

And You From Yours

The art of storytelling translates individual experiences into **collective memories**.

BY RHEA CÔTÉ ROBBINS

WHAT'S YOUR IMMIGRATION STORY? Everybody has one. In Lynn Robinson's short film *And You From Yours* (1993), Robinson tells the story of female immigrants uprooted from Quebec to the Northeast. Through powerful imagery Robinson conjures the range of emotions one experiences when one emigrates: the uncertainty, the acclimation, the indecision for the French Canadian woman of whether to stay or go back, and then finally the recognition of the freedoms gained.

Do you know your own immigration story? And how can you avoid stereotypes when telling that story? Throughout her film, Robinson weaves the tale of her own great-grandmother's immigration, gleaned from details shared with her by her grandmother—her *mémère*.

The film tells an intergenerational tale through the medium of flashbacks set between the 1870s and 1990s. Robinson drives the narrative using an epistolary format, unique imagery of landscapes, close-ups, and scenes revisiting her family's former homestead. The story is told in broad strokes to allow space for the viewer to imagine her own experiences. What makes the film important to the French-Canadian heritage immigrants is that this is one of the few examples of such a film where the women are self-voiced. If I were to express what I feel when I watch the film, I would say that I'm given freedom. It's the freedom that only a story can give—and not just any story, but one I can relate to personally and profoundly. ■

Watch *And You From Yours* at www.vimeo.com/213185748. Rhea Côté Robbins is the author of *'down the Plains'*, and editor of *Heliotrope-French Heritage Women Create*.

