

Student

SWCCL Conference

Professor Bracken

4 October 2004

Film and Faith

On October 1, 2004, The Southwest Conference on Christianity and Literature (SWCCL) included a session on “Faith and Film.” From the title I was expecting to hear about different films and how they relate to our faith. However, to be honest I did not expect much. When I hear the word “conference” I think about the older generation and boring lectures. But I was hoping for a change, something that is understandable, fun and some what inspirational.

The “Faith and Film” session had three speakers, each with their own evaluation on a movie or movies. Each person had their own opinion, own attitude, and their own way of telling us about it. I had a different opinion about each speaker and their reviews.

The first speaker was William Hagen from Oklahoma Baptist University. His paper was entitled “Transcendence in Film.” Sun Rise, Dead, and Wings of Desire were the movies he discussed in his paper. Of all my criteria Mr. Hagen met none, his paper was not very inspiring. As he was talking I found it hard to follow him, and to be honest I found myself daydreaming. He did not have an engaging introduction and his continually dry humor did not help any. Because I did daydream and not pay much attention, this is all I can write about.

The second speaker was Joanna Rempel from the University of Oklahoma. She wrote a paper entitled “The Passion and the Sublime.” However, after much debate she changed the title to “Maintain the Balance in the Passion.” Rempel did an amazing job

describing the movie, and giving explanations for why the critics said what they did and why “normal” people, like us, think the way we do. My expectations of wanting change, an understandable presentation, and fun and inspirational content were all met. Rempel stated that she thought it was amazing that certain critics said the movie Passion of Christ was a “gore fest,” and “full of violence.” Yet when it came to movies like Kill Bill, Saving Private Ryan, and Seven, the same critics said they were excellent movies. Yet it is easy to see that the violence in these films is very different. In Passion of Christ the violence is focused in on one person, Jesus, and He did not fight back. Then in the other three, the violence is aimed against a number of people and they are all attacking each other. Rempel brought questions to mind that kept me interested and wanting to listen for more. She is a very intelligent woman and had so many wonderful things to say about the film and its effects.

The third paper was by Matthew Key from the Fuller Theological Seminary in California. For some reason he could not make it, but Ryan Scott “Staples,” an SNU student, read his paper entitled “Redemption in the Films of Wes Anderson.” Key wrote about the differences in three movies, Bottle Rocket, Rush More, and The Royal Tenenbaums. He talked about how all the films had things in common and kept everyone sitting on the edge of their seats. One thing similar in the films is someone getting hurt. In every film the number of people getting hurt multiplies. He also stated that in these movies there are relationships that are made stronger in the end.

To say that my exceptions of this conference were fully met would be an under statement. All the speakers knew their movie and all but one kept my attention. This

conference helped me to see how other people view films and how they share that with others.