

Notes about sergio leone's western movie empire essay sample

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This is to inform you about non-canonical western movie of 1968 by Sergio Leone. There are plenty of viewers who cannot get enough of the epic Western "Once Upon a Time in the West." Fans play the highly projected showpiece coherences of the film over and over again. They memorize the movie concise, aphoristic dialogues, majestic gestures and allusive story. However, "Once Upon a Time in the West" was never recognized by the Film Academy; the movie influenced and inspired generations of America's most popular filmmakers. Let's find out more about the characters, symbolism, and creation of the movie.

At the very beginning, Sergio Leone's Movie Empire composed of "A Fistful of Dollars," "For a Few Dollars More" and "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly." These films were fateful and, in the matter of fact, formed a new movie genre. The world of a Leone Western is just breathtaking as it was in the films the director watched as a kid, though the values have become tangled. Due to Leone's directing innovations, The Hollywood Western movies experience some changes. Now good guys, as well as the bad guys, are apt to be motivated by revenge and greed. The setting in which they act is deserted and godless, though with its charm. The Leone Westerns are twice dismissed from the reality, by myths that were originally developed in Hollywood studios. Because Leone films are usually filmed in Italian and later dubbed into English. There is the same distance between sound and image that existed in the John Wayne movies that Leone watched in his childhood; as a result, the Leone Western may seem even more randomly violent and brutal than it is.

The Message of “ Once Upon the Time in the West”

“ Once Upon the Time in the West” is the biggest, longest and most expensive Leone’s Western. However, some critics claim, that it is also the most absurd among his works. The director is not presenting a western story. He is retelling a story about the West, something like an explanatory parable about why it came to an end.

Most literally, it is the story of the woman who finds herself in the violent, bloodthirsty empire of the West. A universe created and adjusted for men with guns and their victims. Arrives train in the town of Flagstone, Arizona, Cardinale is expecting her new husband to meet her. But he isn’t there. She makes her way out to his ranch in the middle of deserted nowhere, where she finds out that he and his three children have been killed by intruders led by Fonda and hired by Ferzetti. From this very moment, she becomes the center of attacks of three gunfighters.

Each of them has his reasons and methods of “ work” and circling Jill; Fonda regards himself as independent of Ferzetti leader of the gang. Robards falsely accused of the murders by Fonda, wants to know the reason why.

Bronson seeks revenge for an unknown doing, uses the land to lure Fonda to him. The three approaches Cardinale successively as vultures and protectors (often it’s difficult to tell which) until one by one, they get rid of each other. Cardinale is amazing in the central role. Her face reflects (in close up, of course, and with little dialogue) a subtler range of emotions than his male protagonists ever had to display: loss, disappointment, and regret. Her

scenes, many of which take place indoors at the ranch, serve to humanize Leone's work. To suggest that there might be an alternative to the wilderness and carnage outside the door.

The finish of the West epoch and escape of the wildness is metaphorically implemented by Ferzetti and Cardinale. Ferzetti, with his money and train, reflects the power of capitalism and technology. The former undermines and fails; the latter prevents the need for heroes. This idea is presented explicitly when Fonda realizes that Ferzetti's methods - money and his gangsters - will never accomplish for him, and decides to oppose Bronson directly. "So you found out you're not a businessman after all," Bronson tells him. Fonda responds, "Just a man." "An ancient race," Bronson answers. "Other Mortons will be along, and they'll kill it off." Cardinale's role in the passing of the West is never performed quite so clear but is equally crucial. She is the pioneer woman who leads stability and order, which domesticates the masculine mayhem around her. As the railway workers appear at the end of the film, causing commerce and modernization, she is the only remaining person who does not escape back into the wilderness.

Closer Critical Look at the Characters, especially the Female One

The director based the opening scene on three central figures: Harmonica (Charles Bronson) is not The Man With No Name, but he is a man with no name, a mysterious gunman on a quest for vengeance; Cheyenne (Jason Robards) is a bandit-clown mindful of Wallach's Tuco; Frank (Henry Fonda, in a remarkable success of casting against type) is an Angel Eyes-like killer-for-hire. But to this familiar trio Leone adds two fresh types: Mr. Morton

(Gabriele Ferzetti), a dying robber baron living in a luxuriously appointed train. Jill (an achingly beautiful Claudia Cardinale), a former New Orleans prostitute who has moved West to marry a widower.

All three of the principal male characters - Harmonica, Cheyenne, and Frank - are defined to a great extent by their relationship to Jill. Jill's survival will provide Harmonica with his second mission (after the murder of Frank) and, maybe, his more morally significant one. Cheyenne's character softens and deepens through his relationship with Jill; helping Jill provides the basis of Harmonica's and Cheyenne's camaraderie. And underestimating Jill proves to be a large part of Frank's undoing.

Even Leone's most sympathetic critics have often been dismissive of Jill's character. Robert Cumbow sees Jill as "an independent woman of the world molded gradually into a coffee-making, house-cleaning, water-carrying, semi-respectable, dependant lady." Noel Simsolo regards her only as an archetypal convention, "the repentant prostitute, nothing new here." Frayling describes her in his earlier writings (he seems to change his tone in his newer, lengthier study of the film) as "a rather passive, reactive figure. At no stage in the story, until the very end, does she take the initiative". Sergio Leone himself claimed the following: "Even in the greatest Westerns, the woman is imposed on the action, as a star, and is destined to be "had" by the male lead. But she does not exist as a woman".

In "Once Upon the Time" the director tried to avoid this way of handling a woman in his renewed Western. The male lead does not "have" Jill; there is

no traditional love or sex scene. All three men in this film circle around her but none gets her in the end. Interestingly, that Leone had a beloved wife and two daughters; Leone's wife Carla believed that women played an important role in his life. That is why he couldn't use a woman "as props" in his films.

Some researchers showed that Leone and Bertolucci were inspired, in their creation of Jill, by an earlier strong woman character from a Western. Joan Crawford's Vienna in "Johnny Guitar." Jill is a woman of a questionable past who is taking control of her life, moving on, as well as Vienna. Like Vienna, she has to battle forces that want to remove her from her land. It happened when she was waiting for the train and its riches to reach her land. Some of the strength of Jill's character is attributable to the film's source material, as well as to Bertolucci's contributions.

Leone picked up some of Ray's desire to subvert Western traditions by handing power over to the woman. As Frayling notes, "Since Leone was so set on bucking Western conventions. It was appropriate on this occasion to center the film on a resourceful and powerful woman". A somewhat different estimation of Jill, on Frayling's part, from that of his earlier writings where he regarded her as "purely reactive character," and evidence that, upon closer analysis, Jill emerges as something more than a passive figure in this film.

The New Italian Western

Working with film critics (later directors) Dario Argento and Bernardo Bertolucci, Leone crafted a story that plays with, repackages, and revamps

well-worn Western conventions. The director demonstrates his affinity with the genre through many visual references to other westerns. For instance, ("The Iron Horse," "Shane," "The Searchers").

However, at the same time, he disrupts conventions, for example in the casting of Henry Ford as a vicious hired killer. Sergio Leone develops his extreme stylization and formalism to its fullest extent. He even rehearsed actors' movements on set to Morricone's music which, unusually, was composed before the film was shot.

While Westerns are often derided as being nothing more than horse operas. The operatic nature of Leone's film is its core strength. A meeting of essential Western archetypes (disabled railroad tycoon, the outlaw, the hooker with a heart of gold, the gunfighter). Each character has their musical leitmotif, courtesy of composer Ennio Morricone.

These play off of one another so effectively that the film could work even without dialogue. For example, the casting of Henry Fonda the bad, as Frank was risky for Leone. Known best for his roles as a man of honor and righteousness, Fonda played completely against type. His revelation in the film introduces him more as a force of nature than a man, and he's represented musically by an angry electric guitar that cuts through everything else.

Music plays a key role as well with the character named for the instrument he plays, Harmonica. Rather than a song, he blows a mournful wail that the sounds like the long distance scream of a railroad whistle, the Iron Horse

coming from the East as a sign of progress. That is appropriate, as he haunts Frank like a long-faded memory. When Frank asks Harmonica's name, he's only given a long list of the men Frank's killed.

Although, some critics say that, the world of Leone's Italian western is one of exaggeration. At a formal level, everything thus works towards intensification. The emptiness of space, temporal dilation of scenes accentuated by an emotionally wrenching musical score, caricaturing exaggeration of realistic details. The multiplication of facial close-up shots - elements that are condensed in the gunfight between Frank and man with the harmonica at the end. The Italian western thus denies the myths of the western (law, civilization, the frontier). Even though reference to the American model is visible: through the caricature of certain conventional motifs. The use of American actors, the playful exploitation (but one that is not without a certain fascination for Hollywood cinema) of American pseudonyms, or the practice of parody. Also, in crossing the American western changed sufficiently to provoke purists into refusing to accept it completely as part of the genre. They saw it as nothing more than a degradation of the western motivated by commercial interest, or baptized in with the pejorative term, " spaghetti western."

It's again important to note that, " Once Upon the Time in the West" is concerned about the image of America. Leone has made it clear he is less interested in the historical West than in the West's movie image. We highly recommend you to watch this movie as it will bring you the spirit and thirst of life. You will be pleasantly surprised with the talented actors and

magnificent scenario. Do you still hesitate whether it deserves your attention?

References

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