

Dark Lullabies

Even though it is filmed in a very unorthodox manner, "Dark Lullabies" is still an effective documentary. In the true sense of the word, a documentary is a record of events set down on film. Irène Angelica strays from the mere facts of her topic, the after-effects of the Holocaust, and manages to give us a more personalized point of view of her subject. From beginning to end, she guides us through feelings that she must deal with in order to satisfy her own conscious and curiosities.

The film opens with an eerie lullaby which is sung by an emotional vocalist. The singer seems disturbed, or rather, preoccupied with some melancholy news. We are more aware of the heavy tone of voice than we are of the fact that her voice might actually be beautiful.

The film quickly leads us to learn that there will be a great deal of personal input by the filmmaker, as she shows us a series of family photos taken around the time of the Second World War. Then a narration begins with the sullen voice of her father. He speaks of the atrocities of the daily life in Dachau.

With this personal touch already in place, Angelica quickly brings us back to a more concrete and

good
introduction

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(sp.)
realistic view, with some actual footage from the war. The footage shows humans being killed, and then being carried off as if they were mere animals.

At this point, the film officially opens. The stage has been set, and Angelica is ready to take us on her progressive quest for knowlege. Her search for answers leads her from her native North American home to Palestine and then to Germany itself. Throughout the whole movie, there is very little fancy camera work; the footage is kept very honest so that we get an impression of total realism. The shots are lengthy and whole. They focus on the faces of the speakers, usually on the eyes, so that we might see from the point of view of Angelica herself. This is particularly effective as she wishes us to understand what it is like to be the offspring of a persecuted and torched victim of the German concentration camps.

The first step in Angelica's series of interviews is to speak with a German survivor of the war. She asks him questions to the effect of, "How could it happen?" or "How could anyone be so cruel?" He is unable to answer these questions; his response that "nobody can understand" is one of the underlying themes of the movie.

Next, she attends a meeting of fellow offspring of concentration camp victims. They share common

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vocabulary

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present
time

stories with each other, but ^{(not one) = singular} none of the children had^s been told much by ^{his} their parents. All that ^{can} could be said with any certainty ^{is} was that the European Jewish empire had^s been destroyed forever.

Since 2/3 of the Jewish survivors migrated to Palestine at the end of the war, Angelica decides that it would probably be far more productive to go there. Upon her arrival, she finds a society filled with religion and peace. The people appear to be living in a traditional manner. The people ^{can} could not understand why she would ever want to go to Germany and uncover the horrific past, but she is determined. She decides that the Holocaust is not an event to lament, but a source of knowledge for the future. This new idea gives her the courage to go to Germany and confront the people.

Her arrival in Germany gives us a feeling of culture-shock. The peaceful and traditional society she left behind is replaced by one of violence and change. Here the shots are quick and mixed up. A violent soccer scene replaces the sincerity of the Palestinians. The Germans shy away from the camera, hiding their faces and walking out of her path.

Angelica immediately heads to the city which once housed a concentration camp. She meets with a young German lady whose curiosity led her to discover the city's covered secret. She, like Angelica, wished to

know her own history, and became upset when she had to be told by an outsider that her city had been used as an extermination site. This fact had been erased from the history books as well as the memories of the villagers.

Over and over the answer that "Nobody can understand" how the Holocaust could have taken place is repeated. One German comes up with a plausible solution. He ^(Sp.) cites that the bureaucratic assembly line death ^(Sp.) methods ^(Sp.) made the soldiers feel as if they were just doing their job. The people were killed in masses, so that individuals and personalities never came into question. They were nothing more than objects which needed to be disposed of. / good

With this slow and steady progression, Angelica decided that she is ready to confront the Eagle's Nest, Hitler's lair during war-time. She is astonished to find that the literature ^(Sp.) distributed here does not condemn Hitler ^(Sp.) but shows him as a playful and loving man! "Could there be others who wish Hitler to be thought of in this manner?" she then asks. The answer is given by a member of the Neo-Nazi party. Although it is regarded as tiny and without any real power, it is astonishing that any such party could exist so soon after the end of the war. Only thirty years after the destruction of the Jewish empire, there were people condoning Hitler! When asked about the concentration

present tense
camps, the young Neo-Nazi member laughs and explains
that the history books and films ~~are~~ ^{are} historically
incorrect. He bases this theory on his superiors'
words. Angelica asks him if he would believe anything
they said; he promptly ^(sp.) answers that, yes, they knew
better than he about such issues. This was exactly
the attitude that led to the extinction of the Jewery
in Europe. /good

(sp.)
Here the shots were particularly effective. The
close-ups show every detail of the young man's face.
His expression is one of cruelty and sarcasm. It is
scary and sickening to watch his smile emerge when she
mentions the concentration camps. /good

The final place that Angelica must visit is
Dachau, the place where the Jews were actually
murdered. She becomes very emotional when speaking of
the horrible past. The camera slowly pans over the
long pits, where bodies are presumably buried. This
is one of the only shots which is wide-angled, and it
gives us a feeling of the vastness of the killings. /good

At this point in the film, the viewer has slowly
been led to more and more horrifying scenes. We seem
almost unaffected by the short clips that have been
flashed on the screen. The final scene is too much
for any humane person to watch without getting a
sickening feeling. An emaciated body of a dead woman
is carelessly dragged along the ground and thrown into

a sea of rotting flesh. It leaves the audience in a state of awe and terror. This is then followed by the lullaby which was introduced at the beginning of the movie. We now understand why the singer has such a heavy tone. She is not lulling a baby to sleep, she is singing a lullaby of death to the victims of the Holocaust.

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"Dark Lullabies" is an effective documentary no matter how it is judged. The personalized point of view of Angelica is necessary so that we do not fall into the bureaucratic assembly-line trap that the German people fell into during the war. Angelica keeps the film real with her personal insight.

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(sp.)

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