

Environment in the movie the letter essay samples

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Analysis of Representations of tropical Asia, Its Peoples and Its

William Wyler is arguably one of the best film makers of the 20th century as evidenced in the film *The Letter* (1940) set in the plantations of the Orient. Among the greatest highlights of the movie are the various representations of tropical Asia, its people and the environment as depicted in this movie in totality (Bazin 34). Considering the time when it was set, it is no doubt that all these have to point back to the happenings of the time; colonialism at its peak. The participants are of different nationalities more so, the Britons and the natives of Singapore. There is a full moon with clouds cluttered in the night sky, and the viewer gets to see a rubber plantation filled with trees and the workers sleep in their quarters. They sleep in hammocks and this, perhaps explains their living conditions which go by the era and what was going on around them as the world was reeling in colonialism. In as much as much of the conception is geared towards the physical there is much about the theme of colonialism that cannot be ignored. The moon, clouds and palm trees are enough evidence of the environment of the Asian peninsula.

The movie brings to mind a collection of two opposite worlds; that of the colonialist and the ones colonized. On one hand are the natives and on the other are the colonialists. Any movie originating from the 1940s is bound to reflect colonialism. The environment in the movie is so tense all thanks to the atmosphere of death, deceit and the relationships that exist therein. In as much as it is physically beautiful, the presence of the colonialists, it is imperative to look at the environment in terms of the people and the relationships that exist between them. The Malayan people are cast as

workers or rather slaves of the Britons who are colonists. Crosbie is a farm manager and has interests in acquiring another rubber plantation in Singapore and has native workers in these plantations (Branigan 67). There are racist notions held by colonists, for instance, by them calling one of the workers the “ head boy”. At one point, Leslie acknowledges that “ the boys take good care of them” and that is why she is not a good cook. This statement is enough to make one understand that the boys did everything including, cooking for their masters. There is a clear distinction between employer and employee. What stands out most about this fact are the inequalities displayed.

In the beginning, there is a full moon that presents another world that is gazing at the present from another perspective. Perhaps it is the bewitching of the moon that makes Leslie commits the sin under the cover of darkness but then the moon helps uncover it. The atmosphere and night time acts as a camouflage of a murder so cruel, but the bottom line is the timing, moon and place play a critical role in bringing out the coldness and bitterness in her heart (Michael 108). Then there comes a tree with a bark that has been cut open and the white rubber drips into a bucket. Perhaps this is an insinuation of the rich Asian peninsula and how its minerals and raw materials are being tapped into another part of the world. This image tells the story of how life is, on a farm in this part of the world. Matters are made worse, and quite clear at the sight of the worker’s quarters. As the Malayan workers play mah- jongg, it becomes even clear that theirs is servant- hood as their bodies and clothes are filled with sweat and dirt. In their open sided hurts, they fight mosquitoes as they lie in their hammocks. There may never

have been any better image of the colonialist era than this one.

There are atmospheric accents that can be heard from a distance very often.

There are occasional sounds of tinkling and wind chimes that carry a heavy indication of the environment. There are a few Chinese wind chimes which perhaps help interest the effect of the location. Perhaps the intention of involving them, was to lift tension and suspense which is a major stylistic device seen in the movie. Aside from that, a crane shoots across the shacks that housed natives and at the sound of gunshots, a cockatoo flutters across to the veranda (Klein & Parker 31). It is from this backdrop that the viewer puts the location into perspective and indeed, agrees to the fact that the location of the shooting has been adequately represented.

Alien intrusion is a factor that cannot be underscored in this movie. The British invaded, and they do not belong to this environment, but nevertheless they have taken over, and the movie can be seen as accommodating two groups of people that belong to two different worlds. Even so, it is not all rosy as many may assume because of the mutual coexistence that is seen through several characters. Deep seated hatred is evident through the character of the Malayan Ong Chi Seng, who is out to meet the needs of his people. But nevertheless, the movie comes out as representing both the physical tropical Asia as much as it does the people and the environment in general. So powerful is the merging of all these that make the movie more interesting and worth the time.

Works Cited

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