



August 15, 2016

***Stations** is an experimental film by Jane Terry, Professor of Art, Meredith College. It screened at the 70th Annual University Film and Video Association Conference in August 2016. The following is a peer review of the film, by Kelly Wittenberg, Assistant Professor of Film, Video & Media, Western Michigan University.*

It goes without saying that the loss of a parent is difficult, and especially complicated when the relationship is less than ideal. Everyone has some kind of unfinished business with their parents, but it's one thing when they're still alive. Even if it's not true, you still have a sense of hope that you could talk things through some day. When your parent dies, however, the realization sets in that you will never again have the opportunity to work things out. Wherever you are, whatever is still wrong—questions unanswered, emotions not expressed—all you can do is let go and forgive. However long that process takes you.

Jane Terry's ***Stations*** is a visually poetic representation of reaching toward this process of reconciliation. Terry uses the medium of film to enter into conversation with the memory of her father, using the metaphor of "channels" or "stations" on a transistor radio. But the title is deeper than this, with multiple possible interpretations: there is the waiting in the train station; the stations on the radio as she tunes her father in; there are four channels, or parts of the film; the stages or "stations" of grief; stations in life (and death); and finally, stations on the journey of reconciliation.

A tattered baby carriage symbolizes the child, waiting at the station, then traveling through the stages of forgiveness. For much of the film, the carriage remains empty, signifying how the child with no parent lacks an emotional center and will never be whole. As such, the baby carriage is both a symbol of Terry as a child, and a vessel in which she carries the fragments of memory. Mother appears briefly in her sickbed, unable to give or receive assistance. Through the layering and manipulation of images of both parents, and audio of her father, Terry evokes the powerful effects of memory and loss.

One of many notable images in the film is of the wooden doll, weathered and stiff, leaning against the wall. The shot is framed so that the doll is cut in half diagonally by a shadow, which falls across the frame. This shot represents how the emotions of the

abandoned child are always split in two, between anger and the desire for love.

Also impressive are the different ways Terry has of framing the situation to signal emotional memory: a cardboard face opens up into a tiny proscenium, almost television-like box; the use of the actual television with the wooden doll dwarfed, watching the screen; her father framed, ghostlike, in the windows of the train, mouthing an unintelligible message; and her use of the stereoscopic viewer. All of these methods suggest multiple windows into the past, as well as a feeling of helplessness, watching the events of her life from the outside.

Terry has been waiting in the station a long time for an emotionally absent father, who leaves, it seems, without collecting her. The childish scrawl of "Dad I do not love you," and misspelled accusation of "shelfishness," colliding with the dreamlike association of shells tumbling from the tattered baby carriage, signify the need to release regret and guilt.

The carriage moves on, having long since given up waiting at the station. We see it circle a rose bush around and around, then we recognize it traveling through a cemetery. There in the graveyard, Terry unloads her burden, leaving a solitary rose on her father's grave. In spite of her father's emotional absence, she has come a long way to make peace with his memory.

Jane Terry's ***Stations*** is an accomplished example of how the medium of film can be used to transcend the personal, tugging at universal situations and feelings we all share. Just like every one of us, Terry has channels her father continues to access. I look forward to further impressive work in this mode from Jane Terry in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Wittenberg". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'K' and 'W'.

Kelly Wittenberg, MFA  
Assistant Professor of Film, Video & Media