

REVIEW

Lost in Poetry

Maria Saakyan's *I'm Going to Change My Name* (Alaverdi, 2013)

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I'm Going to Change My Name is Armenian director Maria Saakyan's second feature film. Set in a small village in her home country, the film is a poetic coming-of-age story of a teenage girl. The sixteen year-old Evridika lives alone with her mother, a musician of medieval Armenian church music who has little time for her daughter and generally shows little familiarity with how a lonely teenager may see the world. The film's narrative is loose and mostly consists of short episodes in which Evridika discovers her artistic talent and sexuality. In the beginning of the film Evridika goes to the local registry office to change her name. Late for class, she has to confront an angry teacher and leaves. Back home, she frequents a suicide chat room. Flashbacks in 8mm (or lookalikes) and mobile phone recordings intersect these episodes. In a café, Evridika meets a stranger called Petr who introduces her to the melancholic poetry of R. M. Rilke, citing passages from his poem *Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes*. Petr is also Evridika's father but this is unknown to both of them as his daughter was born out of a short-lived passion. Later Petr and Evridika keep in touch through the suicide chat room and decide to meet again. But when they spend the night together, Petr suddenly dies. Some sequences in the film are, if not truly poetic, at least technically innovative. In one scene Evridika imagines a donkey from graffiti scratching in a bus window. There are also some nice stop-motion animations, and a creative use of the computer screen in the chat room scenes (which match the handcraft aesthetics of the main character's universe), as well as the use of the phone camera shots. But all of this does not seem to help the story in any obvious way. It is unclear why Petr dies, whether Evridika knows how he dies and whether she knew or found out how they were related. In the end, one gets the impression that the director tried to make her movie more meaningful by obscuring it or by adding heavyweight references to classical mythology. But the bits and pieces from the story of Oedipus, and Orpheus and Eurydice never really find a place among Saakyan's characters. No wonder that Evridika doesn't feel comfortable with her name.