



FILM: **THE QUIET GIRL**

FDG RATING: 3.9 ☺☺☺☺○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Colm Bairéad: *director*
Catherine Clinch: *actress, Cait*
Carey Crowley: *actress, Eibhlin*

DATE: May 21, 2023

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **THE QUIET GIRL**

Based on Claire Keegan's novel "Foster", The Quiet Girl is a beautiful understated, Irish film with gorgeous cinematography. A young girl, neglected by her pregnant mother who is caring for yet another infant, is bullied by her many siblings and also at school, and verbally (or worse) abused by an alcoholic father, Cait is understandably withdrawn which only increases the detached attitude her family has for her. She has retreated into her own little world. Her impoverished family sends her away for the summer to live with her mother's distant cousin Eibhlín and her husband Seán, a middle-aged farming couple, whose son, at about the same age as Cait, who is nine years old, slipped into the farm's slurry pit while unattended and drowned. "Send the strange one," Cait's father had said.

Slowly, while in the care of Eibhlin and Sean, Cait comes out of her shell, feeling loved for the first time in her life. Eibhlin and Sean also slowly come to terms with the death of their son. When Cait first arrived and had gotten her dress muddy, Eibhlin gave Cait her son's clothes to wear. Sean, who at first was more reserved as a result of his grief, warms up to Cait and announces that "This has gone on long enough" and takes them all into town to buy Cait new dresses. It was heartwarming to see how Eibhlin, in a very motherly way, teaches Cait farm chores and how to prepare food. Sean encourages her to run as he times her speed so that she finally feels the free playfulness she had never experienced. Eibhlin and Sean are able to slowly put their grief behind them as they grow to love Cait.

One discussion participant thought it was unrealistic that Cait's real parents would be so detached from her emotionally. But other discussion participants who grew up with many siblings, explained it's very natural that in a large family some children are completely ignored.

In the last scenes, Eibhlin and Sean have driven Cait to her family's home at the end of the summer. Because she has caught a cold after falling into the well trying to be helpful and fetch fresh water, her mother and father blame Eibhlin and Sean accusing them of irresponsibly letting their son die and then getting Cait sick, as if they actually were concerned about her. They were acting out defensively, observed one discussion participant. We disagreed on whether the father's negative character was realistic or over done. But the rest was pretty authentic according to our discussion participant who grew up in Ireland.

The ending is ambiguous. Some of us strongly believed the ending was positive because Cait had experienced the love and nurturing of a true family. One discussion participant imagined that Cait would continue to return to live with her cousins each summer and choose to live with them permanently at some point. Another participant imagined that Sean paid Cait's father some money which the father gladly took in exchange for giving up his daughter. After walking towards her unemotional family when she is returned home, she turns and quickly runs back to Eibhlin and Sean who had just stepped out of his truck to close the gate behind him, jumps in his arms and as she looks at her father running after her, she cries, "Daddy" which can be interpreted that she is fearfully yelling that her father is coming after her, or emotionally calling Sean her "Daddy". Those who felt sad that Cait must go back to living with her parents thought that the ending was tragically heartbreaking rather than positive.

The film develops slowly but the pace didn't diminish the positive reactions to the story, the incredible acting by 12 year old Catherine Clinch in her debut acting role as Cait, and of course scenic cinematography. The role of family in a child's development is seen clearly. The Quiet Girl received a warm, supportive score of 3.9 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best).



See you at the movies!
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