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The Beauty of Endeavor to Retain Memory

"Mitsuha. Your name is Mitsuha. Your name is..." As soon as the twilight hours end, Taki begins to lose every memory regarding Mitsuha, whom he does not want to and should not forget. His palm, which he opened to write down her name, trembles anxiously. This film *Your Name.*, produced by Makoto Shinkai, is about a high school girl and boy who form an extraordinary connection by enigmatically swapping their bodies multiple times only to suddenly forget each other like a dream. Whilst this story is rather fictional, it is an accurate representation of many people in the world who forget the precious memories and relationships as time goes by. However, the boy in this film overcomes this finiteness of memory by trying to encounter the girl who is becoming rapidly forgotten. **In other words, through the unyielding endeavor of the protagonist, the film *Your Name.* reveals the theme of the will to remember valuable memories that should not remain forgotten.**

The inseparable connection and precious memories between the two protagonists begin to be formed with an unrealistic event and are developed through several significant moments. The exposition of this film's plot starts when Mitsuha Miyamizu, a high school girl living in a town called Itomori, and Taki Tachibana, a high school boy living in Tokyo, intermittently swap their bodies. Initially, they were unable to notice what happened because the memory while their bodies were swapped vanishes like a dream as they wake back up in their own bodies. However, they begin to realize it from others' testimonies and adapt to the circumstance by communicating by leaving notes on their phones and bodies. The inciting incident occurs when

Taki, in Mitsuha's body, follows her grandmother Hitoha to a shrine on a mountaintop in Itomori to leave ritual alcohol that Mitsuha made. On the way, Hitoha tells a story about Musubi, the local guardian god at the shrine that is believed to connect everything from people to time. There, when Hitoha says "you are dreaming, Mitsuha," Taki returns to his body, and the body exchange never occurs again. The rising action then begins when Taki finds that Mitsuha, in the body of Taki, wrote in his diary that a comet will be seen in the sky that night. He does not observe any comet that night and tries to call her but she does not pick up. In confusion, he decides to go to her town to meet her in person. However, he relies on his drawing for he cannot recall the name of the town. On his journey, his internal conflict begins as he finally meets a man who recognizes the town. He tells Taki that it is Itomori destroyed three years ago by the comet, which killed more than five hundred inhabitants. He keeps denying Mitsuha's death, the fact that Mitsuha existed three years before Taki, and that his memory about Mitsuha is disappearing. The crisis is achieved as Taki reminds of Musubi and goes to the shrine to drink the ritual alcohol—"the half of Mitsuha"—, wishing to swap their bodies one last time to save the town from the comet strike. Fortunately, he comes back into her body on the day of the comet strike in Itomori and goes back to the shrine, recognizing that Mitsuha must be in his body at the shrine. In the climax, Taki and Mitsuha finally overcome the three-year of the separated timeline and meet each other during the twilight hour. He also warns her about the comet crash. In the falling action, Mitsuha saves people in Itomori town from the comet strike. Simultaneously, both of their memories about each other fade away. Subsequently, in the resolution, Taki and Mitsuha coincidentally encounter each other on a train as adults and each asks for another's name. This sophisticated development of the plot contributes to the establishment of the special connection and memories between the protagonists.

The film synthesizes the sophisticated interconnection of the two protagonists by using a red string as a symbol. The fact that Mitsuha always ties up her hair with her red string and Taki always wears a red bracelet indicates their linkage. When Mitsuha and Hitoha fabricate braids,

Hitoha tells that the braided cords embody Musubi's art and the flow of time. She says that the cords "converge and take shape. They twist, tangle, sometimes unravel, break, and then connect again. That's time." This conspicuously explains the importance of the red string in Taki and Mitsuha's connection that transcends time and space. This concept becomes more visible as Taki reminisces about his first encounter with Mitsuha. A day before the comet crash, Mitsuha went to Tokyo to meet Taki and gave him her red hair tie, but Taki did not know her at that time. Three years later, when he drinks the ritual alcohol to swap his body with Mitsuha, Taki finds out that the unknown girl who gave him the red string on the train was Mitsuha through vision and gives back the red string to Mitsuha at the twilight hour. With the presence of the red bracelet, Taki can swap his body with Mitsuha and remember her. However, after giving the red string back to Mitsuha, Taki completely forgets about her. This symbolizes that their psychological connection depends on Taki's possession of the red string. Likewise, the use of the red string convincingly suggests that it was a medium that enabled the protagonists to link to and remember each other.

While the red string is the symbol of their psychological interconnection, contrasting settings and characters incorporate the meaning of the relationship between the two protagonists. The first apparent contrasting factors are the places where the protagonists live in. Itomori, the town where Mitsuha lives, is depicted as a complete countryside; there are not any cafes, crowded places, high buildings, or traffic. Meanwhile, Tokyo, the city where Taki lives, is crowded with people, buildings, and cars everyday. Along with the setting, the opposing characteristics of Taki and Mitsuha are evident. Mitsuha lives her life in a very conservative and relaxing manner. She is bright, neat, and feminine. She always ties her hair tidily and acts cautiously whenever she is wearing a skirt. Taki, however, lives a busy life in which he handles lots of part-time jobs and time with his friends. He is blunt, clumsy, and impulsive. He often appears with band-aids which represent his clumsy personality. Furthermore, the environments in which Mitsuha and Taki experience the comet strike are discernibly antithetical. To Mitsuha and people

living in Itomori, the comet was indeed a disaster that demolished their lives. However, to Taki and people who live in Tokyo, the falling of the meteors was an “endlessly beautiful view,” as the news reporter says that it is “a great fortune for us living in this age to witness such a beautiful sight.” At this point, it is apparent that their connection forms an antipode in all aspects. What is interesting is that this extremely contrasting relationship between Taki and Mitsuha seems to embody the concept of life and death. In fact, Mitsuha is a dead person according to Taki’s timeline until Taki drinks the alcohol to save Itomori. In this respect, Taki symbolizes the Life, and Mitsuha the Death. This also explains that the reason they were not able to meet physically is not only due to their timeline difference but also because of this meaning behind their relationship: the dead and the alive cannot meet.

However, Taki strives to attain this seemingly impossible encounter and remember Mitsuha, which is manifested through imagery and symbol. When Taki goes to the shrine on the mountaintop with the desperate desire of meeting Mitsuha, the sky gets hazy, and suddenly there is thunder and lightning. It starts to rain heavily. Taki starts to run through the road that is bumpy, stony, and rough. Concurrently, the background music also sounds very risky and destructive with a speedy rhythm. At the mountaintop, he crosses a river that is overflowing to his waist. These imageries of his strenuous way to Mitsuha demonstrate Taki’s struggle to grasp memories about her and meet her. Besides, according to Hitoha, the river that he crossed is a bridge between this world and the world of the dead. Therefore, his action of crossing the river without hesitating also symbolizes his resolved will to encounter Mitsuha and remember her. Thus, with the application of the symbol and imagery, the film effectively illustrates the protagonist’s tenacity to overpower his forgetfulness.

Subsequently, the outcome of this struggle of Taki to remember Mitsuha is shown through foreshadowing and imagery. At school, Mitsuha’s teacher explains a poem about the twilight hour and says it is “the time of the dark evening, neither day nor night, when the world

blurs and one might encounter something not human.” This foreshadows the fact that Taki and Mitsuha will overcome the barrier between life and death and eventually meet each other at the twilight hour. When Taki and Mitsuha are finally able to see each other, the color of the sky behind Taki and Mitsuha range from the day colors—white, yellow, orange—to the night colors—pink, purple, navy, black. Additionally, sunlight, clouds, stars, and moon are coexisting: the twilight hour came and the Death—Mitsuha—and the Life—Taki—can coexist. This beautiful, dreamlike image of their miraculous encounter evokes the cathartic effect; Taki’s eventually meets Mitsuha and recall their memories through tenacious attempts, which initially seemed improbable. In other words, by using the foreshadowing and imagery of Taki and Mitsuha’s encounter, the film shows the strength of the will to retain precious memories and relationships.

Last but not least, utilizing the transformation of tone, the film expands the significance of the effort to remember to a broader scale. After Taki and his friends hear about the Itomori incident, they look for all the resources about the Itomori incident for no one can recall the incident very well. The tone in which the film depicts this scene is empty, depressing, and tragic with slow-paced and chilly music. This tone implies the despair of forgetting victims of such disasters like the Itomori incident. However, after Taki tries to meet Mitsuha anyhow and save the town, all the news reports talk about the miraculous survival of the people in the town. News commemorates the incident even after eight years. The tone of such scenes is very hopeful and relaxing with warm and relatively rhythmical music. This tone delivers a sense of relief as there is no need to worry about those people being forgotten anymore. This change in tone in the film implicitly reflects the importance of remembering not only personally precious people but also people like the victims of such disasters that should not be forgotten.

Therefore, *Your Name* highlights the value of remembering meaningful relationships and memories through diverse literary devices and hidden meanings. The plot, symbols, settings, characterizations, imagery, and foreshadowing all play a pivotal role in displaying this

theme of memory and forgetfulness. Life and death, as portrayed by the association between Taki and Mitsuha, cannot exist at the same time. However, Taki and Mitsuha surmount this limitation by trying hard not to forget each other. Just like Taki and Mitsuha who cross the border between life and death to remember each other's name, we are left to think of the 'names' whom we might have forgotten in our lives.

Works Cited

Your Name.. Directed by Makoto Shinkai, CoMix Wave Films, 2016.