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English 492

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Podcast Script

Hi. My name is Lilit Grigoryan. This podcast is going to be about the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and how it tacitly hints at the Red Car conspiracy during the wake of LA freeway system. The film was released in 1988 by director Robert Zemeckis. It is loosely based on Gary Wolf's novel but the screenplay was written by Jeffrey Prince. The major roles are played by Bob Hoskins, Christopher Lloyd, and Joanna Cassidy.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit is a very interesting work to analyze from the perspective of conspiracies. The conspiracies around Red Car system entail how LA public transportation was majorly destroyed as a result of corporate corruption and gentrification issues. Robert Zemeckis's famous film is a powerful manifestation of ideas and messages through an interesting merging of animation and acting. Viewers can extrapolate various important themes from the movie, however, the most vivid thread of the work is the dying of the California Red Car system and the emergence of highways with the increasing number of

automobiles. The film reveals socio-political aspects of LA development and urbanization striving to present the relevant message in an allegorical way. My contention is that while the synthesis of live-action and animation can be viewed as a successful entertaining technique in the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), the movie, in fact, extrapolates a crucial topic about how LA's public transportation system Red Car was demolished giving its place to a new era of private automobiles.

There are key sentences uttered by the characters that particularly highlight the mood of changing LA in the early 20th century. The villain of the plot that turns out to be a toon himself, proudly announces, (connect the scene from the movie) "Several months ago, I had the good providence to stumble upon this plan of the city council's. A construction plan of epic proportions. They are calling it a freeway!" There are a lot of symbolic meanings in the text that is beautifully hidden under the words of *ToonTown*, *providence*, and *major construction*. Judge Doom's expression marks the sentiments about the development of LA transportation and the changing face of the city, by and large. The iconic trolley system is said to be dismantled by the gigantic automobile companies that through institutional corruption and for corporate greed achieved the erasure of the

cheaper and more convenient type of transportation- the symbol of 1940's LA, which is the Red Car. When Eddie Valiant asks naively, "Nobody'll drive this lousy freeway when they can take the red car for a nickel," Judge Doom brings forth his gentrification plans that seemingly will make a heaven out of what existed then in LA. Sarcastically enough, he enumerates "virtues" such as "gas stations, inexpensive motels, restaurants that serve rapidly prepared food" with such a pathos that the whole scene seems quite comical but at the same time quite thought-provoking. Susan Kerrigan and Sean Maher posit in their critical work that "in order to *flâneur* in Los Angeles, one has to drive along its astral freeways and experience America *in motion*"(89). I think that what Judge Doom dreams about is these astral freeways that have been the symbol or the metaphor for Los Angeles.

The animated characters in the movie called *toons* have a very low social standing. They represent working-class population. Because of their lower status, the toons are very vulnerable to exploitation and incrimination. It is quite obvious that Roger was persecuted by the police without any substantial testimony or evidence. Instead, he was the only character that was aggressively blamed as the murderer of Acme. The attitude of humans towards the toons was condescending and arrogant. The

toons were mainly there to entertain and to exist only for the benefit of humans.

Interestingly, Judge Doom who at the end of the movie is revealed as a toon himself internalizes the hatred and the disrespect that the toons were suffering. He hates toons and, even though being one of them, creates the dip- the mortal liquid to get rid of all the toons. As he says in the movie, with his creation "ToonTown will be erased in a matter of minutes."

One of the main characters in the movie- Eddie Valiant is depicted as an alcoholic detective that lives in apathy and disinterestedness. Merging several genres (noir, comedy, detective, romance, etc.) the film also celebrates the transformation of its main character-Eddie Valiant. By the time the movie ends, Eddie is already a full-fledged hero that quits alcoholism and acquires altruistic and noble traits. By the demolition of the Red Car system, the film also critiques the capitalistic greed that causes people to be apathetic about the world because they realize that like the proverb, it's either you eat or you get eaten in the milieu of corporate greed. Eventually, the private detective works for more than he is paid and devotes himself to the discovery of a great corruption

scheme. Eddie understands that the Toons are not so savage creatures and they are in fact dehumanized and belittled by people themselves. The allegorical interpretation of Toons instantly connect to the idea of how Hispanic and Black communities are racially disadvantaged in the U.S. The segregation of towns where Toons and humans live in separate spaces also communicates the meaning that the allusion of Toons to racial and ethnic minorities is self-evident. When Jessica Rabbit says "I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way", she actually hints at the idea that the marginalized community in the movie and the members of that community are viewed as worthless and rejected creatures.

There is another interesting episode in the movie, where Eddie Valiant is sitting on the back part of the Red Car and he helps a little boy to jump and sit on the outside part of the bus next to him. Funny enough, the child asks him "Don't you have a car, mister?". This question opens up ideas about how luxurious it must have been to own a private automobile instead of just taking public transportation. The LA people of the mid century were gradually transforming and developing an ideology that everything public is of lower status, and any person with a normal income should live his private life not even having to look at the low-ranking people's faces. This alienation and

disenfranchisement emerges in the result of capitalist corruptness and decadence.

In conclusion the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* is a bold critique of capitalist conventions and corrupt corporations that deprive working-class people of their living space, culture, identity, and respect. The movie vaguely offers a commentary on the erasure of LA's public transportation system which is mired in the complicated and intricate plot of murder and detective.

References

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Zemeckis, R. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Touchstone Pictures. 1988.