Festival introduces Spanish-language film with unique character dynamic

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Contributing Writer

This past Wednesday, I went to a screening of the film, "Las Analfabetas," which translates to "The Illiterate." The film shown this week was great and demonstrated what the International Film Festival is all about.

"The Illiterate" is a Spanish-language film from Chile, and is directed by Moisés Sepúlveda. The film made its premier at the Venice Film Festival on Sept. 7, 2014.

"Illiterate" is about an older woman, named Ximena, who cannot read or write. A daughter of an old friend, named Jackeline, comes and visits and offers to read for her. Jackeline graduated with a degree in teaching, but was not offered the job she wanted after an internship.

After failing to meet her standards, Jackeline loses her patience. She finds a letter underneath a small statue of Buddha on top of Ximena's fridge. She reveals that it is a letter from her father that was given to her when he left. This gives Jackeline the idea to try and teach Ximena how to read and write so she can finally read the letter.

The film has lengthy takes, perhaps because it's actually based on a play. The long takes allow you to revel in the scene for a while. The lack of cuts make every move the actors take more fluid. It also feels like you are actually in the room with them.

It is easy to tell the film is a play from the writing. The writing is good, however, and fits the way the film is shot. There are a lot of great monologues from both of the main characters that give the film a lot of drama. The lack of music in these scenes make these scenes feel deeper and draws more focus to what they are saying.

What makes this film worth watching is the lack of characters, who are great. The only two you follow are the Ximena and Jackeline. There are extras in the movie who interact with them, but no characters that stay in the film. This allows us to get to know them personally.

Films about teaching are usually an older teacher teaching young students. In this film, it is a younger teacher teaching an older woman. The type of characters they play are different from the usual teacher films. The teacher is not the good guy. She is doing this for her own personal gain, thinking she is a good teacher. She even dismisses what Ximena says sometimes about learning. Ximena is also different in that she is illiterate. You never really see that with older people. She is really stubborn and does not want to learn. Even though they are different ages, they are similar because they are outcasts from society. Ximena is an illiterate woman who shuts herself out from the world. Jackeline is a teacher who does not teach at a school. She is teaching an older woman instead of teaching children. These two characters were amazing and kept the film interesting. They were relatable in certain aspects and I loved seeing them on screen.

If you get a chance to see this film, do it. The characters and writing really push this film and make it really memorable.

The screening was put on by The Latin American Studies program, the Languages, Cultures and Communications department and the Disciplinary Studies program as a part of the International Film Festival. The festival is sponsored by Pragda and Humanities Texas.

The program is headed by Dr. José Neftalí Recinos and Dr. Gabriela Miranda-Recinos as a way to promote Latin American culture in East Texas.

The program also provides easier access to independent films, which allows SFA students experience a type of film different from a lot of modern Hollywood blockbusters.

The films are shown at 7 p.m. every Wednesday throughout October in room 142 of the Liberal Arts North building.

"Father's Chair" will be shown at 7 p.m. today.

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Photo by pragda.com