Gabriela Piedrabuena

March 18, 2020

HUM 150J

Review of Film Wadjda

The film that was produced by Haifa al-Mansour, Wadjda is very empowering to anyone that is or is not Muslim, this film is very empowering especially towards women, being able to learn the customs that women and men live in Saudi Arabia.

This film portrays women and girls living in Saudi Arabia as very controlled and specific. I say specific because these girls from the moment they begin school, they are taught about the word of Allah and aren’t able to expand their learning abilities to a higher extent. They aren’t allowed the independence they deserve. I saw this in the beginning of the film when Wadjda’s mother was getting ready to go to work at the school she works at and they have a driver that takes them everywhere. Women are also controlled in the matter that they aren’t allowed to work with other men, but that is a decision that is only made by the husband. The women and girls have to wear a headscarf when out in public places. The girls aren’t allowed to respond back to their elders especially men, which is understandable no one should be talking back to their parents. This tells me that these women and girls are not allowed to do things that a regular American woman or girl is allowed to do, which to me seems like I should be happy with the way my parents raised me. There was a scene where it was the political debate, to choose the right candidate the women could not be there, I don’t know if they are allowed to vote at all, but it seemed like it was something only men were allowed to be in. When Wadjda went to go confront the man that takes her mother to work in his car, and he decided he would stop taking her Wadjda went all by herself but wasn’t getting anywhere with the man because she is a young girl, but when the boy intervened and confronted him that was when the man listened and followed the young boy’s orders. Which to me seemed kind of ironic that an older man would be following a young boy's orders.

A principle I saw in the film was when the girls were in religion class practicing the Koran for the contest and the teacher tells them they can’t touch the Koran if they are on their period, so they have to move the pages and hold it with a tissue. This is something I have heard about that I have read in some books that young girls can’t touch the Koran if they are on their period, they get rid of the holiness of the Koran. Another principle I saw was when the contest was almost done and the girls all had to prepare for prayer they all had to get really close together not leaving any space between each of them. The principal said this is very important to not let the devil in. This is something I had read before when I was reading and learning about the Muslims and how their religion is compared to the different ones around us. I read that they all pray very squished together to not let the devil inside as they pray to Allah, they also have to wash their feet and hands to be pure, and get rid of everything negative.

The women and girls try to get around these rules in many different ways for example when the girls are in school, Wadjda makes bracelets with the different sport team players and makes different mixtapes for the girls in her school the way she gets around this rule is to sell them to the girls in change for money in a way that the teachers won’t find out or the principal. Another example is that a woman is not allowed to interact with any other man in a conversation if it is not approved by the husband, but for Wadjda’s mom’s friend she is allowed to work in the hospital with men which means that she is allowed to bend the rules while some other women can’t. When Wadjad got in trouble by her principal because she thought she was over the fact of wanting a bike Wadjda told her “You mean like your handsome thief.” This showed that not only the principal was bending the rules as well and have a secret lover that is not part of the family, which is why she acted like he was a thief. Towards the end of the film the mom ended up cutting her hair short, even though the husband liked her with her long hair, since he is getting married to this second wife, she decided to bend the rules herself. Wadjad’s mom also got her a bike which is one of the rules for girls, so her mom got around the rules and made the decision that she wants to see her daughter happy. When Salma got married she brought pictures to school of the man she got married to and he is 20 years old, while the teacher looked at the pictures which they are forbidden she was not punished and was forgiven for what she did.

The cinematic and storytelling techniques the film writer used with the camera she focused on using a lot of focused angles that makes the center of the image be Wadjda, for example in the beginning she had a full image of the girls singing with the instruction of the teacher, Wadjda was in the back so you couldn’t tell it was going to be her as the main character until the teacher called her out, when she zoomed in on her tennis shoes and you could tell the contrast between the other typical black shoes of the other girls that she was different, or at least had a different way of following rules. The story behind this movie was all based on a bike. Wadjda didn’t want to be any of the typical girls that got married to a man double her age, she wanted to make her own rules and do things boys could do as well, this being, the ability to ride a bike. She is a more outgoing type of kid. She dealt with the obstacle of no one helping her buy a bike or supporting her in the idea of being able to have one. She didn’t necessarily have a villain but her principal was always watching her and seeing what she was doing in school grounds. Her sidekick the boy she has a crush on that is her neighbor, the climax happens when Wadjda wins the Koran religion contest and tells everyone she wants to buy a bike with the money she won, but she get her money donated to the brothers and sisters in Palestine and she ended up not being able to buy the bike she wanted. The relief of this film was when her mother ended up buying the bike for her from the man of the store, in the end Wadjda learned to not give up on the things she wants in life that make her happy. All these impact the audience in a way that it shows a young girl that is facing a lot of social standard problems in her religion wants to her to act a certain way but she doesn’t want to be like the typical women in her religion, she wants to be able to lead and make her own rules, which this film showed Wadjda worked hard to try to get to her ultimate goal which was in general to have a bike.

For this film, I would give it at 5 star because it has a very deep meaning behind it, you don’t have to be Muslium or any type of religious person to understand what this young girl was getting at which was not giving up on her goal, even if people don’t support her decision she still found ways to achieve the goal of getting the bike.