

**Postmodernism in Literature**  
**Dr. Merin Simi Raj**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Week – 03**  
**Lecture – 07a**  
**Baudrillard, Hyperreality and Postmodern representations**

Hello, everyone. Good morning and welcome to yet another session of the NPTEL course postmodernism in literature. In today's lecture we should be continuing the discussions on hyper reality and the postmodern idea of representations.

We began talking about how Baudrillard introduces a concept of simulacra and simulations to talk about the various change in notions, the shifting trends the understanding of the notion of reality in the contemporary.

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So, before we proceed with the discussions it is also important to understand the different stages in the idea of a progress of modernism which is also related to our understanding of representations. Since our post modernism is also an offshoot of a departure from the various concerns related to modernism.

The idea of representation also has a bearing on the way in which it departs significantly from the ways in which representation and reality were framed during the modernist

period. And, often especially the discussion of postmodern art it becomes rather impossible to draw an exact line which would separate modern art from postmodern art and also postmodern representations from that of the modernist representations.

So, in order to trace a proper genealogy of these changing nature the shifting nature of the mode of presentation it is important to see how there are different stages that we could identify in the history in the genealogy of modernism our progress. Firstly, it is possible to till you ate a certain kind of crisis in the representation of reality and this is also manifested in certain movements this Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism. In the discussions related to modernism we could even see evidences of these various kinds of crisis in the representation of reality. This also reflects well in the various artistic trends and also in the literary critical movements as well.

And, secondly, and there is a word of abstraction which is also which also becomes inevitable due to the presentation of the unrepresentable. This is also an idea that we have taken a look at in our previous sessions and here you can also see that this is represented this is reflected in movements is just constructivism a constructivism and minimalism which is also more evident in diverse field such as architecture and in the third stage there is a crisis of representation which is being presented as a non presentation; which also calls for an absolute abandoning of the aesthetic process and here we find that here is perhaps the shift from modernism to post modernism becomes complete or rather and in certain other critical framework this is also the beginning of postmodern art, where conceptual art which borders on the ideas of crisis of representation as well as non representation being manifested.

So, in these three stages which are also predominantly modernist we can see traces of postmodern art, traces of postmodern representation emerging in varying degrees. It is in this final stage of abandoning the aesthetic process that we also see various other kinds of crisis emerging including the challenges upon the various notions such as our text or author images of the reader the various critical reading our processes and also the complete departure the complete detachment from every conventional form of reading or critiquing art and literature

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**'real' Pomo crisis**

- Dilemma of reproducibility in the age of mass consumerism
- Paradox – more desirable to own the original – exorbitant prices
- A consumerist aura extends to anything with a halo of the relic
- Souvenirs of yesteryear's ancient manufacture – eg: an antique gramophone player
- Image consumerism – the reproduced is taking the place of reality or replacing it as hyperreality ✓

So, in that sense, if we try to locate the real postmodern crisis it is first of all a dilemma of reproducibility in the age of mass consumerism. This is something that we began to look at when we spoke about Baudrillard and also in that connection our Walter Benjamin's essay, but however, there is also a paradox which is inherent in this particular situation unlike the prediction of Walter Benjamin that in the age of mass reproduction, the age of technical reproduction there is a possibility of art losing the original art losing its or the original art losing its value we find that paradoxically in the contemporary it has become more desirable to own the original which is also exorbitantly priced.

For example; even though multiple copies of a van Gogh painting is being available in chief posters and cheap postcards we also find that the original is priced exorbitantly high and it also becomes a different kind of a commodity, the possession of which amounts some amount of prestigious as well. And, secondly, as a consequence of this dilemma of reproducibility, we also find that a consumerist aura is being extended to anything with a halo of the relic.

Accordingly, we find the souvenirs of yesteryears ancient manufacturer emerging as particular pieces of art particular compatible artistic relics and for example, an antique a gramophone players is the corrected object of art in the contemporary particularly because of the halo of relic it is associated with it and thirdly, we have the idea the aspect of image consumerism where the reproduced is taking the place of reality or even

replacing it is hyper reality and this phenomenon of the contemporary was brilliantly theorized by Baudrillard in his tech simulation simulacra which we started taking a look at in the previous session.

In these three aspects of the dilemma of reproducibility the extension of the consumerist or at anything with a halo of a relic and also the image consumerism which reproduces a reality or even make it is reality and substitute it with hyperreality in these three aspects we can locate the real postmodern crisis as many have pointed out.

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So, in accordingly in continuation with the discussions that we have been having right from Bart, Foucault, Lyotard and Baudrillard it is possible to state that the central postmodern problems are related to the problems of 1 representation, 2 reproduction and 3 legitimation. We have already engaged with the particular aspects of how various theorists have dealt with these there are ideas a representation reproduction and legitimation in the postmodern contemporary society of advanced technological methods.

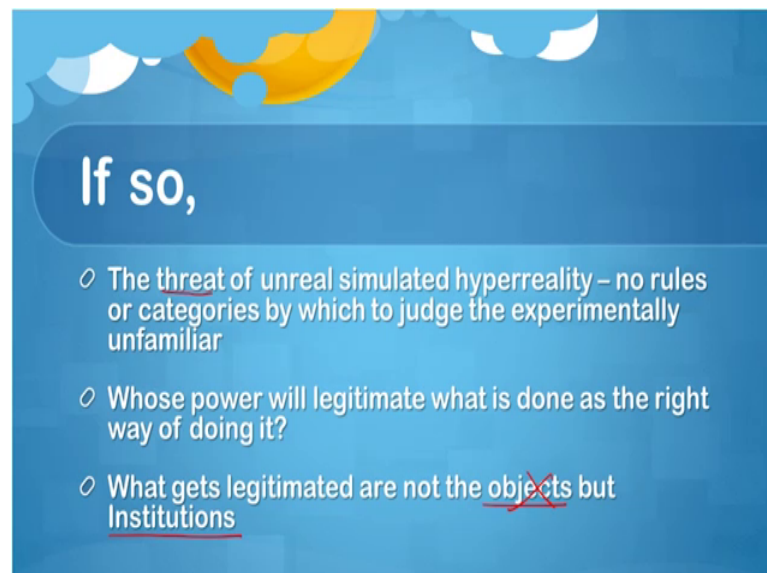
And, one also emerges is very interesting is the fact that there is no single way of looking at the idea of representation there is no single way of critiquing or engaging with reproduction or legitimation either. All of these appearance have spoken about the centrality of the postmodern problems from different paradigms and also engaging with these crisis these are problems in very, whether they all share the same worldview or

whether they all try to place these problems address these concerns within similar or different frameworks is a matter of secondary concern.

What is, what becomes more important to our understanding with the postmodern crisis of the understanding of the postmodern condition is that these three problems could be identified as the starting point of engaging with any of the issues are related with post modernism and irrespective of genre, irrespective of disciplinary boundaries we find that it is possible to engage with these central problems of representation reproduction and legitimation as we have been doing through various of critical frameworks in the last few sessions.

And, there is also a way in which we find within the same tech there is a possibility of identifying different dialogues for example, in Lyotards text when we spoke about metanarratives we also spoke about the idea of a legitimation put forward by Habermas, when we spoke about the idea of representation in Baudrillard text we also engage with Walter Benjamin. So, here we find an ongoing dialogue across disciplines and across these various theorists even when they are engaging with a similar, and similar frameworks of discussing these central postmodern problems.

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If so,

- The threat of unreal simulated hyperreality – no rules or categories by which to judge the experimentally unfamiliar
- Whose power will legitimate what is done as the right way of doing it?
- What gets legitimated are not the ~~objects~~ but Institutions

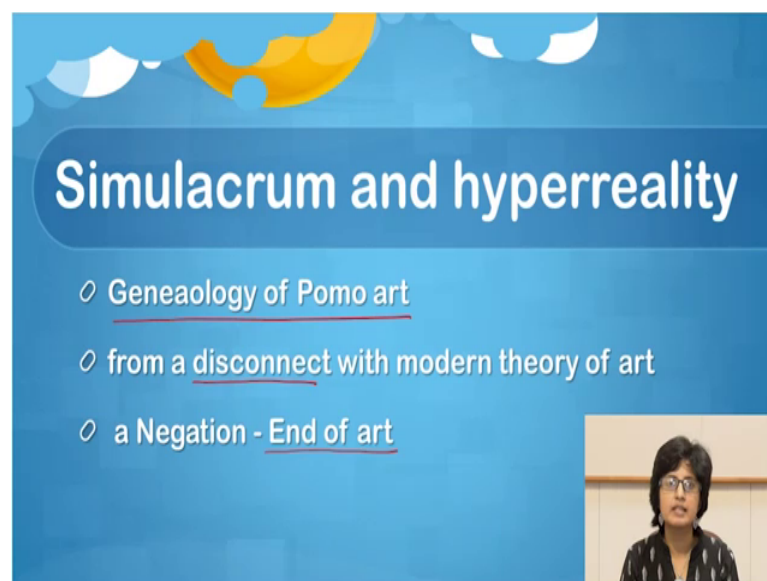
So, if this is the case how to be engage with the central problem of the threat of unreal simulated hyper reality. I use the term our threat rather and by simply because this is also because the condition of hyperreality in the postmodern period has also been identified

as a fatal condition as a as a condition which poses a threat to the postmodern society by a number of critics and this condition emerges because there are no rules or categories by which one can judge the judge the experimentally unfamiliar.

And, this certainly leads to a crisis because whose power will legitimate what is done as a right way of doing it and in the contrary there also emerges a phenomenon by which what is being done itself emerges as the form of it is own legitimation and in this process if we keep aside the various issues related with legitimation we also realize that in this process what gets legitimated are not the objects.

But institutions and here we also find a way in which particular kinds of art installations particular kinds of images of art being projected not centrally as objects of art but, as part takes of different institutions and different discourses and we have been given a framework by Baudrillard to engage with these problems in the contemporary through the ideas of hyper reality simulation simulacra.

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The slide features a blue background with a decorative header containing a yellow sun and white clouds. The title 'Simulacrum and hyperreality' is displayed in white text within a dark blue rounded rectangle. Below the title, three bullet points are listed in white text, each with a red underline under the key terms: 'Genealogy of Pomo art', 'from a disconnect with modern theory of art', and 'a Negation - End of art'. A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a woman with glasses speaking.

- o Genealogy of Pomo art
- o from a disconnect with modern theory of art
- o a Negation - End of art

And, coming back to a discussion of Baudrillard and simulacrum and hyper reality it is also important to notice that in this in the discussion of hyper reality in the various in in identifying the various changing discourses of a representation we can also identify genealogy of postmodern art.

Also, recalling a point that we made a while back the centrality of postmodern problems is also associated with representation reproduction and legitimation and here when we try to delineate when we try to call out the genealogy of postmodern art we also realize that this is possible only with a form of disconnect with the modern theory of art because after the modern theory of art with the emergence of postmodern theory of art with the emergence of the postmodern crisis of representation, legitimation, reproduction what we are left with is an end of art allocation of everything that the modern stood for everything that various aspects of modernity embraced and endorsed.

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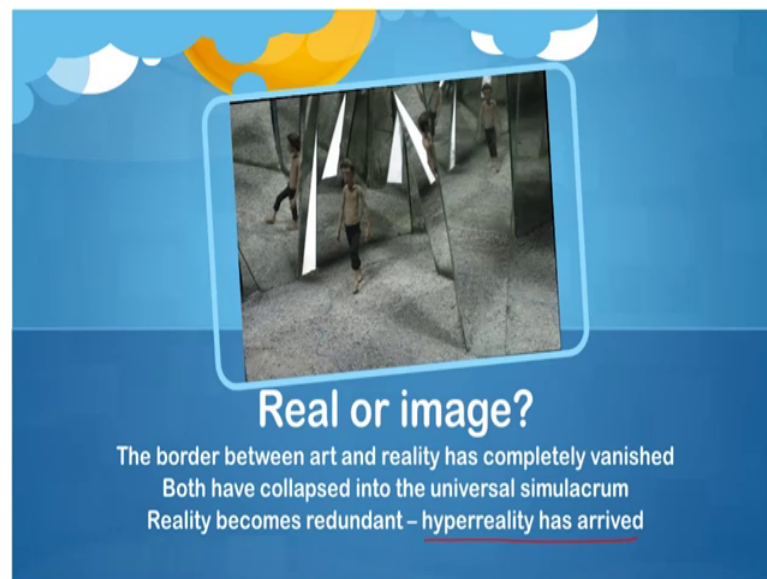


In that context to further reiterate and underscore the major points of our discussion we can also delineate four historic phases of representational image sign which would also enable a better understanding of the transition from the modernist idea of representation and art towards the post modernist negation of fact within which the understanding of hyper reality and within which a new kind of approach towards art also lies.

In the first phase representation was merely a reflection of basic reality and this is something that we all are familiar with. In the second phase we also saw a certain problematization of representation in which representation masks and perverted a basic reality and we do find various forms in which this gets represented in different forms of art including literature and in the third stage what was being represented was the absence of a basic reality it was not important to talk about real reality by representing what is

real and representing there your situation, but it was also possible to engage with a reality by marking at absence of a basic reality and in the final stage which is also the contemporary stage we find that representation bears no relation to any reality whatsoever and the ready and it becomes it is own pure simulacrum and pure is where we situate the discussions related to hyper reality and the postmodern representations rather the postmodern crisis of representations.

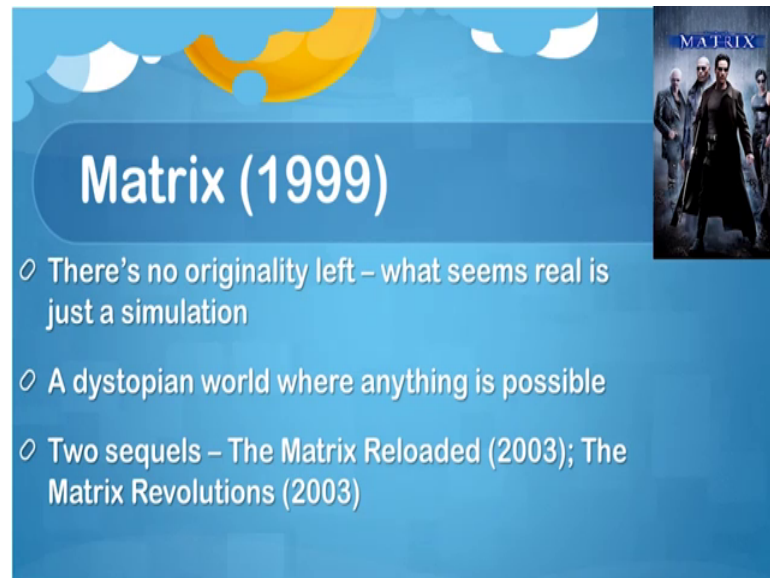
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So, with the arrival of hyper reality we find that distinction between the real and the image has collapsed the border between art and reality has completely vanished and both have collapsed into the universal simulacrum. So, in that sense reality also becomes a redundant concept giving a way to the various forms and discussions of hyper reality in different situations, in different postmodern situations especially in advanced technological are urban societies.



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## Matrix (1999)

- There's no originality left – what seems real is just a simulation
- A dystopian world where anything is possible
- Two sequels – The Matrix Reloaded (2003); The Matrix Revolutions (2003)

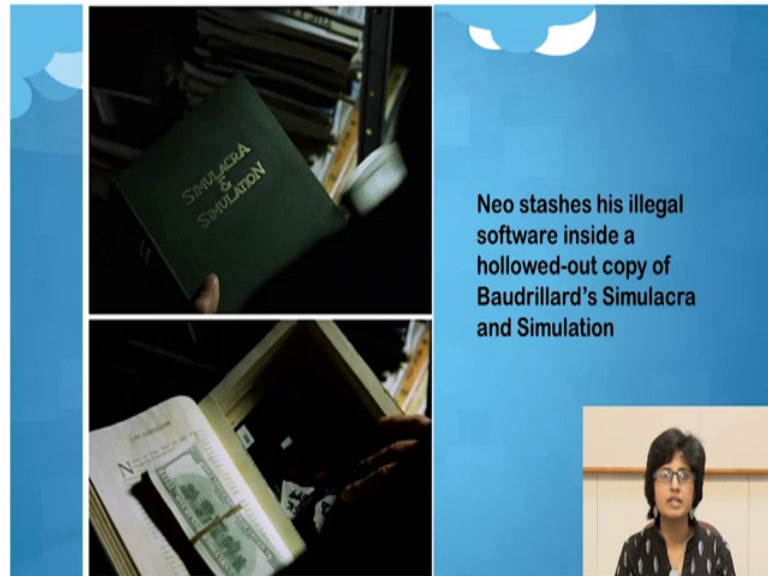
It is very much possible to now take our discussion away from your theoretical frameworks to certain postmodern representations, which have also become markers of contemporary media, markers of contemporary art forms and markers of contemporary mass consumerism. The 1999 movie Matrix is a very supreme example of this. This movie was a very succinct engagement with the idea that there was no originality left and what seems real is just a simulation the movie matrix was the representation of a dystopian world where anything is possible and those the engaged with a non-linear narrative and various are forms in which is challenged with reality a hyper reality being just one of those elements.

The movie was widely acclaimed to critically and it also enjoyed tremendous a box office a commercial success. It also led to the emergence of two sequels the Matrix Reloaded and The Matrix Revolutions. This movie also made it possible to talk about the postmodern crisis of representations and also give us the language to engage with the various a crisis which are embedded in the absence of reality or rather the substitution of reality by hyper reality. A number of hyper reality stopped in situations where introduced and there were ways in which many critics engage with the movie to find parallels with a number of postmodern situations in the contemporary.

And, though there is a certain west eccentric model to this are to these various representations it is also possible to relate with the various themes engaged by these

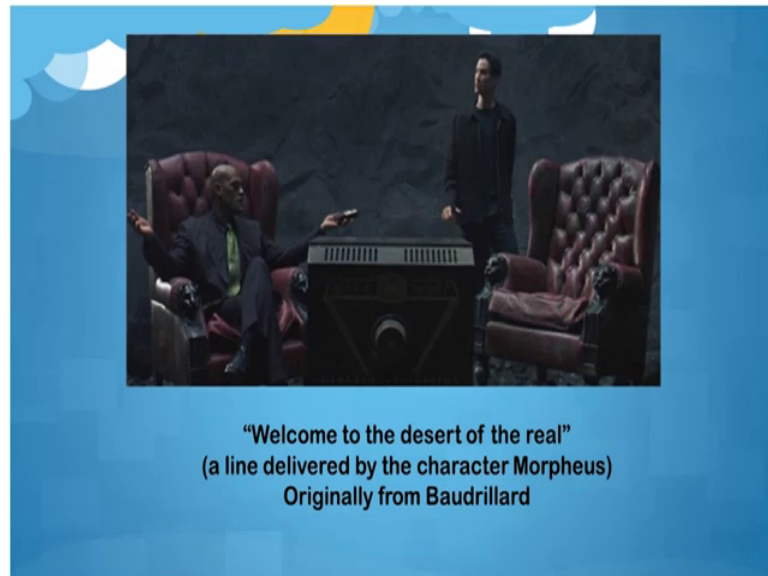
crisis from different parts of the world because there is a way in which our globalized and urbanization and vast technological developments have become a way of the world it regardless of for the geographical location.

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There are very certain there are certain interesting images I in the movie matrix which allows us to make a comparison with the tech with Baudrillard takes simulacra and simulation, there is a particularly interesting scene in the beginning of the movie where the one character neo stashes his illegal software inside a hollowed out copy of a Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation and here we are also being told in a very self reflexive self referential in a very self reflexive and self referential way, that movie is engaging with the notions of a simulacra simulation and hyper reality through it is various forms of representation.

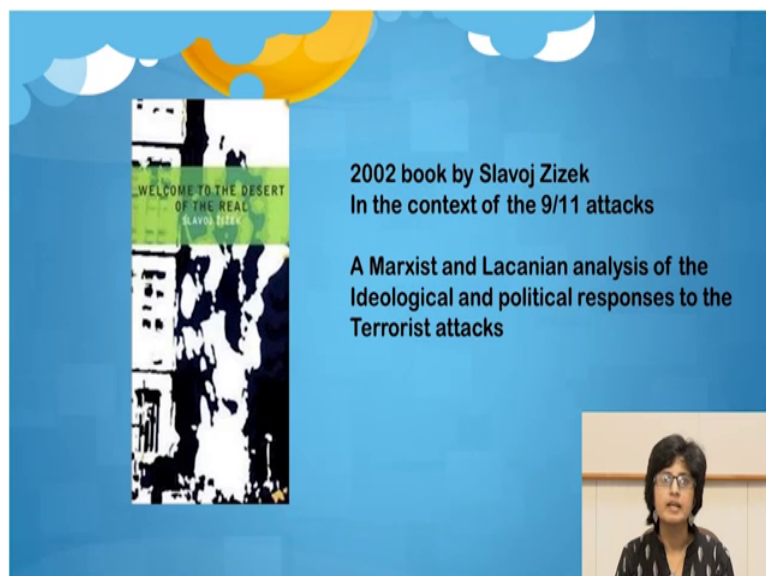
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Also, now the interesting element is a particular line delivered by the character in the movie Morpheus welcome to the desert of the world which is originally from Baudrillard realistic simulacra and simulation.

So, in that sense the various discussions about hyper reality simulacra and simulation this seems to be merely theoretical jonathans, but on the contrary they have become in a very post modern in their very typically postmodern condition they also have become certain ways in which one could really talk about the contemporary reality.

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In fact, there is also another book an entire book titled welcome to the desert of the real which is a tribute Baudrillard original work and written in the context of 9 11 attacks and this is also a Marxist and Lacanian analysis of ideological and political responses to the terrorist attacks.

So, there is a there are a number of ways in which through art, through cinema and through certain incomprehensible events at the contemporary that hyper reality becomes perhaps the only theoretical art tool perhaps the only framework which is available for us to make sense of the contemporary, rather to engage with the temporarily even though meaning making process remains as a distant a promise.

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A number of works and a number of theories have engaged with the idea of hyper reality there are also a number of movies which used hyper reality as a prominent theme to talk about the various crisis and conditions of the postmodern period.

So, here I also draw your attention to Umberto Eco's travels in hyper reality which is a brilliant work of cultural criticism and in this work we find the combination of postmodern philosophy, travelogue and also sardonic representations that focus on the cultural shortcomings of America. So, in that sense in this work which is also a cultural and narration which is also a narrative of the cultural life of a postmodern America we find our Eco emerging as a social critic and the tour guide.

This work in fact, takes us across an American landscape that is being recreated in the image of a faked history, fake art, a faked nature and fake cities. He also gives prominent examples from different images that have been constructed and Eco considered this as a pilgrimage. This work travels in hyper reality across America across different American cities as a pilgrimage in search of hyper reality in which he hoped to be able to engage with the world of the absolute faith which he also terms as the authentic fake.

The paradox inherent in this term is a very interesting and this also captures the essence of the postmodern crisis of hyper reality.

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to the point of exacerbation. There is, then, an America of furious hyperreality, which is not that of Pop art, of Mickey Mouse, or of Hollywood movies. There is another, more secret America (or rather, just as public, but snubbed by the European visitor and also by the American intellectual); and it creates somehow a network of references and influences that finally spread also to the products of high culture and the entertainment industry. It has to be discovered.

And so we set out on a journey, holding on to the Ariadne-thread, an open sesame that will allow us to identify the object of this pilgrimage no matter what form it may assume. We can identify it through two typical slogans that pervade American advertising. The first, widely used by Coca-Cola but also frequent as a hyperbolic formula in everyday speech, is "the real thing"; the second, found in print and heard on TV, is "more"—in the sense

UMBERTO ECO  
TRAVELS IN HYPERREALITY  
PICADOR  
AN INTRODUCTION OF THE NAME OF THE ROSE

Italian  
Faith in Fakes - 1986  
Travels in  
Hyperreality - 1995

About "America's obsession with simulacra and counterfeit reality"

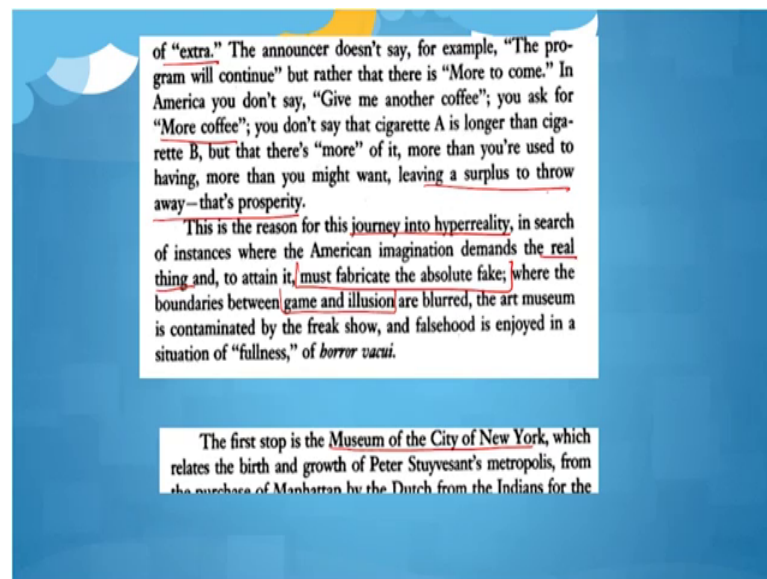
Eco's travels in hyper reality was originally written in Italian and the first translation which came out in 1986 also had the title faith in fakes, but however, the 1995 edition that he had brought about the it bore the current title Travels in Hyper Reality.

Eco's travels in hyper reality is basically about America's obsession with simulacra and counterfeit reality. This is also one of those rare instances in which we find a theory becoming a rather parallel and very important to talk about certain kinds of a reality, you know certain kinds of reality that we find in the post in the contemporary period. It is important to get a sense of how he could take cess through his travels in hyper reality it would also give us a sense of how hyper reality is manifested, how hyper reality is a reality that we can conceive that we can experience in the postmodern period.

Let me read out certain introductory passage from Eco's in *Travels in Hyper Reality*. There is then an America of a furious hyper reality which is not that of a part of Mickey Mouse or Hollywood movies. There is another more secret America or rather just as public, but snubbed by the European visitor and also by the American intellectual and it creates somehow a network of references and influences that finally spread also to the products of high culture and the entertainment industry it has to be discovered.

And so we set out on the journey holding onto the Ariadne thread and open-sesame that will allow us to identify the object of the pilgrimage no matter what form it may assume. We can identify it through typical slogans that pervade American advertising, the first widely used by coca cola, but also frequent as a hyperbolic formula in everyday speech is the real thing. The second found in print and heard on TV is more in the sense of extra.

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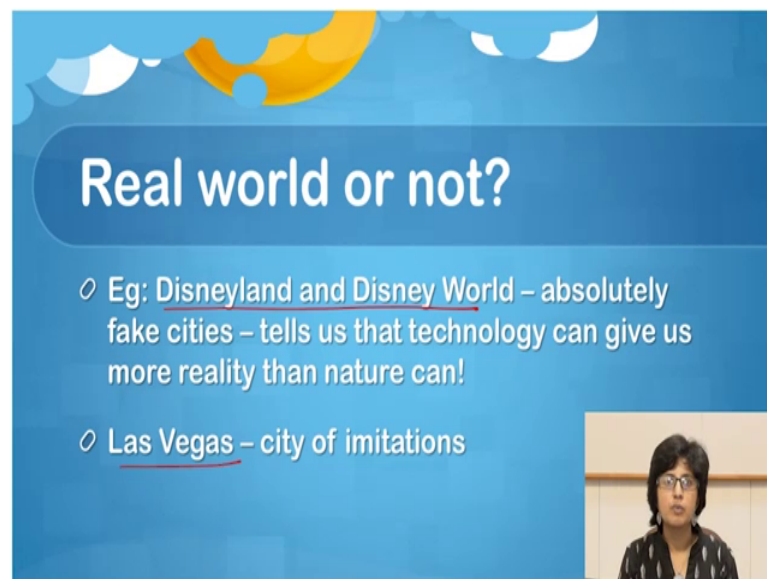


The announcer does not say for example, the program will continue, but rather that there is more to come in America you do not say, give me another coffee, you ask for more coffee. You do not say that cigarette A is longer than cigarette B, but that, but that there is more, but that there is more of it. More than you are used to having, more than you might want leaving a surplus to throw away that is prosperity.

Here Eco also gives us a sense of how hyper reality gets manifested in to the various aspects of using a language as well, how there is a semiotics way of engaging with the notions of hyper reality as well.

This is a reason for this journey into hyper reality in search of instances where the American imagination demands the real thing and to attain it must fabricate the absolute fake where the boundary is between game and illusion are blurred, the art museum is contaminated by the freak show and falsehood is enjoyed in the situation of fullness of horror vacui and he also then takes us through various sites in which these forms of representations could be experience, could be witnessed and the first stop is the museum of the city of New York.

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**Real world or not?**

- ◊ Eg: Disneyland and Disney World – absolutely fake cities – tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can!
- ◊ Las Vegas – city of imitations

And, in these discussions in these travels through hyper reality as Eco puts it we are also being led to eventually a confusion of what is real and what is not, which is a real world that we are experience and which is the simulated world.

And he also talks about his journey through Disney land and Disney World and Las Vegas and he also identifies them as absolutely fake cities and tells us that these two sites are also reminders that technology can give us more reality than nature can.

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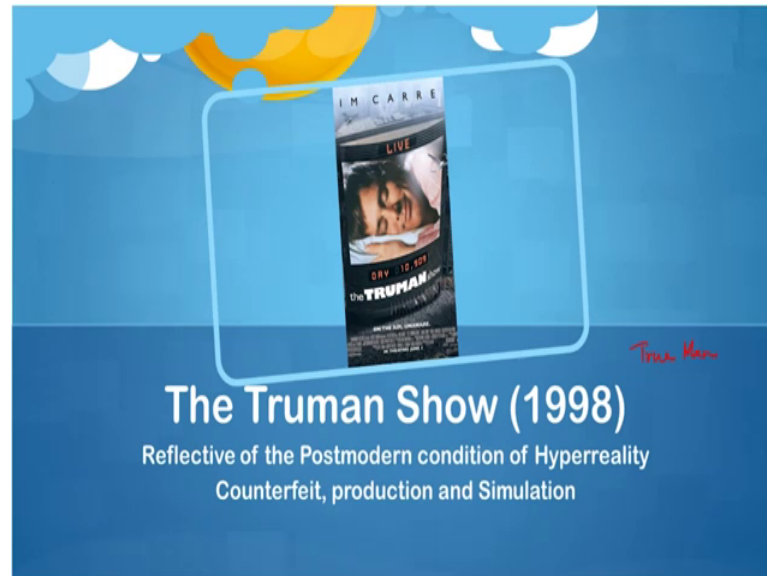


And, going through these cities of imaginations he also identifies these two sites Disneyland and Las Vegas as the two capitals of this new culture of illusions and here we also identified this extremely fascinating fact that it is a contemporary crisis of representation, it is a contemporary need to simulate reality that actually gave rise to the various theoretical frameworks which engage with hyper reality simulacra and simulation.

And, here theory also ceases to be something which is completely removed from everyday life, but on the other hand theory here becomes an offshoot of how life is lived on an everyday basis, how life is rather mediated by technology on an on a daily basis and this is the significance of engaging with hyper reality and the notions of the various notions of representation in order to understand the postmodern period and in order to engage with the various crises that dominate in the postmodern age.



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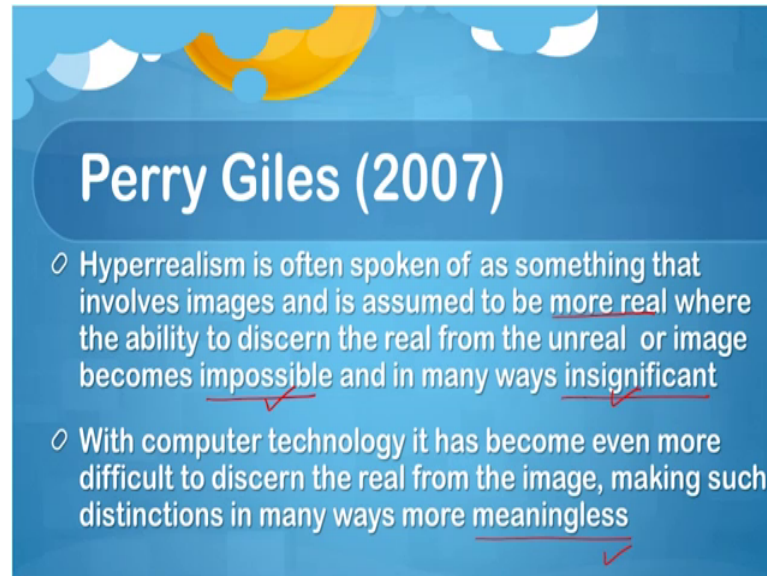


And, we could think of yet another example it would be the movie true man show which was released in 1998 in this also we find that the movie is being reflective of the postmodern condition of hyper reality it also engages with the aspects of count feed production and stimulation through a narrative in which the lead character of the movie is enable is unable to distinguish between the reality of his life and the ways in which his own reality is being sold to a wider audience in the form of a reality show.

And, also there is also a play on words in this title because in Truman Show though he is a character unknown to himself though; Truman is the character of a reality show in which he himself is a playing the real a character we find that to the contrary to that he is the only true man who actually thinks he is living his own life his own reality, but he is only a part of a reality show.

So, as a complicated the narrative is this is also a perfect rendition of the postmodern condition of hyper reality and we shall be coming back to this movie Truman Show because this is also one of the texts that we shall be engaging with in order to talk about various kinds of post modernism at work.

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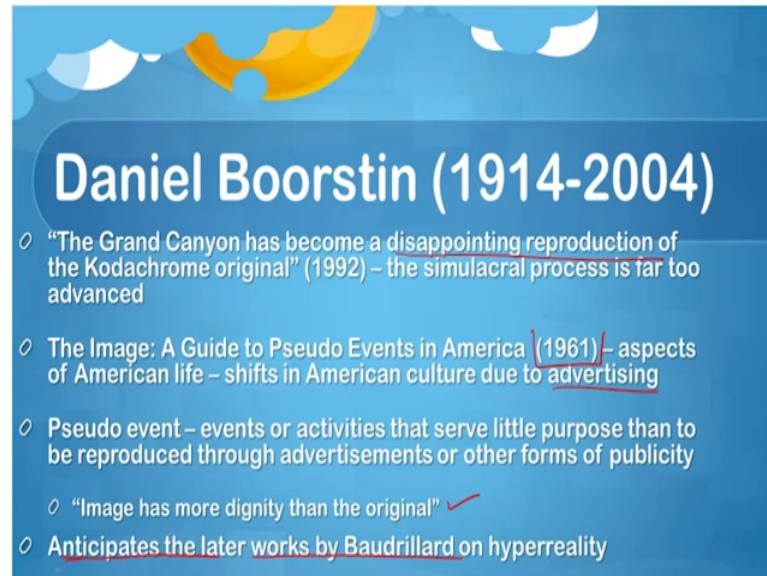


There have also been various other kinds of definitions, various other theorists who engaged with post modernism a Perry Giles he offers his rather said self explanatory comment on hyper reality.

Hyper realism is often spoken of as something that involves images and is assumed to be more real where the ability to discern the real from the unreal or image becomes impossible and in many ways insignificant. With computer technology it has become even more difficult to discern the real from the image making such distinctions in many more ways meaningless.

In fact, we also find that the idea of hyper reality becomes more for reality itself to such an extent that even the pursuit of the real quote unquote the real is being increasingly seen as an impossible insignificant and a meaningless pursuit.

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## Daniel Boorstin (1914-2004)

- "The Grand Canyon has become a disappointing reproduction of the Kodachrome original" (1992) – the simulacral process is far too advanced
- The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America (1961) – aspects of American life – shifts in American culture due to advertising
- Pseudo event – events or activities that serve little purpose than to be reproduced through advertisements or other forms of publicity
  - "Image has more dignity than the original" ✓
- Anticipates the later works by Baudrillard on hyperreality

In this argument further Daniel Boorstin also famously remarked in 1992 that the Grand Canyon has become a disappointing reproduction of the Kodachrome original of the photographic original and here he is also drawing attention to how the simulacral process is far too advanced in the postmodern period and they take in the age of technological advancement. Boorstin's views are extremely important to us because it also anticipates the later works by Baudrillard on hyper reality.

And because in 1961 he had published the image A Guide to Pseudo Events in America in which he engaged with various aspects of American life and also focused on the shifts in American culture due to advertising.

So, he was even before you know even before Baudrillard at spoke about hyper reality and simulacra and simulation, he drew attention to how in the American culture advertising had led to a challenge in the idea of reality and he also defines pseudo events as events or activities that serve little purpose than to be reproduced through advertisements or other forms of our publicity and he also made this a common that image has more dignity than the original men then in the context of advertisement set where are prevalent in 1960's and what you want is this extremely interesting is a factor whether it does Boorstin work on American advertisements or Baudrillard works on hyper reality or Eco's works on or Eco's journeys through hyper reality.

We find that there is an undercurrent of the consumerist culture which has which also challenges the ideas of text the ideas of author, even the ideas of the reader and the critical and the critical our practice itself and how there is a way in which the entire paradigms within which art was conceived within which art was approach has undergone a radical shift.

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This is a again not to say that the notions of hyper reality the theories by Baudrillard and the other and others have not have been received without any criticism. This has been increase many have dismissed these notions these theories is being intensely pessimistic because it also focuses a lot it also relies a lot on technological determinist we should not be going into the details of those right now.

But nevertheless it is also important to remember that though Baudrillard draws their attention to the to the notion of hyper reality to such an extent that it also becoming a form of a frightening reality contemporary we can also a simultaneously think about various others such as Lyotard who also saw a possibility of more liberty for the entire social system in these I mean that in a technologically determined world.

When we move away from the so called set ideas of reproduction, legitimation and representation we are also being invited into we are also participating in a new world which is not limited by any of these criteria in which we can think about newer

possibilities, we can think about newer narratives and newer learn and a newer forms of world here.

So, with that note we also wind up today's lecture. That is all we have for today's session. Thank you for listening and we look forward to seeing you in the next session.