Hubert Yves Rose’s
La Ligne de Chaleur

La Ligne de Chaleur is a deeply satisfying film that owes its critical success in equal measure to its direction, writing, acting and the filmmaking integrity of the Association coopérative de productions audio-visuelles (ACPAV). It is a modestly budgeted film (at $1.3 million) that will not make big bucks at the box office but neither do we live in a perfect world. With the exception of minor roles played by Pat Phillips, Lorena Gale, Charlotte Bonnet and Charlotte Lebeau, you will not find women in this film or popular indulgences like sex, violence and exotic locations that drive male fantasies.

Rather, La Ligne de Chaleur stands as a reminder to the filmmaking community of what can be achieved with a talented cast and crew and the will to make a good film. In a word the film is “intense”, with a dark pall hanging over it. It proceeds in whispered tones yet there is much unspoken emotion. It is an evocative film about the estranged relationship between father and son, a classical relationship that Rose treats with admirable subtlety and respect.

The story opens on a Montreal snowstorm. Robert Filion (Gabriel Arcand) is obliged to travel south where he must identify the body of his father who has died of a sudden heart attack in a Florida resort. Robert’s parents have been separated for years just as Robert is separated from his wife and son Maxim (Simon Gonzales) who is reunited with his father for the trip.

Father and son get along well during the first sunny day on the Florida beach. They share a kindred sense of trust while living in the deceased’s beach apartment. Here, for a brief moment, the old man is dead (long live the old man!) and everything is peachy.

La Ligne de Chaleur, the road movie, begins after the body has been shipped north by train, to be buried. Father and son, who have not planned this trip, follow in the deceased’s car to find that the coastal road through Florida, the Carolinas, Georgia and Virginia is lined with overbooked motels. As they drive north, the rooms they do find become darker and colder as does the relationship between father and son. This relationship finally breaks down on the “heat line” (La Ligne de Chaleur) where the warm weather meets the northern cold front. What was once a breezy beach apartment has gradually become a low-level roadside motel where father and son face, indeed attempt to exercise, the fears and anxiety inherent in their relationship. Thus, what had appeared early in the story to be an awkward but not unusual father-son relationship requiring a period of requalification, becomes something much more menacing.

Norman G. Simpson (Gerard Parkes) is a charmingly nice, retired journalist who is working on a photo essay called “Motels and the Decline of Adventure”. He is a key character, a simple-happy-go-lucky individual engendering all the characteristics of someone on permanent vacation (a large percentage of Florida’s winter-time population). Maxim is fascinated by this old wizard to whom he can talk regardless of language differences, but Robert cannot put enough distance between himself and Simpson.

Robert chooses not to like this older man who appears to want to play the role of his father. His tolerance of Simpson does not improve even after we learn that Simpson is dying of a terminal illness and is lonely.

By, in effect, bringing Robert’s father back to life to show the continuity of the father-son relationship through the years and from generation to generation, Rose and co-writer Micheline Lantoc underscores the complexity of such a relationship.

Guilt, a product of his relationship with his late father and feelings of inadequacy as a father, culminates in Robert’s dark – albeit drunken – night of the soul.

Here, on the heat line, in the Motel Drama, Robert/Maxim (Gabriel Arcand, Maxime Simard) and everything is peachy.

La Ligne de Chaleur is like attending your own funeral. It should not be missed. You will marvel at what you learn about relationships you thought you had pegged.

Jean Chantele

Bruce Elder’s
Consolations (Love is Art of Time) Part III: The Body and the World

“Well this is a mission and I do hope to say that Western concepts of romance have driven us into an absolutely extreme situation – a situation that threatens life on this planet, actually. And these films are partly a call to recognize this extreme condition.”

(Bruce Elder, Cinema Canada #124.)

It’s a small word, but it means a lot, “us.” In the above quote it seems to me to be the key to understanding Bruce Elder’s recent film work. Though the quote is taken from an interview conducted after the completion of Elder’s Lamentations, it remains applicable to The Body and the World, and sums up what I believe to be that film’s central issue – community.

The Body and the World is the last film in the Consolations trilogy, a 14-hour experimental work completed this year. Elder describes Consolations as being about “resentment and its overcoming, that is, about the overcoming of the past that was created by the layers of re-feeling to reclaim the original sentiment – nostalgia.”

Instead of rejecting totalizing forces, The Body and the World works elaborately in a wished for but never realized unity with a whole host of others, among them women, tropical cultures and the landscape. And the film’s strategies – epic length, extensive quotation, avant-garde formal practices, “essential” concerns (being, knowing, living, existing, etc.) – allow it to take on the guise of universality, certainly of Significance. The film presents such exhaustive “evidence” and clanks itself so completely in the path of Western intellectual avant-gardes that it forges its status as the product of a single

A drunken Robert (Gabriel Arcand) struggles to communicate with his son Maxim (Simon Gonzales) in La Ligne de Chaleur.