Miguel Ureña

Brenton Boyd

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The film *Amistad* (1997) uses its cinematography and sound design to display how coloniality of reason, race, and language, as seen in the Module 2.1, are spread and used to oppress men and women of color.

Coloniality, as defined in Module 2.1, is "the structure of thought, organization of society, and categorization of peoples in such a way that maintains European hegemony". This can be divided into seven categories. In this essay, I will focus on three. These being: coloniality of reason, race, and language.

When the Queen Isabella of Spain is in view, the lighting of the scene is a bright yellow. Makes you think of gold. Gold symbolizes her power over people(crown). When the slaves can be seen, the lighting is darker and has a blue tint to it. We humans subconsciously think of a scene with blue lighting with a negative connotation. We, the audience, are meant to feel as if they are less than human. As if the child queen of Spain is more a person than the slaves because of the color of their skin. Even other caucasian characters are shown to have yellow daylight shining into their face. John Quincy Adams is meant to be an old yet powerful and wise man. Because of that the lighting in his house has a yellow tone to it. Not as much as Queen Isabella, but more than the slaves. This symbolizes how he might be better than the slaves, but he is not the same as a royal just because he is a caucasian.

You might point out that it also happens to the slaves. This only happens to Cinque a handful of times. Around the midpoint of the film, the slaves learn about Jesus and christianity in general. Because of that, Cinque is made to allude to Jesus in some scenes. In one of the most powerful scenes of the entire film Cinque tells the court to "Give us free". It is clearly supposed to be an inspiring scene. Looking at the sound design of the scene, behind his voice we hear the sounds of a non-diegetic (not present in the scene) choir. Looking at the shot itself, yellow sunlight shines onto the right side of his face as he holds out his hands. Some cuts later, Cinque covers the window and is completely backlit. These shots are a tried and tested way of subconsciously making your audience associate your character with Jesus. Despite the beautiful shot, the next cut takes us to the slaves in a dungeon. The scene is cold, dark and has an aura of dread. Despite the prior scene, in the eyes of the camera, the slaves are still seen as less than the white man.

Around 1:27:00, the movie jumps into the second trial. Here, Cinque is asked to take the stand and is thus asked questions by both sides for their cross examination of a witness. Since he does not speak English, Ensign Covey is asked to act as a court translator. When asked questions by Holabird he responds yet is treated as if he wasn't doing his job. The court and the opposition lawyers seem to take it as if it were a lie. As if the translator does not know exactly what he is talking about. However, when Captain Fitzgerald is questioned all of his statements are taken as if completely true. I am not saying that he would lie in a court of law. What I am saying is that there is no reason why they shouldn't trust someone more than another. You might say that he is trusted because of the deletion of a language barrier. That since he speaks English what he says can not be misconstrued. To that I ask you to read some of the first paragraphs in this essay. As I

have said, this film is one which covers the issue of race quite heavy handedly. This film is not one to use secondary reasons like the previous to explain a mistrust of someone.

Since the beginnings of European music culture, an increase in pitch leading to a major chord has been tied to positive feelings. This has to do with the 'brightness' of the notes in question. Brightness, in this musical sense, can be defined as "the size of the intervals in a chord or scale"(Neely). The character of John Quincy Adams is followed by bright notes from wind pipes. In the film he is a character of wisdom and reason. He is an ex-president, and a man who people can trust. A great example of this is in the 2:06:00 mark in the film. Here Adams is talking and explaining to Cinque what is happening and what will happen with his case. We know that since he is helping Cinque he is a "good guy". Although, even if we had no clue of that, the music would do a more than adequate job of filling us in with his standing in the film. Earlier in the film the second of the three trials takes place. When Judge Coglin is introduced in the scene he is greeted with silence. His verdict is in favor of the proganosists thus he is greeted with cheer and applause. Because of this we know that he is right in this ruling. In contrast, during their post-trial banquet, John C. Calhoun talks about slavery and its place in their society. He tells the Spanish Ambassador, Señor Calderon, "Slavery is so interwoven into the fabric of our society, that to destroy it would be to destroy us as a people." Moments prior to this, Señor Calderon himself told President Van Buren that if he "can not rule the courts, then you can not rule." He is a literal representation of the Old Continent and its antiquated ways. This dinner is full of powerful and influential men and women. Clearly meant to say to the audience, their view is one of reason. If the statement was made by one of our protagonists, we would think that it is a correct one. Behind his voice, classical music plays. Classical music has always had an air or

tone of sophistication to it. In this scene it is meant to convey that these evil men are better or

above the slaves. Not in the social ladder, but in the world in general.

The film *Amistad* uses key film aspects to show how coloniality of reason, race, and

language, as seen in the Module 2.1, are spread and used to oppress men and women of color.

Work Cited

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