

Introduction to Film Studies
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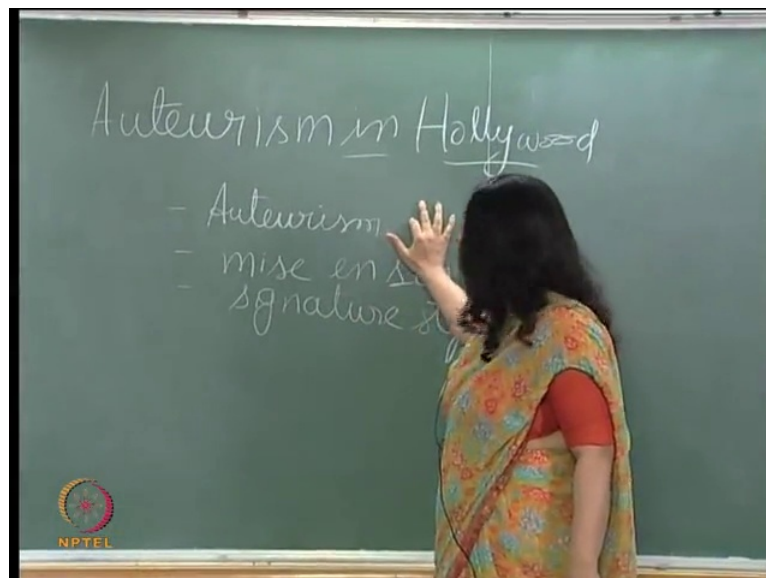
Lecture No. 30
Auteur Theory in the USA
-Andrew Sarris
Alfred Hitchcock

Good morning, we begin to today's class and we will talk about auteur theory in Hollywood. So, I am sure most of you remember we have done auteurism in France, and who was the originator of the auteur theory in France.

Bazin.

Bazin good, André Bazin in France (()) cinema, and what was the idea all about, that the director is the captain of the ship giving more power to the directorship, that is the idea.

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So, key concepts today in today's class would be auteurism and discussing it in the American context. How auteurs make use of mise en scène, and what could be their signature style.

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Key people would be Andrew Sarris, who gave us the theory of auteurism in Hollywood in for American cinema, when ranjith was telling me the other day he read up on a Andrew Andrew Sarris, a few days back and he died in 2012. So, please do look up on Andrew Sarris and Howard Hawks as an auteur, but I am not going into too much depth. I am going to particularly focus on Alfred Hitchcock cinema, I had already asked you to come having watch some of his major movies including rope. So, how did the concept originate, I am giving you a brief historical overview in 1910. The British magazine bioscope identified some directors as a special. So, we are talking about as early as in 1910, remember cinema is very was a still in its very early stages it begin in 1885 and 1910 bioscope already identified some directors as a class apart.

In Germany the term auteuren film was used, during the same period, film maker and novelist and this we have already talked about Alexander astruc. Who coined the term camera pen; that means, camera if camera is a pen director will be auteur. So, this is the connection, astruc wanted to raise the status of cinema from a working class form of entrainment to high art form. There are many people who regard cinema what is there in cinema it is just a time pass affair, but people like astruc and bazin and later on polinkine and Andrew Sarris, they tried to evaluate the status of cinema from just a very lower mode of entrainment to high art.

Have you heard about Alexander Astruc? Astruc's article like camera stylo camera pen stylo pen 1948 called for a new language in film making. And if the upshot of which was that camera should be used, the way authors use their pens. He posited that film makers should make more personal kinds of cinema, and this is something that you will find in the works of auteurs personal kinds of cinema. And when vimal you are talking about new Hollywood cinema they are all about personal cinema, we talked about kapol or the other day while discussing the god father personal film making something that reflect the personality of the film maker.

We have already talked about trufo I am just doing a quick recap. And then lead you towards the major auteur that we are going to discuss that is Hitchcock. So, we have a referred to his 1954 essay Trufo's, Yun, Sarpap and Dones do cinema fancy a certain tendency inference cinema where overacting principles are that mise en scene is curial to the reading of cinema. We discussed mise en scene while talking about velodrama remember the glaxcir how he would construct the scene the mise en scene in such a way that it tells you in the use of color the use of sets actors that he would invariably caused rocket son was his favorite yeah.

So, that is mise en scene sound music cinematography they all express a personal life personal style. Another feature the director's personal expression is key in distinguishing whether they should be called directors. So, there has to be a signature style. So, those are the principles as posited by Fransua Trufo. Now what is mise en scene most of you are already familiar, with and soon I am going to show you a clipping. And you have to identify mise en scene.

So, mise en scene crudely put identifies set and design set design and props. The way certain things are used in rope, which is the major prop if you have watched yes chest? yeah The chest is the major prop and rope of course, yeah lighting and shadow how various directors make use of watch martin Scorsese. See the way he uses lights acting and how certain directors make the actors act in a certain way for hitch cock directors were not sorry actors were not very important. What did he call them actors are all the world cattle Hitchcock use the term very boldly cattle for actors he said that they are alike it is me who controls them all.

Costume and makeup mise en scene in other words is understood by the use of costume makeup, set design, props, lighting within a single scene and explains how these elements contribute to the narrator. So, it is very important to understand mise en scene think of some of our own Indian directors think the cinema of Satyajit Ray. And how important it mise en scene was in his films. A lady of the from an aristocratic household wearing bangles in Pather Panchali this denotes something whereas, you are shown the the the wrist the naked wrist of the lady from a poorer section of society and juxtapose together. What does it mean, it shows the class difference that is a very good example of mise en scene.

So, auteurs are different from metteur en scene metteur en scene are just those people who are hired to direct a movie, they are not auteurs, they put together as same vimal you know these things metteur en scene. So, there is no personal style of a film maker he is just in other words ah of some person who puts together a scene. So, the distinguishing between auteur and metteur en scene was introduced by Cahiers critics. And again I am repeating myself according to these critics an auteur should necessarily display a distinct sense of personal vision a signature style a subjective style.

Andrew Sarris 1928 to 2012 he was the leading American proponent a critic of auteur theory who wrote for the Village Voice. Village Voice is a magazine is a kind of a very important news paper. So, director is the soul author of his work that is what he believed in and this is regardless and this is very bold now, this is very forward this is regardless of the contribution the writers producers or actors make. And new Hollywood again we are hearing towards it. Now next classes onwards we are going to start with a reading of new Hollywood cinema.

So, I urge you to come having watched Vanishing Clyde, Chinatown, American Graffiti by who good George Lucas Easy Rider, if possible watch a Shampoo Warren Beatty's I do not know if it will be available Shampoo Shampoo you wash your hair with Shampoo. So, Andrew Sarris later ranked directors such as John Ford higher than someone like William Wyler. So, that is Sarris Sarris's own opinion for example, see all these critics had major BISYS for example, Polanski was the one who made people like Warren Beatty Robert Altman and later on Martin Scorsese.

She never liked couple other Scorsese the American cinema maps the history of the talking picture period up to 1968 into 11 categories of film makers with titles like pantheon directors, strain seriousness and lightly likeable some are seriously likeable and some are lightly likeable, it is up to you if you want to agree or disagree with his list and each category files directors alphabetize name and filmography is with analysis of the distinct personality or lack of personality of each directors body of work.

Sarris is also known for constructing three concentric circles and this is an auteur theory model. And outside on the outer circle you have technical competence followed by personal style and at the core of each auteur is an interior meaning a core thematic concern. So, that is what thus the model Andrew Sarris purposes that and and it works you know technical competence there has to be some kind of a style technical style. Then personal style it can even mean, the kind of team you create for yourself the kind of people you collaborate, because you are certain kind of a film makers. So, you want to work with only these people like glesserk and rocket son combination, why did he want an extremely good looking actor for all his films, they must have been a reason john ford and john Wayne, why did john ford want only Howard hawks and often Humphrey Bogart and Cary grant.

So, the hyper masculine actor of that particular age and what was the interior meaning implicit in there. So, and sarris's choice is this is just an overview and I want you to be familiar, with the with some great works in international cinema this is the list he gives in 1962 ugetsu. You remember when we were doing Japanese cinema we talked about ugetsu tales of ugetsu Lola montes, you are already familiar with who directed good max ophuls regulate the show you have done who director joran van, Laplanth, George Viejo the great dictator Chaplin, the magnificent amber sons shadow of a doubt magnificent amber sons Osan Orson Welles, shadow of a doubt Hitchcock, know it and bueller that is the French movie and tear so appeared and shoot the piano player by Truffaut, about the so film by Godard.

So, this is Andrew sarris's definitive list of definitive movies, but then its 62 and of course, you wouldn't have some of the more contemporary film makers, but this is I am often asked tell us what to watch. So, this is how cannons are created remember, we have already gone through like process of creation of cannons. This is the canonical list if you

want to understand cinema go through this. See if the movies that you are doing they have a course of these films it is important to understand.

Now problematizing the auteur again I am quoting Sarris. Why is an auteur a problematic category, because see then what happens to someone as important as an actor. I mean, think Tamil cinema and think how our industry works. yeah yeah Even Bollywood may be things are changing off late, but they have not to all always been like that I mean I can give you example, from my personal experience there was a time in during the late 70s and 80s anything is starring amitabh bachchan would be a mega success regardless of the product the quality of the product. So, people would just you know line up for any movies starring Amitabh bachchan.

And similar, is the case terms out you have a particular star and people would go for that since. So, what happens to this category called actor. Then on how come we say that auteurs are so important, when actors are definitely the ones who drawing the audience. Cinematography you often talk about Mani ratnam and Rajeev men on or santhosh Sivan collaboration they are the ones who give vision you know who implement the directors vision who execute the director's vision. So, it is very important, because they are the ones who focus on visual style length the movie a depth of feel, this important to understand that why cinematographers are so important, Gordon Willis and coppola in spite of all the differences during the making of the first god father he still went to him for the second part as well.

So, cinematographers are as important if you think about it that way two exceptions directors who are also cinematographers Lars von Trier and David lynch. You are familiar with works of von Trier, but what did David lynch make classics not here the strength that is to India, Lawrence of Arabia remember these films oh yeah and writer I mean, what does a writer do he generally its accepted that writers are at the bottom of the foot chain. And they are not at all important most controversial category, because any one has the right to interfere with a writer's work especially directors, especially actors they want to change a line they can do that with without a buy or leave live.

So, film or screen player or a story is written rewritten renegotiate several times. So, what happens to the screen writer? And then of course, you have composers and there are the legendry composers who have added inimitable touches to a film for example, we

have a Coppola and Nairn which are we were talking about them we are the day Godfather Nolan and Hans Zimmer legendary partnership and so is Shogun Leoni and no more Spielberg with John Williams. So, all these people make a movie there is a very significant contribution which cannot be neglected actors cinematographers writer composers.

So, then what happens to the auteur. So, this is the question that I am throwing open to you there is there are no answers as Kurosawa has already told us that there is no fixed truth. Now a quick I mean we are doing so much of directors and auteurs. So, and we did not touch up on Howard Hawks at all. So, a quick look a quick glimpse at Howard Hawks one of the greatest one of the most successful directors of all times and then we will move on to Hitchcock.

So, Howard Hawks started his career as an aviator in the first world war, he joined the film industry and did several jobs including screen writer editor assistant director made a seven salient films for 20th century fox production who controlled fox good Zanuck major themes ethics and professionalism, and I will give you a list of his all time great movies please do watch them whenever you have time, focus on his strong narratives most of his films deal with the theme of good versus evil William Friedkin. We often talk about his excesses and the French connection and he once met Howard Hawks who were already in 70s.

And Howard Hawks gave him just one tip that you know in most American new wave cinema I do not find the good and evil there should always be emphasis on the good versus evil. And one reason why all after the initial successes that most American new wave directors met with there was a time of when they started just flopping. Most of the movies bombed and the entire cinema new wave counter culture movement it came to an end but the late 70s early 80s. And after that you have been talking about the resurgence of the new Hollywood period after the 90s post 90s.

So, that is another story altogether, but there was a time when stories focus only on good versus evil. Shogun Stallone there is an enemy there is some so that is a strong Hollywood cinema conventional cinema always goes for the good versus evil narrative and that is what Howard Hawks advised William Friedkin to do and its plots always

offered a strong closure in the tradition in the great classic tradition of classic Hollywood cinema.

Major films scar phase and this is another name you should be familiar with Ben Hecht. Many regard him as the greatest screen writer of all times if you look up set feels screen writing or four great scripts. Then you have to then you will come across Ben Hecht name figuring very prominently in his works. Scarface directed by Howard Hawks and produced by the great Howard Hughes aviator. However the movie was so controversial that Hughes had to withdraw the movie from circulation for several years. And it was not available till Hughes death in 1979 they must have been some censorship issues with it and Hughes had to withdraw the movie.

Some great movies by Howard Hawks the road to glory one of his earliest ventures, bringing up baby Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn, his girlfriend again with Cary Grant the big sleep based on Raymond Chandler novel by the same title is starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, Red River it is a western John Wayne and Monty Clift, gentlemen prefer blonds Marilyn Monroe and Rio Bravo again with John Wayne, and Rio Bravo happens to be a favorite film of many of the new way Hollywood film makers and also of Quentin Tarantino.

Any questions now here I want you to watch a clipping from Rope. Discuss the mise en scene this is our opening title sequence. Observe that is based on a play that Patrick Hamilton and then it was adopted in a screen play by Arthur Laurent's. Come in music by opening can you think how of the way the movie opens and then what it leads you into is a typical Hitchcock style. What is he telling you it is a when the movie opens what what scenes do we see. Street scene what else the calmness, what else a lady pushing a stroller down the street it is a normal regular day just like any other day. By the time the titles and we also see a police man helping two children crossing the road. That means, it is a very normal kind of a society very peaceful harmonious and then this is just opposite.

And why is David killed for no reason is just an experiment a social experiment a Darwinian experiment survival of the fittest, and they on a good day they find an a very ordinary good day they find a friend of theirs who was the most apt subject for this kind of experiment. They do not have any hostility there is no reason for committing this

crime you understand that so that is Hitchcock. Just opposing something you know two a very radically opposite scenes and bringing out the difference it is an ordinary day ordinary human beings are doing their business. And then you have two people who think they are extraordinary and they have every right to kill a fellow human being just, because they want to carry out this kind of experiment.

And we are also told later on if you have watched the movie which the philosophy implicit in the movie Nietzsche idea of superman. There is a superman not the superman a super hero superman, but a being which is intellectually and culturally superior to other beings and that is Nietzsche definition philosophy of superman. Darwin also says the same thing that is the society is based on the principle of survival of the fittest.

What else did you see? The music it leads you to into something so from something very you known giving you an the ordinary ness of this day it takes you into something more sinister that is the kind of music. Now let us talk about the set and the prop most important. The prop the chest, what else the rope and the glass, the bottles and what else yeah which goes with the Howard ungraduate captures yes they have a taste for the better things of life what about the New York skyline yeah what does it tell you what time of the day it is, because they say what a lovely evening he does not say what a lovely morning or a day this is what as its very clearly stated lovely evening perhaps is four or five in the evening and everything happens in a real time remember that ok.

So, the passage of time is clearly stated and Hitchcock is telling you it is happening in real time, because that is what see remember rope was a big experiment for him a very successful experiment for him. He wanted to make the movie in real time and something else he did with the editing part of it that we will talk about later. Then the gate subtext that is important, you have to understand that the author the Patrick Hamilton was the the the writer on whose play the movie is based on he was known homosexual. Arthur Laurent is who adopted the the play into a screen play was also a homosexual.

The two actors and this is very important John Del and Granger Philip and Bran Den they are also known homosexual British actors. So, the the word gay, because you know you are still talking about the code days. yeah So, it is never ever implicitly stated explicitly stated, but it is there the subtext is there. The two man live together they are throwing a dinner party together they are going for a holiday together, and we are also

told later in the movie that Brandon is going to introduce Philip to his mother, and he is going to sponsor Philip's music lessons and go is going to initiate his big concert his life his career into concert piano David is not homosexual.

And where she says that you dated me once, yes yes yeah but you see, but he was never really interested in her. Who is he emotionally more involved with obviously film. He is very flip about his very passing relationship he must have dated her for a while, and that is about it, you have to give up maintaining a of having a normal kind of life. So, he does say that I remember that before David no before Kan there was me and now after after Kan is David. yes That implication is definitely there however it does not mean, that he was in a very serious relationship with her, he is definitely in a very serious relationship with Philip and he is forever trying to control Philip.

So, that is how you read into mise en scene any way the movie is so rich in mise en scene that it has to be watched over and over again. yeah So, canonization of Hitchcock as an auteur by French new wave critics. We all know that Hitchcock in his home land in his own home town was never recognized. You know the kind of respect reorganization he deserves was never accorded to him, we have already talked about it, but the French new wave critics were instrumental in building his reputation. And we are talking about the usual French critics Benson, Rohmer, Chabrol, Godard and Truffaut and Truffaut has also famously written a book. Now just written a book, but interviewed Hitchcock Truffaut on Hitchcock it is a series of interviews. I recommend that you please go through that everything is available online.

And Hitchcock was one of the first directors to whom they applied the theory of auteurism. Hitchcock's innovations and visions I have influenced a number of film makers and directors and we are going soon going to look at his legacy as well. And Hitchcock was one of the for most film makers, who started a trend of film directors to control artistic aspects of what of of the movies without being answerable to the film's producers. So, this is one of the foremost examples, of a film maker trying to take control over the product rather than the producer. So, the name above the title François Truffaut's book or interview rather and it has come out in the form of book also written with Helen Scott in 1966. It played a very important role in canonizing Hitchcock and promoting the directors authorial identity.

Hitchcock was almost always involved in every aspect of film making. He decided who should star in his movies, he decided who should be the screen writer remember there are very few Hitchcock movies which are based on original screen play he never wrote a screen play most of his films are adapted. We have already spoken about his adaptation of Rebecca and birds based on definite movies work strangers on a train. Who is the author Patricia I smith who later on wrote the very successful vimal Patricia I smith the replay work talented mister replay.

So, Patricia I smith is more or better known for a replay work rather than strangers on a train. Birds no one was aware of its existence till Hitchcock took the story in his hands. So, he would develop the screen play, but would its very doubtful whether he actually wrote an original screen play. Also influence that sound track and the visual style, and if you look at a still one of the posters or psycho, when you see where else would you find directors picture. So, prominently displayed on the poster, and what it telling you to do be on time do not be late that is Hitchcock telling you what to do. And no I mean, it was never then before Hitchcock a director displaying his own photograph, you know flashing his photograph all over the poster. Otherwise it we have seen how a star dominated the entire situation the scene was.

Again look at this is the poster from revindo and you have Hitchcock so this Hitchcock's revindo. So, if you could it digest psycho then this is going to be more nerve retiling. And then here you have rope which says that nothing ever held you like Alfred Hitchcock's rope, do you see which is Hitchcock holding you. I am the maker I am in control a very clear and strong message. Some of his most accepted his thetics features of his thetics, invariably making a camio appearance, he is there is he there in rope is one of the people crossing the street. Mise en scene known for mise en scene vertigo today is associated with the color green, and if you watch the movie there is so much of green and red in the movie. You do listen to vertigo sound track go go online today, go to you tube listen to vertigo sound track, it was so innovative for those days. All those electric instruments unheard of those days.

Bernard Herrmann north by north west vertigo also psycho and marine and of course, new way Hollywood directors. So, impressed they were by Hitchcock that who famously used Bernard Herrmann taxi driver, his cause is see for taxi driver literally brought Herrmann out of self impose retirement and Herrmann said who are you I mean, I am

used to working with the lights of Hitchcock, and what are you giving me I have worked with James Stewart, and on vertigo and the classy mister Cary grant or north by north west who would invariably you ware or this guji shuits and you are giving me a movie about a taxi driver no way I am going to do it, but then martin Scorsese had his own he would have made a an offer he could not refuse and therefore, we had Bernard Herrmann.

And it is a it is a very haunting score in taxi driver. Nikcle rosar in a spell bound you it is also a very rival's movie starring Gregory peck and Ingrid Bergman, and from scenes some stills from a spell bound ostensibly a love story Gregory peck Ingrid Bergman. And in this movie he collaborated with the surrealistic artist Salvador Dali. And created that famous dream sequence, where hero is being psycho analyzed. And I am not going to be a spoilsport I would not tell you why the hero being psycho analyzed and what is that how does the movie end, but here in this particular still you can see, where is surrealistic close ups of an eye dream state or dream like state Gregory peck being psycho analyzed. And this is was the scene this was created by Salvador Dali in collaboration with Hitchcock.

Now coming to the movie that we have already talked about rope. And we have already discussed how the opening of rope it is something depicting a very ordinary day a very regular kind of day. And then what happens subsequently. So, if you look at this particular still what is the mise en sece like? Setting the dining table, but what is the dining table the chest so feeding off on David's gray. That is the that something the James toward character say at the end that you made us eat off this gray remember. And see how beautifully the scene is set up you it is an apartment, but not a very huge apartment it has just very limited number of rooms. And you can through this point or through this perspective you can see, the rest of the apartment till the kitchen. Setting up the table and the New York skyline. And as the day closes you can see the skyline is also getting more and more darker and the lights coming up.

And it was not the movie might have been it gives you the impression that is short in real time, but of course, Hitchcock constructed this set. So, it is not the original New York skyline remember that it is a set, and it must have taken a huge amount of resources effort to create recreate the New York skyline. Metonymy as mise en scene several times you see close up shots of hands, this is of course, James Stewart, this is the one of the

climatic sequences where James Stewart comes with this rope. When does he come up with this scene with this rope, yes yeah and this rope as we are told it has already been given away to David's father he has brought some books from Brendan. And Brendan very sadistically ties the books with the same rope with which he has killed mister Kentley's son David. And James Stewart when we returns to the apartment under the pretext of retrieving his cigarette case.

He brings this rope and that is the thing that gives away the entire game, because Philip who is already at the edge. Now just come completely crosses it and confesses that he has done it. That is Hitchcock in the background he is not just the person who crosses, but you can also see his face all lit up by the neon lights. So, that is one incidence of very innovative use of Mise en scene, and then this is something that I often refer to the kiss in notorious. And we are told during the scene the maximum length ah duration of a kiss was three seconds.

So, three seconds, but what they did was to splice the long kiss with snatches of dialogue pieces of dialogue. So, actually is a thirty seconds kiss, but then is broken into several parts. So, that is kiss between Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman when I think this movie is also referred to in rope remember. David's aunt who is a one of the guest and she say I just watched the movie with Cary Grant and that Bergman women and it what is called she say something that something something yes that is notorious. The long take in rope and now this is something that all of you should remember understand very clearly, because this is the way is Hitchcock played with the conventional ideas of editing.

What did he do? So rope is seen as a as a denial of the standard conventional traditional editing process. A kind of negation or repudiation of it is importance and power. Generally editing means, having several shots where he and takes, but here there are lengthy takes and did you notice anything unusual in the editing of the movie if you have watched the movie. The way its edified while I was watching the movie very recently for this class and I just thought what is going, because I have I had long takes sequence in mind did you notice anything unusual. It is not an illusion it is continuously shot not the entire movie, but it has long takes 11 10 to 11 minutes which is very unusual, but I am talking about an unusual scene in the movie which gives you an impression that this is not something which would happen in a in a normal movie. The camera takes you behind Brandon's back two times in the movie and his blue suit will sub the screen.

And you wonder why he is doing that, is just he is trying to he he as cut the shot his cut the take, but he does not want the audience to note that it is an experiment that works. So, at the same time the presence of the cut despites his elegant, he he gives an illusion as Vimal rightly points out, that it is not actually the the entire movie is not actually short in one long take, there are cuts, but he gives the illusion. And this could be seen as the definitive test, and prove of the very centrality that rope seems to deny. We will continue with our Hitchcock, thank you very much.