too late; my doubts have prevented my full involvement. It becomes clearer that the filmmakers are not attempting realism, but are creating a filmic or mental un-reality with its own rules, arbitrary and unfamiliar to me, which obviate the need for concrete, realistic explanation and motivation. Seeming discrepancies have made me withdraw my commitment to the characters: they are figments long before the final scene makes this explicit.

John Juliani, perhaps due to his theatrical background, has, in *Latitude 55*, banked on the power of dialogue and strong acting, making little use of the medium's audio-visual capabilities, and Pelletier and Schellenberg have both delivered; I was never bored with the film, only doubtful and sometimes irritated. The script provided a number of scenes interesting in themselves, but did not create a sense of rising drama as the characters' involvement deepened. There are certainly some excellent moments, as when Wanda, after a crying fit, says, "This is gross." I was convinced, and strongly wished that the film's dreamy matrix contained more such gems. It is as though Juliani and Riis made *Latitude 55* in the belief that cinema would free them from the sometimes cumbersome physical reality of the stage, when in fact it seems that film, by its very dreamy intangibility, must cast a particularly strong illusion of concreteness if it is to have our full allegiance. Whatever my complaints, *Latitude 55* is a thoughtful and complex symbolic work of art, and it is gratifying to see a film artist working unabashedly for delicate characterization and thematic depth. But I, for one, would have preferred that Juliani, through film, make his stage the real world.

Alec Lloyd ●

LATITUDE 55 **p./d.** John Juliani **sc.** Sharon Riis, Juliani **sc. cons.** Anne Cameron **sc. advisors** Sydney Newman, Robert Tessier **d.o.p.** Robert Ennis, Savas Kalogeras (Montreal), Robert Fresco (Edmonton) **2nd unit photog.** John Anderson **stills** Trig Singer **1st asst. cam.** Paul Mitchnik **2nd asst. cam.** Michel Lalonde **key grip** Mal Kibblewhite **grip** Trig Singer **gaffer** Randy Tomiuk, Guy Remillard (Montreal), Michel Chohin **best boy** Bill Montgomery, Claude Derasp (Montreal) **cam.** Jean-Pierre Lachapelle **1st asst. cam.** René Daigle **elec.** Guy Cousineau, Walter Klymkiw **graphic anim.** Tom Brydon **opt. efx.** Susan Gourley, Michel Cleary **ed.** Barbara Evans **asst. ed.** Richard J. Martin **prelim. ed.** Marke Slipp **assembly ed.** Doris Dyck **assts.** David Whitehead, Jack Hilton **ed. cons.** Ray Ball **art d.** Richard Hudolin **asst art. d.** Jack Hudolin **const. des./ward.** Wendy Partridge **props** Shirley Inget, Marti Wright, Ernie Tomlinson, Bryn Piper **make-up** Jamie Brown **hair** Donna Bis **const. coord.** Dee Embree **head carp.** Cindy Gordon, Jean Parisien (Montreal) **carp.** Mike Ellsworth, Don MacKenzie, Mike McQueen **sp. efx.** Jacques Godbout, Louis Craig (Montreal), Jack Hudolin, Ernie Tomlinson (Edmonton) **1st a.d.** Arvi Liimatainen, Marcel Malacket (Montreal) **2nd a.d.** J.P. Finn **loc. man.** Trig Singer **post-p. sup.** Grace Avrith (Montreal) **p. acct./sec.** Gloria Singer **p. assts.** Bill Jamieson, Donna Waring, Patricia Goodwin, Jonathen Leaning, Denise Beaudoin (Montreal) **cont.** Wendy McLean **sp. gopher** Alessandro Juliani **mus. comp.** Victor Davies **soundscape** Juliani **sd.** Andre Galbrand **asst. sd.** Danuta Klis **sd. record.** Don Paches, Joseph Champagne (Montreal) **boom** Rick Erickson, Jean-Guy Normandin **add. record.** Bill McLelland **mix.** Peter Strobl, Adrian Croll **post sync. efx.** Ken Page **post sync. dia.** André Gagnon (Iles, Louise Overy **assoc. p.** Tamara Lynch (Montreal) **p. man.** Harold Tichenor, Grace Gilroy **doubles/stand-ins** Donna Gruhlke, Jan Miller, Basia Broszkowsky, Patricia Goodwin, Gwyneth Walsh **sp. skill extras** Dan Osbourne, Kerry Jennings, Stephanie Gillepsie, Lyn Jackson, Katherine Trowell **sp. skill cons.** Robert Tessier, John Coeck, Doug Morion, Dennis Woodrow, Bohdan Chomiak, Marilyn Myers, Donna Gruhlke, Maria Campbell, Tanton Martin, Norm Quinnie, Dennis Stewart **L.p.** Andrée Pelletier, August Schellenberg **exec. p.** Pil Fraser **assoc. exec. p.** Donna Wong-Juliani **creative cons.** Danny Singer **co-p.** Donna Wong-Juliani **labs.** Alpha-Cine Service, Vancouver; National Film Board of Canada **p.c.** Savage God One Film Productions Ltd. **dist.** Cinema Circle of Canada **colour** 35mm **running time** 101 min.

Bruce Elder's

Illuminated Texts

Canadian film has always had a tendency to vacillate between two extremes. On one hand, there is a preference for films about little people in little situations becoming smaller. On the other, there is the wish to break out into epic forms, to people huge canvases with larger-than-life heroics. From *Back to God's Country* to *Silence of the North*, the stuff of epic just barely eludes us. Eventually, the artist is punished for his hubris.

Bruce Elder's new film, *Illuminated Texts*, seems to exist at both ends of this strange dichotomy. It is, as far as possible, an individual work. Aided by an array of home-made electronics and optical printing devices, Elder pieced together the work in the solitude of his living room/studio. But, more importantly, the film brings together the many facets of a single perspective. We are never allowed to forget that everything we are seeing is the meditation of one man alone in his room.

The solitary nature of *Illuminated Texts* is brought home to us in the film's opening passage. Elder, portraying a professor (which he is) of mathematics (one of his many avocations), welcomes a student into his apartment. Together, they read their respective roles from Xeroxed scripts of Ionesco's *The Lesson*. The professor becomes increasingly perturbed as the student stumbles over the fundamental concepts of addition and subtraction. Slowly we begin to sympathize with the student. In fact, these building blocks of mathematics are not only illogical but inhuman and, finally, as threatening as the rage they induce. Like the hero in Godard's *Alphaville*, we are reminded that we can't know what 2 + 2 are until we know the meaning of "plus."

It could be said that the remaining three hours of *Illuminated Texts* is about the meaning of "plus." Working out of his dramatic prelude, Elder moves into an epic of the mind. The film becomes alive with a collage of spoken and written texts amid a constantly changing pattern of eclectic imagery.

Our first reaction is to look for a thread with which to bind this sensory bombardment. Elder's previous film, *1857: Fool's Gold*, used its two written and one spoken texts as counterpoints to each other, creating the optical thunderstorm of the film's imagery. The film before that, *The Art of Wordly Wisdom*, used a wall-to-wall monologue as its centerpiece.

Where the earlier films appeared referential and self-reflexive, *Illuminated Texts* seems encyclopedic. The thoughts read by the narrator and the many quotations reproduced as titles represent a lifetime of reading and reflection. But they also present, in microcosm, the span of human thought.

If there is to be an illumination of these texts then it is not enough to reconcile the quotations with one another. Frequently, in his reproduction of thought, Elder returns to the writings of Henry Adams who, 90 years ago, gave us a clue as to the task of this film. Adams saw his generation as perched between two dominant iconographies: the Virgin with its implications of selflessness and purity, and the equally religious ideology epitomized by the electric dynamo.

● Part of a composite still form the concluding section of Illuminated Texts

As the first philosopher of the new century, Adams looked for a path that would lead from the obsolete mythology through the dangerous, untested technological world.

Elder's vision looks back from a spot well down that path. The technological complexities of his chosen art are continually acknowledged. The "plus" in this film – the organization of its elements – is work made possible by a computer. Before each sequence, we see Elder's editing instructions typed up on a multi-colored terminal. The implication is that the breath and complexity of the 4000 shots to unfurl before us are made possible only by this mechanized hand.

This said, we are asked to avoid the facile conclusion that the film is a cold, structural exercise meant to distance us from a reading of its individual images. There is, in the film, above all, a passion in the thoughts presented and in the intersection of these thoughts with the film imagery. Recently, Elder declared himself to be "an enemy of Formalism." The narrow-minded pursuit of structure in his films is, to use Elder's term, fool's gold.

Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the last section of *Illuminated Texts*. The computer begins to produce fragments of words, which become fragments of sentences, which slowly come together as the rendition of concentration camp atrocities. The images – processed Nazi footage, home movies of the reconstructed Auschwitz, perusals of sado-masochistic pornography – work closer and closer to the printed texts. Elder's computer begins to speak – as if it could no longer mutely and passively follow orders. It echoes the horrors.

The last sound of *Illuminated Texts* is the now fully vocal computer singing "Deutschland uber Alles." The last image is a tiny portion of Elder's face dominated by a large black rectangle. We have come full circle: from the epic to the solitary, from the expanse of human experience to the filmmaker as screen.

Seth Feldman ●

ILLUMINATED TEXTS **d.** Bruce Elder **asst. d.** Anna Pasanow **op. print., matte prep.** Henry Jesionka **asst. mus.** Bruno Degazio **running time** 180 min **dist.** The Canadian Filmmaker's Distribution Centre.