



• On the road to see the shape of things to come

Tahani Rached's **Rends-moi mon pays**

Papa Loko speaks of his seven years in prison during the Duvalier regime: "To endure torture one must have faith in the future," he says, recalling his days in Fort Dimanche where 30,000 people died. In Haiti, the future is now, and there is a clean-up underway. Tahani Rached's film, **Rends-moi mon pays**, documents it. A symbolic scene reveals the slow chipping away of an enormous stone sculpture which reads, "Vive President Duvalier." Men hack in the sun. Fine, white, stone dust is in the air, creating a cloud on the green mountain where those words disappear.

Replacing the old words are new ones such as, "Bam Pay A" ("Give me back my country"). There is singing and chanting in the streets. These are the moments after the fall of Duvalier. Rached has used them to construct the portrait of Yves Flavien, who left Haiti to come to Canada 20 years ago. Flavien, who participated in the strikes of 1960-61 as a member of the national union of Haitian students, was imprisoned and later hid for five years. He was on Duvalier's hit list.

Flavien takes the first plane back to Haiti after Duvalier leaves. He meets friends at the airport. The film follows up by recording further meetings with these friends. During the strikes, they worked together. Now they talk about their country's changes. One of Flavien's friends refers to this period in Haiti as the *nouvelle apprentissage*, where people are learning the new voice of democracy — the old monologue of the dictator is gone.

In Haiti, the members of the Administrative Council are linked directly to the old regime. Alix Cineas is one of the many whose power has not shifted as a result of Duvalier's departure. He holds keys in his hand and knows the past. The people mistrust him so they're on

the street, making noise, gathering to compare lists on how (who) to clean up, how to take control of the machine. Rached records conversations that draw the issues concerning the popular revolt to the foreground. "Those who eat well, mock the people," says Papa Loko. "What we need to do is send the kids to school, to feed them."

Loko's analysis shows that the country's agriculture needs aid from other countries. Arms are not needed. He believes that the police/army must disband: his family talks about the threats they pose — how they might kill you for your TV.

The film observes, it does not investigate the post-Duvalier administrative, social and economic power relationships. If it did, we would have a greater insight into the transitional period. Instead, Rached has used Flavien's voyages throughout Haiti as the film's motivating force. His voice-over narration describes his respect for the people who have survived. He recognizes that there is at least a generation's work to be done before they will come close to their dreams.

Flavien, like many other returned exiles, is insecure about his position in Haiti. He returns to Cayes, the city of his birth, and talks to one of the medical doctors in that region. Ideally, Flavien would like to practise his psychiatric profession there. But the area is so impoverished that the 10 doctors working for the population of 60,000 can barely make a living at their work. Furthermore, there seems to be little demand for a visiting psychiatrist when the people's needs are met by local voodoo healers.

Flavien confronts the dilemma facing many Haitians at this point in their history: the desire to return to the homeland and partake in their country's restructuring conflicts with their recent past. Flavien's family and practice are in Canada. He now searches for his place in Haiti.

By focusing on only one man's journey and search for answers, the film neglects the larger, critical issues confronting contemporary Haiti. For example, it does not address the Haitian communities outside of Haiti, which participated in the Haitian rebellion. What are their strategies? The confines of the

film's narrative structure preclude examination of other popular revolutions which could offer lessons or examples.

Portraits like **Rends-moi mon pays** confirm the spirit of the people and celebrate their victory with them. Beyond the dance is the dream. But before that dream can be realized there is much work to be done. Rached's film shies away from this hard, work-oriented reality — because it's too overwhelming to face?

Patricia Kearns •

RENDS-MOI MON PAYS d. Tahani Rached asst. d. Bernadette Maugile d.o.p. Jacques Leduc sd. Esther Auger, Yves Gendron ed. Monique Fortier sd. ed. Suzanne Bouilly mix Jean-Pierre Joutel, Shelley Craig admin Nicole Coté exec. p. Guy L. Coté colour 16mm running time 51 min. 2 sec.

Helen Doyle's

Le Rêve de voler

Trapeze artists acting out a kind of theatre of allegory, limbs akimbo between reality and dream, mythology and song?

Yes! It all seems to work in this delicious and amazing little film by burgeoning young filmmaker Helen Doyle. **Le Rêve de voler**, carrying that rarely seen label of 'documentary-fiction', takes us through the creative and physical process of a theatrical company of trapeze-artists, molding and performing a highly stylized airborne choreography in which fabulous beings and symbolic winged creatures struggle for liberation, coexistence and the triumph of life over death.

The film is distinctly split into two parts. First, the painstaking preparation — young people training for the demanding art of trapeze. Difficult movements tried, missed, tried again until gotten right; performing dangerous stunts high above ground and without a net. They share insights and the creative process as they sit in circles, discussing

• The dream of flying in *Rêve*



myths such as Icarus. Their words, their work, their calloused, straining flesh, the way they are lit and photographed, reflect a firm grip on reality.

Then there is the performance: highly stylized, shot in grandiloquent visuals, full of theatric and cinematic effects, lyrical and surrealistic. All is soft fluttering of wings, bright with the interplay of colour. The grace of the aerial ballet is stunning.

In the production, a wandering, sightless 'poet' sings their mythic song, but it is Doyle's direction that renders the ode cinematic. Her background in video may be responsible for the film's TV-generation pace, with quick-cuts and a preference for style over substance, but it is quite the *tour de force* nonetheless. Its single greatest flaw, the difficult melding of the two parts, tends to emphasize the pitfall of jumping straight from a narrative firmly anchored in reality to one of fantasy, where we must suspend the real world for one that is artistically artificial. When watching a ballet, for example, the audience does not wish to know the difficulty of its staging, or the physical preparation of the dancers, or the reasons for the selection of the story. All that is perhaps 'interesting', but it detracts from the perfection of the moment, the ecstasy of the dance.

Though this film may sound esoteric in nature, full of strangeness and cryptic imagery, its effect is actually quite simple and straightforward — like the myths it is loosely based on. If the language of mysticism was born in pre-rational cultures to explain complex issues in simple terms, then **Le Rêve de voler** speaks that language to a 20th-century video generation. That it does so well is all that really matters.

André Guy Arsenault •

LE RÊVE DE VOLER p. Lucille Veilleux d/sc. Helen Doyle a.d. Nicole Giguère orig. idea Hélène Doyle choreog. Lorraine Desmarais d.o.p. Alain Dupras 2nd. unit cam. Eric Cayla ed. Dominique Sicotte ds. Diane Carrière cost. Mérédith Caron masks Karine Lépp orig. mus. René Dupéré voices and spfx Sylvie Tremblay lyrics to "Chanson du poète" Jocelyne Corbeil narr. Christiane Duchesne l.p. Lorraine Desmarais, Marie-Thérèse Lessard, Michel Jodoin, Roger Vallée, Katy Tremblay, Hélène Turcotte, Jocelyne Corbeil, Lorne Brass, Juan Saavedra produced by Vent d'Est Inc. With financial participation from Telefilm Canada, Société générale du cinéma du Québec and Radio-Québec. Distributed by Cinéma Libre. color 16mm running time 53 min.