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Harvest

In this often shrill portrait of a upper-middle-class family in disarray, the estimable Robert Loggia delivers a bravura performance as a patriarch fighting against the dying of the light. His Siv Monopoli is a World War II veteran who probably witnessed more carnage than anyone should experience in a lifetime and returned home to build a comfortable life for his wife and children yet to arrive. We suspect that Siv could have been an ornery cuss, at times, but he continues to command the respect of everyone around him. His wife (Barbara Barrie) lives with him and two of their children in the airy family compound in Connecticut, even though Alzheimer's has reduced her to a shadow of her former self. Like certain genetic traits, compassion and maturity have skipped a generation among the Monopolis. One son (Peter Friedman) is carrying a grudge against the old man and has to be shamed into visiting Siv while he's still in relatively good shape. The other son (Arye Gross), who stills lives at home, is a conniving little prick actively seeking to change his father's will to put him at an advantage over his siblings. A divorced daughter (Victoria Clark), also living at home, is a wilted flower child with a college-age son and a victim complex.

As is usually the case in such melodramas, the grandson (Jack Carpenter) is portrayed as being far more adult than his mother and uncles. As Siv's cancer becomes more pronounced, Josh takes it upon himself to create a familial bond, however short-lived. By acceding to his mother's demands to remain at home during his summer vacation, Josh is required to sacrifice a blooming relationship with a young woman who would

prefer that he dote on her between semesters. A ditzy housekeeper, who's alternately considered part of the family and treated like a doormat, also figures in the *mishigas*. As written and directed by Marc Meyers (“**Approaching Union Square**”), “**Harvest**” could just as easily have been targeted for the New York stage as a contemporized dissection of themes introduced by Eugene O’Neill. Instead, it benefits mightily from its lovely suburban Connecticut setting, well shot by cinematographer Ruben O’Malley, and a terrific ensemble cast. The melodramatic approach will appeal more to older audiences, who will recognize such characters and have the patience to endure their more idiosyncratic behavior.

– Gary Dretzka

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