

Denys Arcand's Le Declin de l'empire americain and Les Invasions barbares



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The release of Denys Arcand's *Le Declin de l'empire americain* (The Decline of the American Empire) in 1986 marked a major turning point in Quebec cinema. It was the first Quebecois film that enjoyed huge critical and commercial success at home and abroad. Arcand's tragicomedy about eight intellectuals gathered around a dinner table relating sexy anecdotes became the top-grossing film of all time in Quebec and was the first Canadian feature to be nominated for an Oscar in the foreign-language category. Seventeen years later, Arcand won an Academy Award for the sequel, *Les Invasions barbares* (The Barbarian Invasions), where the amusing insouciance of the thirty-somethings talking dirty in *Le Declin* is replaced by a sense of moral responsibility and serene resignation. In this engrossing study, Andre Loiselle presents the first in-depth analysis of both films within the context of Quebec culture. Through close readings and concise cultural analysis of two of the most important films in the history of Quebec cinema, Loiselle demonstrates the ways in which Arcand's work represents a snapshot of the evolution of the French Canadian film industry since 1980. The companion films trace the decline of Quebec's national dream and the Quebecois' attempts to cling to their identity against the forces of barbaric globalization. The second title in the new Canadian Cinema series, Denys Arcand's "Le Declin de l'empire americain" and "Les Invasions barbares" is essential reading for cinephiles, film critics, and anyone with an interest in cultural studies and Canadian and Quebec history.

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