HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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The Unforgettable Director of Love Films 1990

Yavuz TURGUL

Overview

The Unforgettable Director of Love Films can be read as cinema's own effort to look at itself, to express itself, because in this film, the director Yavuz Turgul explores the tension between Yeşilçam and the new cinema through the efforts of the character of Haşmet Asilkan, who used to make love films for Yeşilçam, to adapt to the change. The success and failure of this adaptation effort shows how this transition period was perceived both in the sector and in the narrative structure during the period. This film is set in the 1980s and portrays the cultural, economic and social changes which were taking place in Turkey through the film industry.

The Unforgettable Director of Love Films was the second film produced by Yavuz Turgul and Şener Şen together; it focuses on the small components of an era when the Turkish cinema history, dying and closing down, still wanted to survive, and tried various ways to resist or adapt to change, but nevertheless was still dying. It is a production which takes its place among the final products of Yeşilçam both as a film and in terms of its subject.

Visual Language

A key point of the film which should be emphasized is the way in which it is lit. Lighting in Turgul's films is a way of creating atmosphere, telling stories and creating layers in the film structure. The contribution of cinematographers to Turgul's films is indisputable, but in addition to working with different directors of photography both before and after this film, the director's consistency in the use of light is the most important evidence that he also thought about the light in the process of creating this story.

Especially in the coffee drinking scenes, and in Nihat's house and Haşmet's house, careful work draws attention to the creation of an atmosphere and directs the audience's emotions through masterly lighting design. In the realization of this design, especially in a period when it took courage to produce these works shot with a 35mm negative, in which the results are unpredictable and every frame of the film represents a financial risk and the slightest mistake will cause irreversible results, the skill of the cinematographer Orhan Oğuz cannot be ignored.

Characters

Haşmet Asilkan (Şener Şen) is a 50-year-old Yeşilçam director, a divorced father of two children.

Jeyan (Pıtırcık Akerman): is **an** acting graduate, a young talent. She is the leading actor of the movie which Haşmet wants to shoot and the woman with whom he is platonically in love and who he is trying to impress.

Nihat (Aytaç Yörükaslan): is one of Yeşilçam's former actors. He is currently struggling with an alcohol problem.

The blind cameraman (Yavuzer Çetinkaya): is a veteran Yeşilçam cameraman. He currently has vision problems but he continues to work as a cameraman. He is Haşmet's cinematographer.

Tarcan (Oktay Kaynarca): Is a male actor in the movie which Haşmet Asilkan is trying to shoot.

Ceren (Reyhan Karaçam): is Haşmet Asilkan's ex-wife and the mother of their two children.

Summary

The movie begins with Haşmet Asilkan changing his image in front of a mirror. He is a film craftsman who shot hundreds of love films during the Yeşilçam period, but Turkish cinema is undergoing a great change. The Yeşilçam craze is now in its last days and has been replaced by the era of director cinema, which produces films dealing with social problems. This new cinema is now being worked by artists, not craftsmen. Haşmet wants to take part in this new cinema. In order to do this, he first adapts his image to the new situation. Then he changes the books on his bookshelves. He goes to art exhibitions empty-eyed, falls asleep at the opera; he hangs out in bars which are frequented by the important names of the period and tries to create the impression that he is complaining with them. At the same time, he is working on a social scenario entitled *The Hunt and the Hunter*. He goes to see the producer he has agreed will shoot this film, but the producer just wants a movie with a famous singer; he doesn't care about the script. Haşmet convinces another producer by telling him that Müjde Ar will perform in the movie, but of course Müjde Ar is not remotely interested in the scenario. A film crew is formed under minimum conditions and a cast of young players is engaged. Although various events happen to them during the filming, the film is completed, but its premiere is a total disappointment; very few people turn up and most of them leave before the end. Haşmet Asilkan has failed, but just as he is about to commit suicide with filmstrips, he gets a phone call inviting him to shoot a love movie. He returns to his old craft as an unforgettable director of romantic films.

Story

Desire to change In the opening scene, we see Haşmet in front of a mirror, getting ready. To achieve his change, he first grew a beard, and he puts on his scarf and round-rimmed glasses, adds his pipe to this image, and looks at himself with admiration as if he were looking at a stranger. He is assertive in developing himself intellectually as the auteurial director needed by the new cinema. At night, he wanders around bookshops and even goes to the opera but he falls asleep from boredom, and he visits art exhibitions even though he just looks blankly at everything.

Haşmet has been a director for years, he is a craftsman. He has a modest place in Yeşilçam as a well-known, if not very popular, director, who has shot many fabricated love films and has done it well. He had forged a place for himself with the love films which he made and it became his profession: he is a film craftsman. However, Turkish cinema has undergone a great change. Yeşilçam's star has started to wane and the producers of Yeşilçam are wandering around idle in the crisis in their industry. The 1980s have brought another life to Turkey and the whole business has changed. On the one hand, the spread of television and the video film industry and on the other hand, the success of Hollywood films in capturing the domestic sector with the new market freedom have brought challenges for all filmmakers.

In addition, the era of the director has begun in Turkish cinema. For this reason, the number of those who used to call and ask for Haşmet has decreased, and his character-actor friends have all become unemployed for the same reason. Added to all this, he is undergoing an identity crisis and now wants to be recognized in a different way. The boundaries of the life which he has lived have begun to become too restricting for him. What goes through his mind is reflected in his behaviour and his conversations. He talks about "the dialectic of change" and comments on rationality in his own way. The Kerime Nadir novels on his bookshelves have been replaced by *Birikim* and *Varlık* magazines. He goes to the opera, visits art galleries and tries to understand the reality behind the canvases, he picks up tips from independent-political films, hangs around in places where he can meet the new intelligentsia with his pipe in his mouth and his scarf around his neck, and although he does not care about them, he salutes the people around. All of this is the result of his concern about acquiring a new identity. While all this is happening, he writes a script, which he calls the "project of his life" on which he has pondered a lot.

The process of being accepted Haşmet cannot persuade the producer Murat Bey that Müjde Ar will act in the film, even though he tells him that Ar will star in the film with the social content script which he has written. He goes to another producer named Abdulkadir and convinces him that Müjde Ar will even perform in the film for no fee. The dialogue between Haşmet and the producer enables us to understand what Haşmet has to go through in the process of getting his script accepted:

Producer: What is this, brother?
Haşmet: What is what?
Producer: Dude, what did we talk to you about?
Haşmet: What did we talk about? I will write the script, I will shoot it.
Producer: Dude, shouldn't we make a singer movie? Where did this story come from? I want no terrorists, no September 12.
Haşmet: Brother, I don't want to make a singer movie anymore. It has come this far.
Producer: Why? You shoot very well.
Haşmet: Enough, brother, I'm tired now. It was a love movie, a singer movie. The world lives on other realities.
Producer: Dude, if you had told me that you were going to shoot stuff like that …! What have you kept from me all these months?
Haşmet: Just remember that Müjde will play in this story.
Producer: No, whoever plays it, this story would not be … is it Müjde Ar, the real Müjde Ar?
Haşmet: Müjde Ar.
Producer: No way
Haşmet: Yes way…

Eventually, we realize that Haşmet has no other acquaintance with Müjde Ar than just a casual meeting at a cocktail party and shaking hands, Müjde Ar refuses to act in the film. Haşmet's very important scenario questions the concept of terrorism: after the September 12 coup, a young revolutionary and his two friends have escaped from prison and taken hostages of a manufacturer and his daughter who live in a magnificent mansion. During the hostage situation, events develop and the girl and the revolutionary teenager fall in love, the concept of terror is questioned, and ideological oppositions, hunter/hunted dichotomies, and the conceptual term 'Stockholm syndrome' follow one another. All of the country's recent political and cultural debates are articulated in the script. But it is far from a profound perspective and moreover, the whole scenario plays out in one place. This signifies a difficult topic explored mainly by dialogue, which is cinematically a very risky thing to do. The assistant Tolga, who saw the prison and the situation, has an intellectual background and stance, and he gives Haşmet the first warning, telling him that the story is too didactic. Jeyan, who thinks similarly, is also aware of the situation, but she cannot speak out clearly because she has invested all her hopes in this very challenging project, in which she will play the leading role. This is her last chance: either a miracle will happen or it will perish.

Production process The difficulties experienced in the production process of the proposed film make the already problematic scenario even more troublesome. There is a limited budget and a producer who is about to go bankrupt. As a matter of fact, he disappears after he had defrauded the project heavily and Haşmet is left without a filmmaker and without any money. For the sake of their old friendship, the grumpy actor Nihat, who has a long-term alcohol problem, cannot bear the weight of life any longer and dies in the middle of the set.

Haşmet is so caught up in finishing the film that he even reacts to his friend's death complaining that "Nihat can't die, the film isn't over; don't die Nihat, let the film end and then die". Haşmet, who started by being impressed by Jeyan and holding on to her platonically, cannot tolerate her getting close to the leading actor Tarcan and kicks them both off the set. The production team leave the set one by one, leaving only a few stragglers who cannot get another job, such as a cinematographer with poor eyesight. But Haşmet believes in the script and the success of the film and, more importantly, is convinced that its success will give him the place he wants in society. Haşmet, who was desperate when his producer defrauded the project and ran off, obtains money by selling bracelets which belonged to his ex-wife who had abandoned him, and he apologizes to Jeyan, saying that if necessary, he will kneel before her and beg her to come back. He revises the script and writes a finale without Nihat. He creates the whole film from nothing and completes it with the last remaining reel. He gets the post-production done again with a thousand and one difficulties, and he manages to steal back the master copy, which he could not get from the studio owner because he was broke, at night under cover.

In the scenes in which the production process is depicted, it is possible to come across many references to the ambiguity of job descriptions in the sector and the abuse which is rife. It is also possible to read these scenes as a self-criticism. For this reason, it is possible to put this movie in the category of cinema which looks at itself. In one scene, Haşmet takes his children onto the set, and his

little daughter pees herself and Haşmet calls out to the second reji assistant; "It's mine, take it to drink".

In another production process scene, the dialogue between the old Yeşilçam veteran Nihat and the young actress Jeyan reveals the perception of women in the film sector:

Jeyan: I still can't believe it, you and I are in the same movie …
Nihat: Are you playing in the movie for the first time?
Jeyan: The first ..
Nihat: How many times did you give it to the director for this?
Jeyan: (*angrily*)I haven't given it yet, but I promise, you will be the first to know when I make it with a demented alcoholic.

Sad End The result of so much effort, effort and more effort is a great disappointment. Although they invited nearly 500 people to the first screening, only a handful of people come, and they leave the hall during the show: Haşmet is destroyed.

There is still hope All hopes for Haşmet are now exhausted, and at this point, on the verge of suicide, Haşmet is forced to wrap himself in his films but he eventually answers the ringing phone. Ii is a producer on the phone. looking for him: he invites Haşmet to make a new love movie. At first, it seems that he will refuse, but then he accepts, slowly regains his morale and returns to making love movies.

Themes

Clash of potential possibilities and desires - the craft/art tension Cinema is actually the work of craftsmen like Haşmet. Despite all his efforts in terms of both the opportunities offered by life and his potential, the inability of this craftsman to become a cinematic artist constitutes the main conflict axis not only of his character but also in his film. This tension is one of the main themes of the film. The most distinctive feature of Haşmet is also the main conflict of the movie. The tension between the potential inadequacy to fulfil his desires and the effort to ignore the potential to fulfil them creates the main conflict of the film. It can be said that the film is about the adventure of accepting this process for Haşmet. It is possible to derive this from the following dialogue between Haşmet and Jeyan:

Haşmet: My hair was getting white… after my hair turned gray, a fear arose me; the fear of death. Can you imagine? I've made more than a hundred movies, but nobody called or asked. Nobody wrote a single line, they did not replace me, they assumed they couldn't. For them, such a man has not lived, he does not live They did not give me an award even once, I even accepted the Cherry Festival award: I wanted them to say 'Oh, he was the director of such and such a movie' even after I have died, but they did not come again; the people who did come laughed and mocked.
Jeyan: You did your best to move on from being the director of romance movies; at least you tried to change. Everyone is trying to overcome something, but who is twisting ..
Haşmet: Who cannot bend.
Jeyan: Who cannot bend, the important thing is to understand.
Haşmet: But others who cannot bend are extolled, applauded, given a hand, why didn't that hand reach me?
Jeyan: You are out of it.

Haşmet is indeed outside that segment, but the process of accepting this is the main thematic framework of the film. At the end of the film, it is possible to deduce this from the monologue in the scene in which he puts the tortoise which Niham has bequeathed to him on the table in front of him and pours it a drink so that it can drink with him:

"Being unable to bend and being outside is a terrible thing, tortoise, very terrible … What shall I say now? I'm outside, I'm cold, I can't say let me in … I couldn't bend … "

An effort to keep up with change The story of the movie is about an effort to change. Haşmet tells Nihat, "Something new happens every day Nihat; if we stay behind, master, we can see the future no matter how much we renew ourselves". Nihat, who has withdrawn from everything and lost his

hope, says, "I love the past, not today, not tomorrow; my pieces are there" as if to prove Haşmet's words. Nihat is a symbol of a structure which resists this change whereas Haşmet is a symbol of an effort to keep up with it. Another of the main conflicts of the film is revealed by the types of relationship created by change.

Direct messages and advice delivered to the audience have an important place in Turgul's films. In *The Unforgettable Director of Love Films*, the woman who owns the mansion where the film was shot summarizes the change with the following comment: "Today, a buyer came to this mansion. Big, with gold. Excuse me, something like an animal. I thought 'This guy is not having my home; he wants to buy my memories, my beauty, everything …'. I will hold on for a while. We have to take care of some beautiful things. Otherwise, this world will be left to these emotionless animals!"

Self-devotion Blind, unswerving devotion is another thematic issue which comes up in the film. The tragi-comic story of rootless and unsupported devotion is another pillar of conflict depicted.

Character analyses

Haşmet Asilkan Hasmet is a director who has made numerous love films in the Yeşilçam craze in the 1960s and 1970s. But the Turkish cinema of the 1980s is on the brink of madness. Art cinema, which is interested in social events and in which the director gains importance, has taken over from Yeşilçam cinema. Haşmet wants to be one of the directors of this new trend and is determined to use every opportunity and create a masterpiece. However, he has neither the necessary potential nor the opportunities.

Shame Mümin, the son of a cobbler named Fahri, could not accept himself as he was and had a dream of becoming an actor; he has followed a difficult road and eventually became the director Haşmet Asilkan; but he looks at his past with shame. When he is watching the film with his old friend the Yeşilçam actor Nihat, we understand Haşmet's deep embarrassment:

> *Haşmet:* Will you switch this off? I can't bear to see it.
> *Nihat:* Can't you see the purity and goodwill in this movie? What movie has this shot today?
> *Haşmet:* Don't, Nihat, I'm just ashamed.

Being ashamed of the work he has done in the past is one of Haşmet's most defining characteristics and one of the main motivations underlying his actions. For this reason, he always carries on conversations with his friends in different ways; he rewrites his past in another way over and over again.

The desire to be different Haşmet carefully 'places' trendy magazines such as *Opinion*, *Adam*, *Varlık* and *Birikim* around his home. When his assistant Tolga asks him why Müjde Ar isn't going to play the role, Haşmet has his cover story ready, of course: "It's very simple, I didn't want it. I thought last night that if we call it new face, new face, then why the gospel? Is the gospel new? No, it's old". Haşmet has a cover for everything.

Courage Haşmet, bored with the love films of which he has shot hundreds, is actually very brave. He sincerely wants to leave his very comfortable life and move to a completely different genre. But however hard he tries to turn his face towards the new world, his body is always stuck in the past.

Sincerity We believe in Haşmet's sincerity in his desire for change. In his conversation with Nihat, he enthusiastically conveys this desire to us. All his feelings are genuine and sincere; he believes in his own story and is unashamed and courageous.

*To change or not to change***.** Haşmet tells the producer who is struggling to make money, "It will bring money as well. Big grossing movies, innovative, socialist movies. The audience changes every day because people are changing. You change, I change, we have to change! Isn't change the law of dialectics?". He feels the change and believes in it wholeheartedly, but he is caught in between and his potential inadequacy keeps him trapped between change and immutability.

Nihat The Yeşilçam veteran Nihat is a loser: he is a character who has been rejected by the system but who still lives in his old films**.** Being outside also gave him the freedom to act as he wanted. He is a very comfortable character in speaking; he can speak whatever he thinks without considering to outcomes. There is also destructive side of his frankness. Because he has nothing left to lose anymore. But he is a person who also has fears about going out and getting involved. He feels himself kind of lost because he belongs nowhere. He is a character who takes alcohol to find his way in this new brave world.

Loneliness Nihat is rejected: "I can't go outside. Into the street. I'm scared, I feel a problem. Some people know, I am getting worse" he tells himself. He feels that he no longer has a place in the city or the industry, and is therefore severed from life and people. Loneliness is a place where he can be alone with the past where he belongs to. He's a character who chooses to be alone not to face the present world.

Alcohol problem Nihat is in the movie *The Unforgettable Director of Love Films*, which has a special meaning and importance for him and his tortoise; he sells his huge book collection to buy raki, he watches old movies continuously, and he believes that he will live for at least a hundred years. Alcohol creates an escape zone for him. He even makes his breakfast by chopping bread into raki.

The representation of Yeşilçam Nihat becomes an expression of Yeşilçam, his counterpart in the film, as he is imprisoned within himself. With the increasing use of video, production companies are now starting to sell their old movies as videos, and when they look at the conditions of the period, they stop making films. I mean, they eat ready-meals, just like Nihat; they have no courage, just like Nihat. Yeşilçam is dying just like Nihat.

The new image of Haşmet Asilkan changing in front of the mirror.

Haşmet asilkan talks with tortoise

The set of the movie *The Hunt and Hunter*, shot by Haşmet Asilkan

He is visiting second-hand booksellers