

Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
Prof. Aysha Iqbal
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

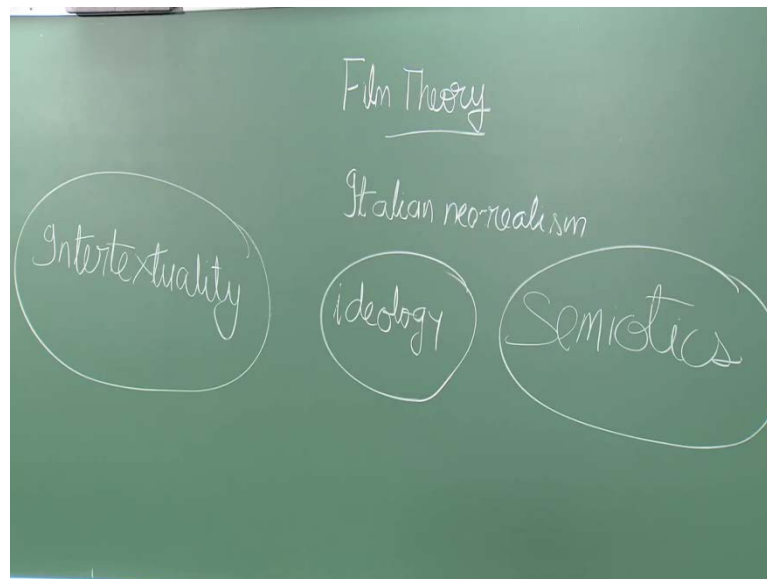
Lecture - 21

Part B

Film Studies

Hi, so before I start talking about the major film theories in circulation today, let us continue with our talk about the major film movements. You may recall that, we have been talking about, French New Wave. So, as important a movement as French New Wave has been the Italian neorealism movement, which started in Italy.

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Neorealism generally refers to films of working class life set in abysmal poverty. This aesthetic movement tabbed into a particular transition in Italian life and became a vehicle for filmmakers interested in vivid description of history and society. The underlying message in the films of this movement is, that in a better society wealth would be more evenly distributed.

In the late 1940's, neorealism's influence spread to Hollywood and filmmakers started using tropes, such as actual locations, filming on actual locations, where city became an

important character. And filmmakers also use long takes to bring about a touch of verisimilitude or true to life. In addition to using non professional actors, who added truthfulness or veracity to the films. By non professional actors, we mean people who have not been actively involved in the business or in the art of acting.

So, the neorealist movement spread to the other parts of the world also. In India, we have Satyajit Ray, who made films which are very similar to the Italian neorealist cinema. Akira Kurosawa in Japan and then, also directors in Germany, Spain and Eastern Europe were influenced by this movement. The major Italian neorealist, were Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica.

Now, Roberto Rossellini, who lived between 1906 to 1977 was named the father of modern film by Cahier Du cinema writers along with John Renoir, he was the most influential name among the international filmmakers. It was open city Rome, which is a regarded as one of the first major works of Italian neorealism, which cemented his position.

The film weaves together a variety of stories of Roman's during the occupation of Italy by the German forces. It was shot true to the dictates or for the tenets of neorealism, it was shot on locations with non professional actors. Again, Vittorio De Sica, the bicycle thieves is commonly regarded as the film that heralded, Italian neorealism and I suggest at this point that you watch some of the films made by Rossellini and De Sica.

Let us move on to now talk about intertextuality. So, these are the major areas that I will be touching upon intertextuality, ideology and semiotics and how, they are related to film theories. So, these are basically literary concepts, which have also come into currency in film studies. So, intertextuality introduced by Julia Kristeva is commonly it is defined as shaping of one text by other texts.

According to Kristeva, the meaning we find in a text is not be located in it is relationship to the mind in which it seems to have originated, but in it is relationship to other texts. So, it is important that, when we do intertextuality we understand, how a particular text is related to other texts. There is another important name that you should be familiar with; that is the Russian critics Mikhail Bakhtin, who according to him all human communication are dialogic and heteroglossic.

That means, every utterance is a contribution to an ongoing dialogue, which means, every word reflects, what has gone before. For Kristeva, any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; that means it refers to something else. Any text is the absorption and transformation of another. So, a text is not simply a text by itself, but it is a mosaic of quotations, it elutes to several other texts.

Cinema is dialogic as films refer to other films and texts. Films are read in the light of their resemblance to other films and texts and tap into a shared cultural heritage. Films feed on pre existing materials and expressive forms. We have to notice that intertextuality is not pleasureism, but a quotation and an illusion, a citation appealing to the knowledge of the educated audience, who have by educated audience; I mean those who are cinematically literate. So, this is something that you should know, cinematically literate audience and visually literate audience.

So, let us talk about cinema and ideology, how does ideology permeate through several works of art. So, it is not just literature, it is not just art, but it is also cinema that reflects ideology. A film as we know is a sum total of the makers attitudes beliefs, which include political and social and also cultural positions. Ideology can be visible or deeply embedded and thus, appear natural.

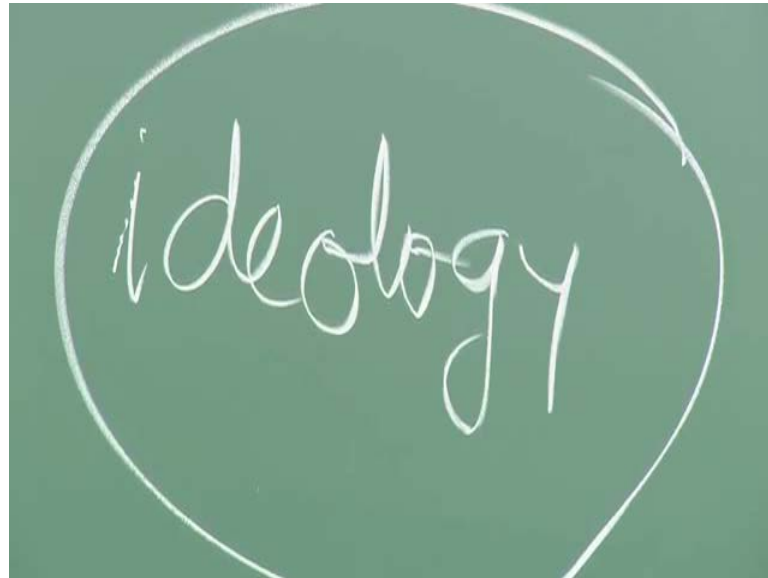
Sometimes filmmakers are overtly ideological, they take a strong political or ethical position, for example, a classic example is the Russian filmmakers, for example, battleship Potemkin. So, it is overtly socialist kinds of an ideology, most of the time ideologies are deeply embedded, they are covert, but they are still there. So, the premises the basic idea is that, there is nothing, there is no text which is completely clear of an ideological position.

More often than not filmmakers have to identify a position, which could be overt, explicit or implicit and that becomes the ideology of the film. Films, especially commercial films and particularly the blockbuster kind of film, they cater to the dominant prevailing ideology of the society. And for this, you have to be very sensitive to the films that you watch and therefore, the word, the term that we give is or we use is visual literacy through several acts of or through several cinematic devices.

A director draws our attention to the position that he has taken in the film and that is what we refer to as ideology. So, an ideology is commonly explained as a systematic

body of ideas, attitudes, values and perceptions. Ideology is also the collective views, attitudes, position and dogmas of our societal group.

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Ideology can be seen or unseen, conscious or unconscious and is determined by time and place, this is important. An ideology is determined by the time, the text is set in and also the place, the text is set in. Now, these are complex issues and these, if you take a course for example, a film appreciation or a full fledged course in film theory, then you might get a better understanding of this.

So, coming back to Eisenstein and his battleship Potemkin of the movie, which made him world famous released in 1925, it is one of the most influential texts a point of ideological conflict between the east and the west between the working class and the ruling class. So, even his aesthetic sensibility was imbued with political vision. So, in the film Eisenstein's aesthetic sensibility was imbued with his political vision and the legendary Odessa step scene contains his vision of operation, rebellion and collective action.

Ideology provides identities and gives us a subject position and it is very clear, very well brought out in the Odessa step scene in battleship Potemkin. Louis Althusser is a prominent name associated with ideology and he has written a famous essay called Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses published in 1969. Here, he seeks to describe

ways in which the state exerts its power, outside such institutions as the army, the courts, the police, etcetera, which is to say in culture and society.

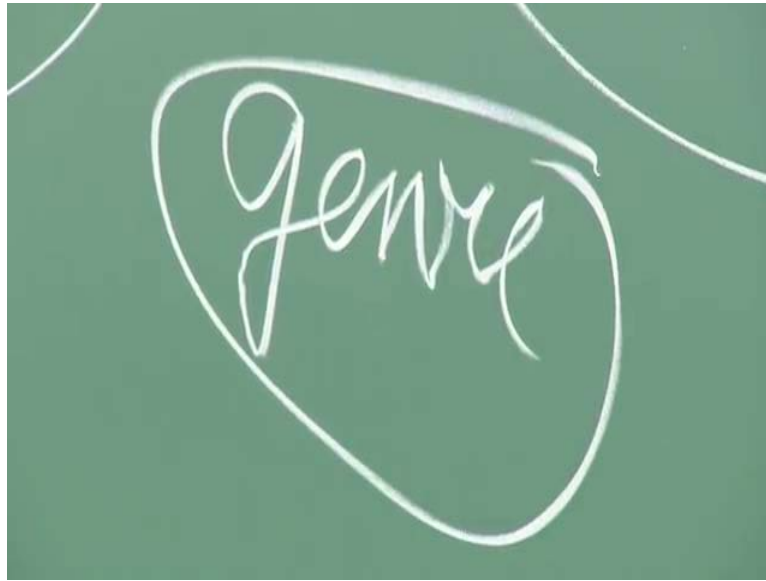
Generally, the central insight of this essay is that, ideology is bound up with the constitution of the subject that man is an ideological animal by nature, meaning that people constitute or define themselves as humans through ideology. As Althusser argues, ideology hailes or interpolates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, it calls us or calls towards a subjects and we recognise ourselves as a subject, then is an effect of ideology.

This was also the time when scholars incorporated Althusser's writings with Lacan's psychoanalysis and the writings that followed. Lacan's mirror stage became a frequently resorted concept in film studies. In his 1970 essay *Ind*, which appeared in *cinetic* called *Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus*. George Louie Baudre the French critic, he developed the mirror analogy as a way of revisiting perspective in cinema and its ideological implications.

Baudre observes that through the adoption of greater realism, more secular subject matter and an increasingly marked individualism of style. Art has conditioned the perspectives of the general spectators. Moreover, the system of perspective based on indicating a single unique vantage point in the imaginary space, outside of the work from which content was perceived, supports an individualistic Burjuva subject position. This historical investigation or interpretation of perspective gets adapted to theories of the cinematic apparatus by offering the film spectator and omniscient unitary point of view.

Thus reinforcing the Burjon notion of subject as a free individual, this subject effect produced by the cinema, became a topic of extensive debate framed under the title apparatus theory in the writings of Steven Hyde, Teresa De Lauretis and Christian Metz.

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I will also talk about genre theory, genre theory and criticism attempts to legitimate, the very popular nature of film. Genre as we understand are categories simplistically put, they are categories to which a work of art may belong. So, genre's are used by filmmakers to legitimate the popular nature of film, especially as a product of the Hollywood studio system. In India too, we have the genre's system, we have action and comedy and romance and such kinds of genere's and categories.

And to identify the similar items and elements in a group of works by different directors, apart from the works of individual directors, genre theory also attempts to explain the social and cultural needs of the viewers of a particular era. Genre theory and criticism was useful for adopting the emphasis on structuralism, which had a profound effect on cultural criticism, during the late 1960's and the 70's.

This was the period when Hollywood offered a large number of similar films with similar elements in each zone, the western, the gangster, the epic, etcetera, which made these films popular. There is a book called Horizon West by Jim Kitses, which establishes a basic structural and thematic argument in the western and also, shows the individual contribution of specific directors in this field.

Peter Ollen also discusses Howard Hawks and John Ford films in signs and meanings in the cinema and also uses John's in Arthurier structuralist approach to develop thematic structures and tensions in the films of these two directors. Again, Christian Metz in film

language a semiotics of cinema, illustrates the way film signify meaning through semiotic codes.

Especially, specialized codes unique to the cinema, such as the eight arrangements of shorts possible in a narrative sequence, we are now talking about, how genre's get informed by semiotic theory. There is also a seminal book by Noel Carroll and David Bordwell call post theory reconstructing film studies published in 1996, where the editors a neoformalist approach and the approach deals with the idea of defamiliarization.

The book also reflects on the grand theories that had come to dominate cinemas studies through the 1960's and 70's, most specially semiotics cultural studies and psychoanalysis. So, Carrol and Bordwell famously use the word or the term slab theory to refer to the theories that use the ideas of Saussure, Lacan, Althusser and Barthe; that is Roland Barthe. So, therefore, slab theories Saussre, Lacan, Althusser, Barthe.

An important feature of film criticism is that, psychoanalytic theory has continued to be revisited and re examine in important ways. So, psychoanalysis analytic theory often emerges and often comes into play as we as a student's of cinema as a student's of literary theory, watch films and there are points, where psychoanalytic criticism becomes extremely visible. There are two more important theories one is a Dalush, so Jails Dalush, who has written cinema 1 and cinema 2.

So, cinema 1 deals with movement an image and the cinema 2, the second volume deals with the time an image. So, they are appropriately titled and as cinema 1, the movement image and cinema 2, the time image. Dalush often writes his books and he has propounded several important theories along with Geytari. So, in Dalush, we find a course from the writings of Enri Boxon and Charlie Pierce for a theoretical and philosophical study of the dominance of the movement image in classical cinema.

Coming to semiotics, semiotics as a film discourse received considerable impetus from the politicisation of theory and criticism from the late 1960's onwards in the French journal cinetic and also Cahier Du cinema and in British publication scream. Termed as the second semiotics, it based upon a combination of semiotics, Marxism as proposed by Althusser and Lacan's theories mirror image and also theories which are interested and informed by post Freudianism.

So, these discourses eventually become a strong force among a group of film teachers at American universities and in the professional journals for which they wrote. The central concern of the second semiotics was to identify and then, deconstruct the ideological structures and codes or society implied in narrative cinema. And also to align this ideological focus with Lacan's psychoanalytic theory about the child's early developmental stage, especially the mirror stage to which we regress on some level, when viewing them images on the screen.

Another important theory is narratology and we will see, how it is important to cinema. So, one of the most famous film theoreticians in recent times is David Bordwell and in 1985, he published *Narration in the Fiction Film* in which he develops a narrative theory that reflects on the spectators, perception and cognition. In addition to employing a theory of psychology, Bordwell also draws on the literary theory of Russian formalism, especially the notions of *Syuzhet* and *Fabula*.

Continuing with theory of narratology, Edward Brannigan's point of view in the cinema a theory of narration and subjectivity in classical film often uses the vocabulary and concepts of literary narratology to discuss film narrative texts. The last part of this lecture focuses on postmodernism and film theory. Postmodernism is also concerned with the fragmentation and lack cohesion in both cultural and individual identity, the subversion of time and history and the domination of the world by media and information technology in which we have created a reality of signs and images for us.

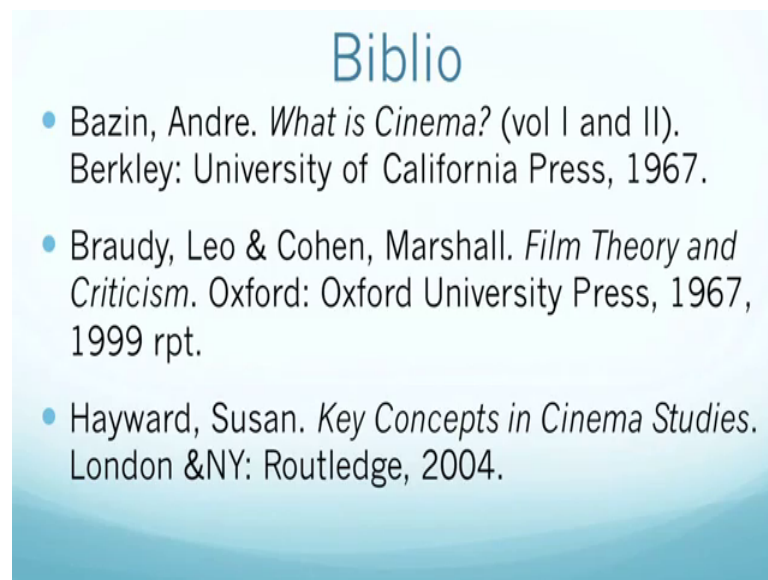
So, most significant works in this discussion are guide the both seminal, *The Society of the Spectacle* and also the works of Jean Baudrillard, especially his *Simulations* and also Fredric Jameson's, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. The concepts, because of postmodernism has been useful so far in the analysis of a number of films and in understanding certain tendencies in modern cinema.

For example, you have to understand Jameson's concept of *pastiche* the imitation and accumulation of the filmic quotes of the past and this has been especially useful. Recent anthologies on film theory attempts to show the diversity of the field, some of the recent important books on film studies are *A Companion to Film Theory and Film and Theory and Anthology*, both co edited by Toby Miller and Robert Stam.

A companion to film theory incorporates authors from diverse backgrounds that crisscross cinema studies and literature communication anthropology philosophy sociology and education. So, the idea here is that film studies is informed by a variety of disciplines. And as Miller states the authors come from five continents as part of our desire to push the field further toward deep provincialisation.

So, this is what I have to say about film theory and let me draw your attention to the bibliography for this particular area.

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Biblio

- Bazin, Andre. *What is Cinema?* (vol I and II). Berkley: University of California Press, 1967.
- Braudy, Leo & Cohen, Marshall. *Film Theory and Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, 1999 rpt.
- Hayward, Susan. *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*. London & NY: Routledge, 2004.

So, Andre Bazin's, *What is Cinema?*, this is seminal classic text. Leo Brody and Marshall Cousins *Film Theory and Criticism* and Susan Haywords *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*.

Thank you very much.