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Gender, Dress and Society

Movie Character Analysis: Amelie Poulain

One can observe socio-cultural influences on dress in viewing the 2001 French film, *Amelie*. The movie is about the title's girl who grew up with peculiar parents who had unsociable tendencies and therefore did not connect with her in ways that showed her how to fully connect with other people. She also did not get it from anywhere else, being home schooled and the only child. This caused her to create her own imaginary world within her home. In her adult years, she finally got a taste of human connections but none to have an affectionate bond with. Her curiosity, kindness and imagination gets her drawn into the backgrounds of everybody else's lives as she works to make them change the things about them she's observed and felt needed to be replaced with other interest. This was due to one evening finding out Princess Diana died and a chain of events then led up to her discovering a boy's hidden box of prized possessions from decades prior. She put in her mind that if she successfully helped the now-old man regain his treasure and it sparked something in him, she will continue to do it for the people whom she interacts with on a regular as a daughter, waitress and care attendant in Montmartre. She single handedly caused events to occur in her circle's day-to-day to get them to take a risk that will change their lives for the better. Amid playing "miracle maker", she found herself undergoing an experience that she couldn't control and one that she never knew how to express properly due to her upbringing - love.

Amelie's initial appearance appeared to revolve around the awkward situations in her childhood. Her only form of affection from her father came when he was giving her medical examinations. At the age of 6, a time where she remembered one of these moments with her father vividly, she had a short hair style. In her twenties, her hair showed minimum changes. Her outfit choices also appeared childish with the floral dresses that got covered with a cardigan, knee-length skirts and the same black boots she wore in almost every scene. It was obvious sex appeal was not the intent of her appearance and she still had innocence within all the usual desires of the society she now was finding her place in. Her pleasure came from simple things that can be overlooked, although she wondered about the world she wasn't fully connected with. The more she put herself "out there" to aid others, she eventually discovered what can be the life for herself as well. Her dress became to change as she started to change her hair into more mature styles and wore darker colors. The costume designer changes her wardrobe to be burgundy for most of the movie. It is more of a warm and relaxing shade in comparison to other red hues that are normally bold and demanding. Red is the color of affection, but being that she has a hesitant behavior when it comes to that feeling, the darker shade still seemed to hide her (Beird, 2011). Dress is the total arrangement of all outwardly detectable modifications of the body and material objects added to it (Adomaitis, 2018), One can infer burgundy is the chosen color for Amelie because she wants to break out of her shell, without coming off too strong and too sudden. Burgundy can also be used to show maturity and self-ambition, which Amelie seems to shift her focus on as the movie progresses. The man whom she begins to fall for coincidentally works in a sex shop, which can show the development she now must take for herself to be able to interact with those around her age. Since dress is a form of communication, she now had to begin wearing garments that gave off more adult innuendos and reality of the world she was in.



Figure 1. Younger Amelie (2001).



Figure 2. Older Amelie (2001).

One can see how the movie shows how important dress can be to communicating a character's personality, interest and identity. Dress can be viewed as more than just the outfit. Dress includes the nonverbal cues, posture, behavior or facial expressions and gestures. These are ways of communication, which is what is considered dress. The changes seen through the main character were easy to spot being that the introduction of the character was not only given through the life of Amelie, but the life of those around her. Putting effort into helping the appearance and behaviors of those around her to be more involved in a happy society of close and soothing interactions, gave her the impact she needed to find out who she wanted to be and to become that person.

One can believe the movie is named after the character to automatically make the attention be on the evolution of Amelie. Although a lot was based off of other's making adjustments in their lives, she had the most change.

References

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Figure 1. Younger Amelie (2001). Retrieved from

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Figure 2. Older Amelie (2001). Retrieved from <https://variety.com/2001/film/awards/amelie-2-1200467697/>