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Full Intermingling and Division Race and gender are always linked to political powers and tyranny. These are reflected inthe movie entitled The Mask of Fu Manchu and the article Marking the Oriental which this paper discusses.
The aforementioned film is about the highly ambitious Dr. Fu Manchu who does anything and everything in order to accomplish his goals. One of his goals is to get the sword and mask of the great Genghis Khan, believing that they possess powers which can yield him into a modern Khan who will not simply dominate Asia but the world. Practicing ancient medical practices, he works his way to get what he needs regardless of who gets hurt or killed. Filmed in the 1930s, the movie still reflects modern politics. In the beginning of Marking the Oriental, the author mentions that “ the cover of National Review featured President William Jefferson Clinton, first Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and vice president Al Gore, all in yellowface” (Hwang). He further explains that this paints the fact that the political leaders have been greatly blinded by Asia’s wealth so that America is now losing its identity as a nation. Such circumstance is also reflected in the character of Terrence Granville who was poisoned by the evil doctor. Consequently, the young man goes to his team and encourages his girlfriend to unearth the real sword and mask to give to Manchu. Like the yellow-faced politicians, Granville, a representation of American leaders, is pushed blindly to bring his team to the dangers of Manchu’s evil plans.
World power is one of the great desires of leaders that led to various wars and killed many people. The movie mentioned above also portrays this theme. Dr. Manchu wanted Genghis Khan’s armor and mask because he wanted to dominate the world. However, the English Nayland Smith and Sir Lionel Barton are determined to stop him from his evil plans. Therefore, they need to get to the tomb of the fallen great Mongolian leader before Manchu does. This event reflects the idea of Hwang’s representation of Asians as pollutants (p. 9). As such, they should be minimized if not extinguished. The world domination of Dr. Manchu represents the scattering of Asians who are thriving wherever they go. For instance, during the gold rush, many Chinese migrated to America. However, they are often suppressed by the Whites because they obviously have leadership capabilities. A time finally came when the Chinese had to serve in American homes. This mixing of races in one environment allowed intermarriages. The lovable characteristics of the Asians attracted them to the Americans nevertheless there has always been that fear of their ethnicity. Again, this could be seen in the lives of Granville and Manchu’s daughter, Fah Lo See. When Granville was captured for surrendering the fake sword, See wanted to sleep with him but his father interrupted her. Filmed by White men, this scene can be interpreted as the fear of the Whites of having their race “ polluted” by such relationship. In the end, See fails to sleep with Granville and he is reunited with his White girlfriend who was supposed to be sacrificed.
The Mask of Fu Manchu portrays the blind obedience and agreement of America to Asia because of its wealth. In addition, it also shows the great divide between the East and West because one is considered a pollutant on the other.
References
Hwang, David Henry. “ Yellow Face”. USA: Theatre Communications Group, Incorporated, 2009.
“ The Mask of Fu Manchu”. Dir. Charles Brabin. Perf. Boris Karloff, Lewis Stone, KarenMorley, Charles Starrett, Myrna Loy and John Hersholt. USA: Metro-Goldwyn Mayer, 1932.