

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Tiefland (1954) Leni Riefenstahl (1902-2003)

OVERVIEW

Auteur: Helene Bertha Amalie 'Leni' Riefenstahl was a German film director, producer, screenwriter, photographer, actress, dancer, and author. She became interested in dancing during her childhood, took lessons, and performed across Europe. Later, she moved into acting. Between 1925 and 1929, she starred in five motion pictures. In 1932, she decided to try directing her own film, *The Blue Light* (*Das Blaue Licht*). In the 1930s, her directing the Nazi propaganda films *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *Olympia* (1938) resulted in worldwide attention. Adolf Hitler collaborated with Riefenstahl during the production of three significant Nazi films. Following the war, she was arrested and identified as a Nazi sympathizer, although she was not charged with war crimes. Throughout the rest of her life, Riefenstahl denied knowing about the Holocaust. Her other renowned films include *The Victory of Faith* (1933), *Tiefland* (1954), and *Impressions Under Water* (2002). She died at the age of 101.

Film: *Tiefland* is a 1954 West German opera drama film directed, produced, and edited by Leni Riefenstahl. The film is based on the 1903 opera composed by Eugen d'Albert to a libretto by Rudolph Lothar. The film stars Bernhard Minetti and Leni Riefenstahl. The cinematography is by Albert Benitz. The music is by Herbert Windt and Giuseppe Becce. Leni Riefenstahl started to write the script in 1934. The film was shot between 1940 and 1944. However, it was not completed by the end of World War II and was finalized and released in 1954. *Tiefland* influenced later cinema. According to Austrian-American academic and film historian Robert von Dassanowsky, James Cameron's film *Titanic* echoes and copies much of what can be found in *Tiefland*. Although the setting is different, the woman character is torn between on one side power and riches, and on the other side, the man-child character offering true love. Thus, there are strong parallels in the key scenes of both films.

Historical background: *Tiefland* (*The Lowlands*) is an opera in a prologue and two acts by Eugen d'Albert (1864 – 1932). The librettist of the opera is Rudolf Lothar. *Tiefland* was d'Albert's seventh opera and is now the best-known one. Riefenstahl's *Tiefland* is the second *Tiefland* film that is based on the opera. The first one is a silent film in 1922, directed by Adolf E. Licho, starring Lil Dagover as the main actress. Eugen d'Albert's opera is in turn based on the Catalan-language play *Terra Baixa* written by Àngel Guimerà in 1896. Àngel Guimerà y Jorge (1845 – 1924), known also as Àngel Guimerà, was a Spanish Nobel-nominated writer. His work brings together under romantic aspects the main elements of realism. *Terra Baixa* became an international sensation after its premiere and is considered his most popular work.

CHARACTERS

Martha: A beggar dancer and entertainer who wanders through towns and impresses Don Sebastian with her grace and beauty

Pedro: A shepherd living in the mountains who later falls in love with Martha

Don Sebastian: The Marquis of Roccabruna who owns prized bulls and is infatuated with Martha

Amelia: The mayor's daughter who plans to marry Don Sebastian to increase her status

Don Camillo: Manager/administrator of Don Sebastian who comes up with clever plans to save Don Sebastian from his debts

Mayor: Mayor of Roccabruna, Amelia's father

Josefa: An old woman living near the castle of Don Sebastian

Nando: An old shepherd

Natario: A miller who is angry at Don Sebastian's injustice toward his peasants

Natario's wife: The wife of the miller

SYNOPSIS

Up in the Pyrenean mountains, the shepherd Pedro is asleep while his herd peacefully grazes. However, soon, a wolf appears and attacks the herd. Pedro wakes up and fights the wolf to protect his sheep. At the end of the ensuing struggle, he strangles the lone wolf.

In the meantime, within the Catalan lowlands, a canal is constructed that reroutes water away from the farmlands of the peasants to nourish the prized bulls owned by the Marquis of Roccabruno or Don Sebastian. The peasants plead for access to water. However, Don Sebastian haughtily dismisses their requests. But he also grapples with substantial debts. Therefore he is compelled to seek financial assistance from a wealthy woman named Amelia. Amelia plans to marry him, yet Don Sebastian offends her.

Martha is a dancer and entertainer. Don Sebastian, enchanted by her grace, takes her to his castle. He retains her as his mistress. Martha pleads for him to empathize with the peasants' predicament, yet he steadfastly denies their requests. Faced with his unyielding arrogance, Martha decides to escape. Exhausted, she collapses in the mountains. Pedro discovers her and transports her to his hut. However, Sebastian's men track Martha down and bring her back to the castle.

Since Don Sebastian faces severe financial distress, he devises a scheme in which he intends to marry Amelia for her wealth while keeping Martha as his mistress. Don Sebastian ensures that Martha marries someone whom he can manipulate and control. He orders Pedro to marry Martha. Later, they are stationed in a mill under Don Sebastian's influence. Initially, Martha harbors disdain for Pedro, believing he is just another pawn in Don Sebastian's game. However, later, she discovers Pedro's genuine love for her. Thereafter, her feelings for Pedro evolve.

Don Sebastian arrives at the mill to be with Martha, which leads to a confrontation between the two men. A fight ensues. Pedro, driven by a surge of emotions reminiscent of his encounter with the wolf, strangles Sebastian. In the final scene, Pedro and Martha, walk together into the tranquil mountains, liberated from the grip of Sebastian.

SCENES

The shepherd Pedro is asleep while the sheep graze peacefully

The film begins with an idyllic scene of the mountains and sheep peacefully grazing. There is a hut not too far away from the sheep. Inside the hut, shepherd Pedro is asleep.



Pedro strangles the wolf that attacks the herd

A wolf appears. The sheep get unsettled when they notice the wolf and start to run away. Pedro wakes up and notices the shadow of the wolf approaching his herd. Pedro goes out of his hut and tries to save his herd from its attacks. He starts fighting the wolf. A struggle ensues between the two. Pedro finally manages to strangle the wolf.



After the fight, Pedro is proud that he protected the herd

After the fight is over, Pedro takes care of his dog. Soon, the sheep return to where Pedro is. The Sun appears in the sky. Pedro looks at the Sun proudly and happily.



Pedro comes into the town, a dancer named Martha prepares for her performance Pedro walks into the town with several of his sheep. He carries a wolf hide on his shoulders. A dancer (Martha) prepares for her performance as she puts on her dancing shoes. The children of the village watch her attentively.



Pedro dines with the peasants in the town Pedro dines with the peasants of the town. They ask him why he rarely comes to visit them. Pedro says that he likes being alone in the mountains. One of the women says that he cannot be alone all his life long. One of the women asks about his pelt. Pedro shows her his wound caused by the wolf. Everybody looks attentively at his wound. The girls ask him if he likes anyone among them. Pedro says he doesn't like anyone among the girls. He prepares to leave and says that he'll come back when Don Sebastian is at home.



Pedro watches Martha and gets awarded by Don Sebastian for the wolf he killed We see Pedro walking through the town. He stops by where Martha is dancing. He seems to be mesmerized by her dancing. Soon, a carriage arrives. Don Sebastian gets out of the carriage. Pedro is happy to see him and offers him the wolf's pelt. Don Sebastian says to him that he will give him money for every wolf he kills. Then he enters the place where Martha is dancing



Pedro cannot get Martha off of his mind. As Pedro walks through the hills, his mind is still filled with the images of Martha. He sees Martha's face looking at him in the mist. He smiles at the image. We can see that he's deeply in love with her.



Nando visits Pedro An old man named Nando comes to visit Pedro. He says he is glad to be in the mountains again. Pedro asks him whether he came from the lowlands. He says yes but it is only in the mountains that he feels like a free man. Nando says that Pedro has changed since he last visited him. Pedro answers: '*Yes, before I was happy that the Sun was shining only for myself and the sloes were scented only for me. Now, I would like to share everything that is nice and makes me happy with a woman.*' Nando says that he'll find women only in the lowlands. But the lowlands are bad and the women there are possessed by the devil. Pedro says: '*I know one and I'm even prepared to fight with the devil.*' He smiles and laughs.



People work to divert a canal We see people working near a canal. They work to divert the course of the river. As the course of the water is diverted, we see dozens of bulls drinking from the new water supply.



Peasants plead with an official for access to water, but the official rejects their request

A group of farmers approaches a man on a white horse. One of the farmers comes to the front of the man and says to him that the stream has been diverted: 'It has been dry for one year now. We need water for our fields.' The man asks whether the water belongs to them. The farmer says that the water belongs to them all and that it comes from above: 'Mr. Mayoral, we beg you, let the stream flow freely again.' The man rejects this request sternly by saying that the Marquis (Don Sebastian) needs the water for his bulls. Then he leaves.



Amelia harbors disdain for Don Sebastian despite planning to marry him for better social status

We see Amelia, a rich person. Her father comes into the room and says that he hopes Don Sebastian will come today. Amelia is in a bad mood. Her father remarks that she could be more cheerful. Later, Amelia says that Don Sebastian is nothing but a beggar. The father says that Don Camillo asked for his commission again. Amelia tells him to give Don Camillo half of the commission for now and the rest will be given after the wedding. The uncle says that when Amelia becomes a Marchioness, it will be a great honor for their family. Amelia sarcastically remarks that this honor will cost too much money.



Don Sebastian offends Amelia

Don Sebastian dines with Amelia and her family. He has a bored look on his face. After dinner, the Marquis and Amelia go outside. Amelia says to Don Sebastian that he seems thoughtful and asks whether he would like to share his thoughts with her. Don Sebastian says that he has been thinking about how he could enlarge his bull breeding. This answer comes as a shock to Amelia who has been waiting for a marriage proposal. She asks whether it is a profitable business. Don Sebastian answers that he doesn't keep bulls to earn money. Then he immediately asks whether Amelia would like to be his wife. Amelia is deeply offended. She says she understands he needs money. She says she will think about the proposal and leaves. Soon after, Don Sebastian and Don Camillo leave. Amelia is infuriated because of Don Sebastian's behavior towards her. She says to his father that she will make him fall on his knees and that his arrogance will come to an end when he knows who has his promissory notes: 'The beggar of Rocabrona!'



Don Sebastian has a lot of debts to pay

We see Don Sebastian sitting in his room. Don Camillo comes in and informs him that the mayor has been waiting in vain three times already. Don Sebastian says that he doesn't like Amelia. Don Camillo says: 'The mayor of Huesca is a rich man and Donna Amelia is his only daughter.' Furthermore, next week, parts of his debts have to be paid but they have no money left. Don Sebastian asks about peasants and how much they pay for rent. Don Camillo says that since he built the dam, farmers no longer have water and their harvests are very poor. Don Sebastian says that he cannot condemn his bulls to death. Because they are the best bulls in the whole province. Then the two men leave the room.



Don Sebastian invites Martha to his castle so that she can dance for him.

Martha dances beautifully. After the dance is over, Don Sebastian invites Martha to come to his castle so that she can dance for him. He greets Martha and leaves.



Martha and Don Sebastian's conversation Martha arrives at Don Sebastian's castle. Don Sebastian welcomes her and takes her to his dining room. He asks her whether she likes the castle. Martha responds 'yes'. He further asks her to tell about herself. She says that there is not much to tell: 'We wander along the roads and stop when we find inns, then I dance there.' Don Sebastian asks her where she learned to dance. Martha says she never learned. It is a natural talent of hers. Don Sebastian invites her to drink with him. Meanwhile, Martha's guitarist who also came to the castle with her, sits at a table with Don Camillo and drinks.



Martha dances for Don Sebastian Don Sebastian plays the guitar. Martha dances beautifully. After a few minutes, he puts down the guitar, approaches Martha, grabs her by the arms, picks her up, and carries her to his room.



Don Sebastian loves Martha and wants her to stay with him Don Sebastian chooses new accessories for Martha. He wants her to look beautiful for him. He kisses her and tells her that she is too good to wander and dance in inns. He asks her whether the guitarist who accompanies her beats her from time to time. Then he looks at the wounds on her shoulders. He says that he won't let her back to the guitarist: 'I want you to stay here. I love you and want you to love me too.' Then he kisses her again.



Don Sebastian threatens the old guitarist who soon leaves the castle The old guitarist drinks in another corner of the castle. Don Sebastian comes to talk to him. He says to him that he will have him whipped because he has beaten Martha. He wants the guitarist to leave the castle as soon as possible or the dogs will kill him. The threatened guitarist runs and leaves the castle.



Don Sebastian and Martha ride through the land and the town The peasants try to acquire water from the well. People look desperate as they wait in lines to get water. Only one bucket is given to one person. Meanwhile, Don Sebastian and Martha ride through the land. They see Don Sebastian's prized bulls. However, when they enter the town they see the desperate situation of the peasants who lack water. One of the peasants calls Don Sebastian 'the devil'. Don Sebastian wishes to whip the peasant, however, Martha stops him. They quickly leave the town arena.



Martha talks to an old woman about Don Sebastian Martha talks to an old woman. She says to her that they believe the devil can take possession of people. She tells Martha that Don Sebastian is good to her as much as he can be but the peasants call him 'the wolf'. Martha asks how they could help the peasants. The old woman replies that none of them can help the peasants. Martha says she will talk to Sebastian. The old woman warns her that she will be beaten but she is confident that Don Sebastian will not beat her.



Martha talks to Don Sebastian about the peasants

Don Sebastian gives Martha a beautiful necklace. Martha says she has a request. She says that the peasants have been waiting for hours and he should talk to them. Don Sebastian agrees to do what she says.



Don Sebastian doesn't give water to the peasants

Don Sebastian goes down to where the peasants have been waiting. One of the peasants steps forward and tells him that the village is in distress: 'The well has run out. We must have water! Our cattle die of thirst, the fields are dry. The corn is burned. If you don't give the water, we cannot pay the rent.' But Don Sebastian does not have mercy and pushes the man away. Then he goes back to his castle.



Martha gives her necklace to one of the peasant women

Martha goes to one of the village houses and knocks on the window. The woman of the house asks her what she wants. Martha says she has to talk to her. She says she wants to help her with the rent and gives her the necklace Don Sebastian gifted her. The peasant man does not accept Martha's necklace. When the husband of the peasant woman comes, she says to him that this is their lucky day and they can pay the rent. She shows him the necklace Martha gave her. However, the man is very angry and does not accept the gift: 'Don't you know it belongs to that monster? We do not need charity. We just want our rights, do you understand? Our rights!'



Don Camillo informs Don Sebastian that Martha gave her necklace to the peasants

Don Camillo comes near Don Sebastian and says to him that Martha has a good heart and is very generous with the gifts she receives. He says that Natario, the miller, brought her necklace back. Don Sebastian gets infuriated.



Don Sebastian confronts Martha

Don Sebastian goes near Martha. He asks her about the necklace and why she is not wearing it. He asks her if she lost it. Martha confesses that she gave the necklace to the miller so he could pay the rent. Don Sebastian gets very angry and pushes her forcibly toward the wall where she hits her head. He tells her to put the necklace on.



Don Sebastian is cruel toward his men

Don Sebastian whips one of his men. Martha comes and asks what he is going to do. But Don Sebastian pushes her away and goes near the man with one of his pistols.



The peasants do not have water anymore

The peasants run out of water. The water mills do not function anymore. The miller Natario says that Don Sebastian is a monster.



Officials throw the miller and his wife out of their house

Officials visit the miller. They inform him that he owns one year of rent to the Marquis. The official says that they will be thrown out. The peasant woman starts to cry. Natario gathers his stuff and leaves his home. Their house is sealed.



Martha leaves the castle

Don Sebastian looks for Martha, however, he cannot find her in her room. He asks Don Camillo whether he has seen Martha. He says to Don Sebastian that Martha left the house a few hours ago. Don Sebastian requests him to ask his men to search for her. Don Sebastian goes to the old woman and asks her about where Martha could be. The old woman asks him whether he beat her. Don Sebastian remains silent and leaves without saying anything. The men of Don Sebastian come to the castle and show him a piece of clothing they found in the hills at Campo Verde. They say they looked everywhere but could not find Martha. Don Sebastian says that if they can't find Martha, he'll have them flogged.



Pedro finds Martha who collapsed because of exhaustion and takes her to his hut

Martha walks through the mountains in a state of exhaustion. She finally collapses and falls. Meanwhile, Pedro tends to the sheep and plays his flute. Soon, his dog starts running and barking. Pedro goes near him to see what is the problem and finds Martha collapsed. He carries her to his hut. Soon, Martha opens her eyes. Pedro gives her water but Martha deliriously keeps repeating: 'Peasants...' Pedro tells her to calm down: 'I am with you.' Martha, in her delirious state, hallucinates Don Sebastian. Very soon, the men of Don Sebastian come to the hut, find Martha, and take her back to the castle.



Don Camillo and Donna Amelia meet

Don Camillo says to Amelia that one day she will be able to rule. Amelia says that first there must be a wedding. Don Camillo says this is exactly why he came. He shows her their debts. Amelia is discontent because Martha still lives with Don Sebastian: 'Maybe she will become the Marquise of Roccabruna.' Don Camillo says that there is no reason to get upset as Martha already left the castle. Donna Amelia is very pleased to hear this. She says that all their debts will be paid.



Amelia's father comes to ask Don Sebastian to pay his debts.

Amelia's father comes to Don Sebastian to ask for his promissory notes. Don Sebastian does not have any money to pay his loans. He tells the man to come next year if the harvest turns out good. The man says that he cannot wait until next year. Don Camillo says that there can be a solution if Don Sebastian agrees to marry Amelia. Amelia's father wants Martha to be thrown out of the castle before the marriage and leaves.



Don Camillo comes up with a clever plan.

Don Camillo comes up with a plan. He says to Don Sebastian that Martha can be married off to a villager. Donna Martha will remain near Don Sebastian and Donna Amelia won't be bothered by the situation. Martha and her husband will be housed in the mill house.



Don Sebastian talks to Martha about his plans Don Sebastian goes to talk to Martha's room to talk to her. He asks her why she ran away and whether she was afraid. Martha wants to be free and leave. But Don Sebastian insists that they will always be together. He says to her: 'You think I'm the wealthy master of Roccabruna. But I absolutely don't own anything, everything is in pawn. A rich marriage is my only way out.' Martha thinks that she will then be free to leave. But Don Sebastian tells her that she will also marry as he has already chosen a husband for her. He says it will be a mock marriage where she'll only bear his name. He also says that he'd rather kill her than let her go.



Martha and Pedro get married Nando comes to give the news to Pedro. He tells him that Don Sebastian wants him to become a miller and that he is going to get married to the woman his men found in his hut. He says to Pedro that because he saved Martha, she will be his wife as a reward. Pedro is very happy to hear this news. He explains to Nando how he first saw Martha dancing in the tavern and how lovely she was. Pedro believes that Don Sebastian is a very kind man and thinks about how he can thank him. However, Nando warns Pedro by saying that he doesn't know the lowlands: 'People are different there, not good.' But Pedro says he is not afraid. He runs to his hut, gathers his stuff, and prepares to leave. Martha prepares to get married. She cries. Meanwhile, Pedro goes to the front of the church to wait for her. Soon, Martha comes accompanied by the old woman. Pedro smiles when he sees her and gives her a bouquet. They enter the church to get married.



Don Sebastian and Donna Amelia get married Don Sebastian also gets married to Donna Amelia. They luxuriously celebrate their wedding. All the guests dance after their dinner meal.



Martha says she despises Pedro but soon understands that Pedro is in love with her Martha and Pedro arrive at their mill house. Pedro is very happy to have married Martha. However, Martha is discontent and does not talk to Pedro. Pedro asks her why she doesn't look him in the eyes. She says she wants to be left alone. When Pedro asks whether she doesn't like him, Martha says that she despises him. Martha believes he married her to get the mill but Pedro explains that he loves her. Meanwhile, peasants have been listening to their conversation and they all break into laughter saying that Martha does not belong to him and that Pedro is a fool. Pedro, infuriated by this situation, runs after the men, catches one of them, and brings him to Martha. However, Martha wants the man to be released. So, Pedro releases the man.



A storm breaks. A storm breaks. Amelia wishes to be near Don Sebastian. However, Don Sebastian says to her that he must meet someone regarding his cattle.

Pedro doesn't leave Martha in the end and stays with her Pedro sits with his hands covering his face. He is in a bad mood. Martha sees him sitting near the mill and goes near him. As she understands that Pedro really loves her, her attitude toward him changes. She tells him to come inside and not leave her alone by herself. Pedro comes in and asks her whether she knows something he doesn't know: 'Maybe that is why they all laugh at me.' Pedro finally asks whether there is someone else. Martha says: 'yes' and begins to cry. Afterward, Pedro packs his things and prepares to leave the mill. When he



looks at Martha, she collapses into tears once again. Pedro comes near her and caresses her hair. Martha understands that he will not leave her anymore. They kiss each other.

Don Sebastian and Pedro fight each other Meanwhile, Don Sebastian passes through the town to reach the mill. He enters the mill, sees Martha, and says to her that it is their wedding night. He attacks her. Martha calls for Pedro. Don Sebastian wants Pedro to get out as he is the master. But Pedro is ready to protect his wife at all costs. He says to Don Sebastian: 'You are the wolf.' The two men attack each other. Don Sebastian injures Pedro, but Pedro manages to strangle him like he strangled the lone wolf before. Meanwhile, the peasants of the town watch this fight from afar. Finally, the master is dead.



Martha and Pedro's walk through the mountains In the final scene, Martha and Pedro walk through the mountains together. They look forward to better days ahead.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Martha

Martha is a beggar dancer who wanders with her guitarist friend through different towns to find inns where she can dance. She is an artistic and free-spirited person who impresses men with her beauty and grace. She is also a good-hearted individual who tries to help the peasants as can be seen in the later scenes of the film.

Artistic: Martha is, first of all, an artist, a dancer. She impresses people with her enchanting dancing skills. Both Don Sebastian and Pedro are affected by her artistry. When Don Sebastian questions Martha as to when and where she learned to dance, she says she never learned to dance. Thus, her talent is a natural one.

Good-hearted: Martha's good-hearted nature can be clearly seen in the later scenes of the film where she tries to persuade Don Sebastian to talk to the peasants who have been waiting in front of his castle for hours. Moreover, she also gives her own necklace (which was gifted to her by Don Sebastian) to the miller family so that they can pay the rent. These examples show us how much she cares about the lower classes and the peasants.

Free-spirited: Martha is a free-spirited individual which is perhaps closely tied to her being an artist. Don Sebastian makes her live in a metaphorical golden cage and provides her with many luxuries. Nevertheless, she cannot accept Don Sebastian's inhumanity and cruelty toward the peasants. Therefore, she leaves the castle on her own without having any plan about how to move forward. Her bravery to leave all the luxuries of the castle behind shows us how much she longs for freedom.

Pedro

Pedro is a shepherd who tends to his dozens of sheep. He lives up in the mountains. He leads a simple and free lifestyle. In the earlier part of the film, he kills a wolf to protect his sheep. At the end of the film, he kills Don Sebastian to save Martha and all the peasants from his cruelty.

Natural: Pedro is a natural person, that is he is free from artificialities and unnecessary complexities of character. He enjoys tending to his sheep and being in a natural environment. However, things take a different course when he goes to the lowlands and sees Martha. He falls in love with her. He is no longer

simply content with what nature offers but wants to share everything he has with another person, namely; Martha.

Naive: Pedro is a naive character. He does not understand at first why Don Sebastian wants him to marry Martha. He believes what he is told, namely that Don Sebastian wants him to marry Martha as a reward for his saving Martha when she collapsed in the mountains after she left the castle. He believes therefore that Don Sebastian is a good master. However, he eventually finds out the truth and realizes that Don Sebastian is the real 'wolf'.

Courageous: At the beginning of the film, Pedro kills a lone wolf to protect his sheep from being injured and killed by the wolf. He kills the wolf by strangling him. This act of his, despite being a very violent one, can, from another perspective, be seen as a courageous one as he does what he does with the intention to protect his innocent sheep from being harmed. As a parallel to this act, he also strangles Don Sebastian at the end of the film, in a similar vein to how he killed the wolf. He kills Don Sebastian to protect Martha from being abused at Don Sebastian's hands and thus shows much bravery.

Don Sebastian

Don Sebastian is the Marquis of Roccabruna. He owns prized bulls which is his real passion. To support his prized bulls, he orders a canal to be completed which diverts water from the farms of the peasants. He is a selfish master who does not care about the well-being of his peasants. The peasants call him 'the wolf' because of his cruel and greedy nature. He is also infatuated with Martha.

Passionate: Don Sebastian can be seen as a passionate individual. He is passionate about his prized bulls that are the best bulls in the whole country. His other passion is Martha. When he sees Martha dancing in the inn, he becomes infatuated with her and wants to possess her at all costs. However, this is not a case of real love but rather a greedy passion that consumes him.

Cruel: Don Sebastian is notorious for his inhumanity and cruelty. The canal he orders to be completed to support his bulls hinders the peasants from having access to water. Therefore, the peasants cannot grow crops and cannot pay the rent to their masters. Even though they plead with Don Sebastian to have access to water, he rejects their requests. He simply does not care about the serfs.

Greedy: Greed is one of the flaws that Don Sebastian exhibits. He is greedy for power, status, and love. Even though he has significant debts and needs money, he is more concerned about his prized bulls' fame than the poor condition of his peasants. He is also greedy for love as can be seen in his behavior toward Martha. However, it must be stated that he doesn't truly love her. He only wishes to possess her as an object.

Don Camillo

Don Camillo is Don Sebastian's administrator and manager. He knows Don Sebastian's condition and that he has many debts and needs money. He informs Don Sebastian about his financial condition and later in the film also comes up with clever plans to save Don Sebastian from his debts.

Clever: Don Camillo is a clever man. He knows well that Don Sebastian can fix his problems if he marries Donna Amelia, the mayor's daughter. Therefore, he comes up with a clever plan near the end of the film. He suggests to Don Sebastian that he marry Donna Amelia. Moreover, Martha will marry one of the peasants whom Don Sebastian can control and manipulate. This is why Pedro is chosen as a husband for Martha.

Amelia

Donna Amelia is the mayor's daughter. She is a very wealthy individual. She wishes to marry Don Sebastian because she wants to raise her status and become the Marchioness. She is greedy for power and regrets that she always has to help Don Sebastian with his financial problems.

Greedy: Donna Amelia is not in love with Don Sebastian. She even calls him 'the beggar of Roccabruna' because of his significant debts. However, she wants to marry Don Sebastian because she wants to rule over the region. Therefore, she even accepts rude treatment from Don Sebastian and tolerates his unkind behavior. In the end, she gets what she wants as she marries him.

Mayor

The mayor of Roccabruna is Donna Amelia's father. He does not have a significant role in the film. However, he is someone who tries to calm Amelia down when she gets angry about Don Sebastian's behavior toward her.

Diplomatic: The mayor is a diplomatic character in the sense that he is careful to say or do things without offending people. Nevertheless, even he loses his temper when he finally goes to Don Sebastian to receive the money he owes him only to return empty-handed.

Natario

Natario is one of the serfs of Don Sebastian. He is a miller and lives with his wife in the mill house. He has an angry temper and wants justice for himself, his family, and all the peasants in Roccabruna.

Angry: When Martha gives her necklace to Natario's wife, she becomes very happy and thinks it is their lucky day. However, when she gives the news to Natario, Natario gets angry and makes it clear that he will not accept this 'charity' under any circumstances. As he says, he doesn't want charity, he wants justice. He wants the rights of the peasants to be acknowledged.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Class 'A social class or stratum is a grouping of people into a set of hierarchical social categories, the most common being the upper, middle, and lower classes. Membership in a social class can be dependent on education, wealth, occupation, income, and belonging to a subculture or social network'. Social class or social stratum is one of the most important themes of *Tiefland*. There is a sharp distinction between the status of peasants and higher classes, in particular the master, the Marquise Don Sebastian. Don Sebastian does not care about the rights of the peasants. He does not recognize or accept the *injustice* he causes when he obstructs the peasants' access to water. Thus, the rights of the lower classes are not acknowledged by the higher classes. The members of the lower classes are not seen as individuals with personalities, wishes, and desires of their own; but rather as masses that can easily be replaced. The peasants cannot revolt against their master Don Sebastian. However, they watch Don Sebastian's fight with Pedro and do not help Don Sebastian when he is about to be killed by Pedro. At the end of the film, the death of Don Sebastian symbolizes the liberation of peasants from the grip of aristocracy.

POLITICS

Power Don Sebastian has a lot of political and social power. However, he abuses the power he has over his serfs. He makes use of the water of Roccabruna for the benefit of his prized bulls. Therefore, he does not let his peasants have access to water. Thus, he violates the rights of his peasants. It can therefore be stated that he uses his political and social power for selfish ends and does not think about the well-being of the masses. The masses or the lower classes do not have any power and they cannot do anything but obey whatever their master tells them to do. However, not all peasants are docile and obedient. The miller Natario is angry at injustice and rejects Martha's gift to them as he is not looking for any charity, he only wants their rights to be acknowledged. Overall, we can conclude that Don Sebastian is not aware of the great responsibility that comes with great political and social power. He abuses his serfs in that he ignores their needs, rights, and wants.

CRIME

Injustice Injustice refers to the absence of justice which is a violation of right or the rights of another. In *Tiefland*, there are many cases of injustice to be found. At the beginning of the film, when the lone wolf attacks the sheep of Pedro, Pedro decides to protect his sheep and prevent them from being harmed. To that end, he kills the wolf. Thus, he restores peace and justice. Even though it can be counter-argued that the killing of the wolf is a violent act that violates the wolf's right to live, Pedro's act can also be defended on the grounds that Pedro's strangling the wolf only aims at maintaining peace and the well-being of his sheep. Here, it must also be stated that the interactions between humans and non-human animals are too complex to be categorized into black-and-white categories. Let us move now from human and nonhuman animal interactions to purely human interactions. The biggest injustice that occurs in *Tiefland* is Don Sebastian's obstructing his serfs to have access to water. Because of his selfish act, the peasants cannot grow their crops, their cattle die of thirst, and the people are distressed. At the end of the film, Pedro kills Don Sebastian whereby, in parallel to his strangling the wolf, he reestablishes peace and justice. It can be stated that murder is always wrong and Pedro's act is a violent one that cannot be forgiven from one perspective. On the other hand, it can also be said that Pedro does what he does to protect Martha from being abused at the hands of Don Sebastian and he also saves the poor peasants from being further harmed and neglected. All in all, there is a large network of human interactions that cannot always be labeled as good or bad but must be examined in detail before we evaluate them.

Punishment Punishment is 'the imposition of an undesirable or unpleasant outcome upon a group or individual, meted out by an authority as a response and deterrent to a particular action or behavior that is deemed undesirable or unacceptable'. In *Tiefland*, Pedro punishes Don Sebastian and his cruelty by fighting him and strangling him at the end of the film. Thereby, he reestablishes peace and order in his community. However, Pedro is not a legal authority, he is only a shepherd. Thus, there is no legal punishment for Don Sebastian as he holds all the political and social power in his hands and can do with his serfs as he wishes. The price that Don Sebastian has to pay is thus not a *legal* one but his very *life*.

PSYCHOLOGY

Sadness Sadness is interwoven with despair in *Tiefland*. Despair refers to the complete loss or absence of hope. Throughout the film, we see the peasants pleading with the authorities for access to water. However, their requests are denied each time. And their rights are not acknowledged at all. Therefore, they do not have any hope regarding the future. When Natario and his wife are thrown out of their mill house because they have not been able to pay the rent, Natario's wife is in a deep state of sadness and despair and does not know what to do. This state of hopelessness can be seen in each and every peasant in *Tiefland*. Other than the collective despair and hopelessness of the peasants, there are also several scenes where sadness on the individual scale is recognizable. For instance, when Amelia marries Don Sebastian, she is very joyful. However, as soon as the storm breaks out, Don Sebastian leaves her with the excuse that he has to talk to some people regarding his cattle which is, of course, a plain lie. Seeing how quickly Don Sebastian leaves her side, Amelia looks after him with a facial expression that reflects a deep disappointment and sadness regarding her husband and the situation she finds herself in. Likewise, Martha is also sad and hopeless at first, about having married Pedro. However, from her despair grows the seeds of hope when she realizes that Pedro truly loves her.

Regret Regret refers to feeling sad, repentant, or disappointed over something that one has done or failed to do. In *Tiefland*, Martha regrets having come to the castle of Don Sebastian. Because Don Sebastian puts her in a metaphorical golden cage and limits her freedom. Moreover, Martha cannot stand his cruelty and inhumanity toward his serfs. Therefore, life at the castle turns into a psychological struggle for Martha. That is the reason why she finally decides to leave the castle even though she has no plans about how to move forward. However, Don Sebastian's men find her in Pedro's hut and take her back to the castle. In the later part of the film, Martha also regrets having married Pedro because she believes that Pedro only married her to possess the mill. However, her despair and regret soon turn into a state of hope and gratitude as she realizes Pedro's deep affection for her and she also develops feelings toward him. Other than Martha's character, it is also worthwhile to note that Pedro never regrets his acts of

killing. He does not regret having killed the wolf nor does he regret killing Don Sebastian. From the perspective of the viewers, these acts are utterly violent and Pedro might be said to mercilessly have taken the lives of the wolf and Don Sebastian. However, for Pedro, these acts are justifiable and necessary to ensure peace in his community and the well-being of the people around him.

Anger There are many instances of anger in *Tiefland*. A character who shows a lot of angry feelings and emotions is Don Sebastian. He becomes angry when his peasants request from him access to water. He makes his peasants wait in front of his castle for hours and only when Martha asks him to talk to his peasants, does he agree to do so. However, he simply ignores the peasants when they voice their concerns. When Natario asks him directly whether he will let them have water, he angrily pushes Natario away. Thus, his mind is filled with feelings of anger and he is utterly merciless toward his parents. Another character who shows anger is Amelia. Amelia gets infuriated when Don Sebastian behaves disrespectfully toward her. She knows that Don Sebastian does not respect or like her as an individual. On the contrary, he is only after her money. In addition to this, he also behaves arrogantly and indifferently toward her. Therefore, Amelia is deeply offended and righteously angry at him. A final character who shows anger is Pedro. When he sees Don Sebastian attacking Martha, he is infuriated. He realizes the inhumanity and cruelty of Don Sebastian. So, he is ready to protect his wife at all costs. Therefore, he starts fighting him and kills him in the end to restore peace to its place. Looking at these character examples, we can say that there are many instances of anger in *Tiefland*. Some instances of anger can be regarded as righteous and justifiable such as those exemplified by Amelia and Pedro. However, Don Sebastian's anger is not justifiable as it stems from his inner selfishness and cruelty.

Isolation When Martha comes to Don Sebastian's castle and starts to live with him, she is driven to a life of isolation. She is no longer free to wander towns and places and dance at the inns. Rather, she is put in a golden cage, protected from the outside world, yet isolated and lonely. Perhaps she could have borne the feelings of isolation. However, her restricted freedom is not her only problem. She also witnesses the inhumanity and cruelty of Don Sebastian toward his peasants. She sees how mercilessly he behaves toward the serfs and cannot accept staying and living with such a person. Therefore, she escapes the castle. Martha's isolation comes to an end when she marries Pedro and realizes how deeply he loves her. After Pedro kills Don Sebastian, both Martha and Pedro gain their freedom as they are liberated from the grip of Don Sebastian.

Jealousy 'Jealousy is triggered by the threat of separation from a romantic partner when that threat is attributed to the possibility of the partner's romantic interest in another person'. Jealousy does not play a significant role in *Tiefland*. Nevertheless, we witness some type of jealousy in Amelia's character. She is, to a certain extent, jealous of Martha as can be seen in the scene where she talks to Don Camillo. When Don Camillo comes to talk to her about Don Sebastian's debts, she remarks: 'Maybe she (Martha) will become the Marquise of Roccabruna.' Don Camillo says to her that there is no reason to get upset as Martha already left the castle. Donna Amelia becomes very pleased to hear this. Then she immediately says that all their debts will be paid. In this scene, we can see Amelia's jealousy toward Martha as she plainly shows her concern that Martha might be the Marchioness. It must be stated that Amelia's jealousy is not purely a romantic one. Her jealousy is directly related to her dreams to become the Marchioness of Roccabruna. She is after power and status. Therefore, it is of vital importance to her that Martha is eliminated from the equation and does not obstruct Amelia's prospects of becoming the Marchioness.

Fear Fear can be observed in Martha when Don Sebastian questions her as to where her necklace is. After she confesses she gave her necklace to the millers so they could pay the rent, Don Sebastian pushes her forcibly toward the wall and she hits her head. Her fear can be seen when she falls to the ground and looks at Don Sebastian with wide eyes, not comprehending how he could behave so violently and cruelly toward her. Other scenes where we see fear are to be found in the interactions between Don Sebastian and his peasants. Don Sebastian is cruel, angry, and merciless. He does not care about his peasants at all as can be seen in his angry behavior toward them. With his acts, he creates a sense of fear in his peasants. Moreover, Don Sebastian hits his men, whips them, and sometimes has them flogged. All these cruel punishments cause his serfs to be scared of him and his presence.

FLAW

Pride Don Sebastian is a proud man. He is particularly proud of his prized bulls that are the best bulls in the whole province or even country. Because of his pride in his bulls, he is ready to do anything to better and expand his bull breeding. To that end, he has his men complete a canal that diverts water from its natural course. Don Sebastian is too proud to see how his actions cause tremendous suffering in his peasants as they no longer have access to water and cannot grow their crops. Moreover, when he makes Martha and Pedro marry, Don Sebastian believes that Pedro is an easily controllable and manipulable person. He does not foresee that Pedro might take revenge on him. Therefore, he comfortably goes to the mill house and attacks Martha. His pride causes his downfall in the end as Pedro is determined to protect his wife at all costs and strangles Don Sebastian.

Greed/Ambition Don Sebastian is a greedy and ambitious man in addition to being cruel. He is too greedy to enlarge his bull breeding such that he ignores the suffering his peasants have to endure. Moreover, he has significant debts which suggests to us the viewers that he has been spending his money extravagantly and without concern for the consequences of his actions. He is also greedy for love. As he is infatuated with Martha, he has a desire to always have her at his side. However, it is important to note that his infatuation is not love or care. Rather, it is an ambitious feeling that makes Don Sebastian want to possess Martha and control her according to his wishes. It is because of his greed and desire that he goes to the mill house even after he has married Donna Amelia and attacks Martha. Interwoven with his pride, his greed and ambition cost him his very life as Pedro fights him and kills him in the end.

QUEST

Explore Two characters that explore their environments throughout the film are Pedro and Martha. Martha is already a free-spirited person who wanders through towns and places and finds inns where she can showcase her dancing skills. Thus, she is a natural explorer. In *Tiefland*, she explores the town of Roccabruna. First of all, she explores the town and dances at one of its inns. Later, she comes to Don Sebastian's castle and experiences the lifestyle of aristocrats. At the end of the film, she is liberated from the grip of Don Sebastian and goes to the mountains to lead a life with Pedro. Pedro also explores his environment. He is, first of all, a shepherd who tends to the sheep. Thus, he knows a lot about the highlands. In later parts of the film, he goes to the lowlands and gets to know about the people living in the lowlands. Thus, both Martha and Pedro explore the life in the mountains and the life in the lowlands.

RELATIONSHIP

Love The relationship between Don Sebastian and Martha cannot be said to be a love relationship. Don Sebastian is infatuated with Martha. However, he does not truly love her. He only wishes to possess her in a similar vein to how he possesses his castle and his serfs. He wants to be able to control and manipulate her according to his wishes. Martha seems not to have any feelings for Don Sebastian at all. She seems to go with the flow and is impressed with the opportunities life in the castle offers. However, she soon realizes how cruel Don Sebastian is toward his serfs and understands that she cannot live with him anymore. Thus, the relationship between Don Sebastian and Martha is a one-sided and forced relationship that does not contain true love. The relationship between Martha and Pedro, on the other hand, can be said to be a love relationship as Pedro truly loves Martha. Martha also develops feelings for Pedro after she learns that he married her not to get the mill but because he loves her. Pedro cares deeply for Martha and is ready to protect her from any outside harm, even if that harm comes from his master Don Sebastian. Thus, true love can be observed between Martha and Pedro