

Auteur theory essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

An auteur is someone who has a consistent visual style; Auteur theory was never thought of as a theory of film until Andrew Sarris translated the popular writings in Cahiers du Cinema known as ' la politique des auteurs' into ' the auteur theory', thinking that it would make it easier but it had the opposite effect.

(1) Francois Truffaut, an influential film maker, defines a true film auteur as one who brings something genuinely personal to his subject instead of merely producing a tasteful, accurate but lifeless portrait of original material. The auteur transforms the material into an expression of he's own personality. (1) Billy Wilder started his career in Berlin writing film scripts and came to Hollywood in 1930s where he continued as a script writer. His first solo directed piece was *The Majors and the Minors* (1942) as though he was not doing enough he also moved onto producing the films that he directed to insure his artistic independence of the movie.

In 1938 he formed a partnership with Charles Brackett and the pair was responsible for writing some of Hollywood's classic comedies the partnership expanded into a producer-director one which sadly came to an end after *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) when he refused to work on *Double Indemnity* (1944) *Double Indemnity* was originally a novel by James. M. Cain. This is what formed the basis for the screenplay by Billy Wilder and Raymond Chandler.

To film theorists such as Thorold Dickinson *Double Indemnity* would be labelled as an adaptation and both Wilder and Chandler would fit under the category of being normal writers who adapt other peoples work into filmic

terms. However many theorists such as Howard Koch would disagree stating that the screen writer must completely re-conceive his material into film medium so there is a high creative effort involved. Double Indemnity is an example of his work even though it was co-written with Raymond Chandler. Writers are not given much credit for their work and are quite frustrated as the director can change the parts of the screenplay or add to parts they do not like. Howard Koch argues that the script writers should be given the same status as playwrights as they get to rent their plays to whom they like; 'The writer is the primary creative source. He puts down on paper the significant symbol, visual as well as auditory, through which character is revealed .

.... It is the writer's imagination that first previews the substance of what eventually appears on the screen.

'(5)The Apartment, another film written and directed by Billy Wilder, is a 1960 American comedy-drama film starring Jack Lemmon, Shirley MacLaine, and Fred MacMurray. It was Wilder's follow up to the enormously popular Some Like It Hot and was an equal commercial and critical hit, grossing \$25 million at the box office, and winning the Academy Award for Best Picture.

(3)The Apartment to me has a delicate balance of light comedy and dark drama, which in some stories would be a risky route to take, but Billy Wilder made this work and it shows well here because it all feels natural. When Sheldrake receives a present from Fran and he asks " What is it?" as an audience you don't question it because he would make that ' odd' inquiry. One of the most powerfully real scenes comes afterward, when Sheldrake gives her a \$100 note as a Christmas present. I felt that this was a strong

metaphorical significance and on Wilder's skills was complete genius, as many thought.

'Wilder's directorial choices reflected his belief in the primacy of writing. He avoided the exuberant cinematography of Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles because, in Wilder's opinion, shots that called attention to themselves would distract the audience from the story. Wilder's pictures have tight plotting and memorable dialogue. Despite his conservative directorial style, his subject matter often pushed the boundaries of mainstream entertainment.'

(4) However in saying this there is a different view of who the auteur is.

'Auteur theory' came from France in the late 1940's. It symbolises the film director as the major creative artist imposing a personal viewpoint on every aspect of the production. As a result, the director's personality is consistently expressed throughout his films. It is said and thought to be contained by visual style of a film that the auteur leaves their characteristic mark.

Relating this back to *The Apartment*, even though the film itself was dated, in terms of fashion and technology, the themes still relate to the 21st century and I feel that they always will. Thinking about this, I can't help but see Billy Wilder as someone who was ahead of the time and did bring a definite uniqueness to the screen. The unique being he's own personality. However for a director to be considered an auteur, he is said to have a particular style within his work, a vision of his own that can be seen throughout all of his films.

Billy Wilder may not have the flashy visual style of, a director like Alfred Hitchcock, but his direction is flowing and expressive, moving from

shockingly direct imagery to more subtle effects. Billy once said that there are only two types of films: ' interesting movies and boring ones. It's as simple as that. Does the film rivet my attention so that I drop my popcorn bag and become part of what is happening on the screen or doesn't it? If the film engages my interests only sporadically, the picture just hasn't got it'.(6)