



Louise Marleau in *L'Amour humain* at Le Parisien.

Celibacy dilemma 'soberly posed' in Héroux's *L'Amour humain*

By MARTIN MALINA

THERE has always been a gap, in Denis Héroux's career, between the preaching and the practice.

Valérie, which opened Quebec's sexploitation floodgates in May 1969, was intended, in Héroux's words, to "deshabiller la petite québécoise." In the literal sense, of course, we know the goal was achieved. As the True Romantic innocent in the big bad city, Danielle Oiumet dispelled any suspicion that homegrown sex would look less attractive on screen than the imported variety. But the wider, socio-political implications of Héroux's slogan were generally ignored.

Then came *L'Initiation*, which, as its title indicates, took up where *Valérie* left off. Despite pious noises from the producers, *L'Initiation's* only "redeeming social values" were more actresses, fewer clothes and a boost to the country's balance of payments.

So it was with a lopsided grin and some degree of skepticism that we received news of Denis Héroux's latest *L'Amour humain* (the grin grew wider) and would be a serious study of a nun and a priest who leave the church to marry.

Well, the film has now opened (at Le Parisien) and I must report that the gap between Héroux promise and Héroux fulfillment has narrowed. Anyone expecting a lip-smacking Russ Meyer shocker about concupiscence in the cloister, will be rudely disappointed.

The dilemma of clericals who cannot suffer celibacy

yet love the church, is soberly if somewhat superficially posed. When Sister Constance (Louise Marleau, incongruous with wet lips and eye shadow) and Father Lambert (Jacques Riberolles) meet in a hospital, a "spiritual crisis" is sparked. The nun's maternal longings had been spelled out by Héroux's heavy directorial finger in a couple of scenes involving a nursing mother and some newborn kittens, and the priest's conjugal instincts were betrayed earlier by his unusual passion for bowling.

It is only a matter of a reel before the pair shed their habits (in Miss Marleau's case the process is pretty much a striptease) and settle down in connubial bliss. Naturally the road is a rocky one — Constance proves somewhat frigid and Lambert's impatience almost leads to infidelity — but love is seen to triumph in a long scene observed through the embers of a country fireplace (what Billy Wilder once called "the Santa Claus shot").

As in his previous films, Héroux pays careful attention to what are known in the trade as "production values." The film's color camerawork (by René Verzier again) is polished; the slick soundtrack is filled with violins, piano and noises of childbirth; Roger Fournier has supplied an efficient script; and the director has coaxed professional perform-

ances from most members of his cast.

Other attractions

Two new films which seem destined to die when the week is over but which merit a second glance are *Up in the Cellar* (at the Seville) and *The Moonshine War* (at Loew's).

The first is a lightweight send-up of campus rebellion in which a soft-spined poet (West Stern), out to avenge himself on the pompous, duplicitous college president (Larry Hagman) who has denied him a scholarship, discovers that the man's Achilles' heel is the women in his life — daughter, wife and black mistress. In director Theodore Flicker's unsweaty hands the sex is amusing and the similarities between the film's president and another, more famous, chief executive in Washington, are cleverly exploited.

The *Moonshine War* pictures Patrick McGoochan as a 1930s "revenooer" who would rather switch than fight and Richard Widmark as a sadistic ex-dentist who now manages a profitable bootleg business. It is a little late to be imitating Bonnie and Clyde but the film does have a certain sleazy charm.