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Media Text Analysis 3: *I Killed My Mother*

The indie film called *I Killed My Mother* was originally known as *J'ai tué ma mère* because of its creation in Quebec, Canada in 2009. It was written loosely based on the life of the young writer of the film, Xavier Dolan. Dolan wrote the screenplay when he was only 16 years old. The story is focused around a gay teen called Hubert and his rough relationship with his mother. It is mostly set in suburban Montreal, Canada where Hubert lives with his single mother. His parents are divorced and Hubert barely sees his father for which he resents his mother for. She gives him other reasons to be hostile towards her including sending him away to boarding school. Because of all his annoyance with his mother, he claims at school that his mother is dead. His teacher quickly finds out and wonders why he would kill his mother like that. Eventually he runs away with his boyfriend and his mother ends up finding him at his childhood home or, "his kingdom." The film ends by showing childhood videos of Hubert/Xavier (Wikipedia).

This indie film has aspects of it that cause it to have drama and romance genres (IMDb). The drama comes because the plot has Hubert and his mother constantly at each other's throats. Drama films can be defined as films that show the serious stories of characters that are having some kind of conflict with something. This conflict can be anything from conflict with themselves or others, to conflict with something in nature. These types of films also often showcase current issues (Drama Films). *I Killed My Mother* talks about how difficult it is for

young LGBT people to come out and be at home with themselves and their identities. Struggles that LGBT people face have been huge issues for a long time. The film shows Hubert feeling the need to hide his sexuality from his mother. It's important to note that this film shows the coming out experience as a semi-positive one. Hubert's mother accepts his sexuality and is even hurt and confused about why he kept it from her for so long. This film also brings divorce and single parent relationships with their children to a forefront as well. The whole idea of the film is that Hubert is constantly at odds with this mother because of the divorce and lack of contact with Hubert's father. It's important to represent divorced parents in film because more people than most want to believe have divorced parents or non-traditional parents. So then more people feel represented. *I Killed My Mother* is also a romance film because we are brought into Hubert's love life in the film. There are a few scenes that show Hubert and his boyfriend, Antonin, showing their love and passion they have for each other. That kind of thing shown in a film constitutes a romance genre. Romance films can be defined as, "love stories, or affairs of the heart that center on passion, emotion, and the romantic, affectionate involvement of the main characters" (Romance Films).

The themes in this film are mainly that of teenage life trials and tribulations. Hubert's story is ultimately a coming of age story. A coming of age story follows the main character as they grow and learn as they become an adult. The plot follows Hubert dealing with home life as a teen with a single mother. Hubert tries to be independent by looking to live away from home with his boyfriend even though his mother holds him back. He also grows as a person and learns about himself and his mother as a person throughout the film. Hubert reflects as an older person in a monologue in the beginning that he loves his mother, but he can't be her son. In other words,

he needs to be his own person and be on his own with his own life. He feels like that will help his relationship with his mother. In an interview, Dolan mentions that his mother, "...is a beautiful human being but perhaps not the most skilled person in what comes to parenthood" (Seymour). So as Hubert grows up, he realizes that his mother isn't a bad person, she's just having a hard time with being a mother. Hubert also develops his knowledge of his sexuality in the film. Because of the coming of age theme, the audience of this film is probably teenagers and maybe even young adults that have just dealt with the issues Hubert is dealing with in the film.

I Killed My Mother was written and directed by Xavier Dolan himself (Wikipedia).

Because most of the production was from the hands of Dolan alone, he had pretty much all the control of all aspects of the creation of this film. He got to direct the actors in the film exactly how he had envisioned in writing the script. The script didn't have a chance to be altered by a director interpreting the words and translating them to the screen. This is a great aspect of indie movies because the deeper meaning from the writing comes through in a stronger and more raw way. A problem with this kind of movie that there come many limitations with production since one person can only do so much.

Dolan attempted to finance the film alone, but soon ran into trouble when his vision was outgrowing his cash. So he reached out to two companies called Téléfilm and SODEC. Téléfilm declined Dolan's request, but SODEC ended up falling in love with the project. However, they suggested Dolan submit another request with them in a lower indie category (Wikipedia).

SODEC is a government agency in Quebec that was founded in 1983. It is focused on aiding culture industries in Quebec. SODEC funds and supports industries in cultural sectors which

includes books, film, music, television, and art (Société). Since SODEC loved Dolan's film ideas, they ended up providing \$400,000 in subsidies. However, the film ended up having an overall ending budget of around \$800,000. Despite this help from the Quebec government, Dolan argues that the process of getting funding for projects is, "...an obsolete financing mechanism that holds the creative assets of Quebec hostage" (Wikipedia). In other words, the lack of the kind of funding big blockbuster films get, cause individual movies to have limitations in the creativity and potential. So films like this may be suffocated by the drought of funds. Money allows creativity to endlessly flourish. However, other indie films like this will have a hard time succeeding without proper funding behind them. The ideas can be there, but they can't go anywhere without money.

Reviewers of the film seem to agree that Dolan's potential with this film has definitely been held back a little. Most reviews say that the film is pretty good for where it came from. Several people note that the talent is definitely there for a 19 year old director. A top reviewer on Rotten Tomatoes named Peter Brunette notes that the film is, "Uneven but funny and audacious adolescent comedy from a talented beginner" (Rotten Tomatoes). Brunette is ultimately saying that the film was pretty good considering the fact that this was Dolan's first film. The film has even gotten quite a bit of international attention which is huge for a small film like this (Rotten Tomatoes). The film was also the Canadian submission for Best Foreign Language Film in the Academy Awards of 2009 (Wikipedia).

Works Cited

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