**Class Discussion Notes for Behind the Sun**

This lecture will provide the information necessary for students to take the comprehension test provided for in the Learning Guide.

"Behind the Sun" -- based on book about blood feuds in Albania -- have them in both countries

Brazil - Catholic - South America -- heritage from Portugal and Africa

Show on map or globe - describe something of country

Albania -- Muslim (58%) -- Southern Europe

Show on map or globe - describe something of country

Honor Cultures

social pressures requires that men aggressively (sometimes lethally) avenge insults or injury to themselves and to their family;

sometimes revenge out of proportion to insult;

contrast to modern West --

look to the justice system, the courts, for redress -- criminal charges, sue for damages; retribution for government not for individuals;

when that doesn't work -- no other recourse; just accept it; realize how lucky you are in other areas, e.g. your family; job, wealth;

honor cultures exist in several parts of the world Mideast, Central Asia, parts of Latin American, Balkans -- e.g., parts of Albania and Brazil,

Western societies not free of its influence -- duel, Hatfield and the McCoys, street gangs (concept of "payback"); Cyrano de Bergerac; problem severe enough that Mark Twain made it the subject of satire in his book, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

Themes:

1. revenge, especially cycles of revenge, are destructive to the fabric of society, family relationships, morality, and human life;
2. parents betray their obligations to nurture their children when, in the service of their own anger or desire for standing in their community, they put their children at risk;
3. it often takes an act of transcendent courage to stop a cycle of violence;
4. often only an innocent child has the moral insight and courage necessary to take the first steps to stop a cycle of violence;
5. blind acceptance of tradition without looking at the consequences of one's actions can have a very bad result;
6. the end of isolation and the knowledge that another life is possible will lead people to break out of the pathologies of isolated communities, such as honor cultures;
7. to find themselves and live their own lives, children may have to break out of the restrictions of their families (the Kid, Tonio and Clara); this is especially true when the parents are abusive and do not nurture the children;
8. religion misused when it endorses actions which are against the basic beliefs of the religion; and
9. revenge is against the teachings of Christianity.

LITERARY/CINEMATIC DEVICES USED IN THE FILM

*SYMBOLS* -- film is thick with them

1. the oxen going round and round, especially when they go on their own, symbolizes the condition of the Breves family: stuck in a rut of grinding poverty and endless violence in which they go round and round, getting nowhere; it also symbolizes the plight of anyone who adheres to an outdated, dysfunctional tradition;
2. the dead trees in yard = dead emotional life of family, lack of parental love, failure to nurture;
3. swinging (at the Breves home and at the circus) = release from the restricted and unsatisfying existence;
4. the book with the mermaid story = knowledge of a better world outside limits of Breves family;
5. the Kid's inability to read = restrictions on his ability to lead a satisfying life caused his parents;
6. the fact that the Kid understood the message of the book without being able to read = Kid's ability to understand the truth despite the limitations of his environment;
7. the blindness of the grandfather in the Ferreira family = cannot see the right way to live;
8. that the child of the Ferreira family broke his glasses as he shot the Kid = locked into vendetta cycle and like grandfather cannot see right way to live;
9. the harsh sunlight = arid emotional environment of honor culture;
10. the rain = the love that releases Tonio from the sterile environment and the lack of nurturing of the Breves family;
11. the action of taking off Tonio's black armband = rejection of the constraints of his limited existence and obligations of the honor culture; also when the Kid put on Tonio's armband he was taking Tonio's place in the vendetta and freeing Tonio from any honor culture obligations;
12. terrible dryness of the land = barrenness of the honor culture;
13. the fact that "the Kid" is not given a name by his parents = they had given up hope that this child would live long enough to be a real person;
14. the fact that the Kid was given a name by the man who ran the itinerant circus and the book by Clara = how people free of the honor culture can give the Kid the love, nurturing and info he needs;

and

1. going to the seashore = a life free of limits of the honor culture.

black armband - both a sign or statement for characters and literary/cinematic symbol for the viewers -- taking it off is a literary/cinematic symbol of rejection of the constraints of his limited existence and obligations of the honor culture; also when the Kid put on Tonio's armband, he was taking Tonio's place in the vendetta and freeing Tonio from any honor culture obligations;

Kid has no name -- parents had given up hope that their children would live to develop into individuals -- cannon fodder for the vendetta war -- moral bankruptcy of parents -- relates to theme #3

*BIBLICAL CONNECTIONS*

the Kid has been said to be a "savior child." -- possesses a moral insight and transcendent goodness that belies his young age. He sacrifices himself for another, his beloved brother, Tonio. The savior child in Western religion is, of course, Jesus.

Abraham and Isaac -- (1) rejection of human sacrifice; God requires the willingness to submit to his will even in this but will never demand the act -- and (2) statement of the sanctity of life; — However these parents sacrifice all their children to the God of vendetta.

*MOTIF*

blindness and difficulty seeing

The kid unknowingly paraphrases Gandhi when he narrates, "An eye for an eye and the whole world will be blind."

In another allusion, the kid says, "In the land of the blind, one-eyed people are said to be mad."

The grandfather of the Ferreira family is blind and his grandson looses his glasses and is unable to see as he shoots at the figure with the black armband, who turns out to be the wrong target. vision/blindness motif has added depth because the blindness of the grandfather and his grandson's loss of his glasses as he shoots are potent symbols of inability to see the right way to live. *SUBPLOT*

The interaction between Clara and Antonio and Clara and the Kid make each of them realize that there is a better life free of the restrictions of their abusive, non-nurturing families.

Tonio and the Kid ---> freedom from abusive family -

Clara ---> Freedom from stepfather

subplot is interwoven with the main plot.

The goal of both Clara and Tonio is a life together at the seashore, i.e., in freedom.

*FLASHBACK*

-- Almost the entire movie is a flashback -- opening scene of Kid walking down road, wearing Tonio's black armband and Tonio's floppy hat. This is just before he is killed. He tells his story -- bulk of the film. Within the story, the Kid has a dream about when his brother Ignacio was killed -- also a flashback.

*FORESHADOWING*

-- Swing -- Kid in Place of Tonio

EXPLORATIONS OF THEMES AND LITERARY DEVICES

-- series of questions to ask class that will help prepare class for questions 8 - 17 on Comprehension Test/Homework Assignment)

Did Tonio do the right thing to leave? What about avenging the Kid's murder?

-- only way to validate the Kid's sacrifice was to go to the seashore -- revenge would have been falling into the vendetta trap;

What did you think of the parents?

lack of love nurture, sacrifice of children to the vendetta, parent's first responsibility is not to any code of honor but to children, to nurture and keep alive; there were alternatives; family could have left; what was so great about their life anyway? or could simply have opted out, called a truce.

The Kid's father said that honor required an "eye for an eye" until everyone was blind. The Kid: "In the land of the blind, one-eyed people are said to be mad." What did he mean by that?

— The culture was so closed and diseased that anyone who saw its insanity, was said to be crazy.

Give some examples of honor culture concepts in U.S. history.

dueling, street gangs that will avenge slights to their honor with violence; feuds like the Hatfields and the McCoys -

What does it take to break a "cycle of violence" in a blood feud?

In order for a cycle of violence to be ended, someone has to be brave enough to resist the cultural pressures to continue the exchange of violence. They will have to understand how the values of the honor culture clash with more important human values such as life, love, compassion, forgiveness, nurturing, etc. In this case, it required the innocence of a child to have the knowledge that there is another way and the courage to take it. -- same on tribal, national basis

After the older brother, Ignacio, has been killed the mother is praying for revenge, asking God for the blood of the killer. The camera pans to a shot of the shrine at which she is praying, and we see a picture of Jesus. What are the filmmakers trying to tell us in that scene?

(1) The filmmakers are pointing out that the parents and the honor culture are hypocritical in that they claim to be Christians, but they kill, take revenge, and refuse to forgive. (2) The filmmakers are trying to tell us that religion is sometimes used to support of justify cultural values which are against the religion.

Geography: show on map; Brazil Christian/Albania Muslim

How to stop a cycle of violence --

On a personal basis

courage to resist the cultural pressures to continue exchange of violence.

understand how the values of the honor culture clash with more important human values such as life, love, compassion, forgiveness, nurturing etc.

sometimes requires innocence of a child to know there is another way and the courage to take it.

tribal or national basis — must recognize that:

no monopoly on truth or justification

cycle of violence will lead nowhere

higher moralities and loyalties take precedence over the desire for revenge.

George Mitchell, a former U.S. Senator from Maine, who negotiated a peace agreement in Northern Ireland:

peace will only come when both sides are so tired of fighting and of the injuries and lost opportunities caused by the conflict that they are willing to forget the past and agree to a peace.