
Review and analysis: Amélie (2001)

The foreign film chosen for analysis was *Amélie* (2001) directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet. The film differs from that of a traditional American film. However, the acting and portrayal of the screenplay envelop the viewer into the world of Amélie, the main character. The film lacks large special effects and leads to a more raw film overall contributing to the realness of the film. This film took me slightly out of my comfort zone. It is similar to smaller independent films I have seen; however, the language barrier made me apprehensive to watch the film. Nonetheless, the film kept my interest throughout and the overall meaning behind the screenplay was not lost due to the language barrier.

The film *Amélie* is of French nationality. The first clue of its French nationality is the fact that the language spoken throughout the film is French—from the actors to the narrator. The mise en scene also solidifies the fact that the film is of French nationality. The sets utilize famous landmarks in Paris, France to reinforce the location of the film without the cliché of displaying the Eiffel Tower in every shot. The East Station is frequently used as the set for scenes when Amélie has to catch a train. Additionally, the scenes of Amélie walking in town shows narrow town streets, markets, and apartments, which are synonymous with villages around Paris. Other shots show iconic bridges and buildings of Paris. The props also reinforce the French nationality of the film. For transportation, small cars, small motorcycles, scooters, and bicycles are used for private transport; whereas, the train is shown being utilized as public transit. The costuming also lends itself to the French nationality of the film. The dress of the younger generation characters was more modern and trendy compared to the dress of older characters, which was more traditional. The costuming corresponds with the characters' ages making the mixture of characters in the town more realistic of an actual town. To help solidify the time-period of the film, certain props were used. Electronics of the 1990s, such as CRT televisions, VCRs, and VHS camcorders, were shown in the film along with the older style automobiles and motorcycles. The mise en scene of *Amélie* helps to reinforce the fact that the film is of French origin; however, cultural references are also utilized.

The film *Amélie* is similar to a silent film in many ways. Although a lot of dialogue is present throughout the film, multiple reaction shots and close-ups are utilized during conversations. The actors of the film are highly effective in using body language and facial emotions to convey meaning without understanding the conversation. The emphasized facial expressions and body language is common in both silent films and in foreign films.

The sound and music utilized in *Amélie* effectively enhances multiple aspects of the film. The background noise that is utilized when she is out in public is that of cars passing by, horns, and

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nature sounds. This is what would be heard in the streets of France and lends to the authenticity of each scene. In addition, distinctively French melodies are utilized as the score in multiple scenes throughout the film—helping to reinforce the French authenticity. For example, in the opening scene, Amélie is shown as a little girl and French melody is playing in the background to reinforce that the events are occurring in France.

Although the film Amélie is presented in the French language, the effectiveness of the screenplay and the film overall is not lost through the language barrier. The combination of the proper mise en scene of the location and time-period, cultural references, body language and facial expressions, the musical score, and certain editing techniques helps to create a film that can transcend language.

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