

Brief encounter essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Brief Encounter” dealt with the issues of sexuality and desire by using a lot of different techniques.

Some of the main ones included the lighting that was used, which would always heighten the facial expressions of the characters that were in the scene (inevitably it was Laura and Alec).

This then led to the viewers noticing how the lead characters dressed and talked.

Although the lighting emphasised their expressions, this led to Laura’s clothes being less noticeable.

The way that Laura talked was with a first person narrative, like it was her conscience speaking, but to her husband Fred.

The director David Lean has used the music to try and emphasise the moment in the film, for example when at the beginning of the film Laura is in the lounge area with her husband Fred, the music is calm, soothing, and slow, to match Laura’s mood and feelings at the time.

Also throughout the film, there are lots of examples of symbolism, which adds to or dramatically heightens the growing love affair between Laura and Alec Harvey.

For example when Laura and Alec first meet at the cafe, she has a small piece of grit in her eye, and along comes Alec and helps to get rid of it for Laura.

I read this as symbolising, that there was a small love beginning to materialise itself between Laura and Alec (a doctor who just happens to be in the right place at the right time).

The piece of grit in Laura's eye, is only something small, but the next event will put their growing love into slightly more proportion, a meal at a posh restaurant, which is a slightly larger event, then helping someone pick a piece of grit out of their eye, which shows the blossoming love between Laura and Alec.

At this time Laura is still feeling guilty about her husband Fred, but as the love between the pair of them (Laura and Alec that is) grows, Laura has less and shows less inhibitions, then at the start of the relationship. They tend to let their emotions run free like two schoolchildren falling in love for the first time. This is a key point to make as the director David Lean plays off of that feeling and emotion very well in one of the last scenes that Laura and Alec share together before he goes off to South Africa. They are sitting outside near the platform, talking and just basically reminiscing about the good times that they had enjoyed together, when in the background we see two children running and a boy chasing after a girl, thus symbolising the love and the fun the pair of them used to have and enjoy together.

Talking of desire, it is interesting to note that although we see that both the central characters Laura and Alec have a desire to be with each other, we do not once see either Alec's family (his wife and children that he allegedly has got, the only way we know about them is because he claims to have them) or his house where he lives. This is a very interesting point, and although this

film was made and produced in the mid to late 1940's, it could easily be that Alec is lying and just likes to cause havoc between married women and their husbands.

He just breezes into Laura's life, and has a four week relationship, and then goes off again, to allegedly South Africa, but what is to stop him going off to say London and doing this with another women, and what is to say that he hasn't done this sort of act before he met Laura. To me Alec Harvey does have a lot of desire to be with Lara, but his excuse of having to off to South Africa is a bit weak at best, personally I think that Alec Harvey is a con man, and just likes wrecking marriages, as this is what he has done between Laura and her husband Fred.

Because you have to think of the context of the time in which the film was made, the 1940's, television wasn't a big part in many people's lives, and so people like Alec could go and do what he was doing quite regularly, without it making national news, and he could move from town to town, city to city and carry on without anyone suspecting him, as the communications were not as good as they are today, and if he kept informing his lovers that he was going away to South Africa, then he could keep on getting away with wrecking marriages.

It is also interesting to note that at the end of the play, Laura says (in her first person narrative voice or her conscience voice), that she could never inform her husband of what went on as it would wreck their marriage, just as I believe what Alec had wanted all along.

The main issue that is being portrayed in "Brief Encounter" is of a woman having an affair, and the consequences of her actions.

The film tries to portray having an affair when you are married as totally unacceptable and as hard to bear on your soul. Both Laura and Alec at the beginning of their relationship (and Laura does more or less throughout their relationship) have regrets about doing what they are doing, and that affairs in general are wrong and morally incorrect, as that was in keeping with the context of when the film was produced.

If Laura and Alec had been living in today's modern society, the feelings of guilt and regrets towards their established family (i. e. their respective husband's and wives, and respective children), but the society we live in today, is far more liberal and having an affair (although still wrong) is I feel far more acceptable, in the fact that it happens, and far more people know why they happen, and can understand the reasoning's behind them.

This I feel is the key issue here is acceptance, Laura felt that society would turn it's back on her if she kept up the affair with Alec, so she felt that it must stop (although Alec made the decision to stop it by allegedly going off to South Africa). But they would have been accepted far more by society today, I believe if they having their affair today.

One of the key reasons for this I believe is that back in the 1940's when this film was made and produced, everyone knew each other, and where they lived and what they got up to, so if anyone like Laura was having an affair it would have made for a lot of gossiping. Whereas in today's modern world, with people constantly moving houses and changing places to live, it is very

difficult to know everything about everyone where you live. So if Laura and Alec were having an affair now, it might now arouse the type and amount of suspicion, and gossip it might have done back in the 1940's when this film was produced.

The techniques that the Director David Lean employ's to develop our understanding of Laura Jesson as the central and main protagonist in " Brief Encounter, are varied and multiple.

For instance at the beginning of the film we see or hear Laura's first person narrative or her conscience speaking to the viewers at home, and telling the story in a non-linear way.

As we follow the story we see flashbacks, to before she was at home with her husband Fred, to about three or four weeks previously, this technique is not a new one nowadays (nor was it back then), but it does allow for the story to make a lot more sense as the audience has some conception or idea as to what Laura is talking about.

The director David Lean also uses a lot of very clever symbolism throughout this film. Such as whenever we see a train leaving the station (which happens on numerous occasions), I feel this matches the pace of the whole film, or Laura and Alec's relationship (slow, getting faster, fast, then slowing down, and then finally stopping).

This is very clever, in the fact that the symbolism that the director David Lean does use, is always in the right position, and is always useful, to the film.

Also what I find interesting is the type of camera shots that David Lean chooses to implement. For example whenever Laura and Alec are in the cafe together, all we get to see is a two shot, and generally zooming in on the central character or protagonist Laura's face, to see her facial expressions.

Also what is evident is the lighting that is used, as this is very important, as since the film is shot in black and white (that was what was only available at the time of when this film was produced), this leads to lots of dark spots, which the director has very cleverly used to his advantage, by concentrating most of the lighting on Laura's face to highlight or heighten the drama.

One of the more subtle devices that the director David Lean uses is the choice of film, and the title of said film, that Laura and Alec go and see in the cinema.

“Flames of Passion” reflects or mirrors the growing relationship between Laura and Alec.

Characteristics of film noir also abound within the film – unglamorous locations, rain-slicked streets, dimly lit interiors and dark train passageways in a tale of doomed and frustrated love.

Also Myrtle Bagot the cafe hostess (the woman who serves all the food and drink) has a long and poignant speech where she talks about what happened when she left her husband (“He died after a few weeks”), after having an affair, to the train stationmaster Albert Godby. This is very reminiscent of Laura's situation with Alec Harvey, but in way so vastly different. As Myrtle Bagot can talk wildly and loudly about her affairs (she seems to have no

inhibitions at all), this is in stark contrast with Laura who is scared stiff that someone might find out about her affair and report it back to her husband Fred.

But at the same time Myrtle Bagot's speech is very dramatic, powerful, and helpful to the audience watching as it helps us to what might happen if Laura follows the same path. Will Fred just die like Myrtle's husband did? What about Laura's kids, these things are all reflected in Myrtle Bagot's speech.

Another scene, which I think is appropriate to talk about, is the scene where Laura and Alec are at the Botanical Gardens, and they get into the rowing boat, and they start off into the water. At the beginning of their journey, there are some ducks in the way, and they part right down the middle, now I don't know if it was done on purpose, but you could read into that as meaning that there will be a parting of the ways between Laura and Alec.

The key or most common devices used by the director David Lean is to use key images, or objects to jog the memory of the viewing public to remember key or important scenes.

The other key technique that I feel that the director David Lean uses to full effect, is matching the scenes to how the central protagonist, or character Laura feels deep down. For example when Laura leaves Alec's friend Steven's flat, the weather is raining very heavily and it is dark and gloomy, just as how I imagined Laura feeling (also it matches her on screen persona at the time).

The music also matches or adds to the scene when it is used, by heightening the drama, it also tends to match the mood of the characters that are the screen, and in the scene at the time. The music also contributes to not only the telling of the story but to move the story along when there is no speech on screen or in the scene.

One of if not the most crucial lines in the film is the last line uttered or spoken by Laura's husband Fred, he says " Thanks for coming back to me", after she has finished reminiscing about Alec (in her first person narrative). This has got a couple of different meanings. You could take it as meaning Fred saying thanks for coming back, to the world, after she had what looked or appeared to be another fainting spell. Or it could mean thanks for coming back to me, and not going to South Africa with Alec. That is a very clever line thrown in by the scriptwriters, and perfectly matches the whole ideals of the film, in just one sentence I feel.

Also as the credit sequence illustrates, the film is about the scheduled, routine comings and goings, appointments and meetings, and arrivals and departures within structured, ordinary, everyday life. An express train whistles and crosses from left to right as it passes through the Milford Junction train station, sending up billowing steam and generating wind as the credits play. At the end of the credits, another train comes from the opposite direction, moving from right to left across the screen. The passage of the trains on different tracks clearly represents the lives of the two protagonists whose lives ultimately move, without romance, in different directions.