

Jean-Guy Noël's
Tinamer

Jean-Guy Noël uses film to play with the dimensions of time and space in *Tinamer*, a feature fiction film inspired by the novel *L'Amelanchier* by Jacques Ferron. The adult Tinamer is given the chance, on the day of her mother's burial, to console the child Tinamer (Sarah-Jeanne Salvy) by visiting her at her father's burial years before. Dipping into the past, the film becomes flashback.

This structure, which gives memory an active present, seems fitting for a film which is mostly concerned with the workings of the unconscious and conscious. In fact, the film could almost be used as a beginner's guide to Freud. The characters seem at times carton-like, embodiments of psychoanalytic thought; the film addressing or undressing, as the case may be, major Freudian tenets. Within the first five minutes of the film the spectator sees Tinamer undress as a woman and as a child. These two classic voyeur shots introduce the character to us; as a woman Tinamer stands in front of a mirror, the camera keeps a respectable or safe distance from her naked body. With a medium long shot the gaze is fixed on the double image of Tinamer at the looking glass. Satisfying further what Freud called scopophilia, the desire for pleasure through looking, we are shown the child through her bedroom window. The screen is completely dark except for a rectangle of light in which Tinamer changes clothes. Tinamer's status as object of the gaze seems well in place; the soundtrack, too, creates her subordinate position. As the child dresses, a voice is heard off-screen calling, "Tinamer, Tinamer, what are you doing? Hurry up."

Tinamer scurries toward the voice of the Father, Leon di Portanquo (Gilles Vigneault), she is off to watch the moon's eclipse with him. Running through the house the child is intercepted by Mother (Louise Portal) who makes sure Tinamer puts on a sweater so as not to catch cold. Mother's role as Guardian of the Mundane begins here, taking on larger proportions throughout the narrative until finally it comes into direct opposition with the role of the Father. Etna's (Mother) character is pretty one-dimensional and doesn't allow for interesting acting to develop or be exposed.

Leon holds the telescope and from behind it explains to Tinamer about the dark side of the moon, that area beyond their home and garden, from which he saved her mother, the city. He points the viewing device and lets Tinamer look, but it is his sights which she must see, his imagination she must embrace, for as he tells her it is not only his name that a father passes on to his child or the color of his eyes, but his dreams. Leon is an eccentric and passionate person whose egocentricities create havoc for his



Pre-school anxiety hits new heights for Sarah Jeanne Salvy

family. When Tinamer discovers through spying that her father is not the bank robber he has always proclaimed to her to be, she is devastated. Vigneault brings a charm to this character who could very easily have been bothersome at the least.

Dreaming is given a major place within the film; it is the child's dreams we see. They fill the screen with color and light; the animation and special effects were done by Michel Murray. The dream is central to the film as it is Leon's will that Tinamer successfully tame her childhood dreams and use them to create a strong sense of herself before venturing out to that dark side of the moon, represented for the child by school. The film's story focuses on Tinamer's desire, despite her father's continuous disapproval, to go to school. She begs her father to let her go. He responds with one condition; she must swear to bring him a branch from a special tree which grows in the depths of their woods. Only then will she have made the necessary passage and be allowed to go to school. Tinamer resists at first, calling her father mean for making her go into the scary woods all alone, but finally she agrees, raises her right hand and swears.

Despite the dream's centrality to the film (Tinamer's search for the branch is a dream odyssey), the actual integration of these animated sequences is awkward. What might have been part of a whole texture feels like a separate and secondary adjunct. The content of the dreams pushes for Freudian interpretation;

this reduces the potential for richness through the very obvious. Tinamer gallops through the woods in her search for the tree. This scene uses particularly beautiful filter work in day for night shooting, creating a haunting oneiric effect. The soundtrack is filled with panting and moaning, finally she comes upon the primal scene, her parents copulating, reproducing their little "becassine", as her mother explains to the shocked child.

Other special effects have difficulty in becoming smoothly integrated into the film. An interesting choreographed crowd scene is used to emphasize social pressure on the individual to conform to society's laws. As Tinamer's mother marches her to school, in her father's absence, a host of people follow her, ensuring Tinamer's delivery. They enter, the film is specially color treated to produce a monotone effect, but these citizens are gone before we really sense their presence. Somehow we realize their symbolic importance in the scene but their hurried disappearance diminishes their part in this crucial point of the film.

It is here where Mother decides to act. Fed up with her husband's refusal to send Tinamer to school, she takes matters into hand and tells her daughter that school is a moral and social obligation to which each individual must submit. Tinamer's response is full of more clues to the Freudian life puzzle. Turning away from her mother and hoping for her father to rescue her, Tinamer is taking the supposed healthy and

right course of action for a young girl. The film follows this through to the end of the story where Tinamer resolves her childhood pain and anger; the camera pans up from the family house of memory to the endless sky of possibilities.

Patricia Kearns ●

TINAMER p. René Gueissaz d./sc. Jean-Guy Noël. Based on the novel *The Juneberry Tree* by Jacques Ferron. d.o.p. François Beauchemin art d. François Lamontagne, Claire Alary anim./sp. fx. Michel Murray, NFB French animation studio ed. Jean-Guy Montpetit mus. Galt MacDermot p. dir. Danny Chalifour assoc. p. Louise Gendron, Francine Morin, Pierre Latour exec. p. Marc Daigle, René Malo 1st a.d. Carle Delarochette-Vernet 2nd. n.d. Michèle Houle cont. Marie Beaulieu 1st asst. cam. Seraphin Bouchard 2nd asst. cam. Claude Brasseur wescam op. Hans Bjerno stills photo. Pierre Dury set coord. Carole Dubuc, Louise Pilon prop master Bruno Lahaye ext. props Gilles Ducas set asst. Claude Dumas, Marie Dumas makeup Mikie Hamilton makeup asst. Suzanne Poisson hair Sylvain Doyon hair asst. André Bouchard, Rosalind Lavemen cost. des. Brigitte Lair cost. des. asst. Lucie Giasson dresser Marianne Carter sd. eng. Marcel Fraser boom op. Marcel Chouinard chief elec. Pierre Provost, Gilles Mayer elec. Jacques Gauthier, Bill Melouin, Robert Matziget, Guy Remillard key grip Johnny Daoust grip Robert Auclair asst. ed. Anne-Marie Leduc set unit man. Alain Labrosse, Robert Giroux loc. unit man. Michel Boyer, Carole Legault, Paul Bujold p. asst. Réjean Tendland, Catherine Thabourin, André Dupuis line p. (NFB) Monique Letourneau adm. (NFB) Nicole Charlebois NFB French animation studio prod. team: opt. fx. coord. Georges Mauro anim. Elaine Despains, Michèle Pauzé exec. p. Robert Forget p. Yves Leduc. l.p. Gilles Vigneault, Louise Portal, Sarah Jeanne Salvy. Produced by ACPAV and the Malofilm Group in association with the NFB. Colour, 35 mm, running time 85 min.