

Movie: The Hills Have Eyes (1977)

Synopsis

Based on the life of “Sawney” Bean, *The Hills Have Eyes* is a 1977 horror film written and directed by Wes Craven depicting the ill-fated fortunes of the Carter family after becoming stranded in the Nevada desert where they are hunted by a cannibalistic clan living in the hills.

At Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, we have a module in our Psychopathology course that reviews mental illness through horror movies that are based on real life encounters. Wes Craven’s 1977 film is included among these 10 accounts.

How it relates to the field of psychiatry

The conflict between the Carter family and the Cannibalistic Hill-Usurping Desert (CHUD) mutants parallels The Titanomachy; the 10-year war between the gods of Olympus and the titans.

After the mighty titan, Saturn, took his father’s (Uranus) throne in fulfillment of an ancient prophesy, he secured his power by re-imprisoning his siblings (the Hecatonchires and Cyclopes) in Tartarus.

In *The Hills Have Eyes*, a similar “legend” is told by Fred when he relates the story of his son, Papa Jupiter, who raised a family of deranged cannibals who dwell in the desert. Fred, who symbolizes Saturn, left his son in the hills to die. Similar to Jupiter (Zeus) surviving the murder attempt by his father (Saturn) and surviving in a Cretan cave, Papa Jupiter also survived. Papa Jupiter had 3 sons named Mars, Pluto, and Mercury, the same names given to Jupiter’s (Zeus) sons brother.

The myth of The Titanomachy served to give a culture the answer to the origin of the universe. This universal question is central to existentialism; “man’s search for meaning.” Just as the Carter family searches for a way out of the desert (their personal existential hell), so too do all individuals search for the existential meaning of life.

| Parallels Between Roman Mythology & Wes Craven's The Hills Have Eyes | |
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| Roman Mythology (gods, titans & heros) | The Hills Have Eyes |
| Saturn, paranoid and fearing the end of his rule, swallowed each of his children whole as they were born. | Pluto abducts the Carter's baby (Katie), who the "titans of the hills" plan to feast on for Thanksgiving. |
| Rhea managed to hide her youngest child, Jupiter, by tricking Saturn into swallowing a rock wrapped in swaddling clothes. | Ruby knocks out Mama and escapes with Katie into the hills, where she is pursued by Mars. |
| After Jupiter and the other Olympians won, the Titans were imprisoned in Tartarus | |
| Ixion is punished in Hades, bound by Zeus to a wheel that is perpetually spun. | Papa Jupiter is killed by a snare trap set by Brenda and Bobby using a spinning wheel of a car. |
| Prometheus is cursed to spend eternity bound to a hilltop and have his liver devoured by a beast each day (only to have it grow back every night). | Mercury is pushed off a hilltop by Beast, falling to his death. |
| Achilles is killed during the Trojan War when he's mortally wounded by an arrow shot by Paris. | Beast tears Pluto's throat out after incapacitating him by biting his Achilles tendon. |
| Hera sent two snakes to kill Heracles in his crib, but Heracles strangled a snake in each hand and played with the dead bodies as though they were toys. | When Mars tries to kill Doug, Ruby puts a rattlesnake on his neck, enabling Doug to overpower him. |

Key words: The Hills Have Eyes, mutants, Wes Craven, cannibalism, Olympians, Roman gods, mythology, The Titanomachy, Saturn, Uranus, Hecatonchires, Cyclopes, existentialism, Man's Search for Meaning

Psycho-nicity: '*Synchronicity*' is a Jungian term depicting the acausal connection of two or more psycho-physic phenomena. For our purposes, it serves as the root for a neologism (newly coined word), psycho-nicity; suggestions that make a movie a transcendental experience. For a truly unique experience, watch *The Hills Have Eyes*, read biographical information on Alexander "Sawney" Bean, then re-watch the movie and appreciate that it's even more horrifying.

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