

# "The House of Cards"

Pioneer Entertainment/92

The collect I came upon this morning in my daily reading in THE BOOK OF ENGLISH COLLECTS begins thus: "O heavenly Father, after whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named,...." (yes, from Eph.3.14-15)

This film is about how a 6-7-year-old bereaved girl sought her father, whom a Mayan had told her was not dead but had gone to reside in the moon. Her normal journey outward from infancy into the "real" world led to her speaking three languages. But the trauma of seeing her father die (from falling off a Mayan temple!) stopped the normal childhood oscillation between the inner and the outer worlds: she retreated into the inner world, where she had no use for outer-world language & so went mute until her architect mother simulated the ascent to the father (in the moon!) by constructing out of plywood a spiral on the model of the child's spiral "house of cards" in which the child had sat looking up while her hands mimicked wings. On a playingcard, the child had seen a spiral leading to the moon: on her computer, the mother designed a spiral able to bear her weight so she could lead the child fearlessly upward.

1 The film is a symbol-loaded in-your-face subversion of materialistic living, which affirms death & denies afterlife: reversing, it **denies death** & affirms **survival of death**.

2 Sally went mute not at the death but upon re-entry in her parental world, which had **no symbolic-ritual supports** for the Mayan paradigm. Such supports for the biblical paradigm have collapsed for millions of America's children: are they in a spiritually mute condition? If so, how lead them to the Father?

3 Parents need pre-parent training in how to respond to **children's cosmic questions**. The film's first words are Sally's to the Mayan man: "Where do dreams come from?" To emphasize his point that dreams are imaginal, he says "In dreams you don't need words." This sets Sally on a no-words (mute!) inner journey, but outwardly she's still full of words. QUESTION: "Where do people come from?" PAGAN-POLYTHEIST ANSWER: "The gods made them." Q: "Why do people die?" A: "They don't die. They go from one home to another."

4 Clergy? Only the Mayan shaman. Deity? The Mayan's "gods," + a few references to "God" (especially the widow Mathews, after the mother-daughter plywood-enactment of the journey upward: "I believe in God again").

5 THEME? Existentially, how to deal with death; philosophically, transcendence; religiously, (what in my Eerdmans book-title I call) "reach of spirit."

6 TITLE? (1) Random House Dict.<sup>2</sup>: "a structure or plan that is insubstantial and subject to imminent collapse, as a structure made by balancing playing cards against each other." (Remember the collapsed trestle at the end of "Zorba," signaling his whole life as a house of cards?) The film is a reification of this metaphor. (2) Remember the British "Mystery" PBS series of this title? A secretly monstrous PM is undone (by a tape-recording made by a journalist he seduced & murdered) at the very pinnacle of his success. (3) The international organization providing association & information to cardplayers.

7 Psychiatrist? Jacob is into verbal-coercive manipulation (with a mute!), trying by deprivation to force Sally to say her name, his theory being that self-naming aloud will return the child to her social location, which by its demands will restore her speech. The mother's (successful) approach is mainly nonverbal. He runs a hospital for autistic children and says "Normal is awesome." Sly comment on materialism: The shrink says Sally's autism is from "brain damage." Keeping Sally out of residence in the hospital, her mother says "They'll treat the disease, not her."

8 The mother's mishandling of the early states of her GRIEF had baneful repercussions in her daughter's grief. Sally's pleading "Mommy, take me to see Daddy" suggests to me that the Lord's Prayer (Christian education) could have been prophylactic to better grieving.

9 The wired world: Salvation by love & computer-assisted skill. Mother created a dynamic-equilibrium temple with ritual. Brother & sister happy hand-in-hand.

Effort  
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