Role of Director's Philosophical Approach in Cinematographic Expression

Sedat Cereci

Abstract—The original idea for a feature film may come from a writer, director or a producer. Director is the person responsible for the creative aspects, both interpretive and technical, of a motion picture production in a film. Director may be shot discussing his project with his or her cowriters, members of production staff, and producer, and director may be shown selecting locales or constructing sets. All these activities provide, of course, ways of externalizing director’s ideas about the film. A director sometimes pushes both the film image and techniques of narration to new artistic limits, but main responsibility of director is take the spectator to an original opinion in his philosophical approach. Director tries to find an artistic angle in every scene and change screenplay into an effective story and sets his film on a spiritual and philosophical base.

Keywords—Director, role, film, approach, opinion.

I. INTRODUCTION

METİN Erksan, a Turkish film director shot a film, “Sevmek Zamani” in 1965. A house painter, Halil goes in a house to paint it, and watches a photograph of a woman on the wall of the house, and falls in love with the woman in the photograph in the film. Halil goes that house every day during a year and watches the photograph. It is the story of that platonic love and the events around love and theme in film proves philosophy of the director in a mysterious atmosphere. One day, the woman on the photograph comes to the house and saw Halil, by the time he watches her photograph, and she thinks that he loved her. But the man, Halil does not love the woman, but loves only her photograph actually. Halil’s story changes into a lyric story in the film and actually reflects director’s lyric philosophy. The director, Metin Erksan shot the film in an extraordinary style by using a philosophical method and revealed a unique approach that only those who are interested in philosophy can understood.

Audience can sometimes find philosophy of director in a film but they sometimes can not find philosophy and meet only some exciting views or adventures but not philosophy. Whereas a film must include philosophy because of its traditional character and convey some philosophical messages to audience.

Another director, Carmelo Bene from Italy has his own philosophy in his own approach and reveals his approach in his theatrical sets. “He is an experimentalist, through and through. For him, the stage is only peripherally a place of entertainment. He has the talent and the professional know-how to transfer intelligently”. Bene has an ironical philosophy about universe and about people and use his philosophy in his films to explain meaning of life [1]. Bene conveys some philosophical messages via history and via psychology and via intensity.

In the early-morning hours of July 23, 1982, a film crew working in the Santa Clarite Valley on the outskirts of Los Angeles was shooting a scene for a film set during the Vietnam War. In one shot, a helicopter meant to hover over the film’s star, Vic Morrow, and two child extras. As the helicopter approached, a nearby hut built for the occasion was to explode. The charge for the explosion was set by professional technicians. The helicopter was flown by an experienced pilot. After photographing the shot, the force of the explosion proved too great for the pilot to handle, sending the helicopter careening out of control. As it crashed to the ground, its rotors decapitated Morrow and the two children. The pilot survived the crash.

“Under California labor regulations in effect at the time, the two children were working illegally, since the shoot took place later than the children were allowed to work. Fines totaling $62,375 were levied against the studio producing the film, Warner Bros, three other companies, and some individuals involved in the production. Attention then shifted to assigning responsibility for the accident. Blame increasingly focused on the film’s director, John Landis” [2]. An action film was it, but it also had the director’s approach in its exciting images. When director plans his shootings kindly, he can not miss interest of audiences and he also exactly catches public opinion.

Director’s kindly approach in film about his humanistic philosophy always attracts interest and admire of audiences because of hopes of people who watch his film. Audiences usually hope some sensitive and humanistic and philosophical messages in ay film even an action film or a horror film [3]. In his nature, human often behave with his feelings and he looks for sensitive clues on what he watches or he touches. Nature of human is always a matter of planning and shooting in director’s process.

“Location shooting and latitude give team and time it takes for shoot to be completed created a unique atmosphere and freedom for photographers. This sense of freedom is clearly evident in intimacy and candor of images, images in which idleness, anxiety, and terror that mark the space of shoot are clearly apparent. This is concerned with director” [4]. Whatever is director interested in, he tries to convey a
humanistic or politic message to audience and has a method to create his approach. In a way, director’s approach which is formed by his philosophy is a point in where director and audiences meet [5]. Films have different themes but all they have philosophical approaches and philosophical messages.

“In 1925, Alfred Hitchcock was promoted to director, getting as his first assignment an Anglo-German production, The Pleasure Garden. Back in 1922 he had collaborated with actor Seymour Hicks on completing the final scenes of Always Tell Your Wife for an ailing director. In the same year he had also directed a two-reel fiction film, Number Thirteen, but the production was never completed. The Pleasure Garden was his first real stab at directing, and despite some flaws it proved an impressive debut” [6]. Hitchcock was known as the director of horror films but he had many humanistic messages in his films and his approach taught the audiences many humanistic realities. “Hitchcock’s Notebooks – a tantalizing, frustrating glimpse through a narrow chink in the thick door of a hallowed vault– will not doom the myths of the auteur to their final resting place, but the book tellingly reveals the many negotiations, improvisations, sleights-of-hand, and slipknots that went into the crafting of Hitchcock’s exacting, austerely precisionist films. To the extent, it contributes some compelling new information to both the meaning of the films and the image of their maker” [7]. Hitchcock always told different dimensions of human spirit in his films and invite people to live in a humanistic world.

Every director has his own style and has an original approach to reach audiences via a philosophical way. Director’s philosophy naturally appears in an artistic image in his film and almost every director is known with his original philosophical images like Eisenstein, or like Hitchcock and etc. Director’s approach is like a stamp that is pressed on audience’s memory via his film.

Cinematographic expression is a way of describing human and life, and film is one of communication languages in humanistic and in artistic places. In this study, role of director’s approach was evaluated in cinematographic expression and director’s process how he proves his philosophy in his film via his approach was emphasized. A primary element of film production, director, was analyzed as the most essential person of a film under different examples. Film direction was thought not only a stage of a film production, but also process of production of a social and artistic product. Some directors who named their films were production, but also process of production of a social and artistic dimension of a film. At a second meeting, scene, not the manner in which it was photographed” [9]. Idea of a director can change any moment because of his artistic sensitivity, but at the end he finds the best image because of his approach. Director’s approach always manages director’s way until arriving at screen.

Somebodies know that Federico Fellini changed the profession of his protagonist in 8.5 from writer to a writer
The original idea for a feature film may come from a writer, director or a producer. But it does not often work out this way. When director does not develop his or her own projects, the director is hired by a producer at some early stage in the project to execute the production of a film. “He may or may not be a party to the selection of the story or subject of the film, but it is important that he be involved in the preparation of the shooting script, preferably, that he writes the screenplay himself, alone or in collaboration. Other preproduction stages the director may or may not (but should) be involved in are casting, selection of technical crews and locations, and determination of the pictorial design of the film with the art director” [15]. Though all technical necessities, director’s approach to topic of film provides most facilities for film, because it manages all levels of film.

Editor is also a principal working friend of director in producing process. Ideally, on a high-budget feature film, editing may be integrated into the early stages of production. The editor is present on the set. “He attends the daily screenings of the previous day’s shooting and discusses with the director the choice of takes and ideas for the editing of a sequence” [16]. There may be a second editor preparing the material in the cutting room, to whom he relays the instructions of the director; and there may be an assistant doing the routine organizational work, such as classifying and cataloguing the footage, syncing up picture and sound by means of the slates, and checking the camera and sound reports against the picture and track. The editor works closest with the director, who is the chief instrument of unity in the film.

“There is a main way to learn rules of directing a film: Assist a director. Assistance of a director can point out how his director works during film process, his early sense of telling a story in a cinematic way, how he forms his situations and builds his sequences, how he opens a picture and how he finishes it, when he is an assistance director” [17]. Most of successful directors began to direct a film as an assistance of a director, and after a great experience they became master directors. While assistance works with a director, he begins to set his philosophy via his experiences and shapes his approach step by step towards an artistic or a humanistic message. Many assistances accept and apply approach of their master and then his approach becomes their approaches.

According to Elia Kazan; directors must be fearless hunters, hypnotists, poets, great hosts, old-fashioned mothers, and construction gang foremen. What a cat might mean to a love scene? How to get a chicken to enter a room on cue? How to direct actors: Normal, neurotic, and erotic? Then the crafts of camera and tape recorder. Every experience leaves its residue of knowledge behind, says Kazan; every experience applies [18]. A film person must be a contradictory combination of the bedrock pagmatist and the driven idealist.

Director has his own style and directs his film through his viewpoint. Some directors plan their films carefully and rarely deviate from their scripts, notes and storyboards once filming has begun. Others like to improvise and make on-the-spot
changes in the script or the visual aspects of the film. “But advance preparation by all directors is thorough and meticulous, for film is a highly expensive medium and mistakes and last-minute changes or adjustments can prove costly and embarrassing” [19]. Different types of shots give different feelings. “It is concerned with narration. Narrative film, what people ordinarily think of as “the movies”, is a combination of literary, theatrical and purely cinematic elements” [20]. Cinematic result of a film always appears by director’s approach.

“A film develops via imagination of a director like in “Three Colors” of Kieslowski. Kieslowski’s alterations to the script drastically abbreviate its dialogue. In the modern era, the classical Greek opposition between a seeing derived from the action of the subject (via eyebeams “extramitted” to strike the object) and a hearing originating in the object (causing airwaves that then strike the ear) persist in the conceptualizations of sight-sound relations by such phenomenologists as Maurice Marleau-Ponty and Hans Jonas: the one sensory register (that of sight) being immediate, the other (that of sound) mediated; the one continuous, associated with space, the other discontinuous and linked to temporality.” [21]. Nobody can confuse and compare Kieslowski’s films with others because of his approach. He had an originaile philosophy in his approach like other directors.

“John Huston’s We Were Strangers would not have been a better film if Huston had included a fuller discussion of the moral problems involved. A director must have an imaginative understanding of everything connected with the material he is working on; and if his materials involves, as Huston’s did, a sense of deep ethical issues, then the director’s own awareness and understanding of these issues is relevant” [22]. A director can sometimes tells political, social and humanist messages in his film like in Vittorio De Sica’s Bicycle Thief. “In The Bicycle Thief, there is a shortage not only of luxury goods but also of basic necessities. In Reconstruction Italy, the borsa nera (black market) was an important source of all goods, including basics. The black market thus became a running motif in Italian films of the early postwar period, including Alberto Lattuada’s Il Bandito, Gennaro Righelli’s Abasso la Richezza (Peddlin in Society, 1946), and Camerini’s drama Molti sogni per le strade” (Woman Trouble, 1948). “Camerini even directed a postwar black-market drama, The Angel and the Devil, based on a story by Zavattini” [23]. Topic of film and character of director are mostly united by director in many films, therefore a film which resembles character of director is always watched. While audiences perceive philosophy of director, they can never give up to follow steps of director in film and they permanently wonder director’s next step because of director’s extraordinary approach.

“Directors usually use their dreams, nightmares, and artistic crisis to shoot. They use stories and poems in their mind to make sequences” [24]. “Poetry can not be discussed meaningfully unless one can assume that everything in a poem—every last comma and variant spelling—is in it by poet’s specific act of choice. Only bad poets allow into their poems what is haphazard or cheaply chosen. Assuming that, best film directors are poets, people can ask “Why that scene there?, Why that dissolve?, Why that music?, Why does the actor walk from right to left?, Why that long shot?, Why that close-up?, Why that camera angle?” and on and on...” [25]. Poetry is one kind of director’s approach to film but it generally has some risk because of relativity of poem.

Under the studio system, most directors were interchangeable, and little of their personal mark could be detected in the final product. In most cases, it was easier to identify a film by its “look” as the product of a certain studio then as the work of a particular director. “It is not, therefore, surprising that only a relatively few directors were known to the general public by name and that forms so many years the film’s stars, not the director, were the main attraction at the box office” [6].

Contemporary film audiences (as a consequence of a greater familiarity with the history of cinema thanks to television, publishing, and film education) are likely to recognize and appreciate elements relating to an image of the director/star’s ingenuity, especially to the director’s manipulation of well known forms and conventions. “In Laurence Olivier’s Branagh, in the role of director, he is also credited with being able to mobilize stars of the stature of Robin Williams and Hannah Schygulla to play cameo roles in his film” [26]. An experienced director always tries to catch lives of audiences via his images in his approach. Because any of audiences looks for his life in film images to watch himself. A director must rely entirely on his own guess and hope for best, but one thing he can be sure of: The minute he sets his heard on someone, that person’s price will skyrocket. “Apparently myth of a film star and how much money he makes has penetrated to wherever films themselves are known. Although business of casting is primarily a matter of a single decision, directing is a much more complex affair. It is a continuous job, involving a tremendous amount of detail and a great deal of time. In primitive societies, directing becomes more complicated because neither cast nor crew really understand exactly what director wants” [27].

A director is like a climber on a high cliff, a dancer on a tightrope. “One false move, and he is ruined. Every minute of a day, he must be aware that this may be his last shot with a given person” [27]. A difficult and anxiously job is direction, but produces the most meaningful and effectual products of culture. Director usually avoids of false by help of his approach that provides director a systematic method to direct film and to convey his message to audiences.

III. CONCLUSION

Any film is result of a director’s effort and director’s point of view and his feelings. Because of this, films are firstly presented by name of their directors, but generally not by their producers or their stars. Director is the man who creates spirit of a film and gives a character and a humanist sense to film.
via his philosophy and his approach. He is primary element of a film with scriptwriter and producer but a film undoubtedly belongs to its director because of role of director in a film. Vittorio De Sica’s Bicycle Thief, Sergei Eisenstein’s The Battleship Potemkin, Krzysztof Kieslowski’s Three Colors, Elia Kazan’s East of Eden are always remembered via their directors. Because each film is product of its director because of director’s approach. Films are naturally identified with their directors. A director is also an art director in a film besides being a philosopher; he shapes a film as an artistic product. Director is responsible either for technical requirements or artistic angles of a film. His role is more than being a creative for a film, but giving a spirit to a script via his approach. Experienced directors always try to catch lives of the spectator via his images in his approach. Because any of audiences looks for his life in film images to watch himself. Therefore a director reaches the spectator by help of his approach and convey his approach in his philosophical view. In a way, director’s mission is meeting the hopes of audiences via his approach and his philosophy in his film. Director’s approach provides director a systematic method to direct film and to convey his message to audiences.

REFERENCES


Prof. Sedat Cereci has graduated from University of Istanbul (Turkey), Faculty of Communication, Cinema Television and Radio Department in 1986. Had Ph in Television and Radio Department. Worked for newspapers and magazines as journalist and as editor and produced music programs for Turkish Radio and Television Organisation, and directed documentary films. Compiled books about communication and television productions. Worked for University of Yuzuncu Yil (Turkey) and directed university television and taught television production and documentary film at university.