

Body comodification in maria full of grace



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Writer and director Joshua Marston's film "Maria Full of Grace" chronicles the titular character's foray into the drug trade. The young girl, in desperate circumstances, wagers that the money promised to her by her drug running employers against the plethora of possible unfortunate outcomes, and when she accepts the job, her body effectively becomes commodified. Maria, in the film, is reduced by her employers from a daughter, sister and expectant mother to little more than a human container, a clandestine vessel to facilitate the import of cocaine into the United States from Columbia. "Maria Full of Grace" exposes the methods that drug cartels use to ensure that their shipments arrive to their destinations. The mules are made to swallow pellets of cocaine, and, upon arriving in the United States, excrete them to be sold. This method of delivery is fraught with danger. There is, of course, the possibility that the mules will be discovered by authorities on either side of the border, and smuggling such large quantities of narcotics carries hefty penalties that could see them locked up for life.

Another, even more serious threat is that the pellets could, at any time, rupture inside of the mule's body, which is tantamount to a death sentence. With these dangers being considered, it can be difficult to imagine how someone could allow themselves to be used in such a way, but, luckily, the film includes the necessary motivations. Maria is prompted to become a drug mule when she loses her job de-thorning roses. She had been keeping her struggling family afloat with this occupation, and was in desperate need of employment, especially considering she was pregnant.

While all drug mules have various reasons for choosing to use their bodies to transport drugs, most of those reasons are to escape desperate

circumstances. The mules are given the opportunity to feed their starving families, to find some solace from their impoverished lives. The mules hold no illusions about becoming rich, they are simply compelled by their lack of options to accept any job that pays well, even if it means risking anything.

Drug mules are compelled by desperation into the horrific world of drug smuggling, but the cartels are motivated only by lust for greed and profit. This represents yet another risk that the mules must face. In “ Maria full of Grace” when Lucy falls ill, the cartel members that contact her pay no mind to the fact that she is dying before their eyes. To the drug runners, Lucy has fulfilled her purpose by transporting the cocaine, and they thus have no reason to protect her life. When Lucy dies, she is disemboweled in the bathtub of a hotel room for the drugs she was carrying. and her body is simply and unceremoniously dumped, this turn of events serves to showcase the fact that the cartels feel no empathy towards the people that they rely upon, for, to them, they are not people, but have been reduced to mere objects. “ Maria Full of Grace” helps to showcase how globalization is allowing human beings to be reduced to commodities. The international trade in drugs makes many unscrupulous people a lot of money, and so, those people are willing to go to any lengths to ensure that the drug trade between nations continues.

When border patrol agents, drug sniffing dogs and the coast guard shut down avenues of trade, the cartels turned to the idea of using people as the containers of their wares. This commodification of the human body dehumanizes the mules to such an extent that when they die serving their employers, their thanks is to be cut beyond recognition for their cargo and disposed of, as if they were trash to be thrown out. Joshua Marston’s film

perfectly reveals the negative ways in which globalization has led to the commodification of the human body