

Tony Takitani: The Colors of Loneliness | by Nia R. M

You don't know what you have until it's gone, or in Tony Takitani's case, you're completely aware of what you have and you're terrified of losing it but you can't do anything because life will run you over and leave you behind with nothing but tormenting loneliness.

Directed by Jun Ichikawa, an accomplished Japanese director and screenwriter, Tony Takitani tells us a beautiful, yet haunting story about love, obsession, loneliness, and life itself. The short story that it was adapted from, Tony Takitani, (first published in 1990, translated to English and published in *The New Yorker* on April 2002) was written by probably the most famous Japanese contemporary author in the 21st century, Haruki Murakami. For those who don't like to watch films that are based on books because it's usually disappointing, this film will definitely not put a frown on your face. This film stays true to the story, and whether you have read the story or not, it's one of those films that stays with you for a few days after you watch it. This film will satisfy your appetite in avant garde films; each shot is done so beautifully and exquisitely that you want to fix your life and buy that expensive dress you were eyeing.

The film follows the life of a man with a strange name, Tony Takitani (played by Issei Ogata), whose name was given by his father's friend who was an American. Because of his Western name, Tony was often made fun of by the other children, and so he had a lonely, quiet life, even as a kid. The fact that his father was kind of distant also did not help. Despite all of this, he was immensely talented in art, especially in drawing. He managed to go into art school and eventually landed a great job as an illustrator. Tony was so used to living in solitary, he never complained or wanted anything more.

“Spending time alone was the most natural thing in the world for Tony.” Until one day, he met Eiko (Rie Miyazawa), a young woman who caught Tony’s attention and eventually became the love of his life. The first thing that made him like her the most, though, was how she wore her clothes. Tony had never seen anyone who wore their clothes with such apparent joy. Tony then found himself completely captivated by her. After went out on a few lunch dates, Tony and Eiko found themselves to be close, despite the fifteen years gap between them. Day bay day, Tony found himself deeper in love and the days they spent together as a couple were so beautiful and blissful that he couldn’t believe it himself. But as we already know, life won’t just sit idly by and let people be happy forever and ever. Happy endings don’t exist, especially not in a Murakami story.

In the film, like in Murakami’s story, we never really see the characters develop, since we can only a glimpse of the characters’ introduction. This film reminds us of the Japanese phrase *“mono no aware”*, which roughly translates to "a sensitivity to ephemera". A friend brilliantly described it as “the bittersweet realization that everything and everyone in our lives are just temporary”. Tony Takitani’s happy life with the girl of his dreams is a perfect example of that.

This film moves in a rather slow pace, but if you can just be patient and try to appreciate the beautiful shots and colors, it’ll all be worth it and not at all boring. If in any other films the scenes were made so that we would forget we’re watching a film in the first place, this film has a way of constantly reminding us that this is just it- a story. We’re reading, watching, witnessing a story unfolds. The narrator talks as if we’re reading lines in a novel, and the sound of pages flipping makes that effect even stronger.

If usually a Japanese film is full of neon, bright colors, Tony Takitani has a different color scheme. Much like Murakami's style, this film has a more subtle, dimmed color scheme, which emphasizes the story's tone and mood. It also goes well with the characters from the story; Tony, a lonely middle-aged man, and Eiko Konuma, a young woman who is mysterious and elegant. The film doesn't have that many dialogues, as we can sort of read the feeling of the characters by paying attention at how the scenes were shot and what music was playing. The story is told much like a fable, it's reflected in the narration and the camera techniques. Feelings of loss and loneliness also created by how the characters are positioned on screen, use of color, and other aspects of cinematography. The concept of minimalism is strong in this film, in which simple scenes and dialogues can create one overarching emotion.

Tony Takitani's official soundtrack was entirely composed by Ryuichi Sakamoto, a famous Japanese musician and composer. Sakamoto, in my opinion, did a tremendously great job in composing piano tracks that perfectly capture the emotions of this story; loneliness and the feeling of isolation from our surroundings.

Tony Takitani was released in 2004 and it has won many international awards in 2005 and 2006, it was even nominated for World Cinema – Dramatic at Sundance Film Festival on 2005. Jun Ichikawa, the director, won two awards at Locarno International Film Festival.

Another interesting about this film is that there were only three actors casted in this film (excluding the kid who played young Tony, he only appeared for a few minutes). Issei Ogata played two characters, Tony and his father. Rie Miyazawa played two characters as well, Eiko Konuma and Hisako, the girl who replaced Eiko after her absence. The last one is the narrator, Hidetoshi Nishijima. Needless to say, all the

actors did an amazing job, since it wasn't easy to portray distant, almost two-dimensional characters with very few dialogues. Murakami wrote the story in a detached, and matter-of-fact style, and watching the film, we can get the same feeling.

Tony Takitani might not be your easy-on-the-eyes, everyday-Blockbuster movie, and it definitely won't get you warm fuzzy feelings in your stomach after watching it. It might make you sad, or even depressed. But if you read Murakami or you just love beautiful films with artistic colors and aesthetically pleasing scenes, Tony Takitani might be your new favorite film.

Sharp Objects: Amy Adams, Girl Madness, and Generational Trauma | by Nia R. M

Go to Gillian Flynn if you want stories about women; messed up women, angry women!, suicidal or murderous women. This time, it's not Amy Elliott Dunne and her idiotic manchild husband, it's Camille Preaker and her devastatingly dull, but haunting hometown. The 2018 HBO series is lucky that a woman named Amy Adams exists; she plays the role of Camille so beautifully. We can see Camille, a grown woman becomes a dutiful child as she goes home to her childhood house. Adams' portrayal of Camille is as if the actress doesn't exist, instead we have Camille Preaker instead, all complete, with her wounds, her fears, her blood-stained childhood. But the genius of Amy Adams isn't the focus of this piece. We must talk about how beautiful and daunting Sharp Objects is at representing women's trauma. We have Camille, whose childhood (and adulthood) is so *ruined* by the neurotic, strange mother. Each inches of her body has a word written onto it, each scars representing her feelings and hurt at the moment. Camille, who as a young girl is not 'accepted' by her mother, as her mother is busy mourning his other sister, Marian. Though it ultimately saved her life, not getting love from her mother still did affect her. When Camille, now a grown woman working as a journalist, comes home, she feels like "a bad person". Being around her mother and her much younger sister Amma definitely makes her mental health deteriorates. It is now the time for Camille to face what she runs away from: the real reason her sister Marian died, and the horrifying truth about her own mother. Another we must discuss is Adora, Camille's mother. Disguised as a sweet, kind, attentive mother, Adora ruins her daughters oh so gracefully. She herself is not aware of how much trauma and hurt she has caused to her daughters; Camille, Marian,

Amma. She views herself as a victim; having raised by her own mother who is also *bad* at parenting. Her own wounds and scars are untouched; they are undealt with, and so they are passed down to her daughters; Camille with her own skin, Amma and her rebellion, and Marian with her own demise. Generational trauma in this family is *rich*.

But if we are talking about trauma and pain, we must not leave Amma. A teenager with voluptuous breasts (Gillian Flynn *really* emphasized that in the book), she plays the role of Persephone, she states of herself. While Persephone is queen of the underworld, Amma is both the weakling, princess of the house, and also the queen of mean girls outside the house. She wears frilly pajamas and asks her mother to brush her hair, and outside she wears little dresses and flirts with boys. Amma *lets* herself to be taken care of Adora, whatever “taken care of” means. Weaned in poison, she, as states in the book, “considers harm a comfort”. Some people have said she is basically the younger version of Amy Dunne, but it must be noted that Amy Dunne kills only because it brings her something she wants; she views killing as a way, a chore to get what she wants. Amma, however, murders as an emotional reaction. She hates the girls, she hates what the girls were getting, and so she eliminated them. If Amy Dunne is a meticulous, calculating psychopath, Amma is a child who throws tantrums by killing. Perhaps she *would* grow up to be more like Amy Dunne, although it’s unlikely that we would see it.

Sharp Objects the miniseries ends in a rather shocking twist (for those who didn’t read the book), and it is done in such a beautiful way and they did not cheapen the truth. The book ends in a happier note, though, with Adora in jail, Amma in a correctional facility, and Camille moving in to her boss’ house and being taken care of. It is to be noted that both the series and book are such brilliant masterpieces, as it

does not give us the bare-minimum “strong woman character” (yes, this is a nod on *Gone Girl*), but instead give us the most messed up, yet the most humane female characters. Camille’s self-harm is not a flaw to be fixed; it is literally just her, existing. Adora’s sweet yet poisonous way in treating her children is not explained, while not justified, by her own backstory. Amma’s tendencies are also what makes her human; so rotten with broken values and madness. If the world could have dozens Patrick Bateman or Hannibal Lecter, then let us also have Amy Dunne and Amma Crellin.

Feminist Spirit and Its Contrary as Seen in *Indochine*: An Essay | by Nia R. M

***Indochine* Summary**

Eliane Devries is a single French woman who runs a rubber plantation with her father in Indochine, or called as Vietnam, in the era of French colonialism. They live outside from Saigon. Eliane adopts her bestfriend's daughter, who died in a plane crash, called Camille.

In short, Eliane fall in love with the French army member called Jean-Baptiste Leguen. Day by day they undergo such a complicated love story. Until one Jean Baptiste just around the street guiding the prisoners with the other army members. Camille just walks with their school mate at that street too. Suddenly one of the prisoners runs out from the line, and the chaotic starts happening. Accidentally Camille and her friends trapped into that chaotic. One of the army members just shoot the prisoner next to Camille and she down. Jean Baptiste comes over to help her.

The situation is getting complicated by that moment. Camille fall in love with Jean Baptiste. Eliane just surprise to hear that news comes from her beloved daughter. She's in a dilemma, whether she will let Camille happy with him or keep her selfish ego that Jean Baptiste is for her. Later, Eliane decides to ask one of her army colleague to send Jean Baptiste out from Saigon.

Camille got engaged to Nanh. However, Nanh lets Camille go to search for Jean Baptiste. Camille just go to the north and face several obstacles to meet him. Finally they meet. They are go away from Dragon Islet, a place where they meet, to another quite island when the'y can live there peacefully. As time goes by Camille gives a birth to their child. They plan to move to Chine, but in the middle Jean Baptiste

caught by the police and sent into the jail. Camille's son is brought up by Elian called Etienne. Eliane sells all her rubber plantation and back to France.

Feminist Values Represented by the Character Eliane Devries

One of the film's female leads is Eliane Devries, a single French woman who runs a rubber plantation in the era of French colonialism.

Throughout the film, Eliane can be considered as a character that represents values of feminism. First, we can see that Eliane doesn't want to get married; she refuses to marry her boyfriend and Jean-Baptiste, the man she has an affair with. The reason why she doesn't want to get married is that she feels she is already independent. She sees no benefits in entering a committed relationship that is marriage, as she can already provide everything for herself. Although Eliane's plantation is also her father's, it is still managed single-handedly by Eliane. Eliane never sees a man (or marriage) as a 'way out' or a step to be taken in order to have a good life.

The fact that she is a rich, educated, and privileged woman could contribute to this principle of hers, but it can't be denied that Eliane is a woman with a progressive thinking, given the time of which this film takes place. The fact that Eliane is an independent, self-sufficient, and independent with a mind and goals of her own makes Eliane as a character that represents feminist values. In a film that explores many complex themes such as romance, French imperialism, not to mention the crucial years in the development of Vietnamese nationalism, the character Eliane shines; and despite the complicated romance of Camille and Jean-Baptiste, Eliane still manages to be relevant and imperative to the story due to the courageous and unabashed personality and principles of hers.

The Journey of Camille: Vietnamese Princess Turned into the Red Princess

In the film, Camille, the adopted daughter of Eliane, undergoes a transformation that shows the strength of her character. Another character named Camille, like Eliane also shows that her choices and principles also represent values of feminism. She knows exactly what she wants. At the beginning, when she realizes that she falls in love with Jean-Baptiste, she is willing to take a step forward to get Jean Baptiste's love. Even when her mother disapproves of her decision in building a relationship with Jean-Baptiste, she still stands for it. She struggles to get her love, and ready to throw away everything she has; her comfortable life.

Knowing that Camille is really stubborn and doesn't want to leave Jean-Baptiste, her mother sends Jean-Baptiste away from their life. Her mother also arranges a marriage for her in order to make Camille forgets about Jean-Baptiste. However, her mother plan doesn't work well. Camille doesn't want to build any relationship with other men but Jean-Baptiste, she is and ready to leave her family in order to pursue her love. It shows that she has qualities of being a feminist. She knows how to get what she wants and is brave enough to pursue it. In her journey in finding Jean-Baptiste, she sees the real world. World that is full of struggles, and it makes her realizes that after all she only lives in a small part of world, not the real world. She sees how her people are being oppressed in their own land; women and children are killed without any reason. That is the time when she realizes that she needs to fight against them. At that time, Camille kills one of the Colonists, the one who has slaughtered innocent people in front of her eyes. After that, Jean-Baptiste takes Camille to run away to another Island and they married there then having one son.

However, having a family is no longer what Camille wants, she leaves her children to fight for Vietnam even at that time women are rarely being a partisan. She joins Vietcong party, opposition movement, which their goal is to get their own freedom and fight against France. She's once being imprisoned, yet it doesn't stop them from fighting until Vietnam finally wins the battle.

Women as a Weapon for Each Other

The love triangle among Camille, Eliene, and Jean-Baptiste is the main cause the main female characters in this film have conflicts toward each other. As seen from the relationship between Camille and Eliene, that it can be concluded that their relation represents they are such a weapon for each other. As the relation's growing up after Camille out from the jail and she refuses to back to Eline. Though, Eliene has provided her with wealth and prosperity, the things that other Vietnamese can't even live in that way. Camile decides to join in a opposite group againts French to struggle for their freedom.

Based on our observation, the film Indochine, despite having two female characters as the main characters, fails to show the audience a good relationship between two women. When viewed as an individual character, both Eliane and Camille show positive traits such as independence, self-determination, and having purposes and goals of their own. However, if the film is seen through a bigger lense, the plot and storyline of Indochine put the two women against each other, instead of being on the same side and supporting each other. Thus, it can be said that, while the female characters (when viewed separately from the other) represent feminist values, the film itself isn't quite 'feminist', because it pits women against each other; first, by giving

them the same male love interest, and by not supporting each other in difficult and dire situations.

Conclusion

The film titled *Indochine* is representing what's so called as Feminism spirit and its contrary to feminism culture. First, feminism spirit represents by the appearance of Eliene. She could support her own life without depending on other men. She refuses to get married because it will decrease her "freedom" in doing anything. She also can take care of Camille only by herself. This is obviously representing what feminist spirit means. Then, the second character also represents feminist spirit is Camille. She decides to refuse Elien's offer to go back home, instead she joins the opposite group to fight Vietnam's independence. This is so unusual for Vietnamese at that time, which lives in patriarchal culture. Camille breaks society rules to stand on the same level as men to fight for their freedom. Although, there are several feminism spirits in the movie and there is also one contrary to its spirit. This one is represented by the relation between Camille and Eliene. They seem like getting away after Camille refuses to go back to her.

