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### Response Paper to the Film: Chocolat

Chocolat is a film based on a French family that lived in Cameroon when it was still a French colony. Claire Denis directs it. The family lives in an isolated outpost of the provincial government. Aimee Dalens are the parents of a girl called France and had a houseboy called Protee. The film is viewed through the eyes of France when she was still young. The film starts when she is an adult going back to her childhood home. The film does not present the reality of the situation in the colonial times as being polarized, but rather it shows that people of African descent had a complicated, and intricate relationship with one another and with the whites.

When France comes back, she desires to know the things she did not understand while she was growing up. Protege had worked for the family for a long time and knew the place and its people very well. As a result, France makes him his best man. In many scenarios, it would be obvious for France to make a local administrator or a person of white descent her best man (Morrey 26). During the colonial times, discrimination was very high, something we miss in the film. She treats Protee just like any other person. In those times, Protee would have been at best, just a worker and nothing more.

Their relationships become complicated when Protee and the mother to France develops a fling for each other. She is a slender and beautiful woman in her thirties, and she has a workable marriage. However, she has a feeling for a worker of African descent. The reality is that such relationships were hard to come by because of the background of Protee and his status. When the

husband goes on government business, the silence that occurs the home compound is almost palpable, and Protee and his employee are aware of each other.

France is lonely, living in a rural setting where they have no neighbors or a friend who lives nearby to talk to. She makes Protee her confidante and shares some secrets with her. As a result, she develops some feelings for him. However, Protee does not tell her that he and her mother had an attraction to each other. She knew she could not have Protee because it would be a disgrace for her to marry a servant and also, her society discriminated against the black people.

At one time, a plane lands in the district and France meets the visitors who seemed to come from an exotic place. One of the young visitors called Luc proposes to France, but she refuses because she does not have feelings for him (Durham 45). However, behave in a way that is meant to get back at protee because she knew she could not get him. The film portrays France as a lady who has all the support of the French society and Protee as the one with moral authority. Having come from a racist society, their attraction for each other becomes a battleground where they both taunt each other. That is an attractive way of portraying racism. The reality is that racism between the blacks and whites can lead to violations of human rights. Protee and France became uncomfortable with each other and could not look at each other's eyes.

Another aspect that shows the boundary brought by race is the fact that all servants are black. They shower in public places, but the white people have private bedrooms and bathrooms. That also indicates the financial disparity that is brought by racism. While Protee works as their servant, he baths in a bath in the bathroom located just outside the house (Connell 148). When Aimee, France mother sees him, he smashes his elbow against the wall and stifles a cry. In this instance, it is evident that the reason for the masters to put the servant's bathroom in full view of

them was charged with desire. A yearning that can never become true because of the racial tensions that existed. Aimee and Protee wanted each other. However, Protee feels humiliated by being on display for Aimee. Protee, however, came to know of his master's desire for him through the gaze.

Luc has a desire to integrate into the African community as he had done in the French. However, he takes advantage of both sides. He goes and inhabits one of the public places owned by the black people. He accompanies the blacks a truck en route to a digging site. He stands out from the rest because it is uncommon for whites to be that close to the locals.

At one time when Luc goes to shower in a public space, Protee chastises him for doing that. The space for whites and black was clearly defined. In another scene, Luc joins the servants at dinner time. This is a huge contrast to the Dalens family eating arrangement. What the Dalens eat at the dining table was an arrangement in a French tradition. The servants eat outside in front of the house, and they sit on the ground. Luc refuses to join Aimee and asserts that Aimee ought to be joining Protee at dinner time (Lee 79). He had seen the sexual tensions that existed between the two and therefore he was hinting at it. By putting the desires of both Protee and Aimee in public, he questions the stance of both of them in supporting a system that categorizes people based on race.

Aimee gets carried away by the attitude of Luc to integrate with the blacks and decides to reach out to Protee physically. When she does so, Protee rejects her. His rejection is shaped by the tensions and nature of the relationship that exists between the blacks and whites.

Finally, France meets Mungo, and he asks her if he could read her palms, but she had no lifelines. Mungo asserts that he had never seen someone with no past nor a future (Connell 751). In this scene, Mungo was talking about the French country having no future nor a past with

Africa. France later asks him to have a drink with her, but she declines. The reason for the decline is because the power and desire brought by colonialism have a huge influence on interracial relationships. The tensions that existed when France was a small girl are still there even after she has grown up.

Chocolat is a film that explores the relationships between the French people and the black people in Cameroon. The tension is brought about by the racial discrimination that was brought by colonialism. The places where a servant eats and bathe are different from their white masters. Sexual desires build up between Protee and Aimee, but they can only desire because the society resents such relationships. When France grows up and develops a feeling for Protee, the only thing they do is to taunt each other because they know they cannot have each other.

Works Cited

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