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JAPN: 310 Japanese Cinema

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# Departures

Every time I watch a film in this class it overpasses the previous one, in the sense that the one can relate to different aspects of the film. I believe that Yojiro Takita did a great job, exposing what was believed to be taboo in not only the Japanese society, but to other parts of the world also. In the film everyone considers this job dirty, low, and is related to the underworld. This film took me back to the film "Dreams", I could relate then in the ceremonial fact. The Tea Ceremony, in Departures they also present a ceremony, which is the preparation of a dead body for its funeral. Besides being a Ceremony it is presented as an art. Everything is done with a passion; the washing, dressing, putting make-up and coffin in the presence of a "public", relatives and close friends. In a symbolic way he was pretending to maintain the dead's people beauty for eternity. After several unpleasant events, Diego ended up developing love and passion for his job. He allowed relatives to be part of the ceremony and also asking the relatives opinions on to how to make the dead bodies look better. It seems that this Spiritual Ceremony was the darkness side of life; it was given a negative connotation. His childhood friend demanded him to stay away due to the type of job he does. And his wife, Miko, asked him to find a normal job, in which he responded that "Death is normal. The wife's sort of manipulation comes to an end when she eye witness the bath lady's ceremony."

We can see several pieces of symbolism in the film. I think the most important was the stone; Daigo calls a stone letter, a story once told by his repulsive father. Diego selects a rock exactly as the one he once gave his father and gives it to Mika. Diego explains the meaning of the stone. In which basically the shape of the stone describes the person's feelings, a small

smooth rock represented that you were happy and a big rough one represented that you were worried about that person. Which Daigo could probably not understand when his father left him.

In regard to the camerawork, I believe it was amazing. The shootings came from all over, from close shots to angle shooting, single cameras and multiple cameras. The director focused camera work on the person that was carrying the action, while the rest of the actors were not clearly captured, that helped emphasize what the actors were transmitting. The fog during the trip through the snow to the transsexual ceremony, which is also a taboo theme, showed mystery to a destiny that Daigo is searching for. Another scene that I believe was asserted was when he was exchanging stones with his father. Daigo father's face appeared could not be distinguished by its blurriness. At the end of the film when he met his dead father, his memory came back to him, and he was finally able to see his father's face clearly. I could say that throughout the years Daigo's hatred against his father did not allow him to recover or to have any good memories of him. The music was much asserted because it gives the music that relaxing, but at the same time mysterious touches. It is incredible that when he decided to play the little kids, meaningful, cello, he travels through time. At the rhythm of the music we also travel, and can see all four yearly seasons. Also Daigo is able to create new music by all these new life settings.

At a personal level, I felt blessed to be able to learn at least a little bit of a new culture through films. If it was not for the language, I would say that the similarity between my culture and the Japanese is the same. It's amazing to see all these themes are presented, themes that at one point were prohibited, and people would keep from reality. There are so many aspects of life that we, as human beings are not willing to share, or accept. Things that are so normal in life, but because of prejudice and ignorance we see as grotesque. We just don't want to accept or just

don't want to think that every existence has an end. We want to believe that we are eternal;  
ignoring that life is just a cycle.

I give this film a 5. I just love it!