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Study of Pier Paolo Pasolini's Cinema under the Context of Criminology with an Emphasis on Social Deviance

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Abstract

The Sociology of social deviance is an essential topic in the criminology. Therefore, according to criminologists, deviance is the start point of crimes. Thus, taking advantage of the sources concerning sociology of social deviance has been vitally important for advancing criminology. But in this regard, Pier Paolo Pasolini as an remarkable Italian film maker that sociology of social deviance is the hot spot analysis of his cinematic works, has been neglected. It is evident that addressing Pasolini's cinema is a necessity since it can lead to optimal use of his intellectual capacities in the fields of criminology and sociology, and also because it can present a new role for intellectual cinema in the service for the sake of human science. The following research seeks extraction of Pasolini's thoughts and ideas in the scope of sociology of social deviance through studying his films and his intellectual interests in theoretical arena including criminology, sociology and psychology. The manuscript means to realize its goal by resorting to descriptive method of researching and documentation review method in order to collect information.

Keywords: Antonio Gramsci, Cinema, Criminology, Marxism, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Social Deviance, Wilhelm Reich

Introduction

The Pier Paolo Pasolini, a prominent Italian film director, writer and poet was born in 1922 in a middle class family. Despite his short life of 53 years, he could produce tens of poetry books, novels, plays, essays and 42 long and short films. His father was a fascist officer during the rule of Mussolini but Pier Paolo Pasolini and his younger brother, Guido Pasolini, joined the resistance movement and the communism campaign to fight fascism. Finally, the guerrilla struggles took his brother life in 1945 as a result of an ambush by Italian Garibaldine partisans serving for Tito's Yugoslavian guerrillas. By the way, Pier Paolo Pasolini officially joined the Italian Communist Party in 1947 but because of a sexual scandal he was expelled from the party. In spite this, it could not impact his beliefs toward Marxism and he always introduced himself as a communist. And even unlike his colleagues such as Bernardo Bertolucci who his Marxist believes did not form the main issue of his movies expect a few of them like the movies "Before the Revolution" and "1900", Pasolini mostly addressed Marxist issues in his movies in terms of sociology of social deviance. The issues like subcultures, cultural conflict and street crime was among the topics that was frequently addressed by Pasolini in his works. But Pasolini's cinema should be divided into two periods. Because in two different era of his cinema, the topic of social deviance was displayed by different viewpoints. These are not against each other but they came from various fields. [1]

The first term of his cinematic works began from the late 50's by writing the story and screenplay of the movie "Bad Girls Don't Cry" in 1959 and continued until late 60's by making films. In this period of time, social deviance as hot spot analysis of the works is around sociological approach. Pasolini's analysis over the mentioned subjects did not merely depend on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels thoughts or Marxist school of criminology but he strictly bound himself to sociological Marxism of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian theorist who suffered imprisonment in the Fascist Era and at the end lost his life at the age of 46 in 1937. Pasolini's interest in Gramsci's thoughts and ideas led him to name his second poetry book, "The Ashes of Gramsci".

And finally, the second period of his filmmaking began in the late 60's by the controversial movie of "Theorem" in 1968 and continued until his murder in 1975. At this era the method of social deviance analyzing converted from sociological approach to psychological studies, specially the findings of Wilhelm Reich, a German psychologist who his ideas over free-sex inspired the free-love and libertarian movement in the 60's and particular during the global protest of 1968. These movements affect cinema and they have indicated in the "New Wave". Pasolini was among the Italian filmmakers who joined this social and cinematic movement. Apart from inspiring thought of Reich for free-love and libertarian movements and its bold role for creating the New Wave in the cinema, there are many other significant similarities between Pasolini and Reich. Reich was a member of Communist Party of German (KPD) and spent a year in (former) Soviet Union but he expelled. Addressing the psychology of mass movement and fascism was an important issue for him, which was similar to Pasolini. Needless to say, the last movie of Pasolini, released under the title of "Salo or 120 Days of Sadom" over the subject of psychology of Fascism. Reich tried to integrate Marxism theory by addressing the role of sexuality in political and social events such as rising fascism. And it seems that the main source of Pasolini's inspiration in his second period of film making was Reich, altough he had never pointed out to this German psychologist. But scrutinizing the second film making era of Pasolini demonstrates the conformity of these cinematic works with thoughts and ideas of Reich. In addition, if in some cases, the movies reflect the ideas of Freud, for instance, on the matter of sexual repression, this is due to similarities between the primary theories of both Freud and Reich. [1,2]

On the research history of literature, it should be noted that there are little research down about the role of cinema in studying social deviance but sociology as a hot spot analysis has been identified for the intellectual cinema. However, searches for finding scientific research on the Pasolini's cinema under the context of sociological and criminological studies have not led to a specific result. [3]

Marxist Criminology

Before scrutinizing each filmmaking period of this remarkable film maker who won several prestigious international film awards, one should study the sources that played a great role in forming his thought. Therefore, the Marxist criminology, the sociological Marxism according Gramsci and psychological thought of Reich must be well addressed in order to analysis Pasolini's cinema with respect to social deviance.

Marxist criminology has been an effective school in the field of criminology that produced and developed by Marxist criminologists. Friedrich Engels describes the harsh situation of workers at an industrial community in his book, under the title of "The Condition of the Working Class in England" in 1854. But the theoritical work that could be recognized as the main source of Marxism and set up a series of revolutionary changes in socio-political arena of many countries including Russia, China and Cuba, was the book "Capital" from Karl Marx that was first published in 1867. [4]

Capitalism has been strongly criticized by the book. It can be concluded from the works of Marxist theorists that economic inequality is the main reason of committing crimes and also, crimes and felonies are considered reaction against social injustice. Meanwhile, there is no logical reason for committing crimes in a communist society unless crimes of sick offender, who the sickness is the main reason of that crime. In addition, the introduction of the concept of alienation that is identified as one of Marx's initiatives and translated into isolation and non-socialization, could performed an effective role in formation of sociological Marxism. Accordingly, the process of division of labor in an industrial community and capitalist regime lead to alienation of working class. This isolation and non- socialization can be considered root cause of crime. The Marxist criminology widely addresses the topic of economic inequality and class society, following the Marxism theory, which according to Marxists are an inevitable product of capitalism. Therefore, Marxist criminilogists have introduced the institutionalized inequality of capitalism as the major cause of crime. [4]

Willem Bonger, who believed in a causal link between crime and economic and social conditions that expressed at his theoretical work called "Criminality and Economic Conditions" in 1905 was the first Marxist criminologist that spread the scope of criminology to Marxism. He argued that criminal thought could be caused by one of these two factors: first, the poverty and feeling of need, which is the cause of working class crimes; And second, greed, which is the reason of white collar crimes. Nevertheless, in terms of genealogy the origins of Marxist criminology goes back to 16th century, which is even before the emergence of Marx and Engels. At the time, Thomas More, the councilor to Henry VIII pointed out to the undisputed role of poverty and unemployment in crime commission through publishing a book under the title of "Utopia" in 1516 in England. [5,4]

Among contemporary Marxist criminologist, William Chambliss believed that capitalism leads to advent of the culture of consumerism and in such a situation, the outbreak of a conflict between low-income class that is not able to afford as much as advertising organs of capitalism determine and high-income class or the capitalists. It is evident that this conflict might take a violent figure and causes crimes. On the other hand, the government and legislative authority that are mostly serving capitalism takes advantage of criminal labeling and criminalization biased against political dissidents in order to eliminate them, which brought the conflict to a new phase. [6]

Richard Quinney, an American sociologist, declared similar ideas to Marxist criminologists. According to him, political criminalization and political commission of crimes are the main cause of it in a capitalist society. Thus, crimes such as theft, assassination and even homicide has been regarded direct or indirect reactions to capitalism and considered among political crimes. But some other commission of crimes are the product of politicization of crimes by legislative to stand well against dissidents. [6]

Jeffrey Reiman, a contemporary theorist in the topic of criminology emphasis on the issue of economic bias in process of criminalization and crime commission by writing a book entitled "The Rich Get Richer & the Poor Get Prison". [5]

Rob White and John van der Velden in the article, "Class and Criminality", consider the issue of class and class society and crime commission. They demonstrate a causal link between street crimes with low-income class and white-collar crime with high-income class. [5]

Chris Harman, a political activist and a contemporary theorist of Marxism, who died in 2009, believed that human rights and human values such as volunteerism and cooperation are proper alternatives to capitalism. Many of the forerunners of Marxism have expressed such an attitude. For instance, Che Guevara, one of the main commanders of Cuban revolution, paid attention to the role of a socialist culture in making a communist system, by writing an article, which was named "Man and Socialism in Cuba". Such a perspective toward the role of culture in establishing a communist society could immune key words of Marxism including capitalism, class society, economic inequality and social justice even after the collaps of the Soviet Union. This approach toward culture, leads to falling charges of Marxist theorists for dissolution of Soviet and the high rate of crimes in the country. In contrast, former Soviet leaders have been found responsible for the failure of promoting a socialist culture and creating a communist system. [7,8]

Although, the school of Marxist criminology has lost its position at the criminal and judicial system of states as a practical theory but the Frankfurt school and Critical theory by taking inspiration from Western Marxism including the thought of Antonio Gramsci and keeping its major basics containing verbal and practical condemnation of capitalism could open a new chapter for socialism school. The Frankfurt school has already played a significant role in various area of human science such as sociology and criminology, and unlike Marxism that could not gain any major achievement in the West, Frankfurt school has been very efficient there. [5]

Sociological Marxism of Antonio Gramsci

Unlike the orthodox version of Marxism or the official ideology of Soviet that merely depend on economic parameters in shaping political, sociological, cultural and even criminal events, the sociological Marxism attend to social function in the above incidents. Unique interpretation of Antonio Gramsci over the concept and application of civil society in advanced capitalism led to a deeper understanding of the capitalism situation and also developed Western Marxism and Socialism. Such a perspective could be considered a turning point in the history of Marxism and Post-Marxism, which has played a great role in forming Frankfurt school and Critical theory. Thus, it can firmly be claimed that the name of Antonio Gramsci cannot be ignored in genealogy of the Frankfurt school or Michel Foucault's idea. Gramsci believed that government and political community is a reflection of the civil society including establishment of school, church and press in the democratic and bourgeois societies. Nevertheless, according to him, the civil society has been established in the line of political community in the advanced capitalist regimes like the United States. [9]

Therefore, despite the fact that the civil society is the mother of political community but for instance the educational system and school, institutional church and the mainstream media seek to fulfill government hegemony by domination over the culture. Accordingly, this type of the civil society leads to backing the government by people through a semi-democratic process and hides the violent and totalitarian core of the state in the advanced capitalist countries. The covert and overt governing of the states over the civil society might be recognized as a kind of suppression, which has remained invisible in this case. [10]

Gramsci argued that the most convenient technique for the predominance of Proletarians in the advanced capitalist societies is the gradual conquest of the civil society. Considering the fact of democracy on the political arena of bourgeois countries, it can be concluded that winning the civil society by Marxists can make the political objectives of them possible. It is evident that if Marxists were able to attract the civil society organizations and institution like unions and media and effect on educational system in favor of their belief, they gain people's confidence toward their own discourse on the arena of political elections. [10]

The victory of Salvador Allende, the Marxist politician in the Chilean election in 1970 is a successful example of Gramsci's theory and indicates that Marxist can take advantage of democracy as an opportunity. So it can be find out that Gramsci preferred the idea of reforms instead of revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. [11] Although Karl Marx openly favored the method of revolution and expressed his pessimism toward elections in bourgeois states through the theoretical work entitled "Political Indifferentism" and several interviews but his colleague, Friedrich Engels was clearly optimistic to elections in the bourgeois countries and supported left-wing parties including Socialist Workers' Party of Germany. [12, 13]

Unlike filmmakers such as Luis Bunuel, the Spanish filmmaker who preferred to determine blaming bourgeoisie as the main mission of his movies, the first period film making of Pier Paolo Pasolini merely focused on identification of the proletariat and their internal and external relations. The distinctive feature of Pasolino rather than the other anti-bourgeois filmmakers is his neutral approach. The Marxist theorists have believed that the economic and political power must be transferred to proletariat and accordingly, The Soviet propaganda machine and Communist parties in the Europe tried to display a flawless and ideal image of proletariat. But Pier Paolo Pasolini exhibited those proletarians who generally had been neglected by Marxists. Suburbans, prostitutes, thieves and smugglers are among these proletarians. The proletariat that was showed by Pasolni are neither innocent nor hero but at the same time are offenders and victims. [1,14]

The screenplay of "Bad Girls Don't Cry" and the movies of "Accattone" and "Mama Roma" or the novels of "Boys of Life" and "Violent Life", which are considered best works of Pasolini according to critics, scrutinize subburbanism and street crimes. The movie, "Bad Girls Don't Cry" that was based on a story of Pasolini narrates the life of the life of prostitutes, marginalized and street criminals. But more than that a specific reason to be identified as the cause of criminal behaviors, it is regress of causes that was recognized as the reason for survival of criminal life through the movies. According to the cinematic works, crimes might and not necessarily certainly have economic origin but as a result of forming local customs and establishing criminal order, the disorder cycle continues. [1]

Thus, domination of criminal culture and order on the low-income classes, persuades its members to commit crimes. Therefore, the alienation theory in the field of criminology was partially questioned. Socialization in sub culture is the main reason of crime commission. According to the movie "Accattone" and specially the narration of Stella's life has clearly show that her resistance against socialization into the criminal sub culture leads to imposing social and economic pressure to her but blocks production of further offenses. [1]

But according to Pasolini, the strength of criminal order is more powerful than willpower of the class members and can break strong reissuances. The films, "Accattone" and "Mama Roma" are the stiries of people who want to change their life style and put an end to their criminal life but they failed to realize their goal. Pasolini bluntly urged his belief by the movie "Mama Roma", while a prostitute seeks an ordinary and non-criminal life to get rid of her social class. So she quite prostitution and then emigrated with his son. Nevertheless, neither immigration nor economic recovery of her life could release Mama Roma from troubles of former living situation. [1]

Psychology of Wilhelm Reich

Wilhelm Riech believed that sexual power is the libido of life, which includes feeling and thinking of human and systematic suppression of sexuality that he called it "character armour" in bourgeoisie societies is the main cause of neurosis. He then conclude that sexual suppression leads to growing of the sense of obedience, which can make their support for oppressive rulers. [2]

Accordingly, the origin of fascism and maybe violent crimes is sexual suppression. The sexual suppression that govern the bourgeois societies through the form of customs and ethic seek to make abiding citizens to government. In this regard, Antonio Gramsci argued in an article entitled

"Americanism and Fordism" that controlling sexuality of workers by establishing the ethic of monogamy is a way to protect their stamina in favor of mass production of factories. Since Wilhelm Riech was a Marxist and his theories over the "character armour" is in some terms similar to sexual ideas of Gramsci, one can guess that Gramsci inspired Riech's thought. [2,10]

At the end, Reich suggested the theory of "sexual revolution" in order to derail bourgeoisie ethics and release libido, as the main source of human life from organized conditions. In this respect, Reich was not the first one who initiated free-love. Inessa Armand, the French-Russian communist who served as a member of Bolsheviks in the Soviet, was the first known Marxist that presented the concept of freedom in love and open marriage for proletarians and Marxism, while, Vladimir Lenin disagreed with her idea since he found it a bourgeoisie demand. However, some consider Reich, the theorist of "free-love" movement and so-called "sexual revolution" in 60's but he tried to modify his above theory in his last years of life and consider some restrictions for sexual relations in order to protect the values that he believed in. In spite of this, it seems that his late modifications has been neglected. [2,15]

The Second Period of Pasolini's Filmmaking

The second filmmaking period of Pier Paolo Pasolini began by the movie, "Oedipus Rex" in 1967 but it has expanded through the controversial movie "Theorem" in 1968 and trilogy of "life" in 70's. Hovewer, the interest of Pasolini over sexual taboos of his society had been revealed by the documentary of "Love Meetings" in 1964. The movie "Oedipus Rex" is a personal and specific narration of an old and famous tragedy, which the movie is contrary to the interpretation of Freud. According to the film, sexuality is a metaphor for father and son brutal competition over the power. Also, the movie shows the father with a military uniform which can be a reference to fascist regime. Thus, the movie is about psychology of authorities. But the debated movie of "Theorem" is a graphic description of psychological theory of Reich and Gramsci that Pasolini called it a theorem. According to the recent movie, sexual freedom or breaking bourgeois sexual ethics will result first, vanishing bourgeoisie and second, freedom of proletariat and returning to their own traditions. Pasolini always stressed on returning to traditions including religious and spiritual traditions. In the movie "Theorem", the return to traditions by a proletarian displayed through manifestation of the spiritual faith. Unlike Marxist belief of Pasolini, he found defending tradition as an essential element for fighting bourgeoisie. [1,16]

In the movie "The Gospel According to St. Matthew", Pasolini clearly showed that there is no contradiction between his Marxist belief and the religion. In the films "Theorem" and "Medea", specially the recent one, the modern and bourgeoisie world encounters the traditional world, as the ideal of Pasolini. Also, the most of Pasolini's documentaries that revealed the situation of developing countries such as India, Yemen and etc. at the time, can be considered an example of Pasolini's attachment to traditions. Certainly, his skepticism toward any elements of the middle class and a bourgeoisie society led him to undermine the 1968 movement in Italy, though then he withdrew from his idea toward them by making the movie "Pigsty" in 1969. The movie distinguished the middle class youth and protesters from great capitalists. But unlike filmmaker like Jean-Luc Godard who addressed middle class youth, Pasolini still preferred to focus on proletariat. The "Life" trilogy was totally based on old stories; therefore, they display archaic cultures and values. The trilogy including the movies, "The Decameron", "The Canterbury Tales" and "Arabian Nights" were portraits of Pasolini's ideal society. According to the movies, there is no place for sexual suppression or in other world, a systematic suppression. Thus, a natural relationship formed among people. But maybe the main psychological purpose of the trilogy would be hidden if Passolini did not make the movie "Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom", which was released in 1975. The recent movie is a counterpoint of the "life" trilogy. The concept of the movie "Salo" is not opposite of the trilogy but it is contraposition of them. In the recent movie, which was his last cinematic work before his murder, Pasolini completed his ideas toward sexual suppression. The meanings of the film is so similar to Wilhelm Reich's theories and in particular, his book, "The Mass

Psychology of Fascism" that was first published in 1933 in Germany. According to the book, systematic suppression of sexuality by the family, culture and ethic leads to formation an obedient society that supports totalitarian rulers. And so, the movie "Salo" that the story set in the last years of fascists' rule, shows causal link between sexual suppression and sexual violents or crimes. Thus, the most violent and sadistic crimes are committed by those who have been a symbol of piety like a priest. [1,2]

Results Discussion

Sociology of social deviance and criminology are hot spots of Pier Paolo Pasolini's cinema;
the cinema of Pasolini can be divided into two periods;
he adopted a sociological approach for his first filmmaking period and a psychological method for the second one;
Antonio Gramsci thought and Marxism were formed as the main core of the first filmmaking period of Pasolini;
the first period focused the causal link between street crimes and the situation of proletarians;
the second filmmaking era of Pasolini was inspired by Wilhelm Riech.

Conclusions

Pier Paolo Pasolini, was a Marxist filmmaker but his scientific and unbiased approach distinguishes him from other colleagues. Pasolini's Marxist belief could not force him to stop criticism of the Italian Communist Party. He even had no prejudice in favor of proletariat, so that most of his cinematic and literary works focused on identifying deviances and street crimes of proletarians. Meanwhile, the cinema of Soviet and load speakers of Communist parties in all around the world tried to create a propaganda in favor of proletariat. On the other hand, in spite of the fact that Pasolini was not a religious person but he did extensive and impartial studies on the Bible and even endeavored to discover messages of Jesses. And addition to the movie "The Gospel According to St. Matthew", he made the short movie "The sequence of the paper flower", which was inspired by a story of the Bible. It can be concluded from Pasolini's collection of works in both his periods of filmmaking that culture has a crucial pillar in crime commission, whether through sub-cultures of low-income class or bourgeois ethics and patriarchal culture.

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