

Choursoglou Clip 5

Philippides:

Do you give related advice — can one generalize on the proportion of dialogue and spoken narration, in a film, in contradistinction with the strength of the image?

Choursoglou:

I try to give a greater weight to the image. Or, in other words, something else that I have noted over the years, as a filmmaker, is that since I had an easy time with creating dialogue, and because I enjoy walking, I would write the first draft of the screenplay while walking. Namely I would walk back and forth and say the screenplay out loud; also the descriptions. I remember the beginning of *Dimakopoulos*: “A hand presses the bell of the front door. There’s a decorative Christmas wreath hanging on the door. The door opens. Dimakopoulos’s childhood friend knocks on the door and has snow flakes on his shoulders”. I’ve recited the screenplay so many times that I have learned it by heart. So I used to walk back and forth, and certainly more so for the dialogues. And many times during this back and forth I’d become very happy because one person would give an amazing cue and another would give an amazing response. I felt that this was very significant, very special.

While working with a friend of mine called Jan Fleischer, who is a teacher of screenplay, we talk in English and I tell him in English what I have written in Greek, which is the result of kilometers of walking, and he tells me, “I am not exactly sure what this means in Greek”. I then realize that he didn’t really like something, and I explain to him that this has x meaning, but it has a second meaning on another level, and a third meaning and a fourth meaning and a fifth meaning. And he says, “Why does she say all of this?” “Because she wants to tell him that she loves him”. “And why does she tell him that she loves him? Just so?” “That’s it”. “Isn’t it a bit...?” Then he tells me, “Try to write as simple dialogue as possible, and the second and third meanings will be played out by the actors”. At first I was opposed to this, but then I saw how great an effect a very simple phrase can have in film. Sometimes I watch American films and I admire them because of their simple dialogue.

On the contrary, all the [long] thoughts and the second and third meanings that I produce in dialogue get lost when they’re turned into film. It is not like drama. I don’t like to compare film and theater. But often, things I was proud of, because they’d come out of me, I’d say them a certain way, I’d stress a certain phrase this way, and another phrase that way, and a third phrase this way..., when another actor took them over, even a good actor, he stressed the first, second, and third phrases in a different way, and they became phrases suspended in air, with no function.