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Advantageous

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Advantageous

Abstract

This is a film review of *Advantageous* (2015), directed by Jennifer Phang.

Author Notes

Jodi McDavid is an instructor in Folklore and Gender & Women's Studies at Cape Breton University. She earned her BA at St. Thomas University (New Brunswick) and her MA and PhD from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her PhD dissertation was on anticlericalism in folk and popular culture. Her current research interests include vernacular religion, digital culture, the folklore and popular culture of children and adolescents, and gender and women's studies.



Advantageous
(2015)
Directed by Jennifer Phang

In a dystopian future, Gwen (Jacqueline Kim) must make some difficult choices in order to solidify her daughter Jules' future (Samantha Kim).

Gwen works for the Centre for Advanced Health and Living as their spokesperson, but in a Machiavellian move, is manipulated into undergoing an extremely risky new procedure the company has pioneered. After losing her job due to her age, she is approached by the company and encouraged to undergo a radical rejuvenation procedure which will help her secure her position.

The director does a good job of illustrating the dystopian nature of the world in which Gwen and Jules live. There are casual elements which show that buildings are periodically bombed, children are homeless and being prostituted, and neighbours' cries are frequently heard through the apartment walls. No reason is given for this reality, although environmental issues and the economy are alluded to. Birds-and-the-bees talks between Gwen and Jules include the knowledge that Jules' future will be one of infertility, and at another turn, Gwen is told she can sell her eggs for money despite being older than a regular donor, because infertility is so rampant.

As Gwen gets closer to her procedure, she realises that she will be put into an entirely new body, and prepares her daughter for that reality. A co-worker explains that Gwen's own body will die and that a copy of her memories will be cloned and planted into a host body. At this point, Gwen needs the job, and has been blocked from other means of gaining employment by her company. Realising she will die, she undergoes this procedure in order to have money for her daughter to attend the right schools and move in the correct circles, without which she will have no future. She signs papers indicating that she is agreeing to the loss of her soul in the process. Jules realises her new "mother" is not who she hoped she would be, and gradually, Gwen's great sacrifice is revealed as her clone tries to integrate in the extended family.

This film poses some interesting questions about science's role in procreation, access to healthcare and poverty, the existence of the soul, and the choices that we will face as technology changes what is possible for the human body.