man in the alleyway ranting about this and that – mostly about women – and he comments at one point, this film will be the end of cinema. I think that avant-garde cinema is beseiged – it has not received the kind of financial support that's required to do it. You can imagine what *Lamentations* cost to make, you can imagine what I could get from public sources – where am I going to get the rest of the money, and who's crazy enough to do that kind of work in those conditions? How much longer can I go on? Not long, working under those conditions.

Cinema Canada: *How real a consideration is that?*
Bruce Elder: It's a day-to-day consideration. It's something that just never leaves my mind, I don't see how it could. I can't continue to run up the debts that I've been running up; I can't continue to do the work after hours in the way that I have. I can't continue to work under the conditions that I have been working. I mean, I don't have the kind of free-time that people working at the universities have to do this sort of work. I'm like a Sunday painter, trying to do eight-hour-long films on the side, it's craziness. And, you know, if I continue like this, I'll be either crazy or sick.

Cinema Canada: *Towards the end of* Lamentations *there is a line, I believe, that goes "a kind of dance, a leaping into the future, a purpose to go on." How do you see your purpose?*
Bruce Elder: Well, I hope to say something about the conditions in which consciousness has found itself in the last few decades – or that have become apparent in the last few decades – though I think these conditions have existed now for 200 years, that, well, frankly, life on this planet...

Cinema Canada: *No, just on the level of your daily effort as an experimental filmmaker.*
Bruce Elder: Well, this is a mission and I do hope to say that Western concepts of reason have driven us into an absolutely extreme situation – a situation that threatens life on this planet, actually. And these films are partly a call to recognize this extreme condition; I hope a suggestion of a way beyond. So there is a mission behind this film that doesn't make the personal difficulties of doing this work any less grievous, however.

Cinema Canada: *Do you see* Lamentations *as potentially your last film? Is that not one of the dimensions of the film?*
Bruce Elder: One is always afraid of not being able to continue and certainly I was, all the time I was making it, wondering if there would ever be another film. I hope there will. I want to do another film called *Consolations.*

Cinema Canada: *This is part of a cycle?*
Bruce Elder: Part of a cycle and...

Cinema Canada: *This would be the third part or...*
Bruce Elder: There are longer portions and shorter portions to this cycle. So far, I guess, there are about seven or eight parts, and there are about seven or eight more parts.

Cinema Canada: *Seven or eight parts, taking the body of your work to this point?*
Bruce Elder: Correct.

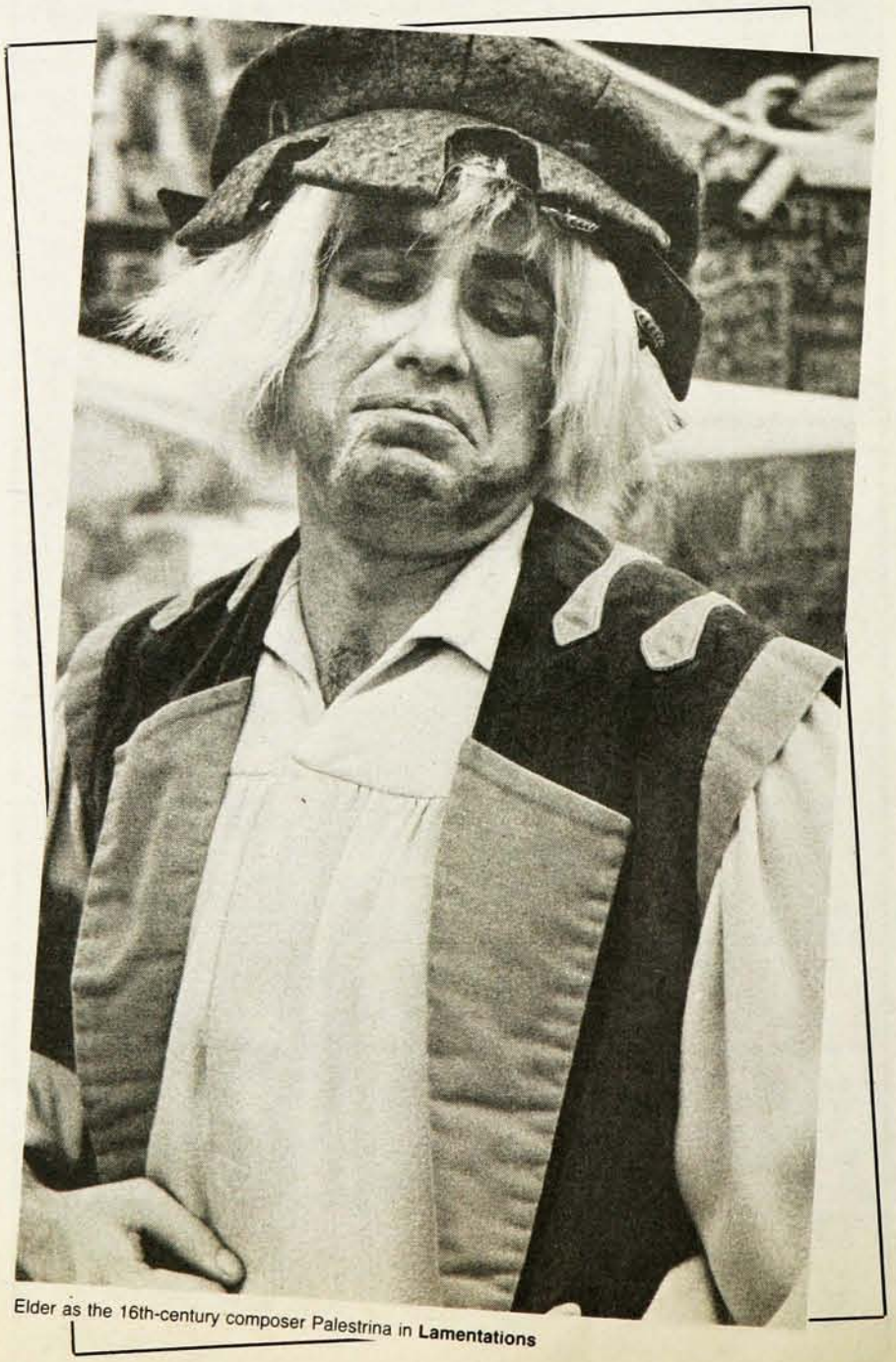
Cinema Canada: *What would it mean for you not to be able to make films anymore?*
Bruce Elder: It would be a relief! Financial relief. It would take a lot of the burden off me. There are times I think I could happily go on by diverting my creative energies into writing. At other times I think that belief is excessively sanguine.

Cinema Canada: *The belief that you could divert?*
Bruce Elder: Yes, excessively sanguine and, in fact, I wouldn't know what to do with myself, if it came to that. Already now I haven't photographed, I haven't used a camera for a year now, other than one week-end, because I couldn't stand it anymore, and I went and bought some film and shot something for no particular reason. But I can't go on, I just need to photograph.

Cinema Canada: *Is it like writing, is it that kind of itch?*
Bruce Elder: Oh yes, it's just an urge – you just have to satisfy it or it just gets stronger and stronger and drives you harder and harder, till you finally give in. Oh yes, I have to photograph.

Cinema Canada: *That is the method, if you want, in your filmmaking? And then the structuring is subsequent to that or they are working together?*
Bruce Elder: It works both ways, actually. I collect material, I go out to collect material, driven by the urge that I just described, and often times I've no idea were the footage that I'm shooting will fit into the overall cycle. I do have a sense of the progression of the cycle and I have had that since I've been working in film. I've known that there would be certain kinds of connections between individual works that, for example, *1857* would deal with illness on a kind of abstract or social level and *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* would deal with illness on a personal level, so there would be a kind of personal calamity and a social calamity that those two films would mirror. I've thought about such connections.

Cinema Canada: *Likewise Illuminated Texts as the social catastrophe and* Lamentations *as the intellectual catastrophe?*
Bruce Elder: Yes, and even there, there is an alternation between the social and the personal level because there are figures who want to rescape their personal lives and then there is an attempt to re-begin, to start our culture over again, to recognize that Western history has drawn to an end and to turn to outside sources for the vitality with which to start a new culture. In other words, to turn culture's life around as figures like Liszt or Newton attempted to reshape their lives, so it's personal and there's an alternation of the per-



Elder as the 16th-century composer Palestrina in **Lamentations**

sonal and social level there, and it reflects within that film. Sometimes the same sort of relationship is reflected in the relationship of one film to another; some of the films have more to do with the nature of the medium, some with the nature of consciousness. But I've known the general shape of this cycle since I plotted it out before I began.

Cinema Canada: *Do you ever think about, would you ever work in the commercial industry?*
Bruce Elder: I would love to, but I don't think we have a commercial industry that would support the sort of work that I'm doing. I don't think that we have a commercial industry that would support *Passion,* or *Je vous salue Marie.* If we had such an industry, then there would be somewhere for me to turn to. One work within the cycle, anyway, that I want to do does involve a lot of acting.

Cinema Canada: *I got the sense from* Lamentations *as a film that is a tremendous act of liberation vis-à-vis the European, and New World traditions, that ends up freeing your imagination such that it could go in all kinds of directions. I felt that there was a real liberation for you as a filmmaker by the end of that film.*
Bruce Elder: I would absolutely love to have the resources that are available to feature filmmakers, who work with actors, scripts, dramatic scenes. One aspect of the cycle of films that I'm working on is a survey of the different modes of film construction and an attempt to map relationships between film construction and forms of thinking. And obviously, the nature of dramatic construction reveals something about the mechanisms that human beings use to take pleasure and that then reveals something, an important dimension of human conscienceness. So I would love to be able to explore drama, to explore these features of pleasure, to explore these features of consciousness. What stands behind our interests, what stands behind the pleasure that we take in identification with dramatic characters? What stands behind the pleasure that we take in discerning a world that was set in disarray being returned to order and harmony? These are interesting questions to ponder and I'd like to have the apparatuses used to produce dramatic films with which to think these questions. But I don't think there's that possibility in Canada.

The Art of Worldly Wisdom (1979): diaries and reveries, past and present

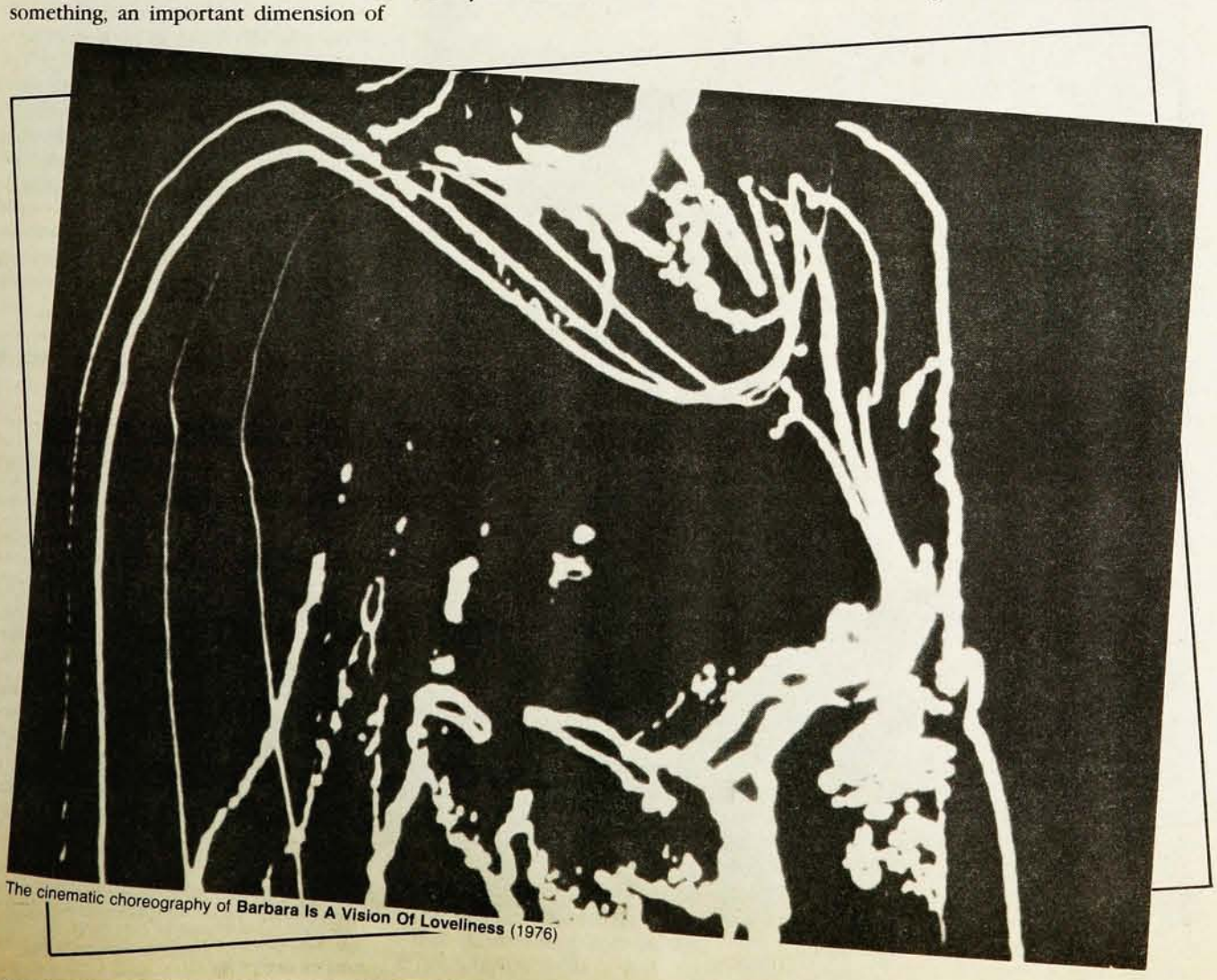
Cinema Canada: *Is that the developmental direction that would take you beyond experimental or it is still in the context of your definition of experimental film? Do you, indeed, consider your filmmaking experimental or is it filmmaking period?*
Bruce Elder: There are lot of complex questions there, because, for one thing, I have to recognize that there are figures, there is a self consciousness about my filmmaking and one form this takes is the recognition of the tradition, traditions in filmmaking from which my works comes from, a recognition, an acknowledgement of the influence that people like Brakhage have had on my work, that Snow had on my work, that Owen Land has had on my work, very consciously. It would be facile of me to claim that I didn't believe that my work was more strongly related to those filmmakers who have been classified as experimental filmmakers than to others. There is another sense in which I would want to claim, though, that my work is very, very traditional work, that people who were in any way familiar with as central epic tradition in Western literature, running from Homer through Milton, through Blake, to Joyce and Pound, would not find my work in any way strange or unfamiliar. In that sense, and I don't really see it as experimental, as innovative, as avant-garde, as vanguard filmmaking. All those terms seem to me preposterous, but they are the terms that are used to refer to the tradition in which my works exists and I use to refer to my films. Furthermore I don't really see that one can establish the features, or describe features that experimental films must have, that separate them from other sorts of filmmaking. One can't say that experimental films can't include actors, or can't make use of scripts or can't do this or can't do that. It seems to me that one can work, self-consciously, and without submitting to the pressures of the entertainment business, and still make use of actors and scripts. But in Canada this will never happen. There won't be a chance to make *Passion* here for decades at least.

Cinema Canada: *You said earlier this summer that the deeper you go into it, the harder it was to see an end to this whole process. Does that scare you?*
Bruce Elder: It's a very unpleasant recognition. It's unpleasant that every single level at which I can think about this problem, from the possibility of continuing financial difficulties, to recognition of the personal toll that it is taking on me, the cost this has on my health. On the other hand, one can take a long view and realize that the chances of completing in any medium a work of the proportions that I have conceived is probably not better than 50/50. One would arrive at this figure by surveying the history of 20th-century art. So lots of others have failed at it too.

I think it's harder year-by-year. I am very eager to make a film entitled *Consolations.*

Cinema Canada: *Which would be a continuation?*
Bruce Elder: Yes, the hook for the title of this film appears in the passage in *Lamentations* which presents Franz Liszt, and Liszt is at this point near the end of his life. He has passed that point in his life where he is travelling around Europe and inflaming the hearts of women with his passionate concertizing and has by now taken minor religious orders, and is an abbé. And in this passage he is composing *Sunt Lacrimae Rerum,* there are tears in the affairs of things, a brutal, dismal, bleak, bleak piece and then at the end he remembers whom he serves and sits down at the piano and plays a piece entitled "Consolations" and...

Cinema Canada: *You too serve God in your own way.*
Bruce Elder: Exactly. ●


The cinematic choreography of **Barbara Is A Vision Of Loveliness** (1976)

Bruce Elder's

Lamentations

The burden of belatedness – how to proceed despite the crushing sense of coming too late with too little into a world filled by those who've already done it all and better – that so oppresses Canadian cinema as a whole, is not that surprisingly the special field of Canadian experimental cinema. And here, broadly, two principal approaches to belatedness can be distinguished: the 'naïve' tradition best exemplified by the films of Michael Snow, and the 'knowing' tradition so characteristic of Bruce Elder's films since *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* (1979). Both traditions reflect dialectically different answers to the same question: How is belated or post-technological art possible?

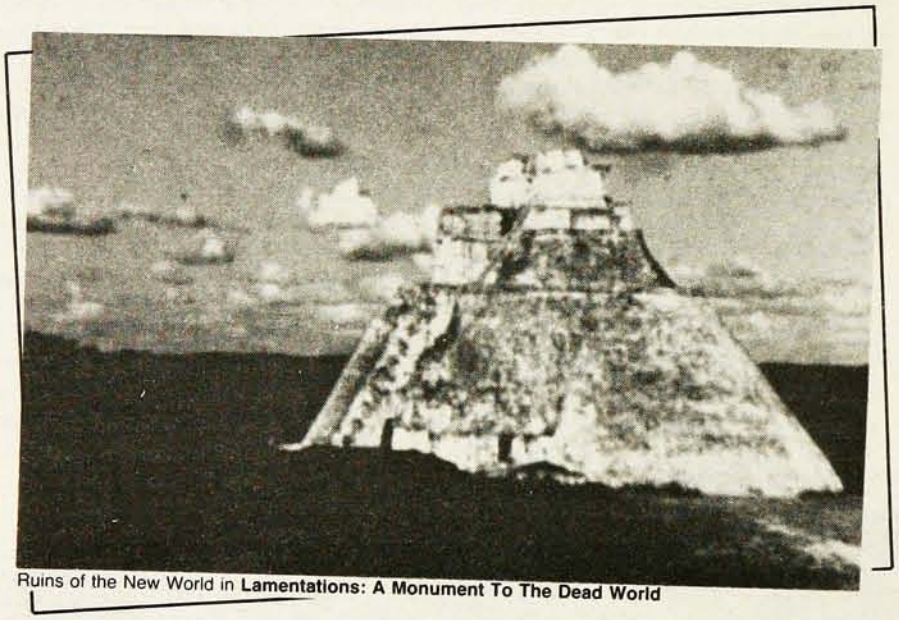
With *Lamentations: A Monument To The Dead World,* Elder's eight-hour film-monument to belatedness that recently premiered as the conclusion of the Art Gallery of Ontario's Elder Retrospective (Oct. 1-11), the question is pushed to psychological and technical extremes. Technically, the film's montage is composed from over 7000 shots, layed over with printed text, readings, narration, stills, dialogue and music mixed on some 34 tracks. The soundtrack was created from a battery of computer and electronic equipment including, say the production notes, "speech synthesizers, phasers, phalangers, vocorders, computer-controlled synthesizers, echo boxes, digital percussion units, digital reverb units, analog delay units, custom built sequencers, filters and computer orchestration equipment." Psychologically, the ante of belatedness is raised to the point of transcendental paranoia in that *Lamentations* offers itself as constructed from the state of mind of one who imagines himself to be the last (thinking) person in history. In the light of such a dual over-determination – the technological death of art, and the end of history – Elder seems to be asking, what happens?

Such a question only raises others: to whom or to what? To me, to you, and all the rest of us who inhabit these modern times? To Film, Art, or the Meaning of Life? If "This film is about you, not about its maker," as *Lamentations'* text explains early on, the statement is later amended with the words "(at best, a half-truth)." For, in the half-truths of the end of History, perhaps nothing happens – and that's why films keep being made.

If Elder hoped that, by taking upon himself the burden of belatedness, a filmmaker can make a film which unburdens *him* of his own sense of belatedness, then that is pretty much what does happen. Because *Lamentations* is an intellectual filmmaker's "Portnoy's complaint" in that only after this long confession is he truly free to actually begin – yet as a confession *Lamentations* both succeeds and fails simultaneously. It succeeds in being a tremendous trope of imaginative liberation for its maker who has with this film freed himself of a psychological burden. But it fails technically in that beyond an eight-hour journey through a mental and imagistic cosmos inhabited by a great many representations all named Bruce Elder – a not uninteresting excursion by any means, given the wild catholicity of Elder's mind – one seldom has much occasion to forget that that is exactly where one is entrapped.

So there's something enormously parenthetical about *Lamentations* – as if Elder, after the apocalypse-Auschwitz end of European history that terminates *Illuminated Texts* (1982), had come to the astonishing and troubling realization that he, the filmmaker, had survived his own film and there was nothing to do but go home.

Lamentations (Part 1: The Dream Of The Last Historian), then, is the journey back from the gas-chambers of instrumental reason, back through the ruins of European civilization and the rubble of the European mind's echoes of its eternal debates, back to the New World in a pilgrimage towards new beginnings, or, if nothing else, that sense of a broken totality that we hold in common.



Ruins of the New World in **Lamentations: A Monument To The Dead World**

Part 11 of *Lamentations* (The Sublime Calculation), large portions of which were shot on the Canadian westcoast, in the American south-west and in Mexico's Yucatan, is a vision of what those new beginnings might have been, if, instead of "sickly, doomed" North Americans, we had had the courage to be Spaniards "a race artistic to the core and monstruous in their lust for blood." But even there/here, where "the world of sunlight meets the dagger" in a "a landscape so exuberant we believe nature has lost her mind," our northernness as belated Europeans condemns us to, at best, a consciousness of absence: "literally everything slipping away together all at once, dissolving into the gloom of an all-pervading Nothing." For what we hold in common, finally, is "suffering" and the confession of the Last Historian is that he is Everyman.

Not quite. After all, the film represents the mind of a paranoid or, by his other name, that cowardly dissimulator, the poet. And as poetic history (or so the text says) "is the story of how poets have suffered," and *Lamentations* is a poem-on-film, how poets will continue to suffer. The poetic suffering that Elder grapples with is where to find the "purpose to go on," specifically, how to end the film. "Look," confesses a character's voice, "what I need is an ending."

For out of the crucible of belatedness, the Canadian poet emerges to find that he *can* sing – but "only the snow falling," "the endless world of the snow falling." Because at the end of *Lamentations'* long lament, nestled there in its dizzying snow of images, sound and text, is the possibility of a beginning. Unless, of course, *that* is the specific paranoia of the poet.

If summing-up is one of the advantages of belatedness, one of *Lamentations'* advantages over any reviewer is that its length defies encapsulation. In its details, *Lamentations* contains a whirlwind, encyclopedic tour of Old World philosophy from Plato to Heidegger, Nietzsche and Freud, historical personages (Newton, Berkeley, Liszt), art (imagery and music) from the Renaissance to the Romantic, architecture, medecine's therapies from analysis to electroshock, New World ruins from pre-Columbian to urban contemporary in mineral, animal and human, form, as well as vignettes of mechanized modern life's car-filled streets, crazies, or robots, contrasted against representations of the female nude, standing solo, dancing, and as part of a couple making love.

For all that, what is striking about *Lamentations* is to what degree it is a traditional Romantic narrative quest-poem at war with elements of filmmaking. If *Illuminated Texts* did stunningly manage to balance image, text, voice, music and readings in a powerful synaesthetic whole, *Lamentations* veers sharply towards narrative. This is as true of Bill Gilliam's music, be it in his Mexican melody or his Palestrina choral, as it is of Elder's poetic voice in text and readings which dominate the imagery, even Elder's own camera-dance technique. So too the film's narrative scenes are the strongest, and especially in the brilliant dialogue between Isaac Newton (David King) and Bishop Berkeley (Tony Wolfson).

In this one scene lies exactly the balance between mind and the perversity of the physical that reveals Elder in full imaginative control. When that control breaks down (and it does), Elder succumbs to the worst kinds of dualism – logomachy and camera-frenzy on the one hand, and on the other an 'objectivism' particularly in its examinations of the 'represented' female body that's worryingly close to the pornographic. If that imaginative control subsequently comes and goes, the inclination towards narrative recurs right through to the film's ending where even such a marvelously visual sequence as the sparkling rhinestones on a Mexican flamenco-dancer's dress tends to be dominated by the narrated conclusion (written à la Virginia Woolf or some such resolutely pre-Joycean prose).

Most curious of all, the viewing of *Lamentations* produces the strong suspicion that Elder is teetering on the verge of abandoning experimental film altogether. And what makes for such an intriguing possibility is the film's own demonstration that Elder, by following his imagination beyond belatedness, has in him the potential to become a director along the axis from Fellini to Syberberg; that is, if he would pursue that tyrannical control over the utter artificiality of his medium that the Newton-Berkeley sequence displays so convincingly. Albeit, this would involve something of a theoretic reversal in Elderian cinema akin to Heidegger's own *kehre.*

Otherwise, what remains are problems. For one, as a poem, *Lamentations* is still entrapped in belatedness; indeed, at much the same point Canadian poetics found itself in by the early '50s. As an 'experimental' film, *Lamentations* is primarily interesting because of the triple feat of its length, erudition and technique; that is, as an object of specialist inquiry. Above all, it is as narrative cinema that *Lamentations* reveals elements of a formidable imaginative redirection.

Having troped itself, the 'knowing' experimental tradition's further evolution could signal the beginning of the complete abandonment of Canadian cinematic belatedness by the realized Canadian Romanticism that *Lamentations* indicates negatively.

"Now ve may begin," says the psychiatrist at the conclusion of *Portnoy's Complaint,* tellingly entitled "Civilization and its discontents" in an earlier draft. In this sense can *Lamentations* be seen as the conclusion to the intellectual Elder's massive critique of civilization, marking the true point of departure for the "real man" Elder, no longer dissimulating, but fully able to assume himself as a filmmaker. Unless, of course, this *too* is only another belated, and paranoid, fantasy.

Michael Dorland •

LAMENTATIONS **d./sc./cam./ed./p.** R. Bruce Elder **p.assts.** Stephen Smith, Tom Thibault, Cindy Gawel **mus.** Bill Gilliam **narr.** Kristina Jones, Robert Fothergill, J. Peter Dyson **titles** Charles Luce **make-up** Maria Finta **anim.seq.** Charles Luce **flute and add. syn.** Ron Allen **drumming** Claude Desjardins **text/narr.** (Mexican insect sequence Indian dance sequence) Murray Pomerance **supertitles** (voice synthesis for "Ode to Joy", text mocking Palestrina) Murray Pomerance **tech. support** Emil Kolompar **conforming** Piroshka Hollo **Mr. Pomerance's clothes** courtesy Harry Rosen **Mr. Pomerance's office** courtesy Arthur Gelgoot **l.p.** David King (Newton) Murray Pomerance (psychiatrist) James D. Smith (Lizet) Bart Testa (lecturer) Tony Wolfson (Berkeley) Michael Cartmell (man in alley) **print** Medallion Film Labs **thanks** Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, The Ontario Centre For Robotics (Peterborough), The Canada Council, and The Ontario Arts Council **sp.tnx.to** Michael Snow, Peter Harcourt, Anna Pafomow, Michael Cartmell, Greg Svaluto, Karen Noble. **Ex.sp.tnx.to** James D. Smith (for hilarious conversation and mad brainstorming). Hilaritus excessum habere nequit, sed semper bona est, et contra Melancholia semper est mala. (Baruch Spinoza, *Ethica V, prop XLII)* **p.c. Lightworks** Film Prods. **dist.** Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, 16mm, **col. running time:** 8 hrs.