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FLM F334

February 26, 2014

Assignment 6

Kurosawa may have used familiar culture and art to help the Japanese connect with the messages in *Dreams*; however, it’s not necessary to be Japanese in order to appreciate the creativity of the film and to understand the universal values that it presents.

Some feel that *Dreams* would have been a masterpiece without the last four episodes (Serper, 2001), but I see it as perfect the way it is. The number and sequence of the episodes demonstrates the continuous flow of life from youth and innocence, through the struggles and lessons in life, to old age, and how all things are connected. I saw it as one dream with eight distinct parts all alluding to the connection of human and Nature.

The first feature, *Sunshine Through The Rain*, fairy-tale-like, illustrates that childhood can be quite carefree, but it is also when our more significant lessons are learned in regards to life. Nature, represented by the Foxes, demands our respect and our offenses to Nature come with serious consequences. Ignoring the messages of wisdom (the mother’s warning) will get us in trouble. Because of our connection to Nature, the consequence of our offenses is the destruction of nature and of us - essentially suicide. Avoiding offenses/destruction is best because forgiveness for the destruction of Nature, once committed, is like chasing a rainbow. *The Peach Orchard* continues on with the message that we do not exist separately from nature. It speaks to how some people are aware of the beauty and significance of Nature; it’s destruction at the hand of the human race, and the presence of hope (the new peach tree sprout), while others (the group of girls) are unaware because they are too involved with insignificant things.

From youth and an innocent view of life, we move into adulthood where life gets serious and full of struggle with the hardships that we create out of our ignorance and mistaken ideas of what is important. The *Blizzard* segment depicts the importance of not giving up and that our goal is so very near even it if doesn’t seem to be (the camp). The ropes represent how we are all in this struggle together which necessitates our helping one another. The beautiful spirit signifies the lure of the easy way out and other distractions in life that promise to ease our discomfort but instead facilitate our defeat.

Speaking of hardships that are created by the ignorance of man, *The Tunnel* effectively depicts the devastation, non-discriminant killing, futility and hopelessness of war. Man has caused this sin against Nature, of which he is a part. He can apologize but the spirits (Nature) afforded no response to lessen our anguish. The dog’s dual appearance represents the anger of man and the insanity that creates war, drawing others unwillingly into long, dark and dismal tunnels along life’s journey, always lurking nearby, ready to steal our peace of mind and threatening to ‘explode’ and destroy us.

The film so far has shown us the consequences of our ignorance and now moves on to a message about our view of the world. *Crows* tells us to quit trying to paint the perfect picture according to our deranged thinking. The world and nature are already perfect; it’s just in our heads that we struggle. Instead of struggling against nature and destroying yourself in the process (cutting off our ears) relax, keep it simple, and enjoy the simple beauty of life and nature as it was so ingeniously created. Happiness in life all depends on how you allow yourself to perceive things. Seeing it as it was meant and being one with nature, will keep us from the devastation illustrated by *Mount Fuji in Red* and *The Weeping Demon*, which show our inability to escape the consequences of our ignorance. Those to blame won’t be there to ‘fix’ what we have done to our earthly home and those who rely on it after we are gone. There is nowhere to escape the aftermath of our destruction, which includes nuclear torching of our mother earth. Technology first, nature last; and then there is no more beauty, just the un-nurturing planet and ungodly beings that suffer and agonize over what they created.

Village of the Watermills provides the conclusion and the ultimate message: Look…this is how it should be - peaceful, beautiful and uncomplicated. Children laying flowers on the grave signify customary behaviors created by gestures of compassion with significance life, rather than a meaningless ritual created by superstition or religion and that just adds confusion or makes life complicated. Life, when kept simple and close to Nature, has meaning and provides all that we need. It’s time to stop trying to improve on what is already perfect because we have gotten too far away from ourselves with technological advances and industrializations that pollute and destroy our environment and in turn make us sick and will lead to our certain demise. We are meant to live and celebrate a long, happy, health life and embrace our relationship with the environment that nurtures and sustains us, not struggle against it. Wise up people, learn from our past mistakes and make amends before we can’t make them. Look around, life is beautiful and we are struggling in the wrong direction. Time, like the watermills, is ever-turning and continues on with our without us.

Taking the messages of this film to heart could prevent more crimes against Nature, such as the 2011 Fukushima disaster, but probably won’t. Can’t say we didn’t see that one coming and it’s almost as if Akira Kurosawa did see it coming (in a *Dream*).

Sources

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