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Chapel Perilous

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Chapel Perilous

Abstract

This is a film review of *Chapel Perilous* (2013) directed by Matthew Lessner.

Author Notes

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Chapel Perilous
(2013)
Shorts competition
(directed by Matthew Lessner)

(On **Saturday, January 25, 2014**, the *YouTube* Audience Award was presented at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival Awards Ceremony to **CHAPEL PERILOUS**, a short film in competition that garnered the greatest number of views on *YouTube* between January 16 and 24, 2014.)

This is my kind of movie. I love movies that ask how things might be different, different from the way we think they are or were, or different from the way we expect them to be. *Chapel Perilous** is a very clever movie that is also wonderfully funny. But it has a serious point to make.



Levi seems to be some kind of computer expert who works from home. While he is working, there is a knock on the door. It's Robin, a door to door salesman with nothing to sell. All Robin wants to do is to make a presentation that will give Levi information that he needs in order to understand himself. When Levi won't let him in the house, Robin asks to use the bathroom. Finally, Levi lets Robin in, but when he's done, Levi sends him on his way. Just as Robin is leaving, however, Levi is visited by his friend Dennis who, failing to understand the situation, sets it up so that he and Levi must listen to Robin's spiel.



David Gerson (with horns) chats with Bill Blizek at Sundance.

Robin's spiel is that science does not know what to do with 97 percent of our DNA. Ninety-seven percent of our DNA is mystery or junk DNA. This suggests that DNA, the discovery of which is supposed to explain everything we need to know about ourselves as human beings, will do no such thing. Life, or at least most of life, remains a mystery that exists beyond science.

In this mystical realm, Robin suggests that Levi, because of his fascination with Charlton Heston as Moses, may be, in fact, Moses. This suggestion comes in a collection of scenes that includes Sun Araw, an American musician whose work is often experimental. Levi's friend, Dennis, is a big fan of Sun Araw. At the end

of this strange experience, we see Levi sitting at his desk holding the sheep's horns that have now grown out of his head. In the movie, the horns are real and it is quite comical to see Levi sitting at his desk holding his impossible horns.

The movie takes on contemporary philosophy and evolutionary biology by asking about the nature of reality. What is there beyond science? What is there beyond the natural world? Is it real? Is it as real as the natural world? Is it more real than the world of science? And in the realm beyond the natural world, what is our individual mystical calling? What are we to be, beyond science? Unlike Levi, we may not be Moses, but we are something beyond the natural world.

Just a word on the casting. One of the problems with independent films is that they have difficulty within their budgets to find the right actors. In *Chapel Perilous*, the actors are all spot on. We know these people and we know them intimately. Because of this, we are drawn into the movie. It's as though all of this is happening to us, or to our best friend. The movie is funnier because it hits so close to home.

--William L. Blizek

*"Chapel Perilous" refers to a psychological state in which the person cannot be certain that they have been helped or hindered by some force outside of the natural world.