

out sometimes. But with him – it's all the time.

So they get married and he treats her abominably – he even throws knives at her! She is fascinated, of course. So she has children, and she is really getting it, and she's still 18 or 19. But then she gets pretty sick. He finally finds her a doctor who is an old friend of his. They used to be friends at college and used to play chess. The doctor is an American who has come to Canada. And she falls madly in love with the doctor. But – she falls in love because she knows that she will be able to use him, to manipulate him . . . And he falls for her. Everybody falls for her – she is like an angel! She just has to lift her little finger and they all say 'yes'. Finally, they kill the husband, le Seigneur de Kamouraska; and once he's dead, well, that's it towards the doctor.

That's really not what the film is about, but that is the first story line. Elisabeth just can't let go. That's why she has a beautiful relationship with a girl of her age who is her maid all her life – but a friend, or sister. She *manipulates* that maid! The maid is the *spirit* – she smokes, has a pipe and God knows what's in that pipe! Walks barefoot (in those days!) and her hair is mangled. Elisabeth spots her fast when she is 15. We have flashes of when they are 15 or 13 and she zooms in on her. The aunts are saying, "You can't have her in the house. She is dirty and has a bad reputation!" Presumably, she lives with her uncle, but God knows if he is her uncle or not. Anyway, she says, "I want her here." She moves in, of course, and goes through torment with Elisabeth.

Elisabeth sends her first to kill the husband. To poison him. (After being married to him she can't stand him.) So again, the family comes and brings her back and the guy follows also. But they throw him out because he wants his woman and he is crazy, but he is beautiful. I think Elisabeth loved the husband, not the lover. It is so complicated. So when she finds herself at 40, she has the same dream every day. She relives those four years. She has no more hope – at 40 that's it. She's been passed by. She wanted it all, but she didn't go all the way. That's where I think we are at. We stop. We can't get any further. We won't do it – the last step. Or the first one? The one that counts.

*That sounds fascinating. The character reminds me a little bit of several Québécoise characters I've seen in films. Especially the woman in "Le Viol d'Une Jeune Fille Douce," the woman who is so totally passive, that she watches herself living her life. Watches herself doing things, without ever really doing them.*

Well that is what Elisabeth is. She is not an active character. She provokes things in people, she makes things happen. Not so much consciously. She is just that kind of being that says things and suddenly – emotions start going. She has got eyes all along her head. She reacts but she won't go and do it. She doesn't kill the husband, but she makes sure he gets killed. All the things I've said about *Kamouraska* are not necessarily in the right order. You might find it hard to follow the thread. But it's also my first big part in French. When I say big part – Elisabeth is the spine of that novel. The spine of that film. It's in French and it's really good. I was really due for that. The pregnancy had been going on for a long time. I really hope French Canadian women look at it with clear eyes, and aren't afraid to say "Yes. It's a mirror of what we are."

*Why especially French-Canadian women?*

I say Québécoise because they are the ones I should know the most. I was brought up there. You see, the women in French Canada are so fucked up! It's getting there, though. I am an optimist and I like to believe that things really can work out if you go at it well and with some kind of faith. "Want! Want! Want!" Like that, you know. All that energy. But what do they get? You meet maybe one, two, or three really serene women from time to time. It has nothing to do with age necessarily. I don't want to be serene at 85! I want to touch and feel it from time to time. Now, then, before, during . . . But they are so afraid of love somehow, and that's what the film is about.



# KAMOURASKA:

## Michel Brault

*KAMOURASKA* – directed by Claude Jutra; screenplay by Anne Hébert and Claude Jutra (based on the novel by Anne Hébert); starring Geneviève Bujold; Director of Photography – Michel Brault; produced by Les Productions Carle-Lamy Limitée and Société Parc Film.

Michel Brault's filmography alone attests to the major contribution this filmmaker has made to Canadian cinema. Considered by many to be our greatest cameraman, he is also very active in the politics of film. A founding member of the Syndicat National du Cinéma, Michel Brault is that union's President as well as being a leading and somewhat legendary figure within the Québec film community.

The visuals in *Kamouraska* betray a superb maturing of Michel Brault's art, and craftsmanship. He truly uses light as paint and the screen as a canvas, to depict the historical story in the style of the Dutch masters, chiaroscuro and all. Mellow yellow candlelight illuminates the elegant mansion, and the cinematographer captures it on the wide-screen seemingly without effort. A dab of candle in one corner, Geneviève's ashen face in the other, her dying husband in-between, with the pools of light just right to enhance the dramatic mood. Then the nurse interrupts the all-night vigil by swiftly opening the drapes and bathing the room in bright sunlight. Phenomenal richness of colours, the poetry of natural light, very subjective and meaningful angles, and a non-static, beautifully moving camera characterize Michel Brault's artistry. Charm, generosity, warmth and honesty are the qualities one senses in him as a man.

Herewith follow some of his own thoughts and comments.

*On The Syndicat National du Cinéma:*

We have 200 members. We did it because we wanted something very different from the American unions. You know, if you're an electrician – nobody else can touch a lamp . . . So we start as a group, because when you have to have relations in

the private industry with a producer, as an individual you are very weak. If you make a verbal agreement, you get screwed.

So you get together to represent a certain strength, but don't let go of the qualities that are characteristic of your film-making. All the individuals are left to be themselves. You try to organize between those two focal points, so that you preserve your self and do whatever you want. But don't try to copy something else, don't take examples from anywhere else. Just try to invent the way you're going to do that.

We invented the way we're dealing with the problems of a union. Our contract is very simple – we just put down on paper what we decide before we start shooting, so we're not going to run into arguments during the shooting. We settle everything before. It's very, very difficult – especially the specialty divisions. But we have mobility. It's not perfect, mind you, because we have a whole lot of people who are used to working the IA style. We're far from perfect. But you have to do it.

What drove me was just a fear of seeing IA come forward strong. I was terrified of them coming to Québec, I had heard what kind of group they are. I did not invent all this, the whole group did by working together. We're not trying for power, we're just trying to exist. The only thing I can say is that in the last two years, we have signed contracts with about 15 producers for feature films (it's going to be 20 pretty soon) and IA has never signed one in Québec.

With our union, we are going to make our own films. For example, when you're making a political film, everybody is doing that work for a cause. It would kill that by having a union! So you have to make very clear in everybody's mind the difference between a commercial and a non-commercial film. We have to be very flexible.

We have a system for investing our salaries. An investment in salaries is the same thing as an investment in money. With the CFDC \$100,000 films, we represent our members as a delegation, and we're producing in their name. We have one film in which we're investing around \$20,000 worth of salaries. So we have the distributor investing and so are we. We will be paid a certain amount the first week, so we're sure of coming out of this with some money. . .

#### On films:

I was director of photography on some films, and I discovered that some of the things I wanted to do were not being done. That's why I started to direct in 1958, and I keep coming back.

I don't want to make just any kind of film, I have a certain kind of film that I want to make as a director. But I can't make them every time. For instance *Les Arbres* – which was to be a film about the October Crisis. I was going to make it in 1971, but it was called off by the Film Board. Then, I thought I could make it with the *CBC*, but that was called off, too. So I was left there. But I no longer wish to criticize the NFB, because I have left it, and mostly because I feel less a part of Canadian cinema than of a universal cinema whose roots are to be found in Québec.

Personally, I'm in favor of a world in which you have lots of little communities instead of where everything is mixed and similar. So, I'm in favor of the independence of Québec. But I dream of a little country which would be conscientious about the freedom of expression granted its writers, musicians, and filmmakers.

Filming is a way of becoming interested in others. Not as a filmmaker, nor for film's sake, but as a human being. One must not attempt to hide the camera but simply to treat it as a natural complement to the exchange between people. Basically, what is needed is simply an honest attitude towards reality.

Lighting is as important as composition, since the nature of lighting reveals a director's moral stand *vis a vis* the observed phenomena. One must always work with the existing lighting – that of the daily life of the people being filmed, and not transform it in any major way – so as to disrupt these people as little as possible.

Technique must be reduced to nothing (it can even be contemptible) in order to achieve something more important, which might be called 'communication' . . .

#### Michel Brault's Filmography:

- 1947 *Le Dément du Lac Jean Jeune* – Claude Jutra
- 1949 *Mouvement Perpétuel* – Claude Jutra
- 1953 *Les Petites Médisances* – Jacques Giraldeau
- 1954 *Images en Boîte* – Claude Jutra and Claude Sylvestre
- 1955 *Pierrot des Bois* – Claude Jutra
- 1958 *Au Bout de ma Rue* – Louis Georges Carrier
- Bientôt Noël/The Day Before Christmas* – Terence Macartney-Filgate
- Communauté Juive de Montréal* – Fernand Dansereau
- Jour de Juin/A Day in June* – Terence Macartney-Filgate
- Les Mains Nettes* – Claude Jutra
- Le Maître du Pérou* – Fernand Dansereau
- Pays Neuf* – Fernand Dansereau
- \* *Le Raquetteur* – Michel Brault
- Une Ile du Saint-Laurent/Crane Island* – Raymond Garceau
- 1959 \* *Les Bateaux de Neige* – Jacques Giraldeau
- La Canne à Pêche* – Fernand Dansereau
- Normetal* – Gilles Groulx
- Téléphore Légaré Garde-Pêche* – Claude Fournier
- 1960 *Les Administrateurs* – Gilles Groulx
- Félix Leclerc Troubadour* – Claude Jutra
- Festival in Puerto Rico* – Roman Kroiter and Wolf Koenig
- Fred Barry, Comédien* – Louis Portugais
- Saint-Denys Garneau* – Louis Portugais
- Urgence au Maroc* – Terence Macartney-Filgate
- 1961 *Chronique d'un Été* – Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin
- Golden Gloves* – Gilles Groulx
- Les Inconnus de la Terre* – Mario Ruspoli
- \* *La Lutte* – Michel Brault, Claude Fournier and Claude Jutra
- Wilfrid Pelletier, Chef d'Orchestre* – Louis Portugais
- 1962 *A Saint Henri, le 5 Septembre* – Hubert Aquin
- La France Revisited* – Jean Lemoyne
- \* *Québec U.S.A. ou L'Invasion Pacifique/Visit to a Foreign Country* – Michel Brault
- Regard sur la Folie* – Mario Ruspoli
- Seul ou avec d'Autres* – Denys Arcand, Denis Héroux and Stéphanne Venné
- 1963 *A Tout Prendre* – Claude Jutra
- \* *Les Enfants du Silence* – Michel Brault with the collaboration of Jutra
- \* *Pour la Suite du Monde* – Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault
- La Punition* – Jean Rouch
- 1964 *Ciné-Boum* – Robert Russel and Claude Jutra
- \* *Geneviève* – Michel Brault
- Les Montréalistes* – Denys Arcand
- \* *Le Temps Perdu* – Michel Brault
- 1966 *Rouli-Roulant* – Claude Jutra
- Titre Unknown* – Morton Parker
- 1967 \* *Entre La Mer et L'Eau Douce* – Michel Brault
- Sartré de Beauvoir* – Max Cacopardo
- La Visite du Général de Gaulle au Québec* – Jean-Claude Labrecque
- Vivre en ce Pays* – Claude Sylvestre
- 1968 *Ce Soir-là* Gilles Vigneault – Arthur Lamothe
- \* *Les Enfants du Néant* – Michel Brault
- Poussière sur la Ville* – Arthur Lamothe
- 1969 *Le Beau Plaisir* – Pierre Perrault
- Eldridge Cleaver Black Panther* – William Klein
- Entre Tu et Vous* – Gilles Groulx
- Festival Panafricain d'Alger* – William Klein
- 1970 \* *Eloge du Chiac* – Michel Brault
- Marie-Christine* – Claude Jutra
- Un Pays sans Bon Sens* – Pierre Perrault
- 1971 *Faut Aller Parmi le Monde pour le Savoir* – Fernand Dansereau
- \* *L'Acadie l'Acadie* – Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault
- Mon Oncle Antoine* – Claude Jutra
- 1972 *Eliza's Horoscope* – Gordon Sheppard
- Kamouraska* – Claude Jutra
- Le Temps d'une Chasse* – Francis Mankiewicz

✧ Also directed by Michel Brault