Claude Fournier's

Bonheur d'occasion

It's the easiest thing in the world to dismiss Bonheur d'occasion (The Tin Flute) as just another six-handkerchief Flute. It's the easiest thing in the world to trust, learns that when you're poor, life isn't about what you want, it's about what you can get. But when you come right down to it, there is a film about the poor and not a triumph.

Marilyn Lightstone, who plays Florentine's mother with decidedly mixed and bathetic results, has been cackling to the press about the movie's reception at the Moscow Film Festival earlier this summer. The Soviets thought Bonheur d'occasion was portraying present-day Canada. "I thought it appealed to the Russians," Lightstone said, "because they like to see North Americans in pain." She went on to say that an introduction was added to the film to explain to Moscow audiences that it does not depict current conditions. Maybe that's true, maybe families of ten no longer live in slum conditions in St. Henri. For that maybe you have to travel farther east to say, the Centre-Sud district, where the average yearly income for a family of four is $7000 and where life expectancy is ten years less than on the western end of the Island of Montreal. In another 40 or so years, maybe someone will make a movie about that.

Will Aitken


When Circle of Two was finally shown, after several false starts, on CBC's winter series of Canadian films, it is not the end of the rather sorry history of the Film Consortium of Canada. The hopes engendered six years ago after the attempt to adapt Marie-Terese Baird's novel to the screen and the failure of Bill Marshall and Henk Van Der Korl would be the bright lights of the English-language film boom, have been proven to be yet another of the many mirages that came and went in those years. In fact, Circle of Two stands as a prime example of what went wrong.

The first, and perhaps the most basic mistake the producers made was to attempt to adapt Marie-Terese Baird's novel to the screen at all. This was a book about which reviewers used words like "wooden," "unbelievable," and "preposterous" with considerable frequency. And it has achieved a best-seller status that could offset these negative comments.

Then there was Tom Hedley's script. He did a dismaying job of reducing the story from the provincial town of Windsor in England (best known as the site of a major royal castle) to Toronto, and then Hedley did something else. He made a Hollywood movie out of it. But Hedley is something of an incurable romantic in genres where sentimentality prevails. Hedley, as the scripts say, is a man of the world, of the wittily insouciant that won her the Academy award, and the erstwhile boyfriend, gets into a fight with Sarah, who fractures her skull. For some reason, Ashley is fascinated by this superficially precocious girl, and she agrees to sit for her. Sarah, meanwhile, works overtime trying to seduce the reticent painter, Paul, the erstwhile boyfriend, gets into a fight with Sarah, who fractures his skull. Sarah's parents, who consider Ashley just a dirty old man, lock Ashley in her room, where she goes into a deep depression. Eventually Ashley and Sarah reunite, but are forced to admit the end of their platonic relationship.

With Circle of Two, as it were, we watch the story of a family of four is $7000 and where life expectancy is ten years less than on the western end of the Island of Montreal. In another 40 or so years, maybe someone will make a movie about that.

I was going to say that the movie's plods along so reverently that it makes me think of the movies St. Henri now looks much as it must have appeared in 1945, since it harkened back to the style and values of the social realism of the previous decade, with its dogged, uninspired prose and over-energeticism.

The movie plods along so reverently, with little attempt to high-school lit teachers throughout the nation to elevate it to classic status. The book must have seemed old-fashioned even when it first appeared in 1945, since it harkened back to the style and values of the social realities of the previous decade, with its dogged, uninspired prose and over-energeticism.

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