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Time to Love (1965)

Metin Erksan

OVERVIEW

Time to Love is a film that differs from other films of its period with its unique features and is considered among the cult films of Turkish Cinema. The film is different from similar love-themed films of its time in terms of plot, character design, and cinematographic narration. Although the love story of two young people from different classes is told in the film, love is discussed conceptually in general. Even though there is a love triangle like the similar ones in the period, the depth in the design of the characters draws attention. The main factor that distinguishes the film from the others is Erksan's cinematographic preferences. There is an intense use of music in addition to the light in the black and white film, the still images, stable and mobile camera shots. The film has a melancholic design as a separation story rather than a love story. Apart from the emotional aspect, the intellectual dimension of love is also told as well as the loneliness of people who take refuge in the serenity of nature.

Although the film was produced in 1965, it could only be screened in 1966. Compared to the films of the same period, it created a legend that has been told since then with its quite extraordinary style. The film does not belong to Turkish Cinema as stated by Erksan, was later shown on television and its DVD was released in 2007. Therefore it could find an opportunity to meet with a larger group of audience years later.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

Time to Love is one of the films in which the features of Erksan's cinematographic narration are most clearly observed. Although the film seems like an ordinary love story between a poor boy and a rich young girl, it differs from the melodramas of the same period produced within the framework of this plot. A pessimistic atmosphere prevails in the black and white film, reflecting the mood of the film in general. An important part of the film there is rainy, windy, gloomy autumn weather. A sharp contrast draws attention in the film. Accordingly, there are intense shadows. Those that are not preferred to be shown in the film are expressed in the form of shadows and silhouettes. One of the most creative visual choices in the film is to visualize the dancing crowd at Meral and Başar's wedding as large shadows. While other people are trivialized, their big shadows still seem to fall on the characters. When the film is examined in terms of camera and shooting techniques, it is seen that long images shot with a stable camera, which is Erksan's general preference, are dominant. Close-ups on the faces of the characters are often used to emphasize the emotions of the characters. These shots are similar to other films of the period, especially considering the close-ups focusing on the eyes. Erksan frequently uses pan, tilt, and dolly movements in this film as well. While the camera pans from one point to another without cutting, it allows the viewer to establish the relationship between the place and the character, and enter the world of the character's feelings and thoughts. The characters stare at the water for a long time, especially when they are by the sea or lake. At this point, the sea is depicted as wavy and the lake as calm. In addition, rainy scenes under heavy rainfall occupy an important place in the film. At the beginning of the film, a contrast has been created with Halil getting wet in the rain and Meral using the umbrella as a shelter. This contrast is resolved in the scenes where the couple is together, by showing them both in the rain without umbrellas. The use of natural frames in the film is another remarkable preference. Halil and Meral are positioned within natural frames such as window and door frames, various columns, trees, or pillars, and their emotional constraints are visualized. In addition, the inner worlds of the characters are expressed by shooting them from the outside of the place they are in. The boat trip that Halil took alone can also be considered in this sense. When the film is evaluated in the context of audio elements, similarities are seen with the films of the period. Most of the music used in the film is Turkish Classical Music works, which are also frequently seen in other Turkish films of the period. The notable factor about the music preferences is that the songs were chosen to emphasize the class and cultural differences between the characters. While Turkish Classical Music was preferred in the scenes with Halil and Mustafa, classical music was used for Meral and popular music of the period was used in the

scenes with Başar. Among them, especially the oud played by Mustafa draws attention. Sound effects occupy an important place in the film. Since rainy scenes are used extensively in the film, the sound of rain is especially prominent, while wave sounds and other natural sounds are also frequently used. Gunshots and car brake sounds are also noteworthy as other sound effects.

CHARACTERS

Halil: In his twenties. Single, poor, romantic, lonely, pessimistic. Painter. Falls in love with Meral's tableau, and then with herself.

Meral: In her twenties. Single, rich, melancholic. Impressed by Halil's love for her tableau. Tries to convince him to love herself instead of her tableau.

Başar: In his twenties. Single, rich, spoilt. In love with Meral. But his love is unrequited.

Mustafa: In his fifties. Painter. Works and lives with Halil. Encourages Halil to be with Meral.

SYNOPSIS

Halil is in love with the tableau of Meral, the daughter of the owner of the house, where he works as a painter. The events begin when Meral comes to the house on the island one day and sees Halil looking at her tableau. Impressed by Halil's platonic love, Meral gets interested in him. However, Halil is indifferent to Meral's interest. Although Meral shares her feelings with Halil, Halil prefers her tableau to the real Meral. He even insists that he is in love with her tableau, not with Meral. When Meral goes back to İstanbul, everyone returns to their world. Meanwhile, Meral's friend Başar, who has an unrequited love for Meral, tries to console her. Halil goes to another house on the lakeshore with Mustafa. He brings Meral's tableau with him. With the encouragement of Mustafa, he decides to talk to Meral and goes to İstanbul. He finds Meral at a shooting range in İstanbul. At the shooting range, Başar's friends beat Halil. While going with Başar in his car, Meral gets off and prefers to walk. Halil coming in another vehicle behind them sees her. He also gets out of the vehicle and they hold hands. Meral and Halil decide to live their love. After a while, they decide to get married. Halil goes to talk to the Meral's father who is a rich manufacturer. Seemingly respecting this love, the father emphasizes the class difference between the two. After his speech, Halil believes that his love for Meral has no future and leaves her. As Halil returns to the lakeside house and Meral's tableau, Başar convinces Meral to marry. Learning the news of Meral's marriage from the newspaper, Halil comes to İstanbul and buys a mannequin wearing a wedding dress. Halil places the mannequin in a wedding dress and Meral's tableau in the boat and rows on the lake. Meral also comes to the lakeside in her wedding dress. Noticing Meral, Halil takes her on the boat, too. Meral first throws the tableau and then the mannequin in the wedding dress to the lake, and they hug each other. Meanwhile, Başar, who comes to the lakeside, sees them and shoots.

THE PLOT

The Man in Love with the Tableau. The film begins with an outside view of two people talking in a restaurant on a rainy day. While panning from the image of the pier to the restaurant, two people (Halil and Mustafa) whose conversations cannot be heard appear on the screen. Halil leaves the restaurant. With the camera's stable shot, Halil walks wet in the rain and comes to a mansion. He jumps over the fence of the house and enters. He opens the door with his key and goes upstairs, which he seems to know well. When he enters the room, a tableau of a young woman hanging on the wall attracts attention. Approaching Halil's face, the camera shoots him admiringly looking at the tableau. As the images cross-cuts between the tableau and Halil's face, the camera gets closer and closer to the woman's face in the tableau. Finally, after a close-up focusing only on the eyes, Halil starts the record player, lights a cigarette, and sits on the chair opposite the tableau for watching.

First Encounter. Meanwhile, the young girl (Meral) in the tableau comes to the mansion with her two friends. Three young girls trying to protect themselves from the rain with their umbrellas planned to spend the weekend at Meral's mansion on the island. Girls who hear the sound of music at home realize that there is a stranger. Meral goes upstairs and looks at Halil's room from the terrace. She sees Halil watching her tableau behind a window where the rain is gliding. She enters, approaches silently and touches Halil's shoulder. Meral is impressed by the situation, and Halil is embarrassed. Upon Meral's question, he tells that he is a painter, that he came to do the interior decorations of the house last year, and that he has been coming and going to this house for a year.

Divergent Worlds. Halil and Mustafa are painting in another mansion. Mustafa asks whether he has

seen the original of the tableau, Halil says that Meral herself is much more beautiful than her tableau. Meanwhile, Meral is lying in her house, holding a book called 'The Art of Love' in her hand. Halil, on the other hand, dreams of Meral by the fireplace, accompanied by the oud played by Mustafa. It is understood that the worlds of Meral and Halil and their perception of love are different from each other.

Confrontation. Meral leaves her friends with whom she goes for a walk in the forest and comes to the house that Halil is painting. Here he meets Mustafa and learns that Halil is in love with her tableau. She compares this love, which she cannot believe, to love stories in fairy tales. Halil comes but goes to the greenhouse, Meral follows him. Halil says that he is in love with the tableau, that this tableau belongs to his world, and that he does not want Meral to intervene between him and the tableau. It does not make sense to Meral. She takes the tableau and brings it to Halil. The next day he finds Halil looking at her tableau again. They go to a high hill overlooking the sea to talk. In their dialogue here, Halil expresses his love for the tableau and his fear of true love, while Meral declares her love for him.

The Letter. The girls leave the island. Meanwhile, Halil, speaking to Mustafa, says that the love belongs only to him and he cannot share it. Finding this selfish, Mustafa convinces Halil to apologize to Meral. Halil goes to the mansion to talk to Meral but only finds a love letter in the empty house.

Love from Afar. Meral is at her home in İstanbul, and Halil is at the house on the island. Both suffer from love. They look out to sea from different places, both shown in natural frames. Meral is with Başar on the terrace of her house, telling him about her love for Halil. With the view of İstanbul in the background, Başar tries to convince her of the impossibility of this love. Meanwhile, Halil and Mustafa leave the island and come to a new house by the lake. Halil brings Meral's tableau with him.

The Decision. Halil goes to Meral's house to talk as a result of Mustafa's pressure. Meanwhile, Meral goes to the shooting range with Başar and other friends. Learning this, Halil also goes to the shooting range. However, seeing Meral in this environment, Halil gives up. Just as he is about to leave, Başar's friends catch and beat Halil. Başar holds Meral. In these violent scenes, the director prefers to show the people with their shadows falling into the water or with their silhouettes. On the way back, Meral is in Başar's car, Halil is in a minibus. Meral forcibly stops Başar, gets out of the car, and starts walking barefoot on the snowy road. Halil, who sees her from the minibus, also gets off. They hug each other, then walk away holding hands.

Merging Paths. Meral and Halil are together now. They go down to the beach, look out to sea hand in hand. They travel by boat on the lake. Meral encourages Halil to talk to her father as she doesn't want to be alone anymore.

The Father's Speech. Halil, who goes to meet with Meral's manufacturer father, encounters a positive attitude. While walking in the factory, the father says that he respects his daughter's decision and wants her happiness. Then his speech changes direction. He tells him that her daughter has grown delicately. He adds that this situation is romantic now, but the financial circumstances will affect them in the future.

Separation and Sorrow of Love. Meral and Halil walk hand in hand in the rain. They take shelter under a bridge. Although Halil says that he is not affected by Meral's father's speech, he explains his decision to leave. He leaves Meral under the bridge. Halil and Meral wander thoughtfully apart from each other, with the various historical sites of İstanbul in the background.

The Wedding Dress. Başar comes to Halil, who is wandering by the lake. He humiliates him and warns him not to approach Meral again. Başar is defeated in the fight and leaves. After the scene where Başar hugs Meral, Mustafa reads Halil the news of Meral and Başar's marriage. Halil is helpless. He looks at the waves at the pier, walks down the streets alone. Thinking in front of the rough sea, Halil makes a sudden decision and buys a mannequin in a wedding dress. He took it to the house by the lake. The mannequin in a wedding dress and Meral's tableau are side by side, but Halil is not looking at them. Meral appears in her wedding dress. She is sad despite the entertaining music and the crowd that is shown dancing only from their big shadows. Başar, on the other hand, is around her desperately.

The Replicas on the Lake. Halil takes the mannequin in the wedding dress and Meral's tableau to his boat and rows. Meanwhile, Meral gets out of the car, still in a wedding dress. Meral looks at Halil

from the shore, Halil notices her. He approaches and takes Meral on the boat. The real bride and her replica are in the same frame. Meral first throws the tableau and then the mannequin in the wedding dress. Replicas are no longer necessary. Halil and Meral hug. Meanwhile, Başar arrives in another car. He sees them hugging. While Meral and Halil are lying on the boat, Başar takes out his rifle. Although he hesitates at first, he fires three times. Hearing the voices, Mustafa runs to the shore and collapses there. While the boat on the lake is seen far from the shore through the trees, sad music is heard.

THEMES

Love. The main theme of the film is love. However, this love is a sad love rather than a romantic love. While the focus is on the love story of two young people from different classes, the sad side of love is told through both these characters and also Başar, who has unrequited love. Nevertheless, the melodrama patterns encountered especially in Turkish films of the same period are not seen. Because the dramatic structure of the film is not a melodrama in which the woman sacrifices herself. Even in the limited time the couple spent together, sadness predominates. The location choices and visual style of the film support this sadness. On the other hand, for most of the film, all three characters are shown in sorrow of love. Even the reunion scene at the end of the film, ends with death. An important discussion topic that the film raises about the theme of love is the love for the image, which is also found in literature. Halil often declares that he is in love with the image in the tableau rather than a real woman. Meral, on the other hand, does not believe in love until she finds out that Halil is in love with her tableau. The conversations between Meral and Halil include their opinions on what love is and how to live it. However, the point at the end of the film is that the love for the image cannot replace the love between two people.

Class Conflict. Although it is given in parallel with the theme of love in the film, class conflict is also a determinative theme. The difference between classes is presented as the biggest obstacle. At first, the main character, Halil, cannot even consider the possibility of falling in love with an upper-class woman due to the class difference. Although Meral responds to his love, Halil cannot dare for a long time. After deciding to live their love, the attitude of Meral's father turns Halil back to the starting point. Although they love each other, the thought that the class difference between them will one day emerge makes Halil leave Meral. Two people, both members of the upper class, clearly show the class difference between Meral and Halil. Başar underlines the class difference between them, even though he cannot understand why Meral is in love with Halil. Meral's father, on the other hand, does not seem to care about the class difference but burdens the responsibility on Meral. He tells Halil that Meral is used to wealth, and convinces Halil that this love will have no future.

East-West. Another conflict in the film is based on the difference between east and west. Halil is eastern who is introverted, plain, mysterious, unambitious, and symbolizes platonic love; Meral, on the other hand, is a western, as well as being rich and spoiled, associated with luxury objects such as house/car/record players. Başar and Meral's father, who are portrayed as other western characters, are discredited as corrupt and hypocritical people as well as being rich. Mustafa, who is another eastern character, stands out with his honesty and sincerity. In the film, the contrast between east and west is revealed visually through the locations, and audibly with the music preferences. Halil is shown in natural and historical places of İstanbul, Meral is in his house with a view of the Bosphorus. Meral's change of place occurs when she enters the world of Halil, who is a mysterious eastern in a sense. While classical Turkish music and especially the oud were used in Halil's scenes, classical music and foreign pop music were preferred in the scenes with western characters.

Nature-City. The distinction between nature and the city considering the shooting locations is clear. While the visual serenity in the lake and forest scenes parallels the emotional states of the characters, the rough sea and rainy streets accompany the changes in emotions and thoughts. The urban complexity of İstanbul is expressed with both visual and audio preferences. The difference between the main characters can also be read through the nature-city contrast. Halil gets wet in the rain without using an umbrella and prefers the view of a rough sea or a calm lake whereas Meral is usually seen indoors. Meral approaches nature when Halil enters her life. She walks barefoot, gets wet in the rain. When she moves away from him, she returns to closed places.

Loneliness. The loneliness of the characters is another theme that is repeated throughout the film. This loneliness appears in all of the few characters in the film. Halil, who has no relatives and no friends

other than Mustafa, Meral who is always alone despite having family and friends, Başar whose friends have no function other than beating Halil in the film, and even Mustafa are all lonely characters. Halil is already an introverted character living in his world. He is afraid of even sharing his love and then losing it and prefers to live it on his own.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Halil: He is a young man who paints the houses with Mustafa. No relatives are mentioned in the film. He has no expectations from life. Even he loves a tableau instead of a real woman.

Painter. Halil is a simple-minded character who makes a living by painting the interiors of the houses. Although Halil does not seem visually poor in the film, the class difference between him and Meral is represented through the places they are in, the music they listen to, and the activities they do during the day. Moreover, in the scene on the windy hill where Halil rejects Meral's love, he denotes this difference as one of the reasons why he prefers her tableau over Meral. He expresses that he will not be ashamed of his poverty in front of the tableau. Meral does not care about this class difference, but Başar brings it up to discourage Meral. The one who reveals the class difference most clearly will be Meral's father. When Halil goes to see Meral's father for marriage approval, the father says that he respects their love. However, he expresses this difference by emphasizing his daughter's future wishes. As a result of this speech, Halil, who believes in the impossibility of their love, leaves Meral.

Lonely. Halil has no relatives or friends except for Mustafa. Halil is designed as an introverted character who cannot open his emotions. The only person he shares his troubles with is his master Mustafa, who is older than him. He believes he can be with Meral with Mustafa's encouragement. Halil often wanders alone throughout the film, going to the beach or to the pier. He wanders by the lake. He watches the sea or the lake alone. Halil is so lonely that he even lives his love alone.

Pessimistic. Halil is a person who has no expectations from life and no hope for the future. The house they painted with Mustafa becomes their temporary living space. Even the existence of the girl in the tableau he is in love with doesn't change anything because he never thought of the possibility of having real love. Although Meral responds to his love, he finds this love impossible. Rather than experiencing true love and being disappointed, he prefers to stay in love with the tableau. After accepting Meral's love, he chooses to give up at the first difficulty. When he learns the news of Meral's marriage, he does not make any effort to dissuade Meral. He takes refuge in replicas. Halil never fights for his love throughout the film. It is Meral who comes to him at the end of the film.

Meral: She is the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer. While she is a person who does not even believe in the existence of love, she is impressed when she sees Halil who is in love with her tableau. This platonic love turns her feelings and thoughts upside down.

Rich. Meral is a young girl who does not have money problems, does not have to work, and travels with her friends, thanks to her father's wealth. Her life changes when she learns that Halil is in love with her tableau. For this young girl, who is used to getting what she wants until then, it would be quite shocking that Halil chooses her tableau instead of herself. Despite his class and cultural differences regarding his home, lifestyle, and tastes, Halil becomes the purpose of Meral's life. She tries very hard to persuade him. She makes sacrifices. Although she finally agrees to marry someone else, on the wedding day, she leaves everything behind and goes to Halil, choosing love instead of wealth.

Melancholic. Meral does not believe in true love until she witnesses Halil's love for her tableau. Halil's love not only changes her thoughts on this matter, but also she falls in love with him. However, the fact that Halil prefers her tableau instead of her would be a complete disaster. She struggles to persuade Halil. She even begs by falling at his feet. Meral does not enjoy life anymore. Başar's efforts to console her are also useless. Throughout the film, we watch Meral as a person experiencing almost unrequited love. Although she finally makes Halil accept herself instead of her replicas, this love ends when Başar pulls the trigger as they hug.

Başar: He is one of Meral's rich friends. He has unrequited love for Meral. Therefore, he cannot make sense of Meral's interest in Halil. He certainly cannot admit that she is in love with him. He tries to dissuade Meral. He supports Meral in difficult times.

Spoilt. Başar is a rich and spoilt young man who is used to getting what he wants. He spends money comfortably even though it is not clear what he does for a living. Although he has an unrequited love for Meral, he does not give up on her. He does not hesitate to use violence to disallow the love between Halil and Meral. He gets Halil to be beaten by his friends at the shooting range. However, he cannot resist Halil when they are alone with him. This time, Başar who cannot get support from his friends and money is beaten.

Desperate. Başar is surprised that Meral, who has returned from the island, is in love with another person, but he cannot give up on her. At first, he cannot make sense of this love and tries to dissuade Meral. Although he cannot convince her, he continues to love her desperately. Afterward, he does not hesitate to use violence against Halil to prevent them from being together. He is sure that the class difference between Halil and Meral will make this love impossible. Taking advantage of Halil and Meral's separation, he convinces Meral to marry, knowing that she does not love him. However, Meral runs away to Halil, leaving Başar alone on the wedding day. Seeing them together in the boat on the lake, Başar struggles with himself but finally shoots his rifle by aiming at them.



Halil is in love with Meral's tableau.



Halil says he doesn't love Meral, but he loves her image on the tableau.



Başar tries to convince Meral to give up her love for Halil.



The window is used as a natural frame while Halil is carrying Meral's tableau.



Halil and Meral decide to be together.



Halil breaks up with Meral believing their love has no future.



Everyone except for Meral and Başar is represented by their shadows during the wedding.



Meral leaves the tableau to the lake, the replica is no longer necessary.



Başar sees Halil and Meral hugging each other on the boat.