



Uncle Antoine, a drink or two away from a small rebellion.

country's best director, and *Mon Oncle Antoine*, its best movie.

Knelman says Jutra's work "isn't political in . . . narrow, didactic terms . . . yet maybe Jutra is political in a deeper way. *Mon Oncle Antoine* and *Kamouraska* are his tender embraces for the traditions of French culture in North America. He shows you the malevolent restraints and denials at work. . . . Yet he can't help being buoyantly entertaining at the same time, as if he can see so much that he's constantly on the verge of breaking into a little song to express what he knows. He's in love with even the worst secrets of life in Quebec."

Knelman also offers an interesting view of old and new heroes and the self-consciousness critics provoke in artists: "A few years ago it became fashionable to complain that Canadian movies were always about losers. . . . It is easy to see, in retrospect, how this sort of talk must have affected our most talented film-makers. They began to feel they had a disease they'd better get rid of. One of the most bizarre events of late on television was a one-hour drama on the CBC Performance series called *Kathy Karuks Is a Grizzly Bear*. . . . It was based on an incident that occurred in the summer of 1975, when a

teenage girl tried to swim Lake Ontario, prodded by a coach whose main concern seemed to be the prizes various merchants were offering. Probably the girl should never have been allowed to try the swim, and, after a horrifying ordeal, she had to be pulled out. But the director of the TV version, Peter Pearson, changed the script so the audience could watch the heroine finish her swim and collect all those prizes. It didn't seem to matter that this ending negated the whole point; what mattered was the new insistence that in this country we like to see winners."

As Knelman makes clear, *Mon Oncle Antoine* fits into Sutherland's theory as a kind of transitional hero. Antoine, a mild, small-town shop-keeper/undertaker begins as the essential non-rebellious French-Canadian family man of the 1950s. The movie revolves around a tragic/comic incident: Antoine and his nephew lose a coffin and a corpse in a snow storm. "Jean Duceppe as Uncle Antoine has an unforgettable sequence when he stumbles out into the snow in a French-Canadian equivalent of Lear's storm scene. Wrapped in a great fur coat and too drunk to help Benoît lift the coffin back on the sled, this mild, unimposing man who has spent a lifetime quietly doing dull, depressing jobs suddenly howls furiously against the fierce, chilling element, as if this vast, bleak landscape and its bone-rattling weather has conspired to defeat him alone."

The Canadian hero, old or new is found in plays as well as books and films. James Reaney's three plays (or his one play for three evenings), **The Donnellys: Parts I, II and III** (Porcépic, 1975-77), are about a whole tribe of rambunctious losers based, up to a point, on a real and tumultuous nineteenth century family who were slaughtered by their vigilante Ontario neighbours. If Ira Groome is a winner/loser then the Donnellys, as portrayed by James Reaney, are something like loser/winners. They are brought down, but not until they've had six full hours to strut upon the stage; and they are unconquered and unconquerable to the end. They are, though dead, much more triumphant than Rutherford, the diplomat, or Gould Moncrieff or Ira Groome. The plays, in Mr. Reaney's own quicksilver style, are a sensual delight.

SIX LIVRES EN FRANÇAIS

La vie littéraire est vigoureuse au Québec. Ses écrivains, tant dans le domaine du réel que de l'imaginaire, jouent un rôle marquant dans l'évolution de la pensée et de l'action depuis le

début de la révolution tranquille. Les récents ouvrages qui font l'objet de nos critiques ont été sélectionnés par Jonathan Weiss de Colby College (Maine) comme étant les plus significatifs de la