



## Exemplar Review

### Edge of Love

Set partly in the Blitz in London of 1940, and later in the relative safety of the Welsh coastal countryside, this brings together the charismatic and womanising poet Dylan Thomas with two women: his first love Vera for whom he still harbours desire, and his wife Caitlin who Vera had known nothing of. Somewhat unlikely, then, that the two women should strike up a friendship but that's what they do, among the occasional bombs dropped on the city by the Luftwaffe. It's not long before handsome Captain Killick enters the equation, marries Vera but gets whisked away on what proves to be a lengthy call of duty. That's not before Killick manages to father a child, and Vera and son go to Wales with Dylan Thomas and his wife Caitlin, a woman who partly supports the pair of them by prostitution, but they also hang onto the financial security of the absent Killick and new mother Vera, he with a regular army income. Perhaps a fair chunk of that cash goes to buying cigarettes, because these people seem to be smoking constantly throughout the entire film.

Basically, it was hard to really care for anybody in particular - and since this is a film with just four main characters, at least two of whom are on-screen at all times, this is a critical failing. It's hard to say whether it's down to the acting, the directing or the casting, maybe it's a little of all three, but for large portions of the film I felt detached from the story and I was distracted by the outstanding cinematography. Dylan Thomas comes over, assuming this is an accurate portrayal, as rather a dislikeable character; although plenty of time is allowed for his poetry, it's his real-life persona that shines...or rather, it doesn't. He drinks and smokes constantly, he womanises, he penny-pinches off his friends and he invokes no appeal whatsoever. On the other hand, he doesn't come over as utterly hateful either, so in a nutshell he doesn't really stir the emotions much.

But the same could be said of the other three. Vera is a talented singer (and Kiera Knightley too, it should be said), but there's little else to her personality to make her special. Caitlin is the most unpredictable of the four, with very sudden mood swings, but again it's difficult to latch onto her and really care for her. She's a prostitute and she takes financial advantage of her two friends, and there doesn't appear to be much good in her heart. Finally there's William, Vera's husband, who returns from the front line with what we would call today, in retrospect, 'Second World War Syndrome', or post-traumatic stress disorder, an affliction that I would have found very interesting personally but it was never explored in the depth that I feel it deserved. As a result we never really get under the skin of William, we don't truly share his emotional traumas despite their playing a significant part in the closing part of the film. In some ways he is the most enigmatic of the the foursome.

It's a beautiful film, but unfortunately has slightly shallow characterisation and sometimes confusing portrayals of the not-very-complex inter-relationships between the two couples. Apparently Vera, despite being married now, still hangs on to the memories of her brief mid-teen fling with Dylan Thomas many years earlier and the



suggestion is that her marriage to William is a sham, but that - to me at least - rarely if ever materialises as for the most part, even in his long absence on the front line, Vera retains her love for her husband and if anything it grows deeper. Dylan Thomas, meanwhile, ends the film unchanged from the beginning, so there is next to no development of what is supposedly the central character - although he drifts away from centre for lengthy periods.

Throughout most of the film and at its conclusion I felt unconcerned about any of the key players or any of their ultimate fates; my interest peaked when William returned from the war in Europe but this potential explosion of emotions never really materialised, at least not satisfactorily, and in the end I felt slightly short-changed.

### **Task:**

Read through the review and annotate what points from the success criteria have been covered using the code given.

- (OP) An overview of the plot;
- (DC) Provide a discussion of characters;
- (PO) Give personal opinion;
- (Set) Discuss the setting of the film;
- (DI) Discuss the intentions of the director;
- (Re) Provide recommendations or suggestions for improvement.

Using the success criteria, give the exemplar answer 2 stars and a wish.

