

Translation from Greek to English:

In a Better World directed by Susanne Bier 2011

Susanne Bier is a very important director who has been closely connected with the Dogma 95 movement, but who took a different direction in her later career, directing a line of movies that were well received by the audience with several awards, but that also received negative reviews.

In 2011 the movie, "In a Better world" won an Oscar. While the title of the movie in Danish is "The Revenge", the film was promoted in Greece with the title "Ίσως αύριο- Maybe tomorrow". The diversity in the title might insinuate the complexity of the issues in this moralistic-philosophic movie as well as the many levels of the scenario by Anders Thomas Jensen.

The story takes place in 2 different film spaces – in a refugee camp in Africa in the desert and in a Northeuropean town in the outskirts of Denmark where daily and dull routines are unfolded. The protagonists are 2 fathers with their sons. Anton, a doctor working at a refugee camp in Africa (played by Michael Persbrandt) and father of the 10 year old Elias (played by Markus Rigaard) is constantly absent in the life of his son as well as in his marriage with another doctor (played by Trine Dyrholm). Claus (played by Ulrich Thomsen) is a businessman who has recently lost his wife from cancer and who is facing the anger and accusation from his son Kristian (played by William John Nielsen) because of his constant absence. The parents, who are mentally absent to their sons while occupied with their professional lives, are incapable of being part of the boys personal lives. In the shade of this absence, the two boys build up a strong friendship. The movie touches upon the very important issue of school bullying and violence with Elias being "the stranger" due to his Swedish background. The situation exacerbates when the movie unfolds how small unimportant events can make people into extreme figures where victims become abusers.

While focus is on the 2 young boys, the scenario explores the differences in dealing with school violence, a phenomena that seems to permeate everything and to be beyond race, culture, age and universal character. Similarly the scenario touches upon moral dilemma and thereby involves the audience directly. To my opinion, one of the two most shocking scenes in the movie, is when Anton is humiliated in front of the two boys, being attacked in the garage by the "macho"-aggressive worker (the newspaper The Guardian compares this scene to the one in the book by Christos Tsiolka "The Slap"). The second one is the scene where the same person is witnessing the violence against unarmed people and defenceless women in the camp in Africa, proving that pacifism is not always the most proper way to deal with evil and that human justice requires a dynamic response. This scene in the refugee camp is like a huge punch in the stomach of the viewer in contrast to the pacifism of the scene in the garage. The movie is filmed in excellent pictures, with great rhythm and montage.

The development and the diversity of the movie has been criticised for its "melodrama". The movie should be seen in the light of modern melodramatic theory, compacting the contradictions of this genre but also its dissimilarities to sentimentalism. A very interesting factor in the analysis is the meaning of "melodramatic fantasy" as it is mentioned in the book "The melodramatic imagination" by Peter Brook in 1976.

"Melodramatic fantasy consists of the moral thinking of society, aiming at the consolidation of a moral order into a so-called "after-sacred-period". Brooks suggests that melodrama is seen

as a filling out of the cosmological vacuum that European conscience is undergoing (Patsalidis, Nikolopoulou 2001). Similarly, Elsaesser supported that the aesthetic form of melodrama (the abuse of exaggeration, the excessive dramatization/confrontation between good/evil, appealing/repellent, and the justification of the intended happy end) is approaching the truths of human existence, truths that do not apply to any other species (Patsalidis, Nikolopoulou 2001).

The Director has so far proven that she is not afraid of emotional issues with movies reflecting very human stories with emphasis on the pervasiveness of the characters.

"10 years ago we decided to focus essentially on the scenario and the way a story is told - to work mainly with the characters and thereby create transparent and substantive movies".

Awards for "In a Better World".

European Cinema Award to Susanne Bier and Script Writer Anders Thomas Jensen.

European Cinema Audience Award to Susanne Bier

Award for Best actor to Mikael Persbrandt

Award for Best optical Effects to Daniel Parkers

Award for best Danish movie to Susanne Bier

Oscar award for best Foreign Movie 2011

Filmography by Susanne Bier

Freud's leaving home, 1991

Family affairs, 1994

The one and only, 1999

Once in a lifetime, 2000

Open hearts, 2002

Brothers, 2004

After the wedding, 2006

In a better world, 2011

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