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Where I Am

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Abstract

This is a film review of *Where I Am* (2013) directed by Pamela Drynan.

Keywords

Disability, Homosexuality, Homophobia, Quaker

Author Notes

William Blizek is the founding editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film* (2009).

Where I Am

(Slamdance: Documentary Feature)

Directed by Pamela Drynan



On January 31, 1999, American writer Robert Drake was brutally assaulted by two men in his apartment in Sligo, Ireland. Since Drake was well known as a writer on gay topics and as an editor of other gay authors, and since Drake does not remember even today any of what happened that night, it is assumed that the assailants beat him nearly to death because he was gay. The assault left him with diminished motor skills, difficulty in speaking, an inability to type (except one letter at a time—a significant blow to his career as a writer), and an inability to maintain his balance, which means that he needs to move about in an electric wheelchair. The two assailants were captured, found guilty, and sentenced to eight years each in prison. Many believe that this was a remarkably light sentence, given the bodily harm they rendered to Robert Drake.

Where I Am is the story of Drake's recovery and his return to Sligo in an effort to visit with his assailants. In the movie we see Drake come full circle, from

where he was to "where I am" now. It is an amazing story, although it seems to continue to be a very sad story as well.

There are several connections with religion in the story. Drake has become a Quaker. He finds faith in God to be important in his life. He believes in a God that pervades the world around us, rather than a personal supernatural being. He has found it in his heart to forgive the two assailants and he believes that if God kept him alive after the attack, then there must be a reason—although Drake does not yet know what that reason is. With regard to homosexuality, the story reminds us of the extent to which religions foster hatred toward gays and lesbians. That is a sad element in any religion.

The most interesting religious connection in the movie, however, is the claim that young gay men undertake such a deep and profound introspection in an effort to understand who they are that such introspection is itself a religion or a religious experience. At the very least this introspection is the source of deep spiritual feelings. This makes perfectly good sense if you think of religion as a process of self-examination and a discovery of "where I am."

— William Blizek