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A MOVIE WITH DISTANCE (FILM ANALYSIS OFBANDE À PARTWITH BERTOLT BRECHT EPIC THEATER THEORY APPROACH)

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Received: 16 September 2019; Accepted: 23 Oktober 2019; Published: 5 November 2019

Ed. 2019; 3 (1): 052- 060

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk memberikan pemahaman bahwa, tidak semua film mendapatkan respon emosional penonton secara instan dan memiliki orientasi tunggal memperoleh keuntungan finansial tertinggi. Beberapa film memiliki orientasi seni dan mampu dianalisis dengan teori tertentu dan mengandung beberapa estetika sebagai aspek filosofis yang layak menjadi sumber pengetahuan yang dapat dipercaya. Paradigma penelitian ini adalah konstruktivisme dengan pendekatan kualitatif dengan observasi dan tinjauan pustaka sebagai instrumennya. Pengamatan dilakukan dengan menonton film secara berulang kali diikuti dengan analisis menggunakan Teori Teater Epic Bertolt Brecht. Analisis-analisis tersebut dilakukan menurut unsur yang diketahui oleh Bande; yaitu keberadaan narator, korelasi adegan, stabilitas setiap karakter dan perkembangan cerita, yang berkembang secara linear atau berputar-putar. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa Bande à part oleh Jean Luc Godard memiliki narator dari luar film untuk menggambarkan beberapa adegan yang tidak terkait dengan adegan berikutnya dan sebelumnya sampai adanya perubahan genre dari film kriminal, romansa, sindiran, aksi hingga menjadi komedi. Dengan perubahan jenis dan genre film, karakter di dalam film juga perlu disesuaikan. Perubahan tersebut menciptakan efek yang disebut *Verfremdungs effektor Distancing Effect* dalam terminologi Brecht. The Distancing Effect memberi antisipasi kepada penonton untuk tidak terlibat, melayang atau mengalami ilusi dramatis dengan film. Dengan Distancing Effect, Godard ingin agar penonton tidak terlibat secara emosional dengan film dan ingin penonton menjadi penonton yang santai. Menjadi penonton yang santai memungkinkan mereka untuk menjadi lebih kritis, konstruktif, dan memiliki visi yang lebih rinci tentang film ini.

Kata Kunci: Jean-Luc Godard, Gelombang Baru Prancis, Bande à part, Teori Teater Epic Bertold Brecht, Genre.

PRELIMINARY

In industrial context, film holds more value on its functional aspect and it can be seen through film ability to affect audience's emotion without any further thoughts. Examples include notable blockbusters movie such as Iron Man, The Avengers, Transformers, Alien, Predator, 2012,

Passion of The Christ, Serendipity, Superman, Devil Wears Prada, Sex and The City, etc. In average, those examples have great dramatic effect capable of absorbing audience's mind to its story line, scene, character and film plot. This recent tendency has created a stigma that film function is limited to entertainment aspect

whereas referring to its history film also has a practical art context. Immanuel Kant stated film as an disinterestedness article as can be seen on *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1928) by Dziga Vertov, *8 1/2* (1963) by Federico Fellini, *Bande à part* (1964) by Jean-Luc Godard, *Persona* (1966) by Ingmar Bergmann, or *Eraserhead* (1977) by David Lynch. It can be seen clearly that none of those film directors have intention to create something that can be understood directly by the audiences. Further understanding of art theory, esthetics experience, and philosophical study are needed to understand the factual meaning of those films. Putting those kinds of films in expectation of receiving direct emotional reaction will leads to absurdity, lost of meaning, and even decreased of appeal.

Despite of facts mentioned above, socializing film's function as a source of esthetical and philosophical knowledge remains a noteworthy issue that can be done to obliterate the current society's perception of film, which is solely as an entertainment tools. In this research the film of *Bande à part* (1964) by Jean-Luc Godard is chosen as a model for non-practical and further analysis is done using Bertolt Brecht Epic Theater Theory to reveal film's component that worth as a thought-provoking esthetical and philosophical insight.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this research are as below

1. To give understanding that not every film is intended to reach audience emotional respond instantly.
2. To give understanding that not every films are financial-oriented.
3. To give understanding of the existence of art-oriented film.
4. To give understanding of the existence of films analyzable using art theory outside film

field, such as theater theory.

5. To give understanding of the existence of film consists of esthetical and philosophical value that can worth as a trustworthy insight of knowledge.

Theoretical Basis

1. Jean-Luc Godard

Jean-Luc Godard (born 3 December 1930), a French movie director is one of the pioneers of French New Waveism. He had directed some notable movies such as *Une femme est une femme* (1961), *Le Petit Soldat* (1963), *Le Mépris* (1963), *Bande à part* (1964), *Alphaville*, *une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* (1965), and *La Chinoise* (1965). His film had experimental style like his fellow French New Waveism follower such as: François Truffaut, Éric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, and Jacques Rivette. Godard believed that a movie director has the full right to direct a movie according to his wanting, just like another art concept, i.e: novel which has full right on its novelist, music composition on its composer, and fine art on its creator.

Godard's experimental style gave insight about film possibility to stand as an independent art work unrelated to market's demand. His cinematography, music scoring, actor, and scenario experiment had been influential to many other film directors until now such as Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, Steven Soderbergh, Jim Jarmusch, John Woo, and Brian de Palma. Inside Godard's work we could also see some philosophical issue like Marxism, Maoism, and Existentialism.

Prior to his career as a film director, Godard also wrote for *Cahiers du Cinéma* magazine founded in 1951 by André Bazin, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and Joseph-Marie Lo Duca. *Cahiers du Cinéma* contained some material related to film theory and film critic directed

to Hollywood movie director such as Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, Robert Aldrich, Nicholas Ray, and Fritz Lang. Through its critics and theories, Cahiers du Cinema had possessed an immense role in the formation of French New Waveism.

Godard's works were also affected by political aspect, especially Maoism that he absorbed through his friendship with Jean-Pierre Gorin. Together with Gorin, they established DzigaVertov Group, the group name was taken from Russian movie director called DzigaVertov. Vertov was known through his experiment of a film without scenario and actor, *Main with the Movie Camera* (1928). Those activities that he started in 1968 mark his work orientation to Marxism and Maoism political aspect.

2. French New Wave

The concept of French New Wave had to be seen from the 1950s, when Italian Neo-Realism affected France cinema industry the most. Italian Neo-Realism brought reality as the main theme for its film. Italian Neo-Realism used non-professional actors to act as them. For instance, a role of policeman and musician in *Bicycle Thief* by Vittorio de Sica would be played by a real life police and musician. Italian-Neo Realism also referred to the exact situation and condition of Europe at that time. European economic crisis had affected Italian-Neo Realism movie to be a low budget movie, mainly also bringing up issues like poverty, injustice, and pressure among poor people. Although initially those films were logical consequences of economic crisis, eventually those films could stand out as a movie owning its distinctive traits. One of the notable foundations of French New Waveism was the courage to bring up daily life theme of Italian Neorealism. To compensate their low-cost performance, French New Waveism developed many unusual yet amazing cinematography technique that could be seen in numerous of Godard's movie.

Those experiments were also triggered by Godard's admiration towards Russian movie director, DzigaVertov through his notable documentary film, *The Man with A Movie Camera* (1928).

French New Waveism was also being reinforced by camera-stylo concept by Alexandre Astruc. That concept stated that a movie director should possess a full right towards their expression, the same right as a novelist creating novel or painter creating their painting. That concept was then synergized with auteur theory concept by Andre Sarris. This concept believed that movie wasn't entirely a yield from industrial process but also a movie director's creative work thus making a movie director eligible to hold the right of a movie's copyright. The foundations of notable movie director French New Waveism like Godard, François Truffaut, Éric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, and Jacques Rivetteto create certain formulation about the ideal French New Waveism movie stereotype are combination between Italian Neo-Realism, camera stylo concept, and auter theory. Despite of the distinctive characteristic of each French New Waveism movie director, we could have a unique resemblance from each of them such as experimental cinematography style, improvisation on dialogues, absurd and existentialism theme, low-budget characteristic of a movie, and the usage of Bertholt Brecht epic theater theory, unique to Godard.

3. Bande à part

Bande à part (1964) a film by Jean Luc Godard is one of an ideal example of French New Waveism such as absurd dialogue, unimaginative story plot, and experimental cinematography. *Bande à part* has three leading role which are Odile (Ana Karina), Franz (Sami Frey), and Arthur (Claude Brasseur). Their relationship resembles a love triangle but hidden down their relationship is Franz's and Arthur's desire to steal Odile's aunt, Victoria's wealth, making their togetherness composed of both romance

and intriguing sensation. Some notable scenes of this film are the one minute silence scene, Madison scene in which those 3 roles dance together, and Louvre scene in which those three run around Louvre Museum in just 9 minutes. *Bande à part* has all of its dialogue in French and it is also considered as relatively easy to be understood movie of Godard. It can be proven by *Bande à part*'s accomplishment to be inside some list of Best Movie of All Time like Time Magazine's list and standing at 79th position in Empire Magazine Best Movie of All Time list.

4. Bertolt Brecht Epic Theater Theory

Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1956) is a renowned theater director from Germany and the founder of Epic Theater Theory. Epic Theater Theory stands as a criticism towards Constantin Stanislavsky Dramatic Theater Theory known with its melodramatic characteristic, considered to drift audiences too much to the show. The main purpose of Brecht Epic Theater Theory is to put audience in an appropriate distance from the movie enabling them to still give criticism (more known as *Verfremdungseffektor* Distancing Effect). Audience should realize that theater is not a reality and aware of its true identity as a fiction entity.

Epic Theater Theory has some method to create the distancing effect. Brecht wants the actor to be aware that they are only playing their role and the audiences should be aware that the actors are only playing their specific roles. Actors in Brechtian terminology isn't same with Stanislavian terminology which requires them to "fool" the audiences with the actor exaggerating appreciation. An actor in Brechtian terminology sometimes play several roles at once, act as the narrator, and talking directly with the audience (Breaking the Fourth Wall).

Unlike Dramatic Theater Theory, Brecht's theory doesn't try to hide some supporting aspect of the performance like music, lighting, and costume changes, instead he keeps it transparent to make the audience as a relaxed audience. He correlated that watching a theater is pretty much similar to a boxing match where the audience can be relaxed, entertained, and given personal space for thoughts.

Some major differences between Epic Theater and Stanislavsky Dramatic Theater are mentioned on the table below:

Dramatic Theater
Plot
Positions audiences as a part of the stage
Related scene
Stable character of role
Story is developing linearly

Epic Theater
Narrative
Positions audiences as an observer
Independent scene
Changing character of role
Story is developing independently and sometimes circling around

Research Method

This research is using constructivism paradigm with qualitative approach. This research is conducted with observation and desk study. The object of this research is a film directed by Jean-Luc Godard, titled *Bande à part* (1964). The observation is conducted by watching the mentioned film repeatedly, and analyzing it with Bertolt Brecht's Theory of Epic Theatre. This analysis is done by reviewing the following elements on *Bande à part* film:

- Narrator's presence.
- Whether each scene is related or independently separated from one another.
- A stable or dynamic character.
- The story develops linearly or fragmentary

After analyzing the Bande à part film with Bertolt Brecht's Theory of Epic Theatre, there will be conclusion on whether the film has the tendency to create a gap with its audience or not—in line with the Brechtian theatre. By realizing the gap effect or Verfremdungseffekt, the audience may be more relaxed and critical at the same time, and will not be carried away by melodramatic scenes.

Results of analysis and discussion

Bande à part film is using narrator to tell the plot of the story, background, along with the thought and the mood of the actors. The following table proves such argument:

Minute 03:38 – 03:44
Narrator (France) <i>Mon histoire commence ici. Environ deux semaines après avoir fait la connaissance d'Odile, Franz conduit Arthur à la ville pour lui montrer la maison.</i>
Translation My story starts here. About two weeks after meet Odile, Franz asked Arthur to the city to show his house.
Minute 05:05 – 05:15
Narrator (France) <i>En se retournant pour regarder la maison à travers à l'écran que formait les branches, les arbres, Arthur et Franz lire dans sentiment de lumière froide lointaine comme c'est une étoile. Arthur veut lui dire quelque chose mais les mots ne lui va pas.</i>

Translation

After seeing the house from trees and branches, Arthur and Franz felt the light from far away, just like a star. Arthur wanted to say something, but he is speechless.

Minute

07:05 – 07:15

Narrator (France)

Dix minutes après le soleil d'Austerlitz sur le fait à la Bastille, Arthur demande à Franz si c'était bien vrai qu'il avait caressé celui de genoux d'Odile et Franz dit que oui et qu'elle avait la peau douce.

Translation

In 10 minutes after the Austerlitz's sun rises in Bastille, Arthur asked Franz, whether he fondled Odile's knee. Arthur answered yes, and he added that Odile has a smooth skin.

Minute

07:56 – 08:11

Narrator (France)

Pour les spectateurs qui entrent ce moment dans la salle, tout ce qu'on peut dire ce sont quelques mots: près de chez moi, il y a trois semaines, pas mal d'argent, encore d'anglais, une maison près de la rivière, une jeune fille romantique.

Translation

For the viewers who get behind, here's the story: Three weeks ago, lack of money, English class, a house by the river, a romantic girl.

Minute 22:40 – 22:48
Narrator (France) <i>Ici, on pourra ouvrir une parenthèse et parler des sentiments d'Odile, de Franz et d'Arthur. Mais après tout, tout est déjà assez clair, il faut séparer des images et fermer la parenthèse.</i>
Translation At this point, we may put parenthesis and tell about Odile, Franz, and Arthur's feeling. But everything is pretty clear. So let's end the parenthesis and let the picture speaks for itself.

Minute 37:26 – 37:40
Narrator (France) <i>Une idée fleurit Odile comme un mauvais nuage qui n'aille pas ça. Il est Arthur la regardera toujours de cette façon un peu comme s'il était une ombre à travers à la quali le fou et le foi comme s'il est jeune homme et la jeune fille qui déjà été séparés par une séance d'indifférence.</i>
Translation An idea crossed Odile's mind, just like a black cloud. That Arthur is always looked at Odile just like a shadow of madness and the certainty that they are separated by the wide similarities.

The narrator on *Bande à part* is not the character from the movie. The narrator is from someone outside the film. With the presence of the narrator, *Bande à part* film wants to provide the plot, background, thought and mood of the actors, so that the viewers do not have the chance to digest and reflect the film independently. Godard is constantly creating a

gap between the viewers and the film, by providing the detail on the ongoing scenes. With such effort, the viewers may be more relaxed in watching the film, because they do not have to conduct in-depth interpretation. *Bande à part* also provides independent scenes that are separated from the previous and afterwards scenes. The following table depicts such scenes:

Minute 06:12 – 06:40
Scene Franz is looking like shooting Arthur, but Arthur looks really hurt.
Previous scene Franz and Arthur are seeing Odile's house.
Afterwards scene Franz and Arthur are driving together to someplace.

Minute 45:43 – 46:20
Scene Franz, Arthur, and Odile sit together in a café, and doing a completely silent scene for almost a minute.
Previous scene Franz, Arthur, and Odile are talking about the crime that they will commit.
Afterwards scene Get up from the place to dance.

Minute 47:28 – 50:50
Scene Franz, Arthur, and Odile are dancing together with narration that represents their own feeling.

<p>Afterwards scene Arthur and Odile are taking a walk in the city and try the guns.</p>	<p>Minute: 05:18 – 05:56</p> <p>Genre: Crime</p> <p>Scene Franz and Arthur are spying Odile's house.</p>
<p>Minute 67:34 – 68:01</p> <p>Scene Franz, Arthur, and Odile are running around the Louvre museum to break the record set by an American that successfully to take a circle around Louvre in 9 minutes 45 seconds.</p> <p>Previous scene View from the bridge, along with the words from the narrator.</p> <p>Afterwards scene View from the bridge, along with the words from the narrator</p>	<p>Minute: 06:15 – 06:40</p> <p>Genre: Comedy or Action</p> <p>Scene Franz looks like shooting Arthur, but eventually Arthur is actually hurt.</p>
	<p>Minute: 10:29 – 11:43</p> <p>Genre: Romance</p> <p>Scene Franz and Odile is looking at each other during English Class.</p>
	<p>Minute: 17:32 – 22:25</p> <p>Genre: Romance</p> <p>Scene Arthur and Odile are making a conversation to know each other.</p>
	<p>Minute: 22:50 – 24:58</p> <p>Genre: Romance</p> <p>Scene Franz, Arthur, and Odile are driving together, with Odile in the middle of Franz and Arthur.</p>
	<p>Minute: 23:44 – 23: 50</p> <p>Genre: Crime</p> <p>Scene Arthur: "Nous devons voler cet argent!" (We must steal this money) Odile: "Il faut soyez fou! C'est completement fou!" (This is crazy!)</p>

The abovementioned scenes are depicted independently from other scenes, as an effort from Godard to prevent viewer's attachment to a specific scene. According to Brecht, the viewer may not take a distance, if they are attached to the scenes in a story. Therefore, Godard is constantly making a distraction, by creating a scene that is totally separated from the previous and afterwards scene. For example, the scene where Franz, Arthur, and Odile are dancing together (47:28– 50:50), is a distraction from previous scene. However, during this dancing scene, Godard makes a distraction by providing a narrator in the middle of the scene. Therefore, the viewers will not be attached with the scene known as the Madison Scene. The genre for *Bande à part* film cannot be certainly determined, because there are no consistent plots from the beginning to the end of the film. The following table supports such argument:

Minute: 33:46 – 35:59
Genre: Comedy
Scene Franz and Arthur are mocking each other by reading the newspaper.
Minute: 55:03 – 57:21
Genre: Satire
Scene Odile is commenting and singing about the social life around her with philosophical sentences.

Changes made by Godard are aimed to distract the viewers, so they may not quickly decide the genre of the film. For instance, when the viewers are sure that *Bande à part* is categorized as crime film, Godard changed it into a romance, and so forth. One of the most important thing that Godard did to create a gap with the viewers is the Odile's singing scene in minute 55. From the Brechtian context, a singing scene is not meant to dramatize the situation to make the viewers are attached to the scene. Odile's singing was created in the context of commenting the current situation and it also functions as the narrator.

With the changes of genre during the film, the characters are also adapting to the plot. For example, when the genre shifted into crime story, Franz and Arthur are acting like two criminals that will rob the money from Odile's aunt's house. When the genre shifted into romance, Franz and Arthur are looked like two persons fighting over Odile that has hesitation over the two. Further, when the genre shifted into comedy, Franz and Arthur are acting funny to make the viewers laughed. Lastly, when the genre shifted into satire, Odile acted like a person that is sensitive to her social surrounding. The presence of narrator and many distractions in terms of characters, genres, and independent

scenes, put the viewers as a totally separated party from the film. The involvement with the film is sometimes happened when the film described everything clearly, consistently, and tried to imitate the reality as similar as possible. *Bande à part* that provides unclear, inconsistent matter, and not trying to imitate the reality, wants to assert itself as a work of art that is separated from functional values. At this very point, the viewers are not dramatically involved with the film, but merely as a commentator.

Conclusion and Recommendation

After observation and desk study, there are some consistencies between Jean-Luc Godard's *Bande à part* and Berthold Brecht's Theory of Epic Theatre. Such consistencies can be seen from the following points:

- Godard used narrator from the person outside the movie to describe the situation.
- Godard made scenes that are totally independent and separated from previous and afterwards scenes.
- Godard changed the film's genre from crime, romance, satire, action, and even comedy.
- Due to the change of film's genre, the characters in the film are adapting to the plot.

The changes are creating an effect called as *Verfremdungseffektor* gap effect in Brechtian term. This effect will make the viewers not to be involved or attached with the film. Godard wanted the viewers to be emotionally detached from the film, and in contrast, Godard wanted the viewers to be a relaxed audience. When they are relaxed, the viewers can be more critical, constructive, and see more detail on the film. The viewers may see the film as an entertainment, but not entertainment in the sense that it involves a excessive emotion. Entertainment in the Brechtian context is "a distance entertainment", which sees the film as something that has its own background, plot,

character, and story that has no connection with any reality. When the viewers see the film as something that is separated from the reality, Brechtian see this as a successful attempt to realize a film as a work of art. Art in the Brechtian context may affect emotion and feelings, but it does not create the illusion where the viewers are part of the art itself.

Recommendation

With the research on *Bande à part* film, there are some recommendations that may be considered:

- For educational institutions: organizing a non-practical film screening for the students, followed up by a critical and constructive discussion.
- For students: balancing the film references with non-practical art film. This should also be supported by theories that may strengthen the analysis and appreciation.

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