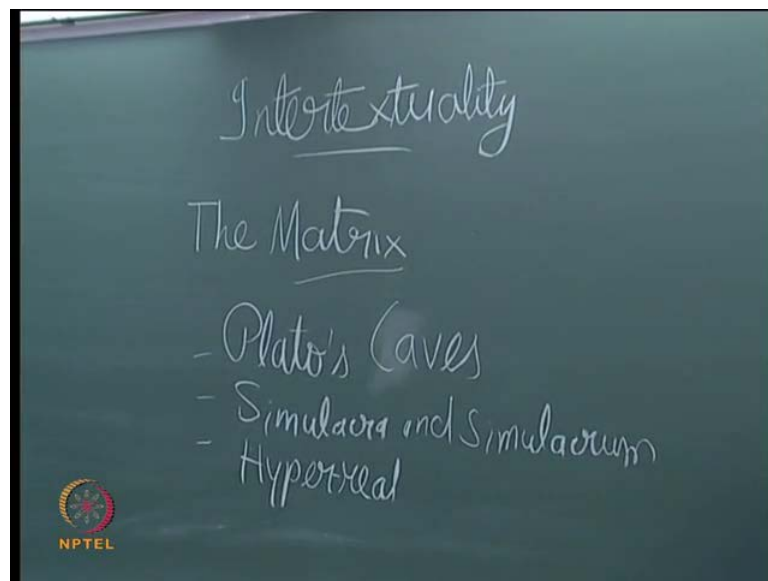


Introduction to Film Studies
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Lecture No. 12
Intertextuality (contd.)
The Matrix (1999)

Good morning. We continue with our discussion of intertextuality and cinema. And today, we will be focusing with reference to a very popular film, the matrix.

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Some of the key concepts that we will be discussing would be simulacra and simulacrum. This is also the title of a book by philosopher Jean Baudrillard – the condition of hyper reality and Plato scales, and how matrix draws on all these elements. Before we begin, we will just watch two clippings from the matrix; so, we will be discussing. But I just wanted to draw your attention to a still – The Bonaventure Hotel, which is situated in L.A. If you are not familiar with this image already... This is something which is discussed extensively by many of our post modernist thinkers and also philosophers like Baudrillard with a specific reference to the city of L.A.

Now, why do we think... What strikes you about this particular image The Bonaventure Hotel in L.A?

Glass (())

Glass fasten and? What is being reflected?

The cityscape.

The cityscape. And, the cityscape as reflected in that, there is a simulation. So, this is not the city, which we are seeing right here, but an image of the city. So, second level of simulation. Now, what happens is, when you go inside in the Bonaventure hotel and you have to do some readings on your own, you will realize that Bonaventure hotel is a mini L.A. in itself. It replicates L.A. It has elevators; it has shops. And, those shops mimic the city shop, the cityscapes. So, that was the idea behind constructing the hotel in such a way that it becomes a mini L.A.

Now, I am going to just read you this particular reference from Baudrillard. And, Baudrillard has worked extensively on American cities. They are created in such a way or they have become so that they no longer appear real; they appear as if they have already been created out of image of something that already existed before. It is what Matrix (()) tells you basically. Baudrillard's New York is a city of the mad set freed with the energy and electric buzz of the modern city taken to another level with its speeded up non-teleological activity or lack of a real goal. The city is approaching an apocalyptic state of speed, noise and over consumption with its total electric light. And, I quote Baudrillard the terrifying diversity of faces, their strangeness restrained as they are all into unbelievable expressions. The masks old age of death conferred in our kike cultures are worn here by youngsters of 20 or 12. But this reflects the city as a whole. Baudrillard reads New York almost as a survivalist painting or text; his visions of clouds filling people's head or coming out of their eyes conflicts architecture and human subject.

So, the idea is human beings mimic something else – what they are supposed to become; what we see in media images, we want to become that; we are no longer are realselves. And, that is what matrix tells us. So, we have become a collage of several things. Viji, if you remember what pastiche is all about, I would invite you today to talk us at least for

two minutes. So, that is the significance of Bonaventure hotel; it mimics everything that is outside. You want to see L. A., just go inside Bonaventure hotel; you do not really need to understand the city as such.

Coming to Matrix, Wachowski brothers and when they were brothers made in 1999; and, it is very significant that a movie like this comes at the turn of the century. It is very interesting. Some of the greatest American films, which interrogate what our society is turning into; they came in the year 1999 and 2000; I mean think fight club. Setting of matrix as all of you are already familiar with, it is 2099.

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Yes, it is dark and it is a dystopic vision of society. What is dystopic? As opposed to?

Utopian.

Utopian – Utopian is an idealized and dystopian is a nightmare, a nightmare city. Our hero as played by Keanu Reeves, he leads a double life as we already know. In day time, he works as a company man; he is Mister Anderson as the agent is Smith, often calls him. He is the only one who refers to him as Mister Anderson throughout the film, very politely; great actor – Hugo Weaving; and, his double life, his other... his Neo, a computer hacker. And, of course, we have already seen Trinity, a mysterious, enigmatic woman, who later on becomes his love interest. And, she introduces him to a Zen kind of a hacker – Morpheus as played by?

Laurence Fishburne.

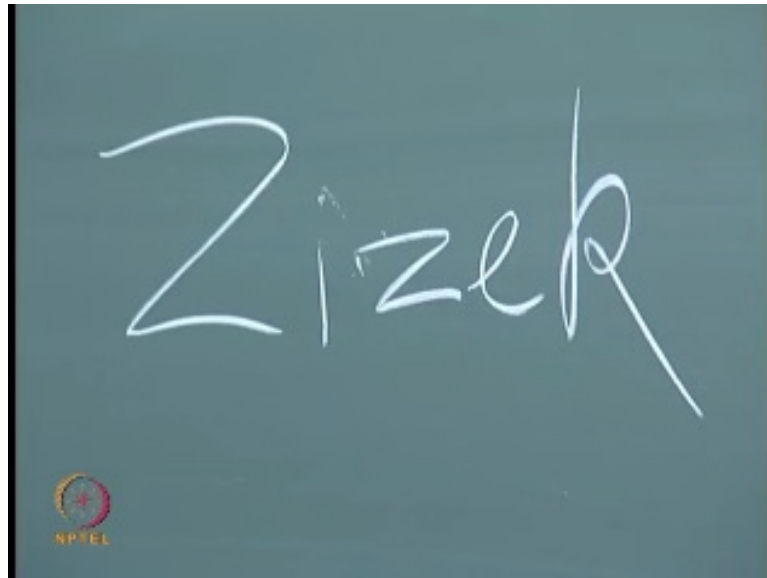
Laurence Fishburne.

Now, in the scene, we have just witnessed, Neo discovers the world he previously existed in was a computer generated virtual reality program, controlled by the AI or artificial machines, mankind developed years ago. And now, what is a situation today? Machines have taken over the real world.

Features of matrix – and, these are the things that we are interested in. One is the size, the sheer volume of content that goes in; I mean if you watch the second part, just they appear as if they are set pieces for example, Monica Bellucci's part and her husband;

they are the key makers. But they are there; they exist; they are trying to tell you something, but we are going to get into the philosophy of Matrix also, because its philosophy was very important; people have written books on that. And, not just anybody, but a philosopher as important as Zizek; are you aware of this name?

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Watch it; there is a you tube – z i z e k – Slavoj Zizek. He expresses his views on the matrix; he has also written papers on it. Are you familiar with that?

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 08:35)

Exactly. Yes. We also get to see for the first time on the screen – bullet time; how bullets travel in extremely slow motion cinematography. Have you watched the movie? Good. Wire-enhanced action – you all know; you are all familiar with; a close on heels for matrix, we had crouching tiger and hidden dragon. And, one of the reasons for its enormous popularity – what that? It duplicates the formula, the wired action. People want that; we could not have enough of that in the matrix. So, they wanted to watch it again and it was so successful. But it all began with some director who most of us like here and I think we had been discussing him for quite a while – John Woo, a guy who made face off, a Chinese director. He is extremely fond of doing wired and enhanced action. He has made a couple of great Chinese movies – all thrillers, action movies in which he employs the use of wire and enhanced action and bullet time and slow motion; almost like a ballet, a ballet bullet, bullet ballet kind of a thing. And, beautifully

choreographed Kung Fu fight scenes; I mean all of you are familiar with Matrix. So, I do not have to get into it, but there is a scene where Morpheus trains him inside, almost like a Japanese kind of a studio kind of a place.

Major themes – human beings are reduced to almost batteries for machines and they are being fed to the machines for their energy. The matrix controls the creation and dissemination of ideas. Morpheus – why is he important? He directs the entire venture and he controls the revolution; he is trying to restore the workers to consciousness; workers are the real human beings and not those who are machines. Neo is repeatedly referred to as the savior. So, look at the biblical imager, is a reference.

Even in the very first scene, when we are introduced to Neo, what does the person call him? You are my savior; you are Jesus Christ. Remember? So, we have told at the beginning of the movie that look he is the super hero in the making although he have no attributes of being a super hero at that point. So, nature of reality in matrix... And, I am coming to all these – to intertextuality; why we think matrix is a supreme example of intertextual cinema. So, it is ultimately impossible to tell the difference between the real and the unreal as we have just seen in the scene, where Neo confers reality. What is real? Morpheus asks you. Is it something that can be perceived by your senses – the way you touch, feel, breath, whatever? So, that can be electrically simulated as well. So. what is real?

Reality can be simulated and it can be better than the real. And therefore, when you watch the movie, you will find the simulated world is much more beautiful and attractive than the real world. I mean there have been critics of Matrix; there are lots of critics on Matrix; maybe everyone is not a fan. We enjoy the movie for variety of reasons, because it is a great thriller and great entertainer, but then the philosophy is suspect; I mean are we trying to tell each other here that a simulated world is more peaceful and more beautiful than the real? Because the real world is really bleaker, desert of the real. Remember? That is the term he uses. And we have come to a stage where human beings feel that a virtual real is preferable to normal reality; that is the idea that is been discussed.

Now, French philosopher, John Baudrillard – he gives us a term called hyper real, a situation where a kind of virtual reality is produced by models of what we want reality to

be – Bonaventure hotel – we want L. A. to be like this; we do not want to look at the seamier side of the city; we want the prettified city. So, we simulate L. A. and called the inside of the Bonaventure hotel that this is L. A.; this is mini L. A.; this is the real L. A. But is it? No. It is the prettified version, beautified version of the city. So, we want the reality to be like this and we produce certain images and we say this is real. But is it? That is the question. It is a beautiful philosophy; I mean you read Baudrillard and you will become a fan for life. A world... Hyper real is a world in which simulation or imitations of reality have become more real than reality itself.

And, Baudrillard then very eloquently gives the examples of the Watergate Scandal and Disneyland, which are exercises in duplicity, cover ups and simulations. This is matrix. And, you have just seen Neo going through a volume of Baudrillard's simulacra and simulations. But what does he use the book for? Is he reading it? No, it is an idem kind of thing. All his idlest games he hides in one particular section of the book. So, that is also an interrogation of what kind of world we are living in. It is a commentary; it is a critic. He does not know that the world he inhabits is not real. And therefore, it is very ironic that he is reading a book like simulacra and simulation. But he is not using the philosophy; he is just using it for something. So, you see the comedy aspect of this; very ironic. Matrix has no comedy of course; takes itself very seriously.

Baudrillard's famous essay, a very long essay – the gulf war did not take place; he is talking about the first gulf war, not the one which took place in the 2000. There was another gulf war in the year when most of you would have born. That was 1991 I think. So, the gulf war did not take place. What do you understand if you have already done something from this? Have you? What does it mean? Two major books: Simulacra and Simulation and another one which made him very famous. The gulf war did not take place; the gulf war took place; it did happen. Why does he tell us, it did not take place? Any guesses? Go wild when you are watching Matrix. So, let your imagination go wild.

Maybe he is saying that the aim with which the America entered in the name of democracy, it did not happen. All the traditionally activities maybe they are continuing still in the Gulf.

Good, it is politics you are talking about. I am talking about media created images and philosophy. Tell me. Now, this was the very first time that CNN was given total control

over filming the war as it really happen; I mean I do remember; I watched the gulf war taking place live as we have all these wonderful reality shows. It took place on television 24 by 7; that means that they are choosing what to show. Television tells you what to watch and the viewers controlled media prefers certain scenes, certain situations, which they want us to watch. So, the real war must have... But what viewers subjected to or what we were exposed to was a very glamorous viewer-centric version of the war. So, the gulf war – yes, it took place. But at the same time, philosophically, it did not take place, because it was all mediated through media – media-saturated images; that is the idea. The gulf war did not take place; that is the very ironic statement.

The ideas and ideals that Baudrillard professes that consumer culture has evolved from a state in which they are surrounded by representations and imitations of things that really exist towards state in which our lives are filled with simulations. Objects that look as if they represent something else, but have really created the reality they seem to refer to. Think the Bonaventure hotel again. It represents something and it makes us believe in that representation as reality as if this really exists. Are you able to follow this line of thought? In such a situation, the world of simulation increasingly takes on a life of its own; it becomes reality; that is, I am repeating myself. We are living in a world in a media-saturated world, where representation is more important than reality. And, it has come to a stage where we take the represented version as the real, not the real; and, reality is eroded to a point that it becomes a desert. So, welcome to the desert of the reality.

The reality looks ugly, because representation is so beautiful. Do we agree with this? I mean you have every right to contest Baudrillard. To what extent do you agree or disagree? Every 20 year old woman has to look a particular part. That is what television tells you. Away, away; she has to appear in a certain way. A 25 year old man should be like this; that is what a set of movies tell us. I mean we had a great film critic recently with us in IIT and he was taught... He gave reference to student of the year and he was talking to our class. Viji knows whom I am talking about. So, he was talking about the film student of the year and then he looked around and he said I do not find anyone here, who resembles those students; I mean all of you are students, but none of you resemble those boys or that girl. Why? Media tells you that a 20 year old girl is supposed to look like that, but does she? Do we have boys, who are as beefed up and whatever, hunky as

the boys we watch in those movies of that John. So, we have come to expect that certain kind of representations, whatever is their representation or simulation. And, we expect real life to be the way they are told to us in representations. And therefore, reality has become bleak.

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 21:36)

Shown as (()) even though they are picky while choosing (()) It is not romanticizing or something.

Yes, it does not, but it romanticizes or it lionizes a particular society's supremacy over another.

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 21:56)

Bombers (())

Exactly

Bombing a particular building; it shows you that they are in control.

In control and they are fighting a just war. And, it is through media images that we are told that they are fighting a just war. Is it? That is a very contested term; it is not a class of politics.

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 22:20)

No, what we want is simulated. Television tells us what to believe; that is the idea. They have taken certain... and chosen certain images and showed them to us. And, it is telling us; it is conditioning us to believe in whatever they are choosing to show us. If you read the essay, you will understand. So, representation and imitations, Agent Smith – thousands of Agent Smith; I cannot praise this actor enough; he is one of the greatest actors of our generation, wonderful. Absolutely.

Matrix – and, how it draws on simulacra and simulation? As Morpheus introduces Neo to the real world by welcoming him into the desert of the real; and, it is also a quotation from Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation. Baudrillard by the way died in 2007. And, it is the critic of the culture that we live in, a culture that distracts us from the reality that

we are being exploited just as the machines exploit the human in the Matrix. So, the idea is that we are living in a state of consumerism; consumer culture exploits us, feeds on us the way machines feeds on human beings and the Matrix. It is very interesting that there has to be a television set in the middle of the set, because it conditions the way we see the world.

Another idea which Matrix is fascinated with is allegory of the caves, which was first described in Plato's republic. When Neo is freed from machines, he is literally pulled from a kind of cave. We just watched the scene when he slanged and purified his body, rid off all the mechanical stimulations. So, he appears as a new born baby; appears as if he is coming out of a mother's womb; all swabbed in blood and fluids. And, this is how it is; almost I can do that his reality was just an illusion. And, that is what is Plato tells us that the shadow on the cave walls are... What shadows are those? Caused by statues. But those statues are also mimicking real people. So, twice removed from reality, the levels of reality. And, this idea reached another level, are not above inception. They are not mentioned to be taken literally, but they are allegories of something deeper. And, that is what Plato says.

Those who free themselves and come to perceive reality have a duty to return and teach what is real to others. And, that is what Morpheus does. So, Neo is the chosen one to save humanity from ignorance and acceptance of a false reality. And, the question that the movie raises is what is real? Very interesting scene; there is no spoon although you see the spoon. But is it real? This is the scene which takes place in the Oracle's domestic setup. There is no spoon. There are no bullets. It is all the slow move choreographed action scene; there are no bullets.

Another intertextual – apart from very philosophically deep ideas of Baudrillard and Plato, the film also draws on from popular stories and fables – sleeping beauty – bringing the beauty to a conscious state by a kiss.

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 27:30)

Exactly; beauty is someone else. And, there is a scene where he is almost dead in the first Matrix; and, she brings him back to life with a kiss; the scene is there if you watch the movie. Reference to Alice in Wonderland; who is the writer? Lewis Carroll. So, follow white rabbit. And, what is that white rabbit? What does that rabbit do?

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 28:01)

Takes her to?

Wonderland.

Wonderland. So, follow the rabbit. And you will realize and you will come across a new world. And, his first transition to the real world is by interacting with a looking glass. There is a scene through the looking glass. That is again a direct reference to Alice in Wonderland. You take the red pill and this will happen to you; you take the blue pill, something else will happen to you. So, eat this, drink this in Alice in Wonderland; again, the same idea. So you have a choice what you want to be by taking a kind of a pill. Pill is nothing but a metaphor for choosing your own path.

Again intertextuality – intertextual reference – a character in Matrix say we are not in Kansas anymore; a director lift from wizard of Oz – Judy Garland. How many of them have watched wizard of Oz? Please do watch it. Now, it looks pretty dated; I will accept. Even 20 years ago when I watched the movie for the first time, it looked horribly dated. But there are certain films. But I will tell you what. Citizen Kane in spite of being short in black and white, still looks extremely dynamic, very alive, very contemporary. Therefore Orson Welles is considered one of the greatest directors of all time. Let me tell you, Orson Welles was never respected to this extent. A reputation had been revived especially by those directors, who came in hollywood during the counter-culture period and during the European New Wave cinema; otherwise, Orson Welles, because he was so much of individualist, so much of his own person. At hollywood, almost wiped him out. But then his reputation was revived. Anyway, that was a digression. And, the wizard of Oz is another influence on a film.

The world of liquid pots when Nero is thoroughly cleansed and washed; and, he has to go through various stages to various caves for purification. So, the world of liquid pots rings of hell in Dante's Divine Comedy. The Dante's Divine Comedy seems to be a very popular text among film makers in Seven. We have Morgan freemen reading through; and, Brad Pitt being what he is. He goes through the cliff notes. And, they are talking about Blade Runner – image of an eye with very dystopic vision of the city, fire and hellish images; again, a reference to Dante's Divine Comedy. Any question? Any comment or any observation here?

Let us talk about Matrix. I know how much you love Matrix. So, let us talk about it anything that comes to your mind when you think Matrix. Pannery? Unusually silent. Why do you like matrix, if you like?

The way it... Its set at home reality, its artificial reality (())

The way it?

One agent would (()) He sits in the restaurant and he says (()) to real reality, such things. People tend to prepare artificial things rather than...

Anything else? So, you are into philosophy of Matrix. Rehan, what do you like in Matrix?

The same idea we apply to people who are actually... Not just consumer culture and even ignorance of the... from point of view of (()) I can actually say it is 8 years against... I can actually say it is rise of the (()) against the capitalist. It is just conflict of two beliefs. There entire population is (()). Then the others actually... Knowledge comes and others try to revolve.

So, Matrix – actually the premise is quite progressive; I think that is what he is trying to tell us. It is a very progressive movie as far as its basic premise is concerned. It is a revolt of a proletariat against those who are in complete control. That is one way of looking it. It is also an assertion of someone who is a misfit; recognition of the misfit and the recognition of the nonconformist in a society, which demands conformity. So, this is the threat that runs through most of the films, which followed the counter-culture cinema movement in hollywood. The nonconformist, the outsider, the misfit is the hero. Neo is the hero; he is the savior. A group of people who refuse to bow down to the machines – they are the heroes. So, it is a fight; it is an unjust and unequal fight. But someone has to do it. So, that is the message. But then it is the very contested message, because see he has brought me something to... But what about the technical aspect of it, I mean, the masses, which made the movie such a huge hit? It is a commercial hit. Of course, now it has become a cult movie. But in spite of its cultish status, it was a commercially phenomenally big success. Why?

Stylish movie.

Stylish movie; so, it is a highly... It did not become such a huge success, because of its philosophy. Definitely not because of its philosophy, because of the way it was shot. So, now, we are talking about a contradiction between philosophy and between commerce. Are you able to get me they are done? Yes, there is a huge (()) between what Matrix is trying to tell us and what it is actually really aiming to do. It is telling us to be nonconformist. But it conforms to all the dictates of the market; John Woo's style of action; what is the action? Wired action; it is all there. He would solve all his problems, because now he is trained in Kung fu and martial arts and he is very adapted that. And, they are wonderful set pieces; therefore, I used that word. Set piece is the beautifully shot chase sequence; I mean, it is one of the most voicy film scenes on the you tube, where Trinity is on the run with the key maker behind her; and, that chased by?

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 36:26)

Yes, that person – Monica Bellucci's husband; so, he is the one who personifies devil in the film. They are chasten; you see it has all the troupes of a commercial movie. The chase sequences, the action sequences, the slow time bullet flying all over the place; that is... So, all these are highly commercial elements, but with liberal doses of progressive ideas and philosophy thrown here. Therefore, people have actually critiqued the movie because of its philosophical pretentions. The philosophy is just there as a garnishing, but it is something else; it is an out and out commercial film. Therefore, we like it. We do not like it because of its high sounding philosophy. And, they may quote Baudrillard or they may refer to Plato. But at the bottom of it, it is a huge success because of the way it was done, the way it was marketed.

References again to religions, oracles, something very popular; so, you have nice doses of Zen Buddhism, even from references to Hindu philosophy especially in the third part, oracles. In part 2 – second part, we have a sequence where Neo fights thousands of Agents Smiths. They just refuse to go away. It is like biblical locus attacking the hero from all over the place. Again, very direct reference to bible. Yes, people can read into that also. On the surface, an excellently choreographed action sequence – a direct reference to Hong Kong martial art films. Also, inspired by Japanese anime movie; and, if you watch the film, it is called Ghost in the Shell. I am told, this movie also has a huge cult following – Ghost in the Shell. The dystopic version of city, hero as the savior, the martial arts sequences – all these are referred to in Ghost in the Shell.

Against as we are talking about, we have been discussing that Matrix negotiates between progressive notions of nonconformity and the rise of the proletariat against those who are in control, those who compel us to conform. But it is also a very conservatively made commercial film. And, people have pointed out, Trinity begins something else. She is her own person; she is the one who liberates Neo from his state of unconsciousness. And, by the time we reach the third part of the film, she is just relegated to being his love interest; she has no other role to play in the movie. I am sure most of you have observed this. And, very fashionable, very faddish philosophical ideas, and spiritual ideas, spirituality taken from all over the place verses martial arts; so, martial art is actually the solution to all our problems. That is what the film tells us.

There is a song by a band called Rage Against the Machine That song (()) That also... I mean, the band themselves are very nonconformists. And, the idea during that particular song; the song itself is called wake up.

Yes.

Refer to (()) the making of (()).

Even there is a point that the movie (()) I am sure in this class, everyone would be familiar with that. It is the point, way the movie ends; and then, Neo returns to the real world and he is the savior now, a very messianic presence; and, the song that plays is the rock song – wake up. So, that is the idea that he is here to wake people from their state of unconsciousness. They are a very nonconformist group, yes. But after all, they have a huge following.

(Audio not clear. Refer Time: 41:34)

Absolutely, commercialized aspect of the music, yes; any other observation?

There is a green tinge to whatever happens, what we call the world in which we live, we have that; otherwise...

It is very bleakish. So, there are two color palettes we have been talking about. What kind of color palette? It acts both as spatial-temporal difference, because the real world is somewhere else and the machine, the virtual reality is? I mean, it is 1999. The real world is a way ahead. So, spatial-temporal differences are brought out through the use of colors

and lights. Therefore, we call it a dystopic vision of our world, because the world in the future is going to be bleak, because we let machines run all over us.

I am glad you are observing these features.

Akira

Akira?

Yes. (()) One day, I was heavily inspired by Akira.

Yes, the Japanese anime has been a very strong influence for most of these science fiction films.

Please Swetha?

In 1984, the ideas were (()) controlling, (()) conformist...

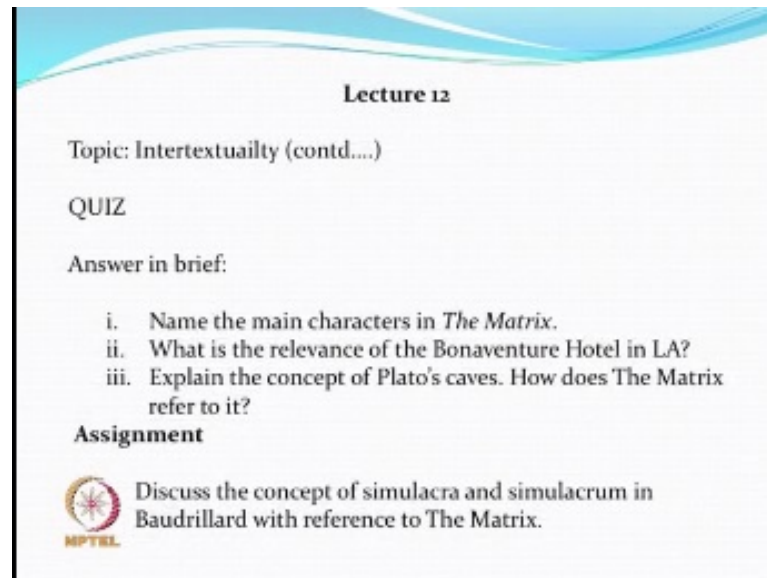
Yes, that idea is very much there. Yes.

In the first movie, the revolt against the machines, there is actually one or two individuals. From that individuals' message (()) All the people are actually (()) from individualism to a mass management (()) the transition (()) I think that first...

If you remember, (()) we have fight club, which also capitalizes on the same idea. An individual is starting a club, which becomes a metaphor for mobilizing a group. The other day, you were talking about discontent of masculinity. So, all that discontent men of our society – they come together and form fight clubs. Any other idea before we wind up? Start sending you preferences to Ranjith. Before we disperse, a couple of movies that you should be watching for the subsequent classes – one is Up in the Air; Jason Reitman directed and a George Clooney movie, Up in the Air. Watch The Godfather please; watch The Godfather; specially the first part. But the second is also beautiful. And then, how many of you have already... I mean, I am just hazarding a guess that this is not a very popular movie among the ideas, but prove me wrong; Groundhog Day – impressive; watch Groundhog Day.

So, see you tomorrow. Thank you.

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Lecture 12


Topic: Intertextuality (contd....)

QUIZ

Answer in brief:

- i. Name the main characters in *The Matrix*.
- ii. What is the relevance of the Bonaventure Hotel in LA?
- iii. Explain the concept of Plato's caves. How does *The Matrix* refer to it?

Assignment

 Discuss the concept of simulacra and simulacrum in Baudrillard with reference to *The Matrix*.

(Refer Slide Time: 45:08)



Suggested readings:

- Iampolski, Mikhail. *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Films*. California: University of California Press; 1 edition, 1998.

Suggested links:

- <http://liyahsatnarinefilmshort.wordpress.com/2012/10/11/intertextuality-in-film/>
- <http://beauchampcollegemedia.com/2010/09/06/intertextuality-pastiche-and-parody/>

