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Le Meraviglie – synopsis nl

Het einde van de zomer, op het platteland in Umbrië. De 14-jarige Gelsomina woont samen met haar ouders en drie jongere zussen in een vervallen boerderij waar ze honing produceren. De meisjes groeien op in de marge van de maatschappij, bewust van de buitenwereld afgeschermd door hun vader die voorstander is van een leven dat in harmonie is met de natuur en de dieren. Gelsomina's kleine microkosmos wordt echter verstoord door de komst van Martin, een jonge Duitse misdadiger die een ontwenningsskuur volgt en door de opnamens van de show "Village Wonders", die streekproducten in de kijker wil zetten.

Le Meraviglie – synopsis fr

Dans un village en Ombrie, c'est la fin de l'été. Gelsomina vit avec ses parents et ses trois jeunes sœurs, dans une ferme délabrée où ils produisent du miel. Volontairement tenues à distance du monde par leur père, qui en prédit la fin proche et prône un rapport privilégié à la nature, les filles grandissent en marge. Pourtant, les règles strictes qui tiennent la famille ensemble vont être mises à mal par l'arrivée de Martin, un jeune délinquant accueilli dans le cadre d'un programme de réinsertion, et par le tournage de "Village des merveilles", un jeu télévisé qui envahit la région.



Le Meraviglie – cast

Gelsomina.....	Maria Alexandra Lungu
Wolfgang (father).....	Sam Louwyck
Angelica (mother).....	Alba Rohrwacher
Cocò.....	Sabine Timoteo
Marinella	Agnese Graziani
Martin.....	Luis Huilca Logroño
Caterina	Eva Morrow
Luna	Maris Stella Morrow
Milly Catena.....	Monica Bellucci

Le Meraviglie – crew

Directed by	Alice Rohrwacher
Written by	Alice Rohrwacher
Produced by.....	Carlo Cresto-Dina
Edited by.....	Marco Spoletini
Sound.....	Christophe Giovannoni
Costume designer.....	Loredana Buscemi
Photography.....	Hélène Louvart
Set design	Emita Grigato



Le Meraviglie – long synopsis

Gelsomina's family functions according to very particular rules. First of all, Gelsomina, at twelve years of age, practically runs the family. Her three younger sisters obey her and work under her watchful eye. But the outside world mustn't know anything about their lifestyle, and they should be kept away from it, well-protected in their isolated countryside home.

Gelsomina's father, Wolfgang, is a foreigner and Gelsomina is in the future queen of this strange and improbable kingdom he has constructed for them. A male heir would have been better, of course, but Gelsomina is strong and determined and what's more, she has a special talent for beekeeping and making honey. It's Gelsomina that retrieves the swarms from the trees, who organizes the honey extraction, and she is the one that carries the hives.

Whilst all around them the countryside is being burnt up by pesticides, rural life is falling apart and becoming something different, a TV show competition arrives from the city offering a cash prize and luxury cruise for the Most Traditional Family. "Countryside Wonders" is presented by the good fairy, Milly Catena.

Gelsomina wants to participate in the contest, but Wolfgang won't even consider it. Something else is tormenting him: the new European laws regarding farm produce. If they don't get their honey lab in order, with washable walls and well-defined working spaces, they will have to cease production. They have to work very hard to expand the bee colonies, and get the lab up to standard. In his desperate search for cheap labor, Wolfgang agrees to take on a delinquent German boy, Martin, who comes from a youth rehabilitation exchange program.

The tension mounts: between a silent evasive boy onto whom Wolfgang projects his desire for a son, and counteracting this, the outward reaching force of Gelsomina that will be stopped at nothing just in order to see the good fairy TV show hostess again.

Nothing will be the same at the end of this summer for Gelsomina and her family. An extraordinary summer, when the strict rules that hold the family together, begin to break.



A FABLE

LE MERAIGLIE is a film about the countryside, about the somewhat peculiar love between a father and his daughters, about missing male sons, about animals and little people that live in the television. It is a film in the viterbese dialect, but when the characters are angry, they even respond sometimes in French and German. LE MERAIGLIE is also a fable.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

The film is set in my hometown and among my countrymen: my hometown is the countryside (between the central regions of Umbria-Lazio and Tuscany) and bees are the animals which I know best. I also know a lot about cross-cultural families, not just because of my own German- Italian family, but because there are many in my region. Apart from these elements, the story and characters are not autobiographical, but certainly familiar to me. I wanted to speak of a firstborn daughter. Of course I was very inspired by my sister Alba, and how I viewed her during our childhood. At the same time, I think I would get very bored if I worked on something completely autobiographical, with all the things I want to discover about human nature outside of myself. When you write a screenplay, it's necessary to find characters that can live on for years, that can fuel your imagination. It is better for characters to be somewhat unknown to me, so I will never get bored of getting to know them. I prefer the feeling that they are continuously re-invented, this is very stimulating.

THE FIRST IMPULSE

The moment always arrives when someone asks you where you are from. I would like very much to respond with one word like Rome or Milan, but instead I find myself explaining that I am from a border region between Umbria- Lazio and Tuscany in the countryside where the regional identities are all shattered. Perhaps the person with whom I am speaking knows this place? "But of course, of course," he tells me. "I was in Civita last Sunday and I felt like I was living in the Middle Ages for one day." This was the first impulse that prompted me to work on LE MERAIGLIE: the difficulties that one thinks when you think of the countryside, or of the small towns that make it up, as "pure" places, outside of time, and thus usable because they can never change. But seen from within (or maybe seen from the sidelines), these places are not like that and purity is only a prison to which they have confined themselves in order to have in exchange a warm meal per day.

BEES & HONEY

I know bees very well and I worked for a while in honey production. I adore bees, even if it was not easy to convince the industry insurance companies that nothing bad would happen during the shoot. I insisted on using only real bees in the film without resorting to any visual effects. I wanted to capture the feeling of the materia and also for the actors to really work with real bee hives and swarms. The only way to accomplish this was to do many tests. I remember that the parents of Maria Alexandra Lungu (who plays Gelsomina in *LE MERAVIGLIE*) were very happy: they said that if the film wouldn't work out, at least their daughter learned a real skill and could become a beekeeper!

MARIA ALEXANDRA LUNGU AS GELSOMINA

I didn't know exactly how I wanted the character of Gelsomina to be, but I knew that I would recognize her when I saw her. And that's how it was. After months of searching for the actress to play Gelsomina, we had no doubts from the moment we saw Maria Alexandra Lungu in a catechism class. (That's pretty funny when you consider the story of my first film *HEAVENLY BODY*). Working with her was a joy, because she has such a generous spirit and she enjoyed working with us, which is perhaps the most important thing. She was 11 years old and she had never done any acting, not in film nor theater. She is of Romanian origins, but she has always lived in Italy. She had never worked at beekeeping before, so we spent much time with the bees before shooting the film: we wanted her to dominate the work, to make it really the character of Gelsomina who does all the work with the honey processing and the bees. It was not particularly difficult, it was actually fun. She did get stung several times, but luckily she is good-spirited and curious which keeps her going.

THE HOUSE

In order to find a pure image, we need a point of view that has to be hybrid. And of a home, of course. And of a family that has gone to inhabit it. The house that we chose for the film had always been there. It is a house that has old parts and parts that are more recent as no one has ever renovated it in a uniform style. Until recently it was normal to live this way: you entered a home and you became part of a history that preceded you, that could not be controlled all the way. The draughts of air were repaired with foam rubber, the tiles were replaced where necessary, but the house was adapted to a world already in existence. Only the latest generations have desired to give the place where you live a single layer of interpretation, whether ancient or modern. It was not easy to find the house where to film: all the places that we saw were either destroyed by ill weather or too renovated. During these pilgrimages we had in the car with us the beautiful book by Roberto Innocenti "The House", which in a way guided us.

THE FAMILY

The family in LE MERAVIGLIE is made up of Wolfgang, the father from a land up North, maybe Belgium or Germany, and Angelica, the Italian mother. They have four girls: Gelsomina, the oldest, Marinella, Caterina, and Luna. They have a vegetable garden, a permanent guest, Cocò, sheep, and bees. What are they doing there? The answer is almost embarrassing, but true: they want to protect the girls. From something they know that they have seen because everything is in disrepair, destruction, and corruption, and only the countryside can save you. Only by staying together. Their intentions are sincere, even if sometimes they express themselves in rage. But how to explain it to Gelsomina, the eldest daughter, the Crown Princess, daddy's little girl? She wants a simpler life, more serene, a family with less ideals and more wisdom like those of her friends. Wolfgang feels that the daughter on which he places everything, that daughter that is better than him with the bees, who is grounded and responsible, is slipping away from him. But if the girls want to go away – to Milan? to Florida? – then what is the point of all this effort?

MY SISTER ALBA

Working with Alba (who plays the mother in LE MERAVIGLIE) is very exciting and necessary, not only because she is a great actress, but also because she is a great sister. I was confronted with thoughts about my sister during the whole screenwriting process, and, of course, it was very important for me to try and see this story through the eyes of an older sister, thus through Alba's eyes. We share the same sort of imagination, so there is no need to discuss much. And even when we often think differently, our intuition unites us. In our work, there is always a move toward some reference imagination. What binds us most is that we will always be "half-breeds," united in belonging to a world that is somewhere in between the two (German and Italian) and a need to continually search for something. As Elsa Morante wrote in "Arturo's Island," a half-breed is a thief with his back to the treasure. He cannot see it in front of him, so he continually looks for it. We see it from the inside, from the roots, so there can be neither tricks nor deceit. This is a strength and also a reciprocal push to improve.



SAM LOUWYCK AS WOLFGANG

For the father character in *LE MERAVIGLIE*, I wanted to work on a brutal but also very human hero, someone who has no idea about himself and who gets lost in his own ideals. So even when he makes mistakes and behave badly, it's difficult to judge him. Wolfgang knows nothing about strategies. He's like a very small child, or like certain animals. It was very important for me to tell this story with characters that cannot be psychoanalysed, who existed before psychoanalysis, or else all their gestures would become dark and twisted. Especially the love of a father for his daughter could become nebulous if it is over-rationalized. I wanted the relationship between Wolfgang and his daughter Gelsomina to be about an instinctive love, in which he protects his lair and knows only the seasons. It was very difficult to find an actor who had the necessary spontaneity and clarity. It's not by chance that Sam Louwyck is first and foremost a professional dancer. All his research stems from the body, and if the body knows where to go, the head follows it.

THEY ARE ALL EX-SOMETHINGS

The family in our story was not there from the start, is not from the region, and did not even know from the beginning that it was a family. They are people that arrived in the country as a political choice because in the cities there were no more jobs and years of demonstrations had been stifled by violence and disillusionment. So they read books, learned to make a vegetable garden with handbooks, tried hard, and fought the seasons alone. They are all ex-somethings, with different languages, distant pasts, but with common ideals. I have met many families like this in Italy, but also in France, in Greece. Small communities untethered to the rest, with autonomous rules and a parallel life to that which we read about in the newspaper. But it is not a simple life: you have to work hard and it is difficulty to survive without the comfort of belonging to a movement. You are not a true farmer because you are not from the land, but you can also not be defined as a city person because you have severed ties to the city. You are not hippies because you break your back from sunup to sundown, but you are also not agricultural entrepreneurs because you reject the use of more efficient agricultural technology in the name of a healthier life. Not having a movement, a definition which can be ascribed from the outside, all that remains is one word: family. Precisely the word that in the demonstrations of 1968 they wanted to destroy is now their Noah's ark, their only shelter. They are a family.

SABINE TIMOTEO AS COCO

Working with Sabine was a great experience because she is an actress who works with her body and she succeeds with little space in creating a character so real, comical and terribly dramatic. We do not know the story of mysterious Coco. She is a relic of this family's past, but her presence is important because it opens up a wound in their history. She has taken refuge there and maybe she never planned to remain, but she became part of the family without any intentions, as sometimes happens to a piece of wire that was tied to a tree, incorporated slowly into the bark. We see it's now impossible to remove, and we can go back to a story, to someone's gesture that tied it to the tree. That's Coco, a sort of family scar. Sabine Timoteo was able to delicately bring this character to life who performs questionable acts but we never judge her.

WONDERS & FAILURES

A wonder is something that makes you speechless, it makes articulating impossible. It is that which hinges between the earthly world and the fantastic. But like the word tradition, wonder has also become, in recent times, a word easily thrown around, often associated with promises of great emotions, wonderful emotions. In LE MERAVIGLIE there are small wonders made of light, shadow, animals, and childhood secrets, and then there are the great wonders, those related to the appearance of Milly Catena, the host of a TV show contest that promises to bring the past back to life. LE MERAVIGLIE takes us through a changing landscape, a TV show competition, and a family without a place. It is a film probably about failure. People do not change, do not improve. If they have no place at the beginning, they will not find it in the end. There are no good or bad people. There are only people more exposed and people that dig burrows. Often those who expose themselves fail. But being able to feel tenderness for themselves and for their failure is a way of happiness.

MONICA BELLUCCI

For the TV hostess Milly Catena, we wanted an icon of beauty, someone that would come across as a good fairy, but also a real woman. Monica Bellucci has both those worlds in her – the magical and the carnal. She also has an extraordinary sense of humor, even about herself, which is a fundamental trait for an actor. Working with her on set also recreated the true dynamism of the film. The day players who participated in the TV show scenes were as excited about her as the characters needed to be about Milly Catena. This caused some very funny confusion about what was real and what was the film to the point where we didn't even know anymore. Monica's character needed to initially be a completely two-dimensional icon: without depth. That doesn't mean she had to be superficial, but pure and inaccessible. In the end, in the last shot, we realize that there's always a person behind the icon, and that person is not always free.

A DEEP AND PAINFUL CHANGE

In Italy today one speaks of the countryside only to describe destruction and imminent ruin, or to use it as a romantic and innocent backdrop for stories that barely examine it. Yet, what is taking place in the Italian landscape is a change a lot more deep and painful. The long fight for the land, that thousand-year old stage for the clashes between landowners and workers, has not resolved itself. It has only distanced itself, faded out. The battlefield has been left free and the profiteers have arrived. First they lit a match to everything that they found on their way, then they seized the few remaining areas that remained more or less intact, and have transformed them into an amazing theme park in order to reassure us of our days of rest. A type of open-air museum.

THE LAYERS OF TRADITION

To live in the Middle Ages for a day: that is the territorial policy that was systematically advanced in the last twenty years. First, they tried to destroy everything that was culture – the piazzas, the hedges, the libraries and the small cinemas, the provincial theaters, the associations and all the places of meeting and exchange – in order to then transform everything that remained into culture, everything that was innocuous: eating (with a full mouth, you talk less) and the remote past (what danger can there be in Etruscan theater?). Suddenly everyone remembered that they have ONE tradition and became loyal to it with all their strengths. But one cannot extrapolate tradition. It is produced in layers and it is often only the last manifestation of a process of change. It is not flat, it is like a well. You cannot salvage and protect only one layer. I therefore began to travel in my region, finding farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs, country-folk. I began to ask myself: if aliens came, what would they understand about this place? Could a rural festival be the only thing that remains in an almost completely agricultural countryside? What does it mean to live in this landscape, to be part of it, to contain commercialization on one side and environmental difficulties on the other? Is there an image that can synthesize all of this?

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The shoot lasted eight weeks, after several months of pre-production to scout the right locations and cast, and to bring everything to life. We worked with a lot of enthusiasm and joy, and I can truly say that this movie exists thanks to an amazing group of people who left their own cities and moved to my very isolated area. We took the same path as the family: we found a house, we put it in order, we set up the garden and brought in the animals. Of course, all of this took months. I think that it can be seen, felt, in the film the very special relationships that arise between the actors and the location, between the crew and the location. The experience still matters, in my opinion. I like working on a fictional story, a fabricated story with characters who do not exist, but with very real relationships. I think all of this, even if it is something invisible, is able to penetrate the images like some kind of magic dust, and then somehow be seen in the movie.

VERY GOOD HONEY

In LE MERAVIGLIE, Gelsomina's family makes honey and we are sure that it is a very good honey. But their laboratory, the way they work, is completely illegal: the walls are not sterile, it lacks a sewer drain, the bathroom is with the antechamber. And what about the child labor? In short, what they do is good, but if we look closely, they have no respect for the law and could really be thrown in jail ... A similar thing happens in our work. Often good movies cannot comply with all narrative and production rules. Sure, there is the risk that audiences, a bit like the sanitation department, will shut you down. But I believe that before thinking about how much honey to sell, you have to ask yourself if the honey is good, especially if we would feed it to our own children.



Sam Louwyck

Sam Louwyck is a Flemish dancer, choreographer, actor and singer. He is known as a writer and performer of alternative ballet. Since 1993 he has been involved with '*Les Ballets C de la B*'. With this group he performed all around the world. He also acted in several films – first mainly as a dancer – later increasingly as an actor.

In 2003 he made quite an impression with his rendition of the so-called '*Windman*' in the motion picture '*Any Way The Wind Blows*' by Tom Barman. He got his next major role in '*Ex Drummer*' as the deaf guitarist Ivan Van Dorpe. In 2009 he took on the lead roles in '*Lost Persons Area*' and '*May 22nd*'. Sam also performed in the critically acclaimed drama film '*Bullhead*' which was nominated for an Academy Award in the category of Best Foreign Language Film in 2012. Amongst his most recent accomplishments are '*La Cinquième Saison*' and '*Little Black Spiders*'.

Besides his dance and acting career Sam Louwyck sings in the avant-garde rock band '*Falling Man*'.

Alba Rohrwacher

Alba Rohrwacher is an Italian actress. Alba Rohrwacher was born in Florence, the daughter of a German father and an Italian mother. She studied acting at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. Her first movie role was in 2004 in *L'amore ritrovato*. In 2008 she was awarded the David di Donatello for Best Supporting Actress. In 2009 she received a David di Donatello for Best Actress for her performance in Pupi Avati's *Il Papa di Giovanni*. At the Berlin International Film Festival 2009 she was awarded the Shooting Stars Award.

She is the sister of Alice Rohrwacher awarded the 2011 Nastro d'Argento for Best New Director for *Corpo Celeste*.

On 6 September 2014, Rohrwacher won the Volpi Cup for Best Actress at the 71st Venice International Film Festival in *Hungry Hearts*, a film by Italian director Saverio Constanzo.



Sabine Timoteo

Sabine Timoteo was born on March 25, 1975 in Berne, Switzerland as Sabine Hagenbuechle. She is an actress and writer, known for *Der freie Wille* (2006), *L'amour, l'argent, l'amour* (2000) and *in den tag hinein* (2001)..

In 1994 she completed a dance training at the Swiss Professional Ballet School, it was followed by engagements at the Deutsche Opera in Dusseldorf and tours with Carlotta Ikeda's Compagnie Ariadone.

For her first role in a feature film in Philip Gröning's *L'amour, l'argent, l'amour*, Sabine Timoteo was rewarded in 2001 as Best Actress with the Swiss Film Award and the Bronze Leopard at Locarno. In the television film *Die Freunde der Freunde* by Dominik Graf (2002) she played the lead role of Billie. The production was awarded in 2003 with the Adolf Grimme Prize.

Monica Bellucci

Monica Anna Maria Bellucci was born on September 30, 1964 in the Italian village of Città di Castello, Umbria, the only child of Brunella Briganti and Pasquale Bellucci.

She originally pursued a career in the legal profession. While attending the University of Perugia, she modeled on the side to earn money for school, and this led to her modeling career. In 1988, she moved to one of Europe's fashion centers, Milan, and joined Elite Model Management.

Although enjoying great success as a model, she made her acting debut on television in 1990, and her American film debut in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). Her role in the French thriller *L'appartement* (1996), shot her to stardom as she won the French equivalent of an Oscar nomination. Other credits include *Malèna* (2000), *Under Suspicion* (2000) and *Le pacte des loups* (2001).



Le Meraviglie – Alice Rohrwacher (director/ writer)

Alice Rohrwacher was born in 1981 in Fiesole (Italy) and studied in Turin and Lisbon.

She has worked in music, performing as a musician for theatre and in documentary filmmaking as editor and director.

Filmography

LE MERAVIGLIE / THE WONDERS / LES MERVEILLES Italy 2014 (111')

"Grand Jury Prize" Cannes Festival 2014

"Best film" Filmfest München 2014

"Black Pearl Award" New Horizons Abu Dhabi Film festival 2014

"Special Jury Award" Seville European film Festival 2014

"Best Screenplay" Mar del Plata International Film Festival 2014

CORPO CELESTE Italy/France/Switzerland/Germany 2011 (98')

"Ingmar Bergman Int. Debut Award" 2012

"Nastro d'Argento" Best Newcomer 2012

"Ciak d'Oro" Best Newcomer 2012

"Premio Suso Cecchi D'Amico" Best Screenplay 2012

LA FIUMARA episode of the collective documentary Che cosa manca Italia/What is Italy missing 2006 (7')



18/05/2014 - CANNES 2014: At just 32 years of age, Alice Rohrwacher is in the running for the Palme d'Or. This is her second film after *Corpo Celeste*, selected in 2011 at the Directors' Fortnight.

Gelsomina is a teenager living in the Tuscan countryside with her mother Angelica, her father Wolfgang and her three younger sisters. The whole family works producing honey. We are in an undefined period post '68 - it could be the '90s or even today; it's not important. Gelsomina (Maria Alexandra Lungu) is the favourite daughter of their grumpy father (Belgian actor Sam Louwyck); she is the one who helps him with the bees and the beehives, and she's the one who at the end of the day plucks the stings from his back. But things are changing, aliens are descending upon the sweet Etruscan hills: the award-winning TV show "Il Paese delle Meraviglie" has arrived, with its anchorwoman Milly Catena (Monica Bellucci, chosen for her iconic beauty), a femme fatale with platinum-blond hair. For Gelsomina it's cajoling and means a life elsewhere.

With *The Wonders* [+], the 32-year-old director Alice Rohrwacher is in the running for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. This is her second film after *Corpo Celeste* [+], selected in 2011 at the Directors' Fortnight, which also had a young girl as the protagonist.

Although we can't say it's an autobiography, it's true that Alice is delving into a subject she knows well. Her parents are bee keepers, and what she observed as a child, the act of questioning her own identity in a family in which different languages were spoken, lit the spark to this story endowed with great power and elegance.

In *The Wonders*, the German father speaks broken Italian, and the mother, played by the director's sister Alba, switches from Italian to French when she has to discuss important issues with him, as if she wanted to bring the discussion to neutral ground. Wolfgang is an idealist who went to work hard in the countryside owing to a political choice. Unlike his farming neighbours, he refuses to use more productive techniques. The new hygiene and health regulations threaten his small farm based on totally natural methods. And his efforts to preserve, at all costs, his family from the outside world lead to a situation of permanent conflict.

Further complicating things is his decision to lodge silent Martin, a "difficult" boy who comes from a rehabilitation programme in Germany. For Gelsomina this is another reason to "betray" her father and to take flight towards adulthood. The excessive fatherly gift to a daughter who is no longer a child is worthless: a camel, a real camel that growls in the farmyard, tied to the bee roundabout of the mischievous younger sisters. The world which Wolfgang has built could collapse and mean defeat. The same is happening to culture, from small libraries to cinemas on the outskirts of town which close one after another.

The Wonders, dedicated to the late German co-producer of the film, Karl "Baumi" Baumgartner, is the visible result of lengthy team work. From the head of casting Chiara Polizzi, who met 2,000 young girls, to the acting coach Tatiana Lepore, to whom the producer Carlo Cresto-Dina had allowed a long trial period, to the magnificent work of the director of photography Hélène Louvart (Pina [+] from Wim Wenders) who supported Alice Rohrwacher also for her first film.



18/05/2014 - CANNES 2014 : À seulement 32 ans, Alice Rohrwacher est en lice pour la Palme d'or avec son deuxième long métrage après *Corpo Celeste*, sélectionné en 2011 à la Quinzaine.

Gelsomina est une adolescente qui vit à la campagne avec sa mère Angélique, son père Wolfgang et ses trois petites sœurs. Toute la famille se consacre à la production de miel et cette histoire se déroule à une époque post-1968 restant indéterminée car il pourrait s'agir des années 1990 comme d'aujourd'hui, mais ce n'est pas vraiment important. Comme Gelsomina (Maria Alexandra Lungu) est la préférée de son ours de père (interprété par l'acteur belge Sam Louwyck), c'est elle qui l'aide avec les abeilles et les ruches, et c'est elle qui, à la fin de la journée, enlève les aiguillons qui se sont fichés dans son dos. Mais quelque chose de nouveau se produit : des gens venus d'ailleurs sont en train d'envahir les belles collines étrusques. Car l'émission de télévision "Il Paese delle Meraviglie" (litt. "le pays des merveilles") vient tourner sur place, avec sa présentatrice Milly Catena (Monica Bellucci, choisie pour sa beauté iconique), une fée aux cheveux platine. Alors, Gelsomina se met à rêver d'une autre vie.

Avec *Les merveilles* [+] (*Le meraviglie*), l'Italienne Alice Rohrwacher, 32 ans, est en lice pour la Palme d'or du Festival de Cannes. Ce film est son deuxième long métrage après *Corpo Celeste* [+], qui avait été dévoilé en 2011 à la Quinzaine des réalisateurs et qui tournait déjà autour du personnage d'une très jeune fille.

Sans que *Les merveilles* soit autobiographique à proprement parler, Alice aborde ici un sujet qu'elle connaît manifestement bien. Elle a en effet été élevée par des parents apiculteurs et son film, à la fois fort et délicat, est nourri par ce qu'elle a pu observer durant toute son enfance, y compris le questionnement identitaire qui résulte du fait de parler plusieurs langues à la maison.

Dans *Les merveilles*, le père, allemand, parle un italien chancelant et la mère, (incarnée par la sœur de la réalisatrice, Alba Rohrwacher) passe de l'italien au français dès qu'ils discutent de sujets importants, comme si elle voulait replacer la conversation sur un terrain neutre. Le père, Wolfgang, est un idéaliste ayant choisi de se consacrer au dur labeur liée à la vie rurale pour des raisons politiques. C'est d'ailleurs pour cela, qu'à la différence de ses voisins agriculteurs, il refuse d'utiliser les nouvelles techniques censées augmenter la productivité et qu'il proteste contre les nouvelles normes sur l'hygiène qui vont à l'encontre de ses méthodes totalement naturelles. Hélas, la volonté de ce père de famille de préserver à tout prix son foyer du monde extérieur conduit à une situation de conflit permanent.

Les choses sont compliquées par son choix d'accueillir Martin, un garçon mutique envoyé dans la famille d'apiculteurs dans le cadre d'un programme allemand de réhabilitation des délinquants. Pour Gelsomina, son irruption est un encouragement supplémentaire à "trahir" son père et à prendre de manière autonome son élan vers l'âge adulte. D'autant plus que Wolfgang vient de lui faire un cadeau absurde, maintenant qu'elle n'est plus une gamine, en amenant chez eux un chameau qui blatère dans le jardin, attaché à la balançoire des insupportables petites sœurs de Gelsomina. Tout ce que Wolfgang a construit menace alors de s'écrouler et de se réduire à un échec, un échec pas très différent de celui qui affecte en ce moment la culture, à l'heure où les petites bibliothèques et les cinémas de province ferment l'un après l'autre.

Les merveilles, dédié au coproducteur allemand décédé du film, Karl "Baumi" Baumgartner, est visiblement le résultat d'un long travail d'équipe, de celui de la directrice de casting Chiara Polizzi qui a rencontré 2000 petites filles, à celui de la coach d'acteurs Tatiana Lepore à laquelle le producteur Carlo Cresto-Dina a laissé beaucoup de temps pour les répétitions, en passant par le magnifique apport de la directrice française de la photographie Hélène Louvart (qui compte entre autres à son actif Pina [+] de Wim Wenders) et était déjà aux côtés d'Alice Rohrwacher pour son premier film.

