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Mise-en-Scene: *The Matador*

by Margaret McNulty

(English 1135)

(Image removed due to copyright restrictions.)

(Picture is not an exact representation of lighting contrasts)

In this scene, Julian and Danny meet for the first time in the hotel bar. Julian is very drunk and keeps messing with Danny, who continually attempts to leave. However, Julian convinces Danny to stay and talk with him, but then starts accusing Danny of working for the agency and following him. Danny tries to get away again, but Julian apologizes and asks him to stay and talk with him in the bar.

-Dominant: Our eyes are first drawn to the background because of all the lights and colors. The two main characters are almost silhouettes, but their faces are illuminated by the light reflecting off the bar. The choice to direct our attention to the background may emphasize the contrasts of the two characters. Danny is mostly in front of blue light. Julian is wearing a reddish shirt with green to his back. In between the two is a vase with orange and yellow-orange flowers. The oranges are the opposite colors of the blues and greens. The colors play up the contrast between Danny and Julian.

-Lighting key: This scene is shot in low key with high contrast backlighting. The scene is mostly dark except for the bar and lights hanging from the ceiling making the characters backlit. There is also cool blue and green lighting dividing the scene. The director/cinematographer may have wanted to show who the characters are symbolically by the lighting. It might not be necessary to see them completely because the lighting shines in the right ways to give a sense of what these two men are about.

-Shot and camera proxemics: This is a medium shot showing both characters from about waste up. The camera is at a personal distance from the two characters. This closeness brings the audience up into the space of the characters, placing us right there with the two men. We are brought up to the bar as if we are sitting with them and listening. It creates a more intimate moment while watching this scene.

-Angle: The camera is held at a very slight low angle, just below eye level. It gives the

audience the feeling that they are sitting away from the bar at a table, but still witnessing this scene.

-Color values: The dominant color in this scene is blue which covers the entire left side of the shot where Danny is sitting. On the far right side, there is green light shining out and reflecting on Julian's back. The green is balanced in the scene with the lime in Julian's drink and the color of Danny's drink. The green and blue are both cool colors in the scene. They are complimented by the warm orange and yellow colored flowers in the center of the scene. The orange and yellow colors show a strong contrast between the two characters and work as symbols for their differences.

-Lens/filter/stock: A 28-40mm lens was probably used in this scene to show how things really are. There doesn't appear to be any distortion in the shot. There also doesn't seem to be a filter in use for this scene. For a low-light scene, probably a slow film stock was used to capture the colors of the light.

-Subsidiary contrasts: After taking in the dominant, our eyes go to the two characters. The light that is reflected on their faces draws in our attention. Their bodies are still visible in the shadows, but the light that shines from underneath onto their faces calls attention. The director may have wanted the audience to see the color symbolism before the actual sources to emphasize who these men are and what their relationship is.

-Density: The image is simply set up and not too dense. Aside from the lights, and a few items on the bar, there is not much else in the scene that distracts the focus from the colors and the characters. The texture is stark with moderate detail to the scene. These choices were probably made to keep attention on the two characters. The only things we need to see in this scene are Danny and Julian and the colors that represent their relationship to each other.

-Composition: The image is split vertically in two ways. In the center of the frame, there is a light fixture hanging from the ceiling above the orange flowers. This gives a division between Danny and Julian. The image is also split between the blue and green lighting in the background. The scene is balanced on either side with the horizontal lines behind Danny and the horizontals in the room behind Julian. The lines of the bar draw our attention from the background towards the characters, and back and forth between them. All of the lines in the shot seem to draw our eyes to the two men. The underlying design of lines constantly brings us to the Julian and Danny to keep our attention on them.

-Form: The image suggests mainly closed form, specifically on Danny's side. The left side of the shot seems very closed off. However, behind Julian on the left side, it seems more open. It gives the feeling that Danny is stuck in this situation and that Julian is in control being able to leave any time but keeping Danny right where he is sitting. Towards the top of the shot, because we see the ceiling, the image is in more of a closed form.

-Framing: This shot is loosely framed for the most part. The characters seem to have space to move around, Julian more so than Danny. Danny is stuck there because of Julian who is walking around the bar and standing up.

-Depth: This image is composed on three planes: (a) the background with the walls, horizontals behind Danny, and the green lighted room behind Julian; (b) the mid-ground with the flowers, the lights and part of the bar; and (c) Danny and Julian with their drinks. The background and foreground are opposite of the mid-ground. The colors in the back and the relationship between Danny and Julian in the front are symbolically opposite to the orange flowers in the mid-ground.

-Character placement: The two characters occupy the sides the frame. Danny is on the left, and Julian is on the right. They are placed on either side to show the opposition of their characters. They have just met in this scene, and they are represented as two completely different people, morally and generally. The director wanted to show that they are split apart because they have not made any connection yet.

-Staging positions: The characters are sideways vis-à-vis the camera. Danny has his back slightly turned toward us, trying to avoid any kind of awkward contact. Julian, however, is more

open to the audience and to Danny. It shows that Danny is cautious and that Julian is very open and outgoing towards strangers. They are both facing each other with their heads, but their bodies show their level of comfort with each other.

-*Character proxemics*: In this scene, there is a fair amount of space between the two characters. They start off at a socially acceptable distance for bar conversation. They just met and have not really formed any sort of relationship yet. However, they are getting closer to intimate proximity as Julian leans in towards Danny. Yet they are still separated by the center line of the frame drawn by the flowers.

Work Cited

The Matador. Dir. Richard Shepard. Perf. Pierce Brosnan, Greg Kinnear, Hope Davis. DVD. Stratus Film Co., 2005.