HSS3005 – week 2

Asturias – El senor presidente

‘New novel’ – broke w/ traditional forms – ie pattern of depending on plot and characters etc -> new devices to give reader framework of text

New framework:

* Myth:

Biblical myth of lucifer’s rebellion against god, God casting out lucifer etc creation of heaven and hell – reversed, god evil angel good? – infects entire social structure of novel/ life

^ God vs Lucifer – President clearly God figure – chapter 37 appears like a Mayan god – Tohil – indigenous mythology but also roman/ Greek etc – we see someone confronting President – all powerful boss, omnipresent/omnipotent – when he sees him = nightmare vision, twisted and fantastic, perceives him as Mayan god Tohil: rain god allows life to continue, but in reteurn for granting life in this way he needs human sacrifice – not benign, good god, but evil god who demands sacrifice in return for life. Parallels exactly to relationship between president and Caraje Angel, who is eventually imprisoned and dies.

Caraje Angel – rebellious angel

Loads of biblical references throughout novel – President as all powerful figure but an evil one

Parodying of Christian language – chapters 13/14 at the beginning: national celebration for president’s day – language used to celebrate this day is a bit like holy day in Christian/catholic calendar – chapter 14: “let the whole world see” – glory of god, language – president allows himself to be seen, phrase repeated as chant, president appears a god “como jesus” “hijo del .. ? “luz etc – glorifying/ religious/ hyperbolic language -> parodying of Christian language to refer to the god

Chapter 13 3 pages in – people waking up on day of national celebration – buena nueva - spreading of the word god, is the “good news” – gospel? Of the holiday/ holy day – pray to god that he frees them from bad thoughts/ bad deeds etc when sentence finishes: contra del presidente de la republica – replaces idea of god w/ president -> irony of it all, he is the one trapping them?

These prayers, we as readers realise the president’s actions are cruel, evil dangerous etc – glorification of president as god is glorifying corruption of regime – inverted god figure

This explains tone of novel as a whole – if president is portrayed as an inverted evil god – follows from that that world he rules over is not a heaven, but a hell – classic mythological battle takes place in heaven – world president rules over is a hell

Novel begins with shadow of cathedral dark hellish and ends with cathedral in ruins – hell – not a world of light but darkness – characters living in state of terror fear of the dark

* Inversion: premise of the novel, what allows us to get a grip on it, everything is inverted in this novel – good evil, heaven hell, consistent pattern in novel – main characteristic of novel: everything that we think of as normal is stood on its head/ all basic human values have been inverted – innocence is guilt and guilt is innocence – people are hounded bc their honesty and integrity – kindness generosity - are a threat to regime, but people who lie etc are rewarded with promotions etc

The whole central episode which sets it in motion – army officer is killed, president wants to prove certain people are responsible rather than it just being an accident – truth turns into falsehood and vice versa

Chapter 2 big interrogation scene – beaten them to get them to confess a lie – not as we’d expect – similarly few chapters later – Dr Baredodsklm ese animal? Dr in hospital, comes across scan hospital odfficials administrates, buying bad drugs that don’t actually work well and they’re keeping the money the would be spending on good drugs– 140 deaths bc of this 0 DR realizes this, reports to authorities and as a result he is punished, arrested? Faced with death? Bc he has tarnished name of president’s regime.

All characters are either Major Falfan? General Rodas? All guilty of crime and betrayed family/friends etc – all rewarded, whereas good characters are punished

God is benevolent/positive force – but president’s regime is destructive – breaking things down – cathedral broken at the end in ruins?

Fadina Rodas – imprisoned bc they find out she was in house arrested before house, baby left to starve to death – grabs dead body of baby trying to return it to womb? Inversion? Womb place of life/birth and now is a tomba – place of death -> time of his baptism = time of his funeral – turn reversal of conventional human values

Inversion: ferdina separated from husband and then child, one of features of novel = separation from love one = theme/motif of novel – enforced separation – broken away from loved ones

Lots of random stories that seem disconnected, but they all go through same thing – general separated from daughter

Not just that they’re separated physically, why is this such an important motif? Breaking of bonds between individuals – no other allegiance than to president – normal bonds of love/family broken down – those bonds repeatedly broken, all normal conventional ties are broken down – only thing that remains is loyalty to the president – all stories are disconnected bc the separations themselves are separate situations and cant be connected

Daughter of general is rejected by family bc don’t wana be connected

Major falfan? Set up by lover – who saves him? Calaajaj – but he’s the one who captures him and beats him up later

General rodas abandons her and goes to work for the president while she is abandoned and left to fend for herself

^forced separation but also people betraying each other – to seem good for president?

Bc people only own allegiance to president, everyone ends up spying on everyone else – president as god – he IS omnipotent/ omnipresent, through the people he ‘owns’ his network of spies – trees have ears etc – idea of love thy neighbor/ charity – inversed and everyone is spying on their neighbor

Chapter 10 scene – describing carajosdjfkl’s house – inside theyre all spying on each other, no normal bonds

Chapter 20 Report of the president – collection of letters denouncing their neighbours – shows the extent of which basic human ties of family and friendship have been subordinated to the president

Pattern of social organtisation under president’s regime

Society broken down into individuals – atomized individuals with no connection to one another – but the n for next stage, individual is broken down themselves: personality, morality – of decency, physically beaten down if they can’t be broken – total reversal of normal situation/ inversion of god

Other aspects of myth: rebellion of the angels

Dictatorship of omnipotent god, rebellion of angels

2 rebellions in novel: General canales tries to begin a revolution – society with groups and bonds are broken down, but this is the only movement in novel where we see people come together in constructive, collective action, operating as a group to achieve something positive, represents constructive social trait, in direct opposite to social grouping president has forced – this has come about bc of not just in spite of president – but then he dies?

Revolution takes a small part of novel, as soon as it gets going it fizzles out – all this takes part in background of novel “off stage” – maybe showing how little it mattered to dictatorship?

Individual rebellion given much more time – Cara… - comparison between rebellion against god as lucifer

First see him through the eyes of \_\_ who mistakes him as an angel – Caraje Angel? Clearly linked to idea of angelic, but meant to be specific angel – one phrase repeated to describe him “el favarito” – lucifer was god’s favourite/ also the refrain that’s repeated “beautiful and evil just like satan” – rebellious angel lucifer

Difference from biblical story - lucifer rebels out of evil, caraje angel rebels out of good – inversion – because he wants to be loving carrying to camila – he’s loving caring out of love

Presentation of caraje angel’s rebellion: what does he really do that’s so wrong? Not organising revolutionary group – why is he such a threat to the president- simply bc he’s choosing path of good over evil – not psychologically realistic novel – the more good you are the more of a threat you are to evil regime

Caraje angel is president’s key henchman, embodiment of evil at beginning in a way – but his first act in the novel is one of kindness: chapter 4 he tries to help out unfortunate – forced embodiment of evil – when he’s not being watched etc he can be good

His first big job in novel is to set canales up so it can lead to his murder – but he undergoes crisis of conscience, begins to hesitate chapter 11 – when he realises he’s going to be murdered in cold blood – when he gets to canales’ house he gets to camila – he kidnaps her at first, then grows feelings of compassion and then eventually falls in love with her – transition – his relationship with camila parallels the growth of his conscience, under the influence of love he undergoes a change – constructive bond with someone – then he’s able to make the change he’s been hesitant about – camila is dying he’s trying to do good deeds god will save camila in his mercy – he goes out c25 helps an old lady who’s trying to see her son who’s inside barracks, bridbes guard/ falfana – tips him off about president’s plan and saves his life

Power of love reflected in camila herself – why does she start dying? She enjoyed love of father and affection of nurse, nurse killed father forced to flee – camila removed from family home – when her bonds of love/ constructive bonding broken down – she is emotionally alienated - her physical state deteriorates – life meaningless without love – what saves her? Caraje angel C30 – Ticar? Advises caraje angel to marry her – bc a la muerte unica … only thing that conquers death is love – (politically saved = emotionally saved) he marries her which is also climax of his own growth/ transition from evil to love, he moves away from breaking down other people’s bonds and creates a bond of his own

Problem for caraje angel – this change brings him into inevitable conflict with the president – surface reason for his conflict, marrying the daughter of an enemy, but on a deeper level – in the light of his social economy in the president’s world his real sin is that he’s doing good and has adopted a good, constructive life – much more fundamental threat to president and his regime

In this inverted world, love is a transgression that must be punished – a sin

C37 confrontation between president and caraje angel – CA’s vision, seen as argument between Tohil? A god? And a hunter from the countryside carrying an erect loaded good and slingshot – countryside, growth vegetation erect? Confrontation between destruction and death and love and fertility and creation of human life

^key symbolic moment that describes the presidents desire to distinguish love and replace it with evil – rest of novel = practical way president achieves this

First of all he arranges CA and Camila to be separated physically, conned and CA is arrested and imprisoned in deepest darkest dungeon, just like lucifer in bowels of the earth by god – also light/dark – not only separated physically, next stage to break individual down morally – Camila is waiting for his letters/ love- makes her believe that he has become a robber/thief, and CA is lied to, plant false prisoner into cell convinces CA that Camila has become president’s mistress – only then that CA dies, Camila came to life when love is found, CA dies when love is lost – not physical separation but spiritual

Mythical structure stresses the triumph of forces of evil – God’s complete destruction of the rebellion of lucifer is represented in inverted terms by the destruction of good by evil

* Camila? Is she completely destroyed? – after CA’s death, she moves to the countryside – leaves alienating brutal city, goes to live in el campo and names her son Miguel – never returns to capital again, escapes the brutality of the city

Chapter XL when she moves to countryside – all positive imagery surrounding it, more positive, fertile etc, the sterility etc of city, Camila is restored by birth of her son and the bond created between them – novel ends like that – taken away from evil, freedom of contryisde

Mary’s flight with infant jesus? If we’re talking religious parallel

^^positive connotation, - Jesus was the hope for the people, saviour being born – birth of the new child, possibility of change/ newness/ rebirth – garden of eden, which is at the beginning of creation of evil is now at the end in this story – human history of toil ehardship etc in biblical mythology is explained by garden of eden and humans being cast out this is inverse? Going back to beginning, bypassing forces of evil – Miguel represents potential saviour figure, not individually but countryside? Miguel caraje angels spirit lives in despite his death – look at rebellions against dictatorships – did the rebellions start in countryside?

Last line Ticjar? Wedding ceremony – Make thee another self a love of ? – Shakespeare quote – honour god by bringing children to world – life created through love – creating a child is a means of overcoming death?

Chapter38 – child is conceived CA/Camila are in a farm in a countryside, making love in this room and a chicken is being captured – grab the long neck of chicken ejaculating blood/gushing life force – at the moment of conception, death of chicken = life/death

Make thee another self a love of me ?