

Disobedience [15] 2017|UK|114 min

UK release date	30th November 2018
Director	Sebastian Lelio
Screenplay	Sebastián Lelio, Rebecca Lenkiewicz
Cinematographer	Danny Cohen
Cast	Rachel Weisz (Ronit Krushka); Rachel McAdams (Esti Kuperman); Alessandro Nivola (Dovid Kuperman); Anton Lesser (Rav Krushka); Allan Corduner (Moshe Hartog); Nicholas Woodeson (Rabbi Goldfarb)

The question of whose disobedience, and what kind of disobedience it is, are at the heart of this absorbing and moving love story from Chilean director Sebastián Lelio, his English language debut, following very quickly on the heels of his film *A Fantastic Woman*.

The drama takes place in the Orthodox Jewish community of north London. Weisz is Ronit, a young woman we see initially in New York: a photographer evidently living a fashionable and bohemian lifestyle. Out of the blue, she receives some bad news from back home, and Lelio shows that her first impulse is to try to anaesthetise the pain with drink and casual sex. But the truth must be faced up to, and a much-feared homecoming is necessary. Because she has learned of the death of her father, a much-respected rabbi: a fierce, potent cameo for Anton Lesser.

Back in London for the various ceremonies - the very epitome of the religious observance and obedience that she had wanted to get away from - Ronit feels all eyes on her: curious, and disapproving, but in a way cowed by her authentic connection with this revered religious leader. Weisz conveys her grief, her disorientation, her borderline-hysterical need to mock the pieties.

Ronit is disturbed most by two friends from the old days, from whom she senses a nervous disapproval. One is Dovid (Alessandro Nivola), her father's favourite pupil, a virtual adopted son who is now a much admired young rabbi himself. The other is Esti, beautifully played by Rachel McAdams, who was Ronit's only ally in youthful rebelliousness back in the day. But now Esti is

married to Dovid and Ronit is clearly shocked by how much older they seem, how much more conservative, how greater the gulf is between them, and by that token how much more intense her loneliness and grief then feels.

But Lelio's drama is not simply about this, because it is clear that Esti is not in fact so estranged from Ronit as first appeared, and this homecoming triggers a new independence of mind in her that makes everyone very uneasy. The truth is that Ronit and Esti were more than friends - and it wasn't just religion she was fleeing but forbidden love. They could easily be more than friends again and the movie adroitly lets us decide just how open a secret their relationship always was. There is an overwhelming passion and eroticism to this reunion, especially in contrast to the dutiful marital lovemaking between Dovid and Esti which Lelio had already shown us: trying of course for a baby.

The drama is expertly controlled by Lelio, lit and shot in muted and subdued colour tones by cinematographer Danny Cohen and it has a very interesting musical score by Matthew Herbert; its musing and almost playful woodwind figures cut against the expected sombreness and obvious melancholy to contribute to this sense of disorientation and subversion. This is richly satisfying and powerfully acted work.

After: **Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian, 11 September 2017**

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