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The Art of Director, Screenwriter, and Actor Martin Scorsese as an Author's Cinematography Model

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Abstract--Martin Scorsese is an outstanding contemporary director, who strongly influenced the artistic and aesthetic foundations of American (authors' in particular) cinematography of the 19th–20th centuries. He was and remains one of the outstanding creators who shaped the aesthetics of the “New Hollywood” cinematography. In the period from 1917 to the early 1960s, there was a paradigm of “classic Hollywood”, in which films were produced according to the dominant aesthetic, genre and narrative formulas, the characters represented themselves as specific typical images with understandable motivations for the general public. Martin Scorsese is a representative of cinematography, who changed classical views of film art. That is why the study of Martin Scorsese's work remains relevant for researchers in the field of cinematography and culture to the present day. The purpose of this work is to study the creativity of director, screenwriter and actor Martin Scorsese, as well as to identify the author's style in the artist's work, determine his author's handwriting and manner. The methodology of this research is based on theoretical methods of scientific knowledge, in particular, the method of information analysis and synthesis, the cultural method, as well as historical and comparative methods were used. The study was conducted theoretical

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analysis of scientific literature. The work considered the life and creative path of the director. In particular, the still image technique used by Scorsese was analysed, as well as his own director's handwriting. Scorsese's activities during public speeches and discussions related to the preservation of the National Film Foundation and the development of a new cinema are considered. Such films of the director as "Taxi Driver", "Raging Bull", "Nice Guys", "Cape Fear", "Age of Innocence", "Casino", "Gangs of New York", "Aviator", "Renegades", "Island of the Damned", "Silence" were analysed. The results of the research can be used by students of directing specialties and teachers of special disciplines to study the creativity of the director, screenwriter and actor Martin Scorsese during theoretical practical classes.

Keywords--author's cinema, author's style, cinematography, directing tools, drama.

Introduction

Martin Scorsese is an outstanding American director who has strongly influenced modern American cinematography. There is no doubt that M. Scorsese was and remains one of those outstanding filmmakers who laid the foundations of the "New Hollywood" cinematography. It is known that until the early 1960s in the American cultural space there was a paradigm of so-called "Classical Hollywood" whereby films were produced according to the dominant aesthetic, genre and narrative formulas, and the characters represented themselves as specific typical images with understandable motivations for the general public. Martin Scorsese is a representative of cinematography, who changed classical views of film art. That is why the study of Martin Scorsese's work remains relevant for researchers in the field of cinematography and culture to date ([Karakostas et al., 2020](#)).

Martin was born on November 17, 1942 in Queens, New York City. Martin's paternal grandparents emigrated from Polizzi Generosa, a small commune in Sicily, while his maternal grandparents emigrated from the commune of Cimina in the same Sicilian province of Palermo. In 1950, Scorsese's father began to have problems with the owner of the house where they lived, which forced them to move to The Little Italy area of Manhattan. In 1962, Martin entered New York University ([Araujo & Schneider, 2019](#)). At the Department of Radio-Television-Film, students were offered one of the few courses on the history of cinematography with real practical opportunities of introducing students to the film production process ([Strassburger et al., 2016](#)). Martin first showed up at the university on an open day to listen to speeches by representatives of individual faculties. The enthusiasm of professor Haig Manukyan, who represented the film industry, delighted Martin Scorsese, prompting him to choose a profession ([Ferla, 2019](#)).

Martin Scorsese joined the new generation of directors of "The Movie Brats", natives of film schools in the 1960s. Among them were such artists as F. Coppola, S. Spielberg, J. Lucas and M. Scorsese himself. They were called the "Big 4".

While creating films, young filmmakers focused on working out the script, the relevance of its problems, the development of characters that differ from the types and images formed of "Classical Hollywood" paradigms. New Hollywood directors were inspired by the art of the American underground by E. Warhol and K. Eger, as well as the work of director and producer R. Karman, who created the film studio "American International Pictures", which shot films that exploited the themes of violence and perversions (Caminati, 2020). P. Karman was the director of novice directors M. Scorsese, F. Coppola, J. Lucas, P. Bogdanovich, D. Hopper, J. Nicholson and others. Involvement in counterculture, demonstration of spectacular violence, a tendency to mix genres, the partial removal of the boundaries of forbidden topics, became characteristic features of the "New Hollywood" cinematography (Ting et al., 2005). The directors of "New Hollywood" were influenced by the artistic and aesthetic foundations of the theory of "author's cinema" and the film aesthetics of the French "New Wave:". The influence of the "New Wave" on Scorsese's work is already obvious in one of his first films – "Who's That Knocking at My Door?" (1967). The "New Hollywood" paradigm has become characterized by the development of characters whose behaviour was not motivated by specific goals, a clear moral position, and belonging to the interests of any social group (McDowell, 2018). All these features of "New Hollywood" became possible due to the abolition in 1967 of an informal ethical treaty, the Hayes Code, according to which paintings that undermine the moral foundations of society, openly mock the law and force the viewer to sympathize with criminals, were forbidden to shoot. The purpose of this work is to study the creativity of director, screenwriter and actor Martin Scorsese, as well as to identify the author's style in the artist's work, determine his author's handwriting and manner.

Materials and Methods

The following methods of scientific cognition were used in the research process: the method of analysis and synthesis of information, culturological method, as well as historical and comparative methods. The study was conducted theoretical analysis of scientific literature. The method of information synthesis and analysis was used for a detailed study and subsequent analysis of available information about the life and work of Martin Scorsese. The method of analysis and synthesis involves the study of certain objects or phenomena both in parts (analysis) and in general (synthesis). The combination of analysis and synthesis provides a systematic approach to the study and research of complex objects. In particular, by using this method it has been learned information about the early years of Scorsese and the beginning of his creative activity. The culturological method was used to analyse and study Scorsese's creative achievements. The culturological approach is an educational, nurturing and cultural process that takes place in educational and cultural environments. The culturological approach is used to study the personality in interaction with the cultural model, in the context of its culturological existence. This method was used to analyse films, Scorsese filmed, and to study methods and techniques that he used in his professional career. The historical method was also used to analyse and study the life and work of the director. The historical method - a method of research, which includes methods, tools and techniques that researchers use to study and interpret the phenomena and objects. This method helped to establish the chronological sequence of events

and some historical and social events which influenced the art of director Martin Scorsese. The comparative method was used to determine differences in the work of the director. The comparative method is a technique for classification and typology based on comparison of two or more objects, highlighting several common characteristics as well as significant differences.

A large number of film researchers have covered in their works Martin Scorsese's creativity. So, an analysis of literary sources by the subject of work was conducted in the process of research. Literary sources of domestic and foreign scientists were considered. Thus, M. Batova considers the work of Martin Scorsese in her research and notes that in the film "The Departed" the key directorial technique for creating intrigue is the presence of mystery in the images of two main characters, Billy and Colin, since Billy works undercover in a mafia structure, and Colin, being a law enforcement officer, is a mafia agent. Mystery in this case allows the heroes to maintain their power, as well as their position in society. According to the theoretical concept of V. Turkin This example illustrates the first way to use the mechanism of mystery in the drama of the script, due to the fact that the viewer is fully aware of the information about the main characters, and they, in turn, wander in a fabled labyrinth in order to reveal the intrigue created by the director (Batova, 2020).

In 2019, the article "Of Faith and Faithlessness – Adaptive Fidelity in Shusaku Endo's and Martin Scorsese" reviewed the film "Silence" by Martin Scorsese is a cinematic version of the novel by Japanese Catholic writer Shusaku Endo 1966, which became a timely occasion to expand the critical discourse on adaptive fidelity (Ng, 2019). The author explores how both projects (literary and on-screen) draw on historical and biblical sources within the Christian tradition, especially from the biblical story of Judas to clarify the importance of faith in their respective contexts. The researcher used the theory of adaptation of Andre Bazin's literary work. In his work, he argues that both the novel and the film constitute an intertextual "ideal construct" of religious fidelity dynamically experienced in time and place, paradoxically manifested through various ways and paths of adaptive infidelity (Ng, 2019).

Researcher D. Sterritt argues that the intersection of Scorsese's spiritual inclinations and artistic achievements is complex and yet innumerable. This is evidenced by the growing number of scientific and critical works about his work, and it is impossible to calculate how many more years the director's cinema will be studied, how many hundreds of books, essays and articles will be devoted to this topic in the future. The religious aspects of Martin Scorsese's original cinematography are particularly fascinating and useful to study and analyse. It should be recalled that Scorsese's interest in religion and his conflicting relationship with Roman Catholicism began quite early, when the problems of sin and salvation aroused such curiosity and anxiety in his young mind that he took the first decisive step towards joining the Catholic priesthood (Sterritt, 2014).

Thus, the review of scientific literature was the last stage of the study of Martin Scorsese's work, which allowed us to draw general conclusions about the director's creative path.

Results and Discussion

On the Martin Scorsese's creative style influenced by the factor that he spent most of his creative career working with editing director Thelma Schoonmaker. Together, they developed unique cinematography techniques that became the hallmark of their joint projects. In his films, Scorsese flirts with the very concept of time, using a freeze frame. The entire film is director's desperate attempt to break the smoothness, but he does it with such skill that the audience does not show irritation, but only plunges deeper into the film. An example is scenes from the movie "Nice Guys". Moments where the static image technique is used are important to the plot, which is how Scorsese attracts the audience's attention. However, he was not the first to use this technique. Francois Truffaut ends his film "The 400 Blows" (1959) exactly so. This proves how effective freeze frame reception can be if used at the right moment ([Horne, 2020](#)).

Thelma Schoonmaker said in an interview that \$ 90.000 was spent only on flashlights during the filming of "Raging Bull". Sound engineer Frank Warner, in turn, made sure that during their launch there was a real sound, similar to the sound of cameras. In *The Aviator*, the flashes created a disorientating effect in the scene as Hughes walks the red carpet. Scorsese's camera flash is a kind of interference in the frame, a small explosion. The film's cameraman, Robert Richardson, said that they had to make several flash mounts, each of which could hold about 20 units. They were designed in such a way that it was possible to achieve their simultaneous operation using a special needle-like tool. However, in the scenes where Howard enters and exits the theatre, this was not enough to create the necessary lightning-fast effect. Therefore, the team had to use the Maxi Nine Light reflector. They turned it on at full power, and then gradually reduced the light. A special effect was achieved when about 11 takes were shot. Thus, it was possible to achieve such an effect that only the pupils of the character were visible on the recording. As a result, during further viewing of the picture, the viewer had a feeling of anxiety. Scorsese's approach to using flashbacks influenced many directors, including Paul Thomas Anderson, who used this technique in "Boogie Nights", but a completely different mood was created there.

Researchers of cinema note that Scorsese had his own director's handwriting. Between "The Last Temptation of Christ" and "Kundun" Scorsese directed four films, namely: "Nice Guys" (1990), "Cape Fear" (1991), "Age of innocence" (1993), "Casino" (1995). None of the films can be called "passable" – unlike many of his contemporaries, Martin Scorsese simply could not physically create something that would be considered a second-rate film product. For twenty years in a row, he worked for his reputation, discovered new talents, found actors and fought with studios. As a result, actors and studios are now eager to get the opportunity to participate in his film projects ([Blake, 2017](#)).

Reputation began to work for the director, and he, in turn, in each of his new works honed one or another facet, turned to different genres and studied various human weaknesses. In "Nice Guys", he continues what he started with – portraying the streets of New York City at night, the obsession with the fear of loneliness, and the characters' unfulfilled desire to live a fictional reality. In *Cape Fear*, Scorsese explores the phenomenon of killer-victim dependence, creating a

brilliant Hitchcock style and experimenting with the suspense genre. In “The Age of Innocence”, his costumed performance about the aristocracy of the 19th century, with laws no less cruel than the laws of the street, simultaneously resembles the works of prominent Italians such as Visconti and Antonioni. In the film “Casino”, the mature Scorsese's view of the illusory nature of victory at any cost, the defencelessness of the sufferer, the moral inferiority of the romanticized world of 'money and fame' found its expression. “Casino” was the last collaboration between De Niro and Scorsese – they reached the highest point in cooperation. Inseparable for 23 years, the actor and director decided to end the collaboration.

Having succeeded in depicting various facets of human cruelty and weakness, at the beginning of the 21st century Scorsese decided to take a creative break. He returned to directing musical films, creating a number of concert recordings of his favourite artists, such as the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan, enthusiastically told the history of cinematography, from the Lumieres to the present day (Kerr & Phaal, 2018). Scorsese was seen in active public speeches and discussions related to the preservation of the National Film Foundation and the development of new cinema. “Let's face it: classical cinema is dead. It is gone. The cinema as we knew it no longer exists”, Scorsese said in his speech at the John Huston award for contribution to the development of cinematography (Glass, 2016).

In order not to remain unfounded, Martin Scorsese himself had to show what the difference is between an old and a new film. An important task was also to demonstrate what role is given to the director in it. In fact, the search for the author's place and word combines such works of the master: “Gangs of New York” (2002), “The Aviator” (2004), “The Departed” (2006), “The Island of the Damned” (2010), “Silence” (2016).

The first film in a series of these films marked the beginning of a collaboration between Martin Scorsese and Leonardo DiCaprio. It was created in a deliberately naturalistic manner. Scorsese has never been known to hide human flaws before, and in the film “Gangs of New York” physiological cruelty takes the form of an epic narrative. However, even here the stated principle of the master “do not forget that you are making art” is preserved, do not go beyond the limits of what is permissible. And realism is perceived not as an end in itself, but as a means to allow Scorsese to once again say his weighty directorial word: “It seems to me that any sensitive person should understand that violence cannot change the world, and if it does, then only temporarily” (Menon & Ramanathan, 2020).

After “Gangs of New York” came out films, where the matured DiCaprio finally replaced the more adult De Niro. In fact, Leonardo in the images he created lost, lived and repeated the discoveries that Robert De Niro had made before him, together with Scorsese. Only now Scorsese have a chance to fix something that could not be edited even with the help of editing. So, in “The Departed” Scorsese again turned to a mixture of gangster cinema, drama and crime thriller. What was previously embodied in one hero and his inner struggle (take, for example, De Niro in “Casino”), in this remake Scorsese divided between three characters – Nicholson, Damon and DiCaprio. A detailed study of each of the images revealed deep meanings. So, Scorsese finally won his first Oscar.

“The Aviator”, a film that tells the story of Howard Hughes, a crazy billionaire. This film, for all its novelty, fits perfectly into a number of Scorsese's small stories about great dreamers. His disillusioned characters are domineering, nervous, violent, affectionate and easy. But even here, behind every frame, Scorsese's voice can be heard warning us that “cinema is an art form”. The director always reminded the audience to be extremely careful when determining where the line between art and reality is.

The film “Shutter Island” continues the line of madness of the hero of “The Aviator”. Also, this film is often compared to “Taxi driver”. At the same time, critics emphasize that after 35 years, the director returned not to that scandalous and acute social plot, and not even to the hero of the 1970s, but to the principles of a complex narrative that splits reality, as well as complicates time and spatial plans. Thus, the viewer cannot understand where the narrator is and where someone else is, and trusting the director, lives someone's memories, while the main character has long died or gone mad (Howell, 2021).

A large number of film researchers have covered in their works Martin Scorsese's creativity. Let's look at some opinions of scientists regarding the director's work. Thus, researchers D. Sakhno and L. Pugacheva analyse in their analysis the film “Taxi Driver” (1976) by a young, but already classical in all characteristics Hollywood director – Martin Scorsese. The film highlights a number of crisis issues of American society against the background of a fascinating plot. The main character is a Vietnam War veteran. This fact gives the picture a moment of reflection, namely, it raises the issue of adaptation of veterans in society in the conditions of deep personal existential changes caused by what they experienced in the war. The film demonstrates the problem of loneliness, which becomes paradoxical, since the hero lives in a huge city (Nyandra et al., 2018). American film critic Atkinson is convinced that Bickle is the most American of film characters, a disenfranchised victim of the nation's ambitions.

In the film “Taxi Driver” Martin Scorsese convinces that the hero of the tape could not find his place in society (after military service in the Marine Corps) and accept its “laws”. As a tool of struggle, including for the freedom and life of a young prostitute Travis, he chooses the only method familiar to him – resorting to weapons. The finale of the film unfolds in the clouded mind of the main character. The viewer is asked to accept the paradox of what the character wanted to achieve. He wanted to become a hero, to gain recognition from society, but at the same time, before his death, he felt an epiphany – he is not a hero at all. On such an ambivalent existential note – finding and losing the meaning of life – the director ends the film. What could be attributed to purely social problems, thanks to the introduction of the camera into the inner life of the hero's consciousness, seems to be a deep existential drama (Budiarsa, 2021; Sabilah, 2016). The authors note that the considered film “Taxi Driver” by Martin Scorsese is interesting because it clearly reveals the social-cultural reason for the popularity of not only mass, but also author's cinematography (Nilsson & Johansson, 2009; Dumtrache, 2014).

In the final part of the study, the authors note that in addition to social issues, the director of this picture was concerned about revealing existential problems.

One of the proofs of this is the statement of the film's screenwriter Paul Schroeder: "I tried to transfer the hero of existentialist works from Europe to America. In the American version, as you can see, he is even less able to understand the causes of his problems". Travis – the hero of the M. Scorsese's film – is shown outside of any optimistic background. His freedom as an abandoned and lonely person demonstrates another facet of freedom of choice, namely, the freedom to accept reality and oneself in it, no matter what happens when interacting with others ([Pugacheva & Sakhno, 2019](#)).

The author of the article "The Narcissistic Masculinity of Travis Bickle: American 'Reality' in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*" by W. Pauw, studied exactly how Martin Scorsese's "Taxi Driver" (1976) can be interpreted as a critical study of American masculinity after World War II. Based on Susan Faludi's arguments about the American "masculinity crisis" after Second World War, the author highlights how the taxi driver addresses American courage in the context of the ideals of heroism, the myth of the Wild West, The Vietnam era, and argues that popular media play an increasingly influential role in the process of forming ideas about courage. At the same time, the author points out that the taxi driver denounces and criticizes the association in modern American society between courage and what analysts have called the "myth of rebirth through violence" ([Pauw, 2006](#)).

In the article "I want to be a witness: blogging about urban authenticity and cultural authority in the East Village", A. Glass shows how certain groups politicize the plot of Martin Scorsese's taxi driver to counteract the gentrification and renewal of New York. Using contemporary cultural references, the author claims that a visual snapshot of New York's past captured on film has become the most romantic feature of the film ([Glass, 2017](#)).

The name of the famous director Martin Scorsese has become a symbol of many social ideas over the past few decades, to the point that he has become a kind of cultural touchstone. The director's personal life, as well as his work, are closely connected with a certain religion (Catholicism), ethnicity (Italian), genre (gangster film) and a certain period in the history of American cinema (New Hollywood). The artist is a leading filmmaker in American cinematography, influencing future generations of viewers. The number of Scorsese's works is quite large, and M. Raymond in the work "Martin Scorsese. Film and Media Research" tried to present this diversity, pointing out to readers the best achievements in his author's cinematography ([Sargent et al., 2001](#); [De Valck, 2014](#)). Thus, the study was organized with a focus on Martin Scorsese's own theoretical contribution to the modern history, theory and practice of cinematography. The work includes interviews with the director, an overview of his career development, anthologies of creativity, analysis of feature and documentary films and their impact on the film process. Most of the written focuses on the religiosity of the master's films, where the emphasis is on the ethnicity or courage of his characters ([Pogrebniak et al., 2021](#)). In the considered filmography of the director, an attempt is also made to present part of the history of Scorsese's film science itself, focusing on the master's theoretical works that determined cinematic trends at specific historical moments. Scorsese's theoretical work was useful for specific critical

approaches or arguments regarding the development of American author's cinematography (Raymond, 2019).

In turn, article by G. Gunnarsson is dedicated to Martin Scorsese's film "Silence" based on the novel by Susaku Endo. The film tells the story of two Jesuit priests who travel to Japan in search of their mentor due to rumours that he has renounced his faith. According to the plot of the film, the characters, upon arrival in Japan, face severe persecution against Christians (Barnych et al., 2021). After the death of one of them, the story follows the other. His faith is seriously in danger when he experiences God's silence in the terrible circumstances in which he finds himself. Recall that the struggle with the absence of God and his silence in the face of suffering and the bill of Heroes has long been the subject of reflection of the director-author. Such examples can be seen primarily in the Old Testament. This author's article explores how Scorsese's film addresses such struggles in light of the director's Catholic upbringing (Gunnarsson, 2019).

L. Roberto in his essay "Italian films, New York television and the work of Martin Scorsese" critically examines the often-mentioned story that Martin Scorsese as a child watched Italian post-war neorealist films on television in his family's apartment in New York. The author documents the history of how and when Italian films were broadcast on American television, and examines the global artistic impact of Italian neorealism on cinematography in general and Scorsese's work in particular. Instead of assuming (as most film critics do) that there are neorealist features in the director's work, this essay clarifies what exactly connects the artist with the best traditions of neorealism, namely, his work as an activist and defender of cinematography on an international scale, especially, but not only, through the World Cinema Foundation (Ruberto, 2014).

So, Martin Scorsese is one of the most famous American directors of the last 50 years. Considered essay explores his public history in films, books, television, radio, magazines and newspapers. The analysed work reflects Scorsese's personal and artistic path, it reveals the collective nature of overcoming this difficult path by critics, journalists and others. The article shows the intersection of the master's personal life, his public biography, creativity and critical perception of the director's works by the public, who has been talking about ethnic and racial identity in his films for six decades. Based on works in racial and ethnic research, critical research, and critical rhetorical research, the author of the essay uses this story as a case study of the ideological power of white ethnic identity and white racial identity in the racial shaping of America's post-civil rights. The author shows how the public story of one of the most popular and prominent American directors over the past half-century rewrote the transformation of the "unopened" Italian-American ethnic revival of the late 1960s into a white-ethnic American of the end of the century. The author demonstrates the power inherent in the institutional and cultural regime of nationalism in the United States, which destroys the power and legacy of white privilege in personal memory, creative imagination, and art (Lopes, 2017).

Conclusions

The study examined the creative path and features of the work of the outstanding film master of our time – Martin Scorsese. It was clarified, in particular, the role of the still image that Scorsese often used in his films, and also the features of his own directorial handwriting are revealed. Scorsese was seen in active public speeches and discussions related to the preservation of the National Film Foundation and the development of new cinematography. Such films of the director as “Taxi Driver”, “Raging Bull”, “Nice Guys”, “Cape Fear”, “Age of Innocence”, “Casino”, “Gangs of New York”, “Aviator”, “Renegades”, “Island of the Damned”, “Silence” were analysed. The results of the research can be used to study the creativity of the director, screenwriter and actor Scorsese. The results can also be used during practical and theoretical classes in professional directing classes (Schulze et al., 2011; Jäncke, 1996).

Martin Scorsese is an outstanding film director of our time, who had a huge impact on American author's cinematography and determined the vectors of its further development. He was and remains one of the outstanding creators who laid the foundations for the traditions of the “New Hollywood” cinematography. The outstanding director became a representative of cinema, which changed the classical views on cinema art. The search for the author's place and word combines such works of the master: “Gangs of New York”, “The Aviator”, “The Departed”, “The Island of the Damned”, “Silence”. That is why the study of Martin Scorsese's work remains relevant for researchers in the field of cinematography and culture today.

A large number of film researchers have covered in their works Martin Scorsese's creativity. Therefore, our study analysed information from scientific and critical art history sources related to the subject of the work, in particular, the specifics of Martin Scorsese's author's cinematography. The article analysed the research of domestic and foreign scientists. In general, the biography and creative activity of Martin Scorsese is widely covered in modern scientific literature, however, a huge number of films created by the director may require more detailed research to study both in the field of theory and history of cinematography and culture, as well as the social and artistic status of the director-author in the cultural space of the 19th–21st centuries.

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