

Winter 1997

Three Film Reviews

John A. Drobnicki
CUNY York College

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policy at that time was the complete "civilizing" of the Indian, Scott made it his task to completely absorb the Indian into Canadian society, thus ridding it of the "Indian problem." It has been claimed in this film that Scott was simply a man of his times. What is most disturbing, even to those who make this claim, is that Scott was so good at what he did that he becomes an extraordinary man of his times - responsible for the attempted genocide of a civilization.

The bitterness of those who have reaped the benefits of Scott's actions comes through clearly in this film. Os-naburgh, a village that had signed a treaty with the Canadian government in 1905, is today people by inhabitants that had been ravaged by hydroelectric development (a development Scott promised would not come about) to the point of near starvation. Interviewees also tell stories of family members who fell victim to education mandated by Scott: children were taken away from villages between the ages of six and sixteen or eighteen and housed in schools where the conditions were so horrendous that, it is estimated, 50% of the children died. There is irony in the fact that Scott's own daughter was sent to a convent school in France, only to die at the age of twelve.

The story told in this film is a familiar one, but the location is not. The wilderness of Canada was and is still a beautiful place, and its beauty affected Scott and enhanced his poetry. Unfortunately, he could not see beyond his bureaucratic limits to the naturalness of its inhabitants; he could not see into the reasons behind their beliefs and rituals. Scott comes off as the worst example of eurocentrism gone mad.

— JMc

WILBERT: STREET KID IN NICARAGUA. A video by Bent Erik Kroyer. 16 mins. (1995) [First Run/Icarus Films]

The son of an abusive, alcoholic father and a mother who died of cancer, 14-year old Wilbert has lived in a market in León, Nicaragua, for seven years. The market women try to help homeless children and organized what is simply referred to in the film as "The Project," which sees to it that they get some food and rudimentary schooling. The women also lent Wilbert money to purchase a shoeshine kit, and he is determined to stay away from drugs and avoid going back to prison (where he had already been three times for petty offenses). Despite his bleak circumstances, Wilbert dreams of becoming a teacher and opening a school for the other homeless children. Narrated in Spanish with English subtitles, this short documentary should give students a fairly realistic look at life on the street, including allusions to violence and prison rape ("arse" is the only near-profanity).

CHASTIE (PARADISE). A film by Sergey Dvortsevov. 23 mins. (1995) [First Run/Icarus Films]

Filmmaker Sergey Dvortsevov records the life of nomadic shepherd M. Shokhobaev and his family in the Suzak region of southern Kazakhstan. With no narration and very little dialogue (in Kazakh, with English subtitles), the film presents typical, unadorned images of everyday life on the windy steppe. The winner of several film festival awards in Europe and Russia, this film ends as the

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from one place to another? If so, how is this possible? Do the myths and stories still make sense if they are removed from their place of origin? What happens when my story meets your story, when my hero and your hero meet? And how do the myths and stories work over time, as the world around people changes? Do the characters have to adapt? What happens to the people if they lose or forget their stories and heroes? These heady questions are some that arose for me as I read *The Trickster and the Troll*.

-- Faith Hagenhofer (Swede, not Norwegian),
librarian for Nisqually Indian Tribe.

[Some of the final questions in this review are addressed in Joseph Campbell's *Transformations of Myths Through Time*. Harper & Row, 1990, and *The Universal Myth: heroes, gods, tricksters, and others*. New American Library, 1990. -- Editor]

Media Reviews

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family begins to drive its flock toward another area that promises to have more food and grass, which will be a paradise compared to the area they're leaving. Some profanity occurs early on when a young man, cursing his bleak life, rides off on his own. Younger students would find the film's pace too slow and some of the images too repetitive.

ADVERTISING MISSIONARIES. Directed by Chris Hilton and Gauthier Flauder. 52 mins. (1996) [First Run/Icarus Films]

Since over half the population of Papua-New Guinea lives in the highlands, they cannot be reached via traditional advertising media. This documentary focuses on "walkabout marketing," which consists of a traveling theater group that goes to the remote areas and performs short skits about western food and commercial products, as well as sometimes dealing with social education (e.g., alcoholism). As they make their way deeper into the highlands than they've ever gone before, the viewer learns about the group's destination: people in a village in the Yaluba Valley. These valley dwellers subsist entirely on the land, which they have farmed for 9,000 years--the sweet potato is their staple, and men/older boys live separately from women/young children. Alu-

ago, the sweet potato farmer, does not fear the "new" things being introduced into his traditional world, saying that he will teach his sons to accept the good customs and reject the bad practices of modern man. A fascinating and entertaining documentary (with English narration and subtitles when necessary), this film should provoke interesting classroom discussions.

— John Drobnicki,
York College, Queens, NY

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genuine 'gospel' ballad in which "God moves on the water." The two traditions, equally powerful, represent separate forces in traditional music.

The Virginia group has a strong gospel base represented by groups like the Silver Leaf Quartet and the Peerless Four and songs like "Gospel Train," "Witness For My Lord," and "I'm a Soldier in the Army of the Lord." The instrumental segments of the recording are simple, very melodic and more rhythmic than the Ozark counterpart. There are roots of gospel, jazz and even rap music here in these recordings that make for fascinating listening.

Prison Songs are the first two installments of the second series in the Alan Lomax Collection. Rhythmically they are a little monotonous. One must make allowances since they are all work songs. That taken into consideration, there is some fascinating material released on these two CD's.

Some of the more interesting material is spoken. Lomax records the life stories of men named Bama and Bull and tries to get them to tell him what it takes to make a good work song leader or identify who were the best singers they had heard. These men are obviously aware they are being recorded. They tell Lomax some tall tales in two cuts, "Lies" and "More Lies."

The songs are by turns witty, sad and bitter, but all of them are sung with the same work rhythm that seems to emphasize the relentlessness of the system under which such songs were sung. Their power comes in songs like *Rosie* and *Early in the Mornin'* with the beat of the tools these singers are using in their work details.

Most if not all of the participants, except for Lomax, seem to be African American. The recordings were made in the late 1950s and the participants call Lomax "boss" (which one takes as a requirement of the system if *Cool Hand Luke* is used as a yardstick), but he manages to establish an easy rapport with them and get them to talk. The impressions these recordings leave behind are of toil, sweat, and the pain of life on the outside missed.

— JMc