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LLIT 107 World Mythology

1 November 2010

*Man Facing Southeast Analysis*

Mythology allows people to learn about and understand various components of life.

Many films reference mythological themes. In the 1986 film, *Man Facing Southeast*, an Argentinian Film which focuses on a storyline about Rantes, a man claiming to be someone from another world, enters a mental hospital challenging the work of Dr. Denis. There are several components of this film that may be referenced to mythology. Themes such as supernatural beings may be exemplified in this film, supported by the historical and cultural significance and use of sounds in this film.

Supernatural beings occur frequently in mythology and biblical stories. A biblical story that is strongly referenced to in this movie is that of Jesus Christ. Several scenes and symbols throughout the film allude to this. The audience is immediately able to recognize that with the character Rantes. Rantes can be a character that represents Jesus of Nazareth. At the beginning of the film, Rantes is first introduced to the audience as he sits in an old Christian church, majestically playing the organ. Rantes explains to Dr. Denis that he descended onto earth from a spaceship and claims to have come to the hospital to talk about his "mission". Similarly, Jesus came down to earth from the heavens in order to share his mission of saving humanity. The movie then continues with Rantes gathering support and love from the patients at the institute who follow Rantes out to the courtyard, where he faces southeast to transmit information from

his home planet. The followers of Rantes are comparable to those of Jesus Christ, in which they worshipped the teachings of God with Jesus.

The last half of the film is permeated with scenes reflecting the final stages of Jesus' life. Rantes' is "betrayed" by the hospital. Dr. Denis, symbolizing Pontius Pilate, orders for Rantes' medication to be changed. Rantes noting this betrayal by questioning, "Doctor, why have I been forsaken?" which is similar to Jesus' dialogue (*Man Facing Southeast*). This alteration directly leads to the downfall of Rantes' life on Earth. Rantes becomes a different person; depressed, betrayed, and saddened. Beatriz, the "saint" who befriends Rantes, can be compared to the Virgin Mary who comforts her son Jesus upon his crucifixion. The name Beatriz in Greek and Roman mythology means the "blessed one". Beatriz cradles Rantes' head in her lap and wipes him with a cloth, perhaps alluding to Pietà, a statue by Michelangelo (Buonarroti). Rantes' "followers", like Jesus', follow him until his death. Rantes later dies from cardiac arrest. The patients confirmed that though he was dead, he will be coming back for them and they will wait for this "resurrection".

Music is culturally symbolic in this movie. The floods of scenes that reference this begin with the night out in which Dr. Denis brings Beatriz and Rantes to see an outdoor orchestra. The musicians, all in white tops, perhaps symbolizing the purity and angelic nature of the music, spark the interest of Rantes. He soon takes over the job of the conductor and leads the orchestra himself. His passion inspires a riot to occur back at the clinic, where patients are joyfully in celebration. The song played is "Ode to Joy" by Beethoven, also known as the "Ode to Liberation". The patients are perhaps rejoicing their liberation from the medical restraints of the hospital. This may be seen as a cultural reference to Argentinian society. This movie came out

shortly after the “Dirty War” had ended in Argentina. This war was on in which military rulers had secretly abused, killed, and detained people who opposed the government, as well as bystanders (Cavallaro). Perhaps the reference to the liberating music and scene here can relate to the liberation that the Argentinians felt following the conclusion to this war.

It is important to have myths in this world to relate to components of life. Elements of the film are influenced by various aspects of the culture and theme of supernatural beings in mythology. The film *Man Facing Southeast* alludes to the biblical myth of Jesus Christ in Christianity. Analyzing this film may help better understand the myth, as well as the ability to create a contemporary version of it. The movie also serves a purpose of providing a cultural reference to Argentina in the 1980s, shortly after the end of the “Dirty War”. Argentina was overcoming a brutal time in their history, and the liberation from such an event is visualized and symbolized in this film through music. Analyzing this film may help better understand uses of mythology in film, as well as the ability of director Eliseo Subiela to create such a fantastic piece of film.

Works Cited

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