East European Film Bulletin

REVIEW

Who's Afraid of Parenting?

Jana Počtová's *Non-Parent* (*Nerodič*, 2017)

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Jana Počtová is not a filmmaker that is drawn to such issues as politics, scandals and war. Instead, she is more interested in issues such as romance, family and friends, which dominate our daily thoughts and conversations. Her relaxed style reflects the commonplace nature of her chosen topics, yet Počtová does not fail to stand out as she shares both the variety and diversity present within the Czech Republic.

Moving on from *Generation Singles*, Počtová has presented the festival-goers of One World with her latest film *Non-Parent*. The title itself is interesting in that it simultaneously evokes the idea of a parent and the idea of somebody who does not meet the traditional requirements that go with that role. Over a period of five years the director followed the adoptive parent of two Roma twins, a divorced but devoted father, a lesbian couple who conceive through DIY insemination, a single-mother who barely knows the father of her young boy, a reconstituted family of divorcees and step-siblings, as well as a couple who have found fulfillment without bringing children into their family at all.

More than a curious glance into the lives of its kooky subjects, the documentary is a research project in response to the director's own ideas, fears and desires of family life. Throughout *Non-Parent,* Počtová questions if we are ever ready for children, if we are truly capable of making relationships last, if modern families are truly adequate and whether there is more to life than its reproduction.

The fact that the director implicates herself in the conversation, seems to really allow her to enter into meaningful dialogue when interviewing her protagonists. Počtová occasionally pops onto the screen as an interviewer and when she helps her interviewees cook or clean up. She too has to open up for the camera, which results in a strong ambiance of trust and honesty between her and her subjects. The mother of twins for example, is not afraid to admit to her exhaustion or to question her choices, and the silver-haired single mother

explores the incredibly intimate question of whether or not to put the father’s name on the birth certificate.

The level of intimacy achieved does not only concern the non-parents, but also the characters who surround and influence them. There are unfortunately some ugly reactions to the flaunting of tradition, but mostly the film is filled with growth and development as new experiences update old ideas. As a result, Počtová comes across as both patient and compassionate filmmaker, somebody who uses their medium for exploration rather than dictation. Many would argue that tradition still holds a tight grip across Central and Eastern Europe but Czech director Jana Počtová is wrestling her way out of it, with the camera in her hands.