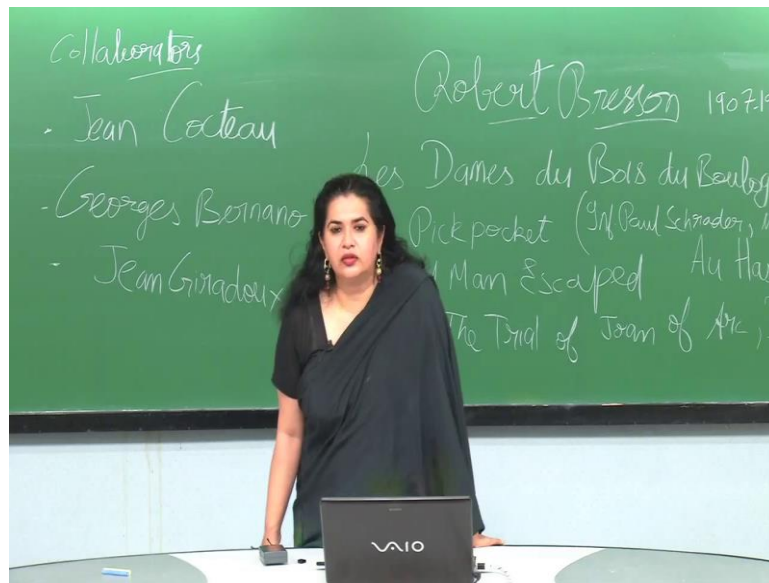


Film Appreciation
Prof. Aysha Iqbal
Department of Humanities and Social Science
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Lecture – 21
Robert Bresson

(Refer Slide Time: 00:27)



Good morning, so I am today in class is going to focus on if great French director Robert Bresson please not this spelling Robert Bresson that is the French pronunciation, who lived between 1907 to 1999, who made only 13 films in 40 years. So, what it is this very meager output tell you about the director himself well we can think of answers he lived by the motto and I am coating him that artiste transformation.

He was one of the for most directors to insist on using only non professional actors, now see we are this today is lecture is in continuation with are commitment to acquiring in over view of old cinema and the greats of old cinema. So, it is important you may supplement or complement my lectures with you tub links you may refer to more books more works more articles by these directors, what I am training to do here is to make you aware of the greats of the old cinema.

At this point also, let me tell you that I have previously recorded a series of lectures it was a full length course call introduction to film studies, which is freely available on you tub that is also a part of IIT is in a on a for the past two years. If you want to complement

this lecture or this particular course that is the mooch related course and film appreciation you can all ways view my already exciting course that is introduction to film studies has I already told you apart of IIT is initiatives and the part of NPTEL program.

So, you will find a number of lectures that you may find useful and which may complement, what we are doing right now. So, my commitment to words making you aware of old cinema and this is an effort that I continue with. We had been talking, so coming back to Robert Bresson I have been talking about how he use in insist on using only nonprofessional actors that the point is that this was nothing new you already know about Italian Neorealism we have done that as part of international film moments.

And you are aware of that Italian Neorealism also insisted on using non professional actor; that means, actors who are not trained to get into films in Brazos case he particularly refer to is actors has is modules. Now, the idea is that actors should be representative of a particular kind of character. So, we are not talking about method acting were a an actor can mode himself or herself into the kind of character here she is plan. We are talking about taking a person according to the demands of a particular character personality type and we have a already familiar with a term type page this was giving to as by the ration formulas type page character.

So, the concept of using non professional actors is nothing new an reborn Bresson only continue the Lagasse off what was already establish before, but he took it not higher with his the kinds of film he will he was going to make and he was in interested in making. Now, let me introduce some of his most familiar names I know that some of you insist that I should be giving you especially when it when I talk about foreign film makers, so I have receives number of mails that whenever are refer to foreign film makers or certain key concept you would like to see as scroll or things you know return, return out for you.

So, here is what I am doing les Dames du Bois du Boulogne that is one film pick pocket and this is something that we will be talking about at length a interestingly Hollywood is screen writer directors people like Paul rider and martin is causes and have retain the names here they were influence by the pick pocket in the defecation of the lunar hero.

We are also talking about Robber, Robber Bresson some man escaped as a beltisar the trail of Joan of arc and diary of a country priest most of these films are all most all these films actually are in the French language and giving you the English translations his

frequent collaborates way the play write John [FL] Bernano and again play write john [FL].

So, these are the collaborates these are the people he work with interestingly Robber Bresson is also called the most Christian of all film makers, who is the style included realism along with absolute asceticism. Now, what do you understand with a idea of asceticism, now asceticism an Christianity we are not talking in testicle religious sense. We are talking about this oar of spirituality and is sparseness of his film making now, I would like you at this point to go to the you tub watch a couple of his film scenes you can you may Google these films look these films up and watch a couple of scenes from his films.

We can also look at a couple of still images from his films an understand, what I am talking about and the sparseness is something that will strike you and soon I give you certain links to you tub also, which you might find useful. So, increasingly his work become more and more spiritually inclined and again I cot braze on to you were he says cinema is interior moment it is all about, what happens in side of person, which is important to Portia.

So, he did not believe in gimmickry in other words he did not believe in providing lots of effects in order to con way a certain kind of interiority that is the key word here. The many at time film makers you make use of colors certain kinds of colors or in a stage effects film effects even music background music in order to convey certain sense certain kind of emotion, but that was not brazen, so therefore the Spareness the Asatisasam of Bresson.

He worked on a movie call the angles of seen which was scripted along with [FL] and in the lady is of the [FL]; that is les dames du Bois de Boulogne he it was a work that was adapted a little rework adapted by Robber Bresson and John Cocteau. Again his diary of a country priest was based on a novel by Georges Bernano any tells of a young priest leaving in the country side and his trails. And his interiorities is anges, he also made a movie 1977 call the devil probably and which highlighted the theme of pollution literal as well as figurate you, this is something that is very common in all Brazos works has a young man Brazos study philosophy and painting and later went want to work is a script writer.

So, along with a other French masses such as Jacques tati he was the most innovative an

important director of the French cinema in the 50's we are still talking about the 50's you already know the 60's and the revolutionary 60's is specially through the work of Godard and through for we have been talking about film such as *Breathless* about the supplier. And through falls many films we have already also been talking about people like Rayne Allen Rayne and his films such as *Last Year at Marienbad*, but that was it still to come that was the 60's we are still in the 50's and with Robert Bresson.

So, when he made his *The Angels of Sin* that is lay [FL] and that was with [FL] and is scripted with Cocteau the screen play for *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* has I have already told your key accept is his distancing himself from a cinema of effects show he performance extensive he did not believe in providing these, so called extras here for him it was extremely important to be as realistic as possible.

One of the earliest film makers earliest major film makers to who short on location especially at the Gare they lay on station in Paris in is a famous metro railway station in Paris and pick pocket was short majorly on location in the railway station in Paris. Again the trail of Joan of arc I am shore many of your familiar with this story the lecture of Joan of arc it was actually base on the trace script of the court proceedings of Joan of arc,. But, Bresson is still very part from the convention realism of cinema waratah, which was quit in o in the 60's.

This is movie hazard bell parser and this is important has I been talking about the is spirituality and Asitisam in Bresson. Now, this movie tells you about the sufferings of donkey, now way donkey you can have more majestic animals, but that is Bresson for you he chose is most amble of all animals to defect humanity and sufferings, what is trying to show is are the movie narrates, how life is casually distraut any kind of life is casually distraut in a heartless world.

The stories about Balthazar the donkey, who passes hand from new man to you man and witnesses all human vices such as pride greed brutality lust and his beaten by people is post to performance treks in a surcease. Now, rather than using donkey as a central figure he is rather instead mirror a use that a mirror to reflect all the other human characters in the film and humanities, so it is a commentary on humanity in a general we see human beings through the eyes of this most humblest of all god's creation that is a donkey, who is treated brutally, casually, heartlessly by group of people and human beings as Bresson tells as a quit same.

When it comes to cruelty, brutality and heartlessness Balthazar expects suffering like a scent and dies like a sent as usual base was camera eliminates objects and parts of RD and also inexpressive faces, now this is what I meant when I introducing of the concept of Bresson and is use of actors is modules. His actors, but instructed to keep to deliberate to keep in expressive faces, you know it was like blank slate on which you can write bread any kind of meaning that was the idea part of body, now I metonymy has have been talking about, when we lecture on the language of cinema.

So, this is in it is important to understand how parts of body especially hands are frequently use by Bresson in order to convey communicate meaning from here, let me take you to pick pocket one of is most celebrated films that was, which was realize in 1959 very keep period in the history of old cinema. So, pick pocket is starring martin les is about a man, who feels a live only when he suffering is a very intellectual very spiritual kind of film.

So, is not your ordinary pick pocket like you offend see in arc commercial films you know very color full kind of hero, whop pick pockets and Erin amen stream Indians in all kind of means stream heroic activities this is not what Bresos pick pocket is all about. Another thing we are offend given justification why a man would turn to crime like pick pocketing here the hero is pick pocket by choice. So, you do not have a back story in writing is sad story about why he was first to pick up a life of a carrier in crime he is the pickpocket by choice as bless that.

Again as I have been talking about is spiritual interiority and Bresson expressive this spiritual in interiority through concrete images and sounds and sound by sounds I do not mean those external sounds as in music background music. The sound the people just there are around is the ordinary data to day sounds is a movie about moral the eclecticism is very those the vise can some of you who made the familiar with existentially philosophy, philosophy of Damon dash Wesley especially a seen in his works it is crime in punishment nodes an underground man.

So, these are the works that you should be familiar it is desirable that you know something about these works. So, what are they talking about basically the lonely existential existentialist kind of a hero Bresson was one of the first film major film makers to providers with this kind of template. To some extent the film was also influenced by holly wood film called pick up on south is straight that was I am an

American film made in 1953, which is a story of pick pocket.

The plot of the movie is very simple the hero is the pocket the movie offish with a Corsican the style of the film is not that of ex trailer, now I should we be told that its Corsican it is like a disc lever if you want excitement if you want to much action just, because of the hero is pick pocket this film is not for you. Now, the hero mesial he is an intervritual quit like Balthazar skin hero as I have been talking about especially Pascal Necok of from crime in punishment.

He lives in a small room he is surrounded by books and petit chef you push is the moral boundary by indwelling in picking pockets. Now, again it is a he does not want to become a daily wage never even a wait doest want to take up a white collage job he it is seek of capitalism he do not maid to much of intellectual debate here. But, again it is a free occupation with a fate of pure soles in a world he looks at pick pocketing as a kind of profession that makes in come alive feel alive that is free will. So, that is quit of philosophy that he has choose in a life of scene and out of a absolutely frewel.

Another important theme of the film is need for human contact an feels an alive an is speaking pockets that is the only contact major contact that he can make with people equally he has a sick mother as same girl friend, but is most that is satisfying human contact is made with those strangers, whose pockets he picks you have to understand that is no longer just a financial gain, but also his own you know self food that he realizes through is.

So, he has series of relationships he has mother girl friend he has a loyal friend and a police inspector, who is on history. Now as we know we have been talking about French new way and he arrive at the cuss of the great moment in cinematic history by again he uses actors in a way that dreams is actors of emotions they do not shown to much of versions here. Again employment deployment of non actors non professionals and another very interesting pastie is that he avoid close-ups with character.

Now, we have been talking about the languages of cinema what does a close-up do and tell me that, what is a function of using close-up the close-up is by using a close-up a director tries is to convey the emotions of a character high lights the emotion high tend form of emotions he is a that is what a close-up does. Now, here he does not want you to look or the actors to express to much of emotion, why, so that he can dispense with all kinds of empathy and empathy sympathy for the actors it is more important that we

audience should be post to think the aware for also way avoidance of music these also unemployment of dab pen voice over.

So, the voice also less emotion it is important that you think more and feel less here. So, that is a total rejection of in other works of melodrama here he allows the audience a great deal of freedom to interpreted the actions on screen you should know that we have been talking about the French new way and you should know that characters in French new way cinema often marginalize antis establish went young rebels and the heroes these a loans with no great family ties to speak of, who is behave spontaneously an often at immorally or immorally and are and the authoritarian.

Now, if you look at the entire array of French new way films we will find that this is quit through of most French new way the hero's that were depicted in the French new way films. Never also kind of cynicism concerning, so see political conditions of that time. And therefore, the film maker restated to create a kind of distance between the screen and expectorates it was very Bresstain we are talking about the great theater export exponent of the elimination effect the idea was not to create feeling of sympathy and empathy, but rather create a distance and pose the audience to think rather than feel.

These are was also quit existentialist in is representation of themes and characters we have already test open the theme of existentialism in Godard films French new view cinema was quit influence by existential philosophy, which is truss the individual and his free choice experience of free choice and the actions of any rational understanding of the universe. So, that as to be sense of absolutely in human life that was the highlight of existential philosophy actions of any rational explanation and understanding of the universe you do not sit and justify and explain the behavior of the behavioral patterns of characters practices.

Because, there is no justification no rationality in the universe we occupy also and key aspect of existential philosophy is using free will and taking responsibility for action instated of playing free audient roles as dictated by society this is what here is all about. Now, moving on to another aspect of Bresson and particularly pick pocket we were talking about language of cinema and metonymy.

So, there are plenty of close-up shorts up hands in Bresson all over is work the plenty of close-up shorts of hands particularly in pick pocket there are also numerous exchange in looks with victims and there is a beautiful mountains, that will I would like to drier

attention to of hands and exchange of looks. So, places not down this link to the you tub and watch this particular seen and understand what I am talking about.

So, I hope that you watch the scene and, so we more one to the basic idea what was the what was Bresson Dring do here. Now, the theme is redemption at the end of the film he the hero is the redemption in hopelessly crept word and reason the certain kind of moral question that will we be just am by who is bitten up to judges. Again the concept the idea is essentially the world is essentially an absolutes meaningless place. Now, I am Bresson techniques and also his philosophy they were defund the resonances among especially the new way holly wood directors particularly people like Paul Rider and martin is causes.

So, if you watch causes is life license you will find how he frames certain kinds of less some certain kind of scenes the way Bresson frames is scenes please watch the film life license is short film. And also martin is causes director were and the screen play of the films was retain by Paul Rider I am talking about taxi driver again is which it uses the same kind of confection narration that Bresson hero uses again he is lonely, so cero path hero looking for reason to live and through him we given rustic look at society

A man a script Bresson other monumental film relies in 1956 you watch the film a clipping from here and give realize the minimalism best pass that the asceticism of Bresson much of the action take place in the pre presionsels and this was theory of the cinema autography non profession actors giving very dramatize performance this is again, but the test here. A man schemed is detailing of move certain key moments building to the preseason's eventual escape.

Now according to Paul Rider Bresson is one of the few model director, who will, who is still addresses we issues of transcendence this is the subject of a film was is the style, which is part down and cinema autograph y, which is then precise objectivity, which touches and elevates the audience it is as if you know even the most banal moment has a significance in towards the towards the building up high narrative a man escape at the bottom of it is engareh of human suffering and is in the leeg of the great preseason dramas.

For example, song of love and other film such a shores hangar dimension also, which seems to be very popular among today's crowds. So, you can watch these films and see how Bressos ideas and themes and philosophy influence in all. So, here is another link

from man escaped please look at the part down nest actors, who are derate of emotions deliberate of emotions not, because the contact or conti moto.

So, you need that you know do not need over dramatization an over gimmickry in order to expressive emotions that is the idea of Bresso, and also of course, look at the metonymy close up shorts of hands and what hands do to people to build up martin and maretime here is link to a man escaped.

So, the final word on Bresson is by for through for psychology and poetry as no works these things have no work no part in Bresso work is all about obtaining a certain kind of harmony out of the various elements which act on each other providing an infinity of relations that the acting the sound looks and noises settings and lighting commentary and music it all at up to what Bresson as to offer.

So, thank you very much and we will need for a next class.