Josef Kiefer

Professor Winkiel

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In *Through the Arc of the* Rainforest, Yamashita creates a fictional world that isn’t much different than ours. She uses this world to comment on the exploitation of natural resources in developing countries. For most of the novel, the United States exploited Brazil’s miracle plastic, the Matacao. This is a fictional substance but Yamashita is referring to the real world exploitation of many countries for their natural resources. She cleverly satirizes this exploitation to reveal the impact of capitalism on much of the nature in Brazil. Yamashita uses this novel as an ingenious way of showing the corrupt process of getting resources. Once she shows this she addresses the real world issues in one passage at the end of the book. This passage occurs when Chico Paco is being taken to his home. They pass through natural areas of Brazil that have been destroyed and abused by people who are looking to make money. This process is a result of capitalism.

At the beginning of the novel, capitalism is scarce in Brazil. Most of characters are innocent and, while they are poor, they’re content. The only character who was already in the capitalist system was J.B. Tweep. J.B. is the definition of efficiency. With his three arms he can do any job faster than most. Yamashita uses J.B. to represent capitalism. Both have qualities of efficiency, relentlessness and expansion. In this book, J.B. leads the charge of corporate espionage in Brazil. Before he arrived, the Matacao was untouched and unharmed. At one point, some thought of the Matacao as being holy. Once J.B. Tweep found he could make money off this substance, he sought out to take get as much as he could. He got too caught up in capitalism and it took him away from more important things. The drive for money blinded him and caused him to do terrible things that many other Americans would have done with the same opportunity. Yamashita uses his plotline to show what corporations do to further their own wealth. While the relentless mining of the Matacao is fictional, she is making the reader think about mined resources in the past. She not only infers this but addresses it directly at the end, when a lifeless Chico Paco is being carried to his home.

Near the end of the Novel she writes about the journey of Chico Paco’s procession. As they take him back to his home to be buried, they pass through areas affected by consumption and see the impact of capitalism on the natural environment. The reason she includes this at the end is to show that Brazil has been taken advantage of in the past. She writes, “Retracing Chico Paco’s steps, the mourners passed hydroelectric plants, where large dams had flooded and displaced entire towns. They passed mining projects tirelessly exhausting the treasures of iron, manganese, and bauxite. They passed a gold rush, losing a third of the procession to the greedy furor” (Yamashita 209). According to Wikipedia, Brazil is among the countries with the highest exports of iron, manganese and bauxite. Greedy mining has destroyed many natural areas in not only Brazil, but the world. Yamashita is saying capitalism will continually take from undeveloped countries. Putting this at the end makes the reader stop and think about what corporations are actually doing to Brazil as well as other undeveloped countries.

The demands of a capitalist culture cause areas all over the world to be ruined. In *A Certain Oil Refinery*, Theodore Dreiser writes about how the desire for wealth makes areas into places that shouldn’t exist. He says, “Looking at the homes and saloons hereabout, it would seem to you as though any grade of intelligence ought to do better than this, as if an all-wise, directing intelligence, which we once assumed nature to possess, could not allow such homely, claptrap things to come into being. And yet here they are.” It is often thought that the capitalist way is the right way but many times people suffer because of this system. The ruthlessness described above makes the capitalist culture come off as deadly and poisonous. If the United States is willing to do this to its own homeland then it wouldn’t hesitate to do it around the world. The drive for money blinds many people and causes them to take and destroy what they want. In Brazil, the casualties are the people, animals and plant life.

Later in the passage describing exploitation in Brazil, she says, “They crowded to the sides of the road to allow passage for trucks and semis bearing timber, Brazil nuts and rubber” (Yamashita 209). Many people know that much of the wood and paper products they use come from trees in the Amazon rainforest. A lot of these people don’t agree with this exploitation but they wouldn’t give up these products to stop it. Capitalism takes advantage of smaller countries in order to satisfy demand. The demand is so huge for what Brazil has that certain people are relentless in getting them. Yamashita mentioned in the novel that Brazil is one of the only virgin places on Earth. Brazil’s rainforest is one of the largest natural places in the world. Many unique animals and other lifeforms exist all throughout this land. When companies illegally take trees and ores from this natural setting, these animals are forced to face displacement and often death.

Earlier in the novel, Yamashita writes, “J.B. was ruthless in his expectations, weaving and tossing GGG’s net farther and farther, oblivious to any obstacles in our path: acres of flooded forest—dolphins leaping into the canopy, giant *pirarucu* waiting in the shallows for dropping fruit; great government hydroelectric dam projects—hundreds of species of plant and animal life bulldozed under, rotting and stinking for miles in every direction; Indian homelands, their populations decimated by influenza” (Yamashita 144). This is what actually happens in Brazil. Companies may not be mining this fictional Matacao but many are still relentless when finding numerous other natural resources. At this point she touches on the fact that the native people are often killed by influenza. This constantly happens in the real world when loggers stumble across small villages. When these natives come in contact with them, their immune systems can’t handle basic colds and flus and are killed by these illnesses.

Yamashita uses this fictional story to show that capitalism can’t be forced onto every country. Many countries are still developing and globalization will take away much of what these countries need. She implies that bringing capitalism into a developing country will cause that country to be exploited. This exploitation comes from taking resources and destroying much of the great areas in the world. In the past, Brazil was untouched and virgin but now it is being ruined and the people are being taken advantage of. The people of that country may be poor but Yamashita shows that money doesn’t bring happiness. It often makes the situations in these areas worse.

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