

Sympathy for inanimate objects in chungking express



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Chungking Express (Hong Kong, 1994) is a film directed by Wong Kar-Wai, with a narrative that is divided into two different stories. The first part of the film follows the life of "Officer 223 (Takeshi Kaneshiro)" while the second one follows the life of "Officer 633 (Tony Chiu Wai Leung)." Although the two stories are separate and consist of distinct characters and events, there are a few elements in the film that show their similarities and differences. In the film, both officers are upset since they are dealing with heartbreak due to recent breakups. This short essay compares and analyzes two specific scenes - one from each story - to emphasize how the two stories are "the same but different". In both of the scenes, the two protagonists use their loneliness to sympathize for inanimate objects.

In the first story, at approximately thirteen minutes into the film, Officer 223 expresses how he buys a can of pineapple everyday- particularly ones that expire on May 1 st . The reason that he buys a can of pineapple everyday is because his ex-girlfriend, May, loves pineapples and May 1 is his birthday. On the night of April 30, Officer 223 gets frustrated when he cannot find any cans of pineapple that are expired on May 1 on the shelves. When the cashier explains to him that the pineapples are practically expired already, Officer 223 defends the pineapple species by replying in aggravation, "With you people it's always 'out with the old, in with the new!' You realize what goes into making a can of pineapple? The fruit is grown, harvested, sliced - and you just throw it away! How do you think the pineapple feels?" (18: 47-18: 51) In the second story, Officer 633 conveys his nightly routine to comfort the "sad" inanimate objects in his apartment. "Ever since she left, everything in the apartment is sad. I have to comfort them all before I go to

sleep" (57: 27). The film continues with Officer 633 talking to a bar of soap with low self-esteem, a crying wet towel, angry plush dolls, and a lonely polo shirt.

These two scenes are similar because they both show the heartbroken officers transferring their sadness onto lifeless items after having been dumped by their girlfriends. Throughout the movie, both characters generally do not have much of a support system to help them handle their unhappiness. Since they are both very lonesome all the time, it makes sense to me that they would result to talking to inanimate objects. Not only are the two scenes similar in plot and theme, but they are also comparable in a visual sense. Both scenes occur on quiet nights. Since the scenes take place during the night time, the lighting in both scenes is very dark and dull-colored. The dark lighting and the lack of background noise in both scenes emphasizes the loneliness that the two protagonists feel in their stories.

Although the two scenes have very prominent similarities, they are also very different. The two scenes are different in three main ways: the focus of the characters, their communication towards the inanimate object(s), and the way the scenes are presented. In the first scene, Officer 223 emphasizes expiry dates and the shortage of time when he refers to the cans of pineapple. His main emotions are frustration and hopelessness because he had been hoping that his ex-girlfriend, May, would try to contact him before the cans of pineapple expire, but time is running out and there has not been any word from her. On the other hand, in the second scene, it is obvious that Officer 633's focus is on all the suppressed negative emotions he has towards his ex-girlfriend. He accuses a bar of soap of having low self-esteem, <https://assignbuster.com/sympathy-for-inanimate-objects-in-chungking-express/>

a wet towel of feeling sad, plush dolls for feeling angry, and a wrinkled polo shirt for feeling lonely, all when he is really the one feeling these emotions. Another difference is the way in which the two officers communicate with the items. In the first scene, Officer 223 refers to the cans of pineapple that one time to the cashier rather than talks to them directly. However, Officer 633 stated how he talks to the items in his house habitually because he feels as though he needs to comfort them. This dissimilarity shows the distinctive forms and levels of sensitivity the officers have. Finally, the last difference between the two scenes is how they are cinematically presented. The first scene with Officer 223 was just one continuous tracking shot in the grocery store while the second scene with Officer 633 consists of multiple static shots of him talking to different inanimate figures.

Chungking Express contains two distinct stories that are similar, but different. One particular theme that can be described as “the same, but different” is the way in which the two characters communicate with inanimate objects. Although the two scenes considered in this essay may seem at times nearly identical, we can discern differentiations after analyzing both scenes multiple times.