

Jean-Daniel Lafond's

Les Traces du rêve

The screen is white with snow. Soon a heavy figure emerges from the white space. The camera zooms in on a man who fills the frame. The man is one of Quebec's leading filmmakers, Pierre Perrault, who this time does not hold a camera. Perrault plods through the woods imposing himself as the master. It is not by mere chance that the director, Jean-Daniel Lafond, lets us hear his subject; voice first. Perrault's poetic narration invites us to share his dream of giving back Quebec's tradition to real people in real places. It is a dream which *Les Traces du rêve* captures.

In the style of Perrault, who gives the Québécois people the opportunity to speak out, Lafond traces Perrault's persona through the years. The spoken word dominates the images in *Les Traces du rêve* as in Perrault's own work. Jean-Daniel Lafond translates his own idea of what Pierre Perrault is all about – the filmmaker, the poet, the nationalist. Perrault is filmed with critics, philosophers, writers, poets, musicians, actors and friends. Lafond provokes reactions in Perrault, reactions which contribute to the tracing of his own portrait.

Twenty years separate *Pour la suite du monde* (1963) from *La Bête lumineuse* (1983). Throughout his work, the theme of men (not women!) in communion with nature remains constant. *Les Traces du rêve* celebrates Perrault's ideas. Lafond presents the filmmaker in tune with the environment, whether it be the woods or the Saint-Lawrence River.

The director takes pleasure in contrasting the hunter's bonds with nature to the jungle of sun-bleached Cannes where *La Bête lumineuse* (1983) is premiered. Neon signs flash the names of Lefebvre, Godard, and Carle one after the other. Perrault's name is not in lights. Perrault explains that he has nothing to do with Cannes ("Je sais que j'ai rien à voir la...") where the audience dwindles from an attendance of 2,000 to 500 people as *La Bête lumineuse* unfolds. The pretentious talk of the French radio commentator underlines the hypocrisy of the whole ratrace of Cannes.

Lafond moves Perrault back and forth from the social uproar of Cannes to his cabin back home with his friends. Through the clips of *Pour la suite du monde* and *La Bête lumineuse*, he gives Perrault back his vital space. Conscious of the importance of words in Perrault's films, the director chooses to show some of the subtitled clips from *La Bête lumineuse*'s original version.

Lafond describes how Perrault does not translate the Québécois language into international French, but writes down the exact words spoken by the men. The subtitles heighten the linguistic differences between France and Quebec.

In *Les Traces du rêve*, Lafond films Stéphane-Albert and Maurice – the

crossbows of *La Bête lumineuse* – together with their former director and friend. Lafond hunts the hunter, filming Perrault as his main character. Yet, true to his nature as organizer, Perrault still remains in control. *Les Traces du rêve* revolves around the path which Perrault decides to follow. Inside the cabin sitting at the end of the table surrounded by his friends, the filmmaker philosophizes on success and failure. In contrast with Cannes, where the artist adopts an intellectual discourse, Perrault talks simply with his friends, no longer needing to justify himself.

Having worked extensively in radio, Jean-Daniel Lafond, a philosopher himself, is naturally drawn, like Perrault, to human speech. Furthermore, Lafond's cinematic technique goes to the extent of adopting Perrault's own visual style of cinema direct.

From Cannes to the woods, we are then taken on a ferryboat to l'Île-aux-Coudres. The philosophic Michel Serres, and the poetic Michel Garneau are also part of the voyage. Lafond discovers the past in Perrault's films, and compares it to the present of l'Île-aux-Coudres. Focusing on Pierre Perrault's trilogy where l'Île-aux-Coudres is the theater, Lafond avoids Perrault's more controversial films set in the '70s: *L'Acadie, L'Acadie*, (1971 – with Michel Brault). *Un Royaume vous attend* (1975), and *Le Goût de la farine* (1977). Jumping back and forth between two decades, Lafond uses Léopold Tremblay (one of the men portrayed in Perrault's trilogy) as a link between the '60s and the present.

Things haven't changed profoundly on the island which is still haunted by the Lenten masquerades when the snow melts away.

Lafond reveals an increasingly clearer portrait of Pierre Perrault, cutting back and forth from the men's conversation with Léopold Tremblay to Perrault's earlier films: *Les Voitures d'eau* (1969), *Le Règne du jour* (1969), *C'était un Québécois en Bretagne, Madame*, (1977), and *Un Pays sans bon sens* (1969). Perrault's major film, *Pour la suite du monde*, appears constantly at different intervals in the film. The filmmaker's career is rooted in his love for people like Grand Louis, Alexis and Marie Tremblay. Perrault wants to make his films live vehicles for the Québécois, teaching them about themselves and giving them the will to preserve their heritage without reconstructing it as a folkloric commodity.

Lafond follows in Perrault's footsteps, hinting at Quebec's nationalist movement. Michel Serres' vivid oral expres-

sion together with Perrault's living documents voice the fundamental similarities and differences between Quebec and sacrosanct France. Lafond's clips of *Le Règne du jour*, *C'était un Québécois en Bretagne*, *Madame*, and *Un Pays sans bon sens* show France as the everlasting myth of an all powerful and rich *mère patrie*. Perrault's characters, Alexis and Marie Tremblay, are more than images glued in a family album; they speak of the contradiction inherent in Québécois culture.

Les Traces du rêve is one of the rare filmic biographies produced about one of the major filmmakers of the National Film Board. Is *Les Traces du rêve* an attempt to immortalize an important artist or is it aimed at reviving a (dying?) national consciousness amongst Québécois in the Bourassa era? – This is difficult to say.

It would have been easy for Lafond to be content with a static heroic tableau of Pierre Perrault hunting images. What makes *Les Traces du rêve* interesting is that we watch Perrault evolve from beginning to end. Perhaps Lafond was aware that from the idealized opening portrait, Perrault increasingly becomes a vulnerable human being. Pierre Perrault is led to participate in his own analysis, questioning himself and his work. The conclusion is nostalgic, and has the feel of a despairing testament.

In the last scene of the film, Perrault describes his admiration for human speech and his amazement at men's indifference to it. *Les Traces du rêve* is a challenge to that indifference.

Marika Csánó •

LES TRACES DU RÊVE d. Jean-Daniel Lafond p. Jacques Vallée, e. Babalou Hamelin d.o.p. Martin Leclerc sd. concept. Jean-Daniel Lafond, Babalou Hamelin sd. mix Michel Motard electro. ac. comp. Francis Dhomot elect. co-ord. Edouard Davidovitch cam. Michel Naud in Cannes, François Beauchemin on the river cam. asst. Carol Jarry, Michel Motard lights Denis Baril sd. Yves Gendron, Claude Beaugrand à Cannes mix Hans Peter Strobl sd. mix Michel Motard credits/titles Louise Overy archives Société Radio-Canada narr. Jean-Daniel Lafond admin. Jacqueline Rivest, Gaëtan Martel Film made thanks to the collaboration of Pierre Perrault, Stéphane-Albert Boulais, Maurice Chailot, Léopold Tremblay. The film was made with the participation of Louis Marcorelles, Janine Baron, Patrick Sabatier, Serge Gainsbourg. Extracts from the following Pierre Perrault films: "Pour la suite du monde, Le règne du jour, Les Boitures d'eau, Un pays sans bon sens, C'était un Québécois en Bretagne, Madame!, La Bête lumineuse song "La chanson de Marie" sung by Monique Miville-Deschênes and Jacques Douai. Special thanks to Yolande et Mathieu Perrault, Hélène et Jacques Pelletier-Baillargeon, Michèle Levieux, Pierre Le Moine, F-J Temple, Pierre Pitiot, Henri Talvat, Cinéma Le Club à Montpellier. French consulate in Montreal, Minister of Exterior Affairs p.c. Produced and distributed by the National Film Board. color 16mm, 3/4" U-matic video, 1/2" VHS and Beta running time 95 minutes 22 sec.

André Mélançon's

Bach et Bottine

André Mélançon's *Bach et Bottine* starts with a dream. On the soundtrack we hear the voice of a little girl who tells us that her name is Fanny and that she has lost her parents but that she is less sad at night. On the screen we get a long-shot of a wide field of snow populated only by the small figure of a little girl dressed in red. Out of the distance, a man and a woman on horseback appear dressed all in white. Magically one of the horses turns into a piano which the woman plays as the man dances with the little girl. A silent fairy tale world is created but the magic is abruptly broken by a close-up of the young girl in bed as she wakes up from her dream.

Through her conversation with her grandmother, we learn that the child's parents are dead and that now that the grandmother is sick, Fanny will have to go and live with Jean-Claude, who is vaguely referred to as her "uncle." Thus, in the first 10 minutes, the basic situation of the film is set up – an orphan child in search of a home and the possibility of a "family". The next scene shows us Jean-Claude at an office party where children and their antics seem to predominate. But Jean-Claude, a typical aging bachelor, is unable to relate to them and is only concerned with his music and being able to devote himself to it during the coming year.

What is a children's film? How would one define it and what is its purpose? The obvious examples are the Walt Disney films which have dominated our screens. But children's films are made all over the world and, in the socialist countries, special attention is paid to their production and distribution. Like any form of entertainment, they can also have educational value, aiding children in their psychological development and helping them to cope with the world. Bruno Bettelheim, the renowned American psychologist, assigned this role to children's fairy tales. Films are also a mass medium and, as such, are vehicles for the values and ideologies particular to their culture. Unfortunately, in Quebec and Canada, there has not been much support for children's films. Except for Rock Demers' *Tales For All* series, for which *Bach et Bottine* is the third of seven projected films (the previous two are Mélançon's *La Guerre des tuques* and Michael Rubbo's *The Peanut Butter Solution*), much of the work in this area has been done specifically for television.

It seems to me that one of the crucial ingredients of a children's film is seeing the world from a child's point-of-view – children make little distinction between the real world and the world of the imagination. This is immediately evident in *Bach et Bottine*. Fanny is quickly defined by her interactions with her grandmother and her environment. In some ways she resembles the heroine of the Swedish books and films,

• Pierre Perrault chasing traces of a dream

