

Jan 15, 2015

***Her*: Dystopia in Disguise**

I. Introduction

Spike Jonze's *Her* is a film about a lonely, divorced writer named Theodore Twombly who develops an unlikely relationship with Samantha, an intelligent computer operating system personified through a female voice that is designed to meet his every need. Though it seems to be merely a love story, the connotation behind it is deeper than its appearance. It is set in Los Angeles in the near future. The Los Angeles in the film is a highly technological and developmental utopia. The streets of Los Angeles are clean and the wide walkways and pedestrian bridges make it a perfectly fine city to walk in. Theodore seems to lead an affluent life judging from his spacious place and his advanced technological devices. Seemingly, the circumstances and settings established in the film can be categorized as an Utopia so the film can be regarded as an Utopian movie. However, I do not agree with the idea that it is an Utopian film but a Dystopian one. I will present my viewpoints by rendering the definition of the Utopia and analyzing the scenes and lines from the film.

II. The Definition of "Utopia"

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, Utopia is a place of ideal perfection especially in laws, government, and social conditions. We cannot tell whether the

Jan 15, 2015

laws and the government in the film are perfect or not. What I want to talk about are social conditions prevailing in the film. The society seems to be perfect in appearance judging from the comfortable surroundings appeared in the film. However, there are several evidences from the film which can prove that the social conditions are not as perfect as we thought if we look into every character's mind.

III. Analysis

1. Theodore Twombly

i. Theodore's job

After getting introduced to Theodore's job, I am in awe. His job is a very special one which I haven't heard existence nowadays. He is a love letters writer, but he does not have to "write" on the paper; he only has to say the content and the computer will record it. It is ironic that a man who cannot properly deal with his relationship with others has such a unique job. Besides, every time these touching words and beautiful lines are spoken from his mouth, it always makes me feel like he is the master of love; however, he is merely a lonely man who talks to a computer for strangers. Furthermore, besides Theodore's situation, audience can tell how fragile people's relationships are. Writing love letters to who we love is not even a difficult task. Nevertheless,

Jan 15, 2015

most people would rather let someone who even does not know them well to write such private and intimate letters for them.

ii. Theodore's conversation addressee

Theodore is aloof because he barely talks to other human beings except for his colleagues. Even if his colleagues start a conversation, Theodore's responses show that he is not interested in these topics. Judging from his facial expressions, he is not good at having long and active conversations with others.

In the film, the audience can tell that only when he talks to his personal digital assistant and Samantha, Theodore's operating system, does he smile and become energetic. There are several scenes that can support this thought. For instance, the scene which he goes back home taking the subway demonstrates that he has no interactions with others. Other passengers chat with other people while Theodore is ordering his personal assistant device and having sneak peeks to the nude photos from a celebrity. Furthermore, when he is in an amusement park, it is so ironically that his interactions with others are manipulated by Samantha but not himself. He let Samantha control his every movement. It is sad that people are supposed to have fun with others in an amusement park instead of locking themselves in their own world. There is

Jan 15, 2015

another scene I find in the film which is also worth discussing: the scene which Samantha reads one of Theodore's letters which asks him to date a particular girl his friend arranged for him while Theodore is busy playing video games. He considers the request and discusses it with Samantha. At last he says "*I can't believe I am having this conversation with my computer,*" and Samantha replies "*No, you're not. You're having this conversation with me,*" and then Theodore smiles. To Theodore, Samantha is like a human being who he can talk to and share thoughts with. Though he does realize that the conversation is between him and an operating system, he still let things happen in this way.

2. Amy

Amy is Theodore's colleague and good friend. She has a perfect life, a husband, a job, and a dream of filming a documentary. However, after watching the scene which she argues with her husband about the content of her documentary, I find her also being another sad person. Though she has ideas of her documentary and tries to defend her ideas, when she faces her husband's pressure, she seems to lose the power of continuously fighting for her own creation. Amy files for divorce at the end of the film and she admits that she also makes friends with her

Jan 15, 2015

operating system. Theodore is not the only one who falls into the charm of operating system.

3. The public

In the beginning of the film, only Theodore is the odd one for his seemingly lack of interest to others. He talks to his high technological devices, and relies it to deal with his schedule and work. Nevertheless, as the story comes near to the end, it is pathetic that everyone talks to his/her operating system and does not have any concrete connection with others. Though Los Angeles at that time is a prosperous city, residents' spiritual life is barren. They are glamorous and bright in their material life but hollow and shallow inside.

IV. Conclusion

In the film *Her*, the director tries to present the audience a Dystopia under the cover of a seemingly perfect Utopia. Though the society depicted in the film is what most people nowadays long for, its imperfect parts are really daunting. People are affluent but they are spiritually poor. Not only Theodore is paralyzed when it comes to a real relationship but also other people gradually fall into this negative circulation and destiny. Therefore, that's the reason why I state that this film is not a Utopian movie but a Dystopian one.

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Jan 15, 2015

IVV. Reference

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