



Times and winds

Director: Reha Erdem
Country: Turkey
Date: 2010

A review by Peter Bradshaw for *The Guardian*:

Here is an utterly involving movie about childhood, by turns mesmeric and shocking; it is as addictive as a soap opera, and mysterious as a dream.



Bes Vakit, or Times and Winds, is the fourth feature from the 48-year-old writer-director Reha Erdem, who has emerged alongside film-makers Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Fatih Akin as a Turkish director for whom film-making is an authentic art form - and his movie recalls the work of Angelopoulos or Kiarostami. This does not, incidentally, prevent it from being completely gripping.

It is set in a mountainous, austere beautiful region of north-eastern Turkey. Three children in their early teens have much to endure, not merely the harshness of their families' day-to-day lives, gouging a living from the unrewarding soil, but a new, yet harsher reality. As membership of the adult world becomes imminent, an awful truth dawns for them all about their status. They are learning what it means to be second best, what it means to be a woman in a man's world, or to be the son who is not his father's favourite. Nascent sexual longing and the pain of a breakable heart are made a thousand times worse as the facts about their own parents' sexual lives come into focus, leading to confusion and mortification.

Yildiz (Elit Iscan) is a bright, studious girl who is never allowed to forget that her primary responsibility is helping her mother look after her baby brother. One night, she hears her parents having sex in the next room, which upsets her intimately, perhaps because at some level she knows what sex leads to, how her childcare duties will increase and what the general duties of womanhood are going to be.



Yakup (Ali Bey Kayali) is a sensitive boy, who nurses a hopeless crush on the beautiful schoolteacher (Selma Ergeç), a crush that is painful and unfunny and unresolved in the way such crushes always are in real life, but rarely in the movies. The small glimpse we get of the schoolteacher's own emotional history is in the book she gives Yildiz to read: *The Wren*, a romance about a heartbroken woman teacher who leaves the city to work in the villages.

Most dramatically of all, there is Ömer (Özkan Özen), who is the son of the local imam, and has, little by little, conceived a passionate hatred of this man, who ceaselessly humiliates him by praising his younger brother and making no secret that he loves him more. Ömer is electrified by a new sense of vocation: somehow he must kill his father.

All these stories are intertwined with images and moods that resonate with each other. An orphan shepherd boy is beaten like an animal for stealing a few nuts from a tree - his adult tormentor merely shrugs and claims that this is a "fatherly" discipline. Meanwhile, Yakup is astonished to witness his own father, a grown man, being beaten by his fierce grandpa (on whom they are financially dependent) for mistreating a donkey, and for being a general useless incompetent, compared with his own brother, Yakup's uncle. The father literally runs away and hangs his head like a child as Yakup looks on; it is an extraordinary, almost unwatchable spectacle of humiliation.

The pain and sheer tactlessness of the drama had me on the edge of my seat: that, and the hypnotic and beautiful images captured by Erdem. Boldly, he uses a western score: the music of Arvo Pärt, which at first seemed to be a little coercive and declamatory, but soon embedded itself in the film's language.

What lends the action its dream-like quality and enigma are the recurring, shocking silent sequences that exist outside the narrative, showing the children immobile, either asleep or actually dead, like corpses or murder victims, sprawled in the undergrowth.

The meaning of these tableaux is elusive. They are haunting visions of fragile human beings, casually smashed by a dispassionate god or scientific observer, or perhaps by us, the viewers. Or they look as if they have been wiped out by some uncanny plague or phenomenon, frozen in their lives like the citizens of Pompeii, their pursuits, hopes and dreams utterly nullified.

These visions of the children as lifeless rag dolls capture them where they have come to rest, as if after an appalling collision, or as if thrown from a car or abandoned by their assailant. They are existential crime scenes encoding a hidden truth about the children's fate that may or may not be elucidated by the "real world" of the drama. Yet they are presented so unobtrusively that their disturbing effect is fleeting, almost subliminal.

Times and Winds is a remarkable piece of work, conceived at the highest pitch of intelligence: it is a cinematic poem, replete with fear and rapture, and one of the best films of the year..

From: <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/aug/29/drama>