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Mid-1970s Through the Eyes of Stan and Virgil Tibbs

Killer of Sheep analysis the black Los Angeles ghetto of Watts in the mid-1970s in the eyes of Stan, a penetrating idealist who is increasing detached and emotionless from the intellectual toll of employed at a shambles. The film deals with no solutions; it simply represents life - now and then hauntingly miserable, sometimes occupied by transcendent happiness and good humor. whereas, “In the heat of the night film” is about the story of Virgil Tibbs, a police detective in the city of Philadelphia, who unintentionally wants to get involved in a murder investigation in a small, very racist town in the fictional city of Sparta in Mississippi (Ball, John, and John Dudley Ball, 56). The film was released for a time in the United States where civil rights struggles were a crucial part after the Civil Rights Act was proclaimed in 1964.

Stan works at slaughterhouses in Los Angeles and loses morale. He frequents thugs but does not give in to the call of delinquency. From galley to galley, he leads his little life with fleeting happiness. Stan hates the work of the slaughter of animals, but refuses to change it, even for a better life. This is not so paradoxical - temptations take shape inherent in the atmosphere of the ghetto. Friends, robbers and murderers come to him. They call to participate in a serious business, where they will have to be silent (Burnett). All this is a chance for a different share. But Stan rejects everything. He cannot understand why the choice is exactly this way: either the killer of sheep, or the robber, the pimp and the lover of the hostess. The image is restrained, devoid of emotional excesses, imaginary pathos. Humor and charm, inherent in black people, ache the heart, they are woven into meaninglessness and squalor of what is happening. Small idiotic conflicts, idleness, endless chatter about anything. Stan gets stuck in trying to make at least something meaningful.

Whereas, Virgil Tibbs is the protagonist in six sequels to that novel. He went to visit his mother in Brownsvillein Mississippi and from there he went home to the north. In the middle of the night, he is waiting for his abstract railroad connection to Memphis, Tennessee, on the platform of the closed train station of a desperate building called Sparta (Mississippi). He is then noticed by a local constable investigating with a cookie-cut on a murder which has just taken place in the village. An unknown black man in a suit and tie sitting with a suitcase on the platform of a deserted train station? There is no doubt in the ideology of the corner, it is the murderer. Virgil Tibbs is being robbed, ransacked and unceremoniously taken to the Sparta police station. He does not rebel but he does not fraternize either. He responds coldly to racist disdain by class contempt. This is the beginning of his adventure in the heat of the night which will be at the same time, for him, a cava in the depths of the countryside and a sort of strange and nightmarish retreat in historical time.

Through the eyes of Stan and Virgil Tibbs, these characters shows that all these elements build a fairly clear picture of what an African American ghetto is: the low salary, the careless children that infest the streets, the brotherhood that derives from them, poverty, and insecurity, etc. All those factors that push African-Americans to look for alternative ways out of the system to have a more dignified life, without realizing that they are walking right in the direction that they are driving. All against all, and here the strongest survives.

Works Cited

Ball, John, and John Dudley Ball. In the Heat of the Night: The Original Virgil Tibbs Novel. Penguin Classics, (2015).

Burnett, Charles. Killer of sheep [videorecording]: a film. BFI, (2008).