

The Bechtel Test versus Le Week-End

10/11/13

This is the week that Sweden introduced a sexism rating at their cinemas. It is based on the Bechtel Test. You will not need to be told that only anti-female sexism is recognised as existing. A film is rated as sexist if it does not contain a scene in which two women talk together about a subject other than a man (or men in general, I presume?). So when I went to see "Le Week-End", a UK film by director Roger Michell, and written by Hanif Kureishi, I had sexism at the forefront of my mind. And what a misandry fest it was.

There are three levels of misandry. The first is the misandry of the film itself. We know what we are in for from the first couple of minutes. The opening scene has the wife of 30 years (Meg = Lindsay Duncan) obviously irritated at her husband (Nick = Jim Broadbent) due to his neurotic fumbling in his pockets for the euros. It is immediately clear that the guy is a dork. In seconds we are outside the hotel. Nick has booked the hotel in the belief that it is what Meg wanted. We are given to understand that this is where they honeymooned - or, at least, where they stayed at some time in their youth. She is not impressed. It's pretty run-down. They go in, up many stairs. She is even less impressed. Heck, it's beige! She stomps off down the stairs again. No discussion. She's decided. Nick is left to scurry after her trying to carry all the bags. So - she's the boss, he's left looking like a dork again because that's what happens when the person you're supposed to be with treats you like a servant. Down in the reception, Nick is the one who has to try to negotiate in broken French with the concierge whilst Mrs High-and-Mighty sulks imperiously. Never mind that she is the one disgruntled. She is *entitled*, period - and Nick just has to strive to make her happy. Why? Because that's men's role. But, in truth, the woman is a bitch. I don't care if people think Lindsay Duncan is wonderful. She's playing a bitch who gets away with being a bitch whilst conning people (Nick and the audience both) that she's an admirable, feisty woman who *deserves* better. But why do we get the impression that she deserves better from life, and from Nick in particular? Simple - because that's what *she* thinks and that attitude is being projected, via sulkiness. She is *entitled*, got it?

And what is Nick entitled to from Meg? Nothing - except mockery.

Suddenly she's had enough and stomps off - again with no word to Nick. This time she dives straight into a cab which happens to be outside the hotel door. Up jumps Nick, grabbing all the bags again, and only just stops his ever-so-considerate wife from driving off without him? Stumbling along with all the bags and nearly missing the cab once again makes him look like a fool, for no fault of his. What has he done to deserve this treatment? Nothing. But the effect on most people in the audience, I expect, and almost certainly the intended effect, is to reinforce the impression that Meg is a feisty, admirable lady whilst Nick is a dork.

But this is not the case. Nick has been made to look like an idiot because he has been treated like a piece of shit by his nasty wife. And this brings me to the second level of misandry. This opening sequence, which sets the tone for further misandry to come, is perfectly realistic. The second level of misandry is real life. This *is* how many women treat their husbands. Would Meg have behaved as she did if she was not with her husband but with a female friend? No. There would have been no stomping and

sulking. There would have been discussion, agreement and mutual respect. But Meg has no respect for Nick.

And it gets worse. Nick dotes on his wife. He's madly in love with her even after 30 years of marriage. She, on the other hand, regards Nick as just irritating. OK, that happens. But she gets to be haughty, commanding and in control of everything, whilst Nick is just demeaned. He begs for sex but doesn't get any. OK, you want to slap him and tell him to have some self respect and leave the bitch. But, he's in thrall and she's in charge, period.

And it gets worse, much worse. One scene involves the most appalling piece of man-shaming I have ever seen on film. This prick-tease of a wife dresses herself up to the nines ready for a party. He is stupid enough to think that this might be for his benefit. Jesus, you do want to shake the guy awake. She scoffs at the idea (as do we). "I dress for myself", she says. Well at least that's honest. There's nothing giving about this woman. But that's not the truly shaming bit. Suddenly she instructs him, "get on your knees". Then she slowly starts to hitch up her tight fitting little black dress (off shot so we don't see). He crawls towards her, drooling. "Let me smell you" he whimpers. He approaches closer. She squirms and hitches higher. Exactly what is to be seen is left to our imagination. Is she going to let him have some action? No chance. When he's close enough, she walks away, making one of her nasty scathing comments about him yet again.

Then there's the hypocrisy. Meg is outraged when Nick accuses her of infidelity, absolutely incandescent with anger. In fact she exercises some violence against him by slamming him against a wall. (It's not the first time we've seen her being violent to Nick. The first time was admittedly an accident, when she pushed him over on a cobbled street. However, when he was on the ground writhing in pain the nearest she could get to sympathy was "Oh, why don't you just try to be a man". Nice. Screw you, by the way, Meg. If the MRM ever make any headway combating anti-male sexism, phrases like "try to be a man" will finally be recognised for the sexism they truly are). Anyway, about an hour after being so filled with righteous indignation at being accused of having an affair, she is on the brink of going off with another man - and makes sure Nick knows it. Of course, he grovels and simpers.

The final level of misandry is that all the above goes unrecognised by almost everyone, of both sexes. I expect that most of the audience, men and women both, would sympathise with Meg, an up-for-it woman shackled to this dork of a husband. What chance do men in our society stand when almost everyone, of both sexes, fails to see how badly women treat men? They fail to see it even when presented with a husband crawling on his hands and knees to get a sniff of cunt, only to be rejected, and having been inveigled into that demeaning behaviour deliberately, and cold bloodedly, by his wife who initiated the event.

So, Swedes - the Bechtel Test, eh? There are more sexist things than being ignored. Being actively mocked, degraded and shamed is far worse. And that's what men get.