told when I saw Gilles Groulx’s Golden Gloves – made in the part of Montreal where I had been brought up as a child. I saw my own streets, but most of all I heard people speak Quebecois in a film for the first time. In the early 1980s we were just a small group of people in love with the cinema. For instance, Objectif, the film magazine that we published with our own money between 1960 and 1967, was very important in developing our thoughts on a possible cinema here. Interestingly, over half of the Objectif writers went on to become very active in the cinema in much the same way as the Cahiers du cinéma critics. At that time there were almost no good films shown in Quebec and so we had to go to New York about once a month to see films and then I went to Paris for a year just to see the movies. It was a wild dream then to actually have a Cinematheque here. Gradually we began to think of making films ourselves, to make something happen here. There was nothing here but the National Film Board. Maybe the circumstances were right, we were in a period of great changes without really knowing it at the time. We wanted to do something. When I began to make films I wanted to speak about passivity and the historical status quo. Over twenty years I have made a lot of films to fight against that historical passivity of our society, but also to show that passivity to people. I have always wanted to show people what, in a way, they do not want to know.

Susan Barrowclough: The documentary movement was very important to you and to Quebec’s emergent cinema – why did you choose fiction?

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: I think that Gilles Groulx is the father of Quebec cinema. Le chat dans le sac was the beginning of a real Quebecois cinema. But Pierre Perrault’s Pour une suite du monde was just as important. Together they are the two sides of our society, our culture. Without their tradition of Direct Cinema I wouldn’t have made fiction films. It taught me so much, but I wanted to go on and experiment. My own formation, my education, my feeling for something beyond the image, naturally led me to fiction. I was closer to theatre, to philosophy, history. In fiction you can re-invent situations, you can travel in time and play with the past, the present and the future. I always knew I would consciously follow the line that there would be a continuity between the work of those film-makers in Quebec who had been making Direct Cinema, cinema verite and my films. But I wanted to get away from the trap of realism. There is so much more to say than the little that can be shown on the screen. I do not believe in the false objectivity of documentary reportage. Cinema is now used. Our experience of life and therefore of making a film in subjective. I can only talk about what I know. I think that people, wherever they live, have a lot in common, so that if I can speak with a certain sincerity of my experience of life in my society, I will at the same time be able to speak to other people in the world. Ironically, even though my films are very personal, very close to my experience of Quebec society, they are also very successful in Europe. Les Dernieres fiancailles did well in Quebec but played for eight weeks in Montreal; but it also did very well throughout France and Mon amie Pierrette did very well in Portugal for example. People there recognised themselves in our situation.

Susan Barrowclough: When you began making films did you think of a project of work which would try to define and name your society?

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: Yes, that was an absolutely conscious choice right from the beginning with Le revolutionning.

Susan Barrowclough, past programmer at the Pacific Cinematheque, is currently adviser at the British Film Institute and has just written the British Film Institute Dossier No. 13 entitled "Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: the Quebec Connection."
Marguerite Duparc

For twenty years, Marguerite Duparc and Jean-Pierre Lefebvre worked together. Editor, producer and director, they combined the responsibilities of their production company Cinak, inspiring many young filmmakers to get on with it and make films with personal expression. Her death in March was sorely felt. Carole Langlois, responsible for French Production at the Canadian Film Development Corp., remembers.

In February 1981, Marguerite and I met to discuss Cinak’s film projects. As usual, she was handling the difficult financing aspects of Cinak’s activities. She summing up the responsibilities of the company. Cinak, inspired many young filmmakers to get on with it and make films. Her death was sorely felt. Carole Langlois, responsible for French Production at the Canadian Film Development Corp., remembers.

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Marguerite Duparc was a visionary filmmaker, a true pioneer in the Canadian film industry. Her work was ahead of its time and her influence on the Canadian film scene is immeasurable. She was a true icon of the Canadian film industry and her legacy will continue to inspire future filmmakers for years to come.
little analysis of what our cinema was trying to do in the 1960s and how it should or should not differ now. There is very little reflection on the practices and the effects of the policies of the CFDC (Canadian Film Development Corporation) and the Quebec Film Institute, or even on the eternal life of the NFB. Unfortunately today the public and even film students do not know much about films of Jutra, Grous, Carle, Perrault, but of course they know all the American and French directors. I have no desire to be nostalgic about the past, but we have to be conscious of the history of our cinema, to have a clear idea of what its future could be.

Susan Barrowclough: How have the federal funding policies of the CFDC and tax-shelter investment affected the type of film now being made in Quebec?

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: We are now in a situation in which tax-shelter investment has taken all the power out of the hands of the filmmakers and put it into the hands of the producers. The investors don't care what sort of films are made; they have made a profit even if the production deal is never made into a film. However, you have to remember that few films are made with tax-shelter money in Quebec than in English Canada, as Quebecois culture is considered marginal and has much smaller potential markets than so-called Canadian films in English which are very often just bad copies of American movies. At the same time tax-shelter films are made in Quebec - in English and usually with Montreal as a stand-in for New York, for example with Patricia, Jean-Héroux. Quebec's biggest commercial producer who does arrange tax-shelter productions, makes films that have very little to do with Quebec and are on the whole aimed at the French market. The cultural references of the CFDC bureaucrats and of tax-shelter producers are those of Hollywood and Los Angeles.

Susan Barrowclough: Given the sort of international packaged films that the CFDC has helped produce in recent years, how have you managed to get financial assistance from them for five films?

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: When the CFDC started in 1968, we had already made five features and had a certain kind of credibility. In their first year the CFDC used a cultural gesture by granting us a prime à la qualité, a prize or bonuses amounting to $100,000 for what they called quality films, rather like the system in Sweden (which by the way, Bergman would never have been able to go on making films). We received $14,000 for 1° ne faut pas Mourir pour ça, 1° Avoir 16 ans, 1° Rimbaud, 1° Les fleurs sauvages and 1° Générations. That was the key to the future of Quebec's cinema and of the French language cinema in Canada.

Susan Barrowclough: In what sorts of cinema have your films been shown?

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: A lot of them have opened in small cinemas in Montreal (salles parallèles), but they have also been shown in schools, universities and in small, communal places in the country. I have spent a lot of time travelling with my films and discussing them with people - that is what I like doing most. For instance with my last film, Avant seize ans, we couldn't find anyone here to release it commercially, so we toured cinemas in Montreal and it played for sixteen nights and it did well. Each screening was accompanied by an animator and there were wonderful discussions afterwards between parents and children. Since then we have had a lot of bookings on the film, mostly in venues that involve discussion. There was a time when many Quebecois films were shown in cinemas and on television and a good audience was growing. slowly but worthwhile. The people used to tell me that Raoul's Les ordres and our Les dernières fiancées were very important in re-building the audience here for Quebecois films. They have helped us to produce our own films and also some of the best films in Canada and the US have been made in Quebec.

Susan Barrowclough: And if the producers in Quebec had been in power they would have done so little to improve the situation in arts in Quebec. They have not increased the institutions' resources or made any gesture towards legislation or quotas, etc. So that is the key to the future of Quebec's cinema is to be found in either large or small cinemas. Jobs, luck. I think that is essential to Morocco films and to one's knowledge of the film industry.

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: We have gone on making films in the same way as everybody else making them here ten years ago. The CFDC is now an institution which could give us money, so we took our pocket money and began to work together with friends like the people from the French work. We have had production deadlines at Cinak because we knew we didn't want to become big and we wanted to find something to do in the past, no money at all, and I don't think the key to the future of Quebec's cinema is to be found in either large or small cinemas. Jobs, luck. I think that is essential to Morocco films and to one's knowledge of the film industry.

Susan Barrowclough: Finally, how do you manage to continue to produce and make your films?

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Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: Filmography

Le révolutionnaire - 1965
Patricia et Jean-Baptiste - 1966
Mon oeil - 1966
Il ne faut pas mourir pour ça - 1967
Man amie Pierreette - 1967
Jusqu'au coeur - 1968
La chambre blanche - 1969
Avoir 16 ans - 1970
Les maudits sauvages - 1971
L'imam - 1971
On n'engraisse pas les cochons - 1972
Les fleurs sauvages - 1975
L'amour bleue - 1975
Le gars des vues - 1975
Rimbaud, 1° Les fleurs sauvages - 1977
Avoir 16 ans - 1978
Les maudits sauvages - 1981

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