



February 2016

Excursions

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Recommended Citation

Blizek, William L. (2016) "Excursions," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 20: Iss. 2, Article 23.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol20/iss2/23>

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Excursions

Abstract

This is a film review of *Excursions* (2016) directed by Daniel Martinico.

Author Notes

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Excursions
(2016)
Directed by Daniel Martinico



ARRIVAL. At first this looks like a movie about a married couple's excursion into the woods. The couple arrives at a cabin in the woods. They put away the groceries, store the luggage, chop wood for the fireplace and clean up the cabin: all the normal things that people do when they settle into a cabin in the woods. At the end of this section, the couple sits together and the woman tells the man that this is “not what we said” and “not how I imagined it was.” He responds that he “doesn't understand.” Ominously, her nose begins to bleed.

COMPANY. But then company arrives – another couple – and we see them doing all of the things you would expect two couples to do in the cabin in the woods. They play dominoes, eat meals, hike, and drink wine. At the end of this section, however, the first woman takes the second man into the cabin and into the bedroom where the lights are turned off. The second woman then kisses the first man before laying him down, obviously for sexual purposes. Is this an excursion into one's sexuality?

MEDITATIONS. Here we see all four of the parties writing out something – meditations? But now, through a series of ritual activities, they begin to explore those meditations and themselves. Toward the end of this section we see what looks like a bright red mouth that disappears.

CLEANSE. In this section of the film we see the couples cleaning the cabin, but also cleansing themselves, again through a series of rituals. They seal up the cabin, they all appear naked and are splashed over and over with what must be cold water. We see them scrubbing their skin – rubbing it raw. It reminded me of a Turkish bath. Standing for long periods of time with their eyes closed. And hopping. Hopping so much that one of the women ends up vomiting (cleansing). Again, it is the ritual excursion into the self, into the soul.

EXCURSIONS. Here we again encounter a series of ritual behaviors, one of which includes one of the women licking the eyeball of the first man. Toward the end we find the first man claiming that his face is gone. The group responds by bandaging his face. The first woman's nose begins to bleed again. She covers her face in the blood. We then see the second couple putting their luggage in the car and driving away as though nothing has happened. But we find the first woman naked and covered in blood out in the woods. Her excursion seems to be into her feral self. And we find her husband sitting against a pile of wood, his face still bandaged. He seems to have lost his identity in the process of his excursion.

The movie is a fascinating account of how we use ritual to explore the depths of our psyches and the depths of our souls. It does not in any way suggest that what we find on our excursions is something that we are always happy to find. If religion is the ritual creation of meaning, this is a movie about religion in free form. This is a movie that could easily be tossed

off as merely weird, but it keeps the viewer engaged and it asks us to consider the various ways in which the rituals in the film might be interpreted. It also asks us to explain the red mouth and its disappearance.

Note: As I watched the movie, I was struck by how difficult it must have been to act in this film. What the actors have to represent is neither normal nor natural. Kudos to the cast for a magnificent job.