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Beast

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Beast

Abstract

This is a film review of *Beast* (2018), directed by Michael Pearce.

Author Notes

Rubina (Ruby) Ramji is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Cape Breton University. After serving as a Chair of the Religion, Film and Visual Culture Group for the American Academy of Religion and then on the steering committee, Rubina continues to serve on the Executive Committee for the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion as President and is the Film Editor of the *Journal of Religion and Film*. Her research activities focus on the areas of religion, media and identity, religion in Canada, and religion and immigration.



Beast (2018), dir. Michael Pearce

The movie *Beast* is about a young girl who committed a terrible act when she was a child, yet continues to pay for it into adulthood. Moll is forced to take care of her father who has Alzheimer's and she sings in the church choir which her mother directs. According to her mother, this will allow others to deem her respectable.

But in the opening monologue of the movie, Moll explains how she sees her life. She says that she's loved whales since childhood because they look like they're smiling. But when whales are held in captivity they go deaf and blind and ultimately insane. Captivity causes them to die. Moll herself feels like she is in her own prison, created by her family, and through her own guilt, where she is kept in a form of captivity.

She eventually meets a young man who urges her to free herself of her guilt. Eventually, Moll chooses him over her family and moves in with him. Meanwhile, the small town in which

Moll lives is worried because a fourth rape/murder of a young woman has taken place (in the past three years). Her boyfriend Pascal is a prime suspect. Molly gives Pascal an alibi for the night the most recent girl was abducted and killed.

Suddenly Moll is brought in for questioning and Pascal is put into jail. Moll goes to the funeral of the young girl, where she finds that the town's people have turned against her because she has stayed with Pascal. Although Moll has found a new sense of freedom by being with Pascal, she still feels guilt for the act that she committed as a child.

When Pascal is released from prison as a direct result of Moll's alibi, she then asks him point-blank to confess to killing those girls. She says that she will truly love him if he confesses to having murdered the four girls. Pascal does it by saying they meant nothing to him. Moll realizes that Pascal feels no guilt whatsoever for killing the four women and takes it upon herself to cleanse the town of him. Moll tries to flip the car they're in, in order to kill Pascal: when that doesn't work Moll gets out of the car and proceeds to strangle Pascal. Pascal tries to convince Moll that they are cut from the same cloth, based on her childhood act of violence. But the difference between the two is the guilt Moll feels.

Although Moll's guilt was nurtured by her family, she knew she didn't mean to hurt the other person. Her guilt makes her a good person. It is what truly separates her from Pascal. Although the captive life Moll endured under her mother was a form of misguided guilt, Moll atoned for her sin through guilt, and knew that Pascal was beyond any form of redemption.