

Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
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Lecture - 21

Part A

Film Studies

Hello, today's class is on Film Theory and what are the key features of this very relatively speaking a recent field of academic enquiry. So, how did it all begin, the first step towards a film theory was taken by Vachel Lindsay in his Art of The Moving Picture in 1915 and Hugo Munsterberg in The Photo Play a Psychological Study in 1916. Both of these works considered this new medium in the context of other art forms, for example, theatre, painting and other works of art.

While Lindsay draws parallels between film and art, such as for example, architecture, sculpture and poetry. Munsterberg goes much further in arguing for the unique properties of the cinema by focusing on the psychological responses of the viewer and on the aesthetic properties of the film. So, we have to consider that these studies which were done sometime during 1915 and 1916 were sort of pioneering works in the field of film theory.

So, one of the foremost theories of films is Arthurian theory, most of us associate arthurier theory and the study of directors as the main person or the way, directors influence a film that idea. And we associate it with the French New Wave critics and we also know the establishment of a journal call Cahiers Du cinema, but it all began in reality it all began much before the French New Wave film directors.

So, Arthurian theory in 1910 by the British magazine Bioscope and which identified some directors as worthy of special mention and worthy of academic studies. In Germany the term Autoren, A u t o r e n, Autoren film was used and filmmaker and novelist, Alexandre Astruc. He coined the term camera pen in his article a camera stylo. It was in 1948 and it called for a new language in film making. According to Astruc, camera should be used the way writers use their pens, so therefore, the word camera stylo.

Astruc posited that film maker should make more personal kinds of films and this was something that most followers of Arthurian theory believed in. Now, in America, there was a critic called Andrew Sarris, who was leading critic, who wrote for the *village voice*. So, according to Andrew Sarris director is the soul author of his work, so again you see there is a connection between what people like Alexandre Astruc's and people like Andre Bazin, more famously in France. I have to say that this is exactly what Andrew Sarris proclaimed in *village voice*, the director is the soul author of his work.

So, according to Sarris, this is regardless of the contribution of the writers, producers or actors. Now, Astruc wanted to raise the status of cinema from a working class form of entertainment to high art form and French critic Andre Bazin *Collection of Essays, what is cinema* published in 1967 and 1971 in two volumes. So, what is cinema is a collection of realist criticism and theory.

Bazin found Lev Kuleshov, when we will talk about Lev Kuleshov and Eisenstein emphasis on montage opposed to the realistic possibilities of cinema. He praised the American directors, such as Orson Welles and William Wyler for the way; images were used to convey reality. Something that Bazin felt was missing in cinemas is the expressionistic films of Erich Von Stroheim and F. W. Monroe.

Basonorson Welles and William Wyler for their use of techniques of deep focus and the long take to represent space and time as continuous and whole and lending that special touch of reality. So, remember these two terms, long take and deep focus and these are extremely important when we do the theory of cinematography. One of the founders of the French film journal *Cahiers Du cinema*, Bazin influence the criticism of such figures as Francoise Truffaut, Jean Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer and Jacque Rivette, who wrote for the journal that was Bazin's *Cahiers Du cinema*.

And it is soon became an influential journal of French films. The policies propose by Bazin and his followers were put into practice by the film makers of the French New Wave of the 60's. They criticized films that lead to high production, relied on big stars and followed the Jones convention, though the idea was to break these things interrogate Jones and make a more personal kinds of films not too expensive and most importantly breaking away from their star system.

Now, cinema and modernism, modernism is also one of the key theories of literary studies, academic studies. So, modernism as we all know as a movement it came into prominence after the First World War. It marks a break from the Victorian Bourgeois Morality rejecting 19th century optimism. And the modernist present, a deeply pessimistic picture of a culture in shambles.

Another key theory that you should know is Walter Benjamin, who wrote his seminal essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, where Benjamin observed that the camera was a surgeon's scalpel which laid bare the optical unconscious. So, you have two terms camera stylo that Austruc gives us and we have camera as a scalpel surgeon's, scalpel is an instrument which can laid bare the optical unconscious. So, that is a term given to us by Walter Benjamin.

And nowhere were these effects of modern technology and artistic movements were more strongly felt and disseminated than in cinema. So, let us see how forces of modernism impacted the very young art form. For example, consider German expressionism and modernism. So, the impact of expressionism or expressionistic movement was so realized in cinematic art.

We all know Walter Munch's famous painting *Scream*, which came almost at the end of the 19th century and how did cinema employ the expressionistic devices. So, Robert Wiene's, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* in 1919 and it is considered as one of the foremost expressions of this aesthetic. It is the narrative of a mad Dr, who uses a somnambulist a sleepwalker to commit crimes for him.

Wiene presents his actors in exaggerated makeup and places them in distorted sets an angular architecture, this was one of the key features of expressionistic theatre and also expressionistic cinema. *Dr Caligari's* embodies all the stylistic features of expressionism chiaroscuro for example, which is the interplay of lights and shadows, oblique angles, special distortions and the idea that danger lurks round corner.

Also, consider the way, the expressionist considers city as a threatening side and reveal in depicting, morally ambiguous characters. Other landmark expressionistic films of this period are *Nosferatu*, which was released in 1922 and *The Last Laugh* 1924 and also Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, which was released in 1927. So, directors such as Fritz Lang, Karl Freund, Billy Wilder and F.W. Monroe, they took expressionism to America, the result of

this transcontinental exuded was a hybrid of German expressionism, French poetic realism and American pulp, which subsequently resulted in film noir.

F.W. Murnau as a yet another early exponent of expressionism along with Fritz Lang and G.W. Pabst's his films are full of dread and suggest a world between reality and fantasy. The themes of repression and sexuality recur, which echo something of Murnau's personal life. Since, he was believed to be a closure to more sexual, during the period of Germany's homophobic laws.

His films are known for creating a sense of an alternative universe and one of the best horror films of all times *Nosferatu*, a symphony of terror is a classic example of German expressionism with Max Schreck playing count, over lock Dracula like character. And let us also talk about the first ever science fiction film, which was Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* released in 1927 and it was also one of the first films that questioned the dehumanizing effect of industrialisation on people. It is also believed to be one of the most expensive films of its times.

While, we move on to the major movements, let us just get acquainted with what is a plot in cinema. So, plot is the narrative foundations upon which all stories are built as we all know, text is a verbal written or visual artifact and narrative is the way a story is told. Film combines all these elements and therefore, is more complex of arts, most stories reflect the universal human experiences which are birth, growth, going on adventure, facing temptations, winning, losing, falling in and out of love and life lessons derived.

So, we have already done plots in quite detail, when we were talking about archetypal criticism and also formalism. So, please refer to those lectures, due to time constraints, I would not be able to dwell much on what is plot. Let us move on to that is quick discussion of major film movements. So, one of the most prominent film movement of all times is, the French new wave, of course we have Italian Neorealism also, but we will talk about it in a moment, but let me begin with introducing you to French new wave.

So, as we already talked about, who is an author, so author is someone, who creates, who writes, but when we talk about a term like authorism or authorial theory, what do we mean. So, the word authorial is a French term for author in film lexicon however, an authorial, it is not a writer, but a director. So, we might ask, how does a director become an authorial.

So, well it all began on March 30, 1948 and Alexandre Astruc, I have already mentioned him. A literary critic comes in hasty published, his the camera stylo in the journal like Roy France. He announced a new wave in cinema and he based his article on analogy comparing a film director to a novelist, whereby a camera becomes a pen. A comparison implied that a cinema has a language of its own and the idea was very clear to elevate cinema to the level of other arts and to emphasize on its personal and psychological value.

Now, direct Francois Truffaut, he built on this idea few years later, when he wrote his celebrated essay a certain tendency in the French cinema. I am giving you the translation in English, it was published in 1954. This is a theoretical essay that paved the way for the French New Wave and ridiculed the so-called tradition of quality, which was evident in films by the likes of a cloth Onto Lara and John Delano, where their script was paramount and the emphasis was on psychological realism and tasteful artistic production values.

So, Truffaut and Astruc challenged the convention idea that film is a producer medium. Remember, even in Hollywood, studios were ruling the roost and the entire conflict between or distinction between rather classic Hollywood and American new Hollywood period, the two kinds of films that were made during the classic period. And the new Hollywood period, they derive from this struggle; basic premise was who controls the medium, the producer or the director.

So, classic Hollywood is all about the supremacy of the studio whereas, the new Hollywood is all about the director being in complete control. So, who owns the medium, a producer or a director. Truffaut and Astruc, they cause the idea of politics, there is Arthurier's to become a central concept of the Cahier year and the new wave. The wave in France it is called the nouvelle vague, which relied with relied on a close relationship between film criticism and filmmaking. That is the films were informed by manifestos by film critics, who often became directors themselves.

The Cahiers critics formed their pantheon of important Arthurier directors including Jean Renoir, Robert Bresson, John Cocteau, Max Ophuls, Jacques Tati, Jacques Becker, Alfred Hitchcock, Samuel Fuller, Howard Hawke, Nicholas Ray, Jean Vigo and so on. Though, the Arthurier theory has been hotly debated since its inception it nevertheless is an

important tool to understand films through an understanding of the directors and their body of works.

The first of the cahier critics came up with the film that was directed by Claude Chabrol, the *Le Beau Serge*, which was followed by Truffaut with his *the 400 blows*. Both films tackled the themes of coming of age and were largely filmed on location. Other films such as *Romance*, *The Sign of a Lion* and *Rivets*, *Perry New Apartyon*, which was released in 1960, they followed. But, it was the most influential film of this period was *God's Abu Duchess Sofley* or *Breathless* that the new wave arrived with the bag.

The novella vague officially lasted from 1959 to 60, 61, but it had a lasting effect on later French and international films in that in a particular idea, because arthurier cinema or arthurier centric cinema start developing in America, Germany, great Britain, Brazil Japan, Poland and the Zec republic. So, one of the most influential movements of all times, I should also make mention of the Russian filmmaker, Lev Kuleshov, who lived between 1899 and 1970.

Kuleshov's significant contribution was the idea that each short is like a building block and it derives its meaning from its context; that is the shots placed around it. During his workshop sessions at the state film school, which is called V J I K, Kuleshov and his students would systematically dissect D. W Grief essays generally known as the father of modern cinema. So, his film *intolerance* 1916 and viewed it several times, editing, reediting, assembling and reassembling it.

So, Kuleshov further felt that juxtaposition of shorts must be inherent in all film signs, shorts therefore, acquire meaning when juxtaposed with what comes before and what comes after them. To put this principle into practice Kuleshov juxtapose several shots from several pieces of films, which then turned into a sequence. And there is a term called Kuleshov effect, in which he took footage of the face of an actor Eivin Masukin and spliced in shorts of a woman lying in a coffin, a little girl with a teddy bear and a bowl of soup.

The audience reacted positively believing the actor had emote it is very well. However, in reality the actors face never change expressions, only that is because, only he is a still shot was used. And Kuleshov concluded with this experiment that people react to a context along with the content to derive the meaning of a scene or a sequence. Kuleshov

also pioneered, what is known as creative geography by splicing together bits of action from various films taken from different spaces, countries and regions.

We move on want to talk about a seminal film of that period called *The Man with a Movie Camera*, which was made in 1929. Now, this is a name you should know Dziga Vertov, who lived between 1896 and 1954, he was a pioneer Russian documentary maker. *The Man with a Movie Camera* combines radical politics with innovative aesthetics, Dziga Vertov's brother Mikhail Kaufman handled the camera, while his wife edited the footage.

The work is important, because it demonstrated a non-linear narrative form for cinema, it is a documentary it gives you a slice of life in Russia. The camera rolls as it captures the city mostly which is Moscow, the city it sights and sounds it is buses and tramps it is citizens and it is industries. So, the camera peers between the legs of a woman as she gives birth to a baby, watches children and ruptured by a conjugates act and tracks an ambulance carrying an accident victim.

So, everyday kind of incidents, the interests in everyday life in a documentary film following a very non narrative kind of a structure. It watches the forces of change as new traditions replace the old, when couples marry in a registry, instead of a church, separate and divorce. An unforgettable image from the film is that of a close up shot of a magnified eye looking through the camera lens, it is a celebration of modern city and film aesthetics and political ideals.

Man with a Movie Camera uses every available device of filming and editing including, slow motion, animation, zoom, split screen, blurring focus and freeze. The film remains a great example of use of montage in the place, where hard work is transformed into mechanized labor. As a socialist document, it heralds an age, where workers would be able to afford leisure activities, such as play soccer, visit theatre, pole vault and go for swimming.

The film made heroes out of the common people of the city, but of course as we know today it is more like utopian view of life and communism. So, one name that is popularly or most commonly associated with editing is montage and what is montage? So, Russian filmmaker, the great Sergei Eisenstein, so Sergei Eisenstein defined montage. A montage

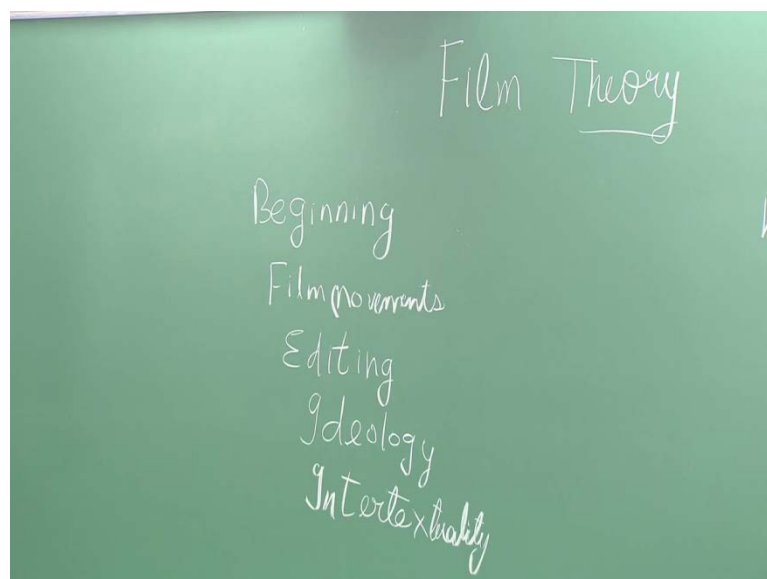
is assembled from separate images that provide a partial representation, which are in combination and juxtaposition.

Montage is a kind of editing technique and refers to a series of images and sounds that form a visual pattern. There may not be any clear, logical or sequential pattern and the montage editing came out of the soviets experimental cinema of the 1920's. Though, Lev Kuleshov first thought of it, but now it is primarily associated with Sergie Eisenstein, who articulated the theories of montage and typage.

Typage means using non professional actors with clear physical trait is in representative roles. In the beginning montage was associated or was read at an ideological level suggesting conflict and collision, it was particularly used, when an editor or film maker wanted to convey a great deal into a brief segment. Eisenstein believed that collision and conflict must be inherent to all visual signs in film juxtaposing shorts make them collide or conflict and meaning is produced through this.

So, one of the most celebrated use of montage or early montage was same in Eisenstein battleship Potemkin. And then later on, Orson Welles used it to perfection in citizen Kane, when there is an entire montage built around the dining table. It also reflects a passage of time.

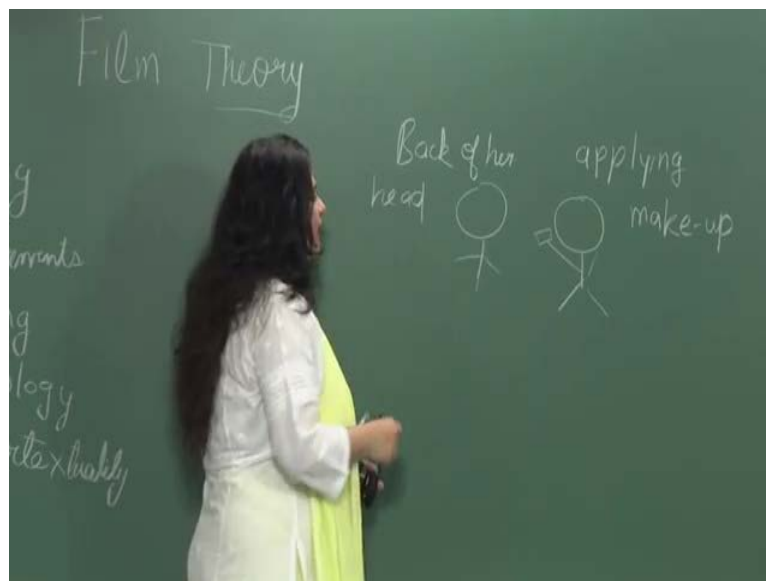
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Now, one of the most prominent editing devices is jump cut and generally, we associate French or Arthurian John Godard with this editing device. So, what is jump cut? The jump cut involves an uncanny jolt in a film's progress, drawing the viewer's attention to a disturbing illusion of time and space. A film might cut abruptly from one location to the next without any attempt to employ those devices or matches of eye line that are essential for continuity. It was the French pioneer George Meli , first recognized that a jump cut could generate magical or comic effects.

If the appearance of a subject filmed from a single vantage point was altered between shots. Although, Godard was not the first to use or think about the possibilities of a jump cut, modern use of the technique is more or less come to be associated with him. So, when we say jump cut, we immediately think of Godard. Breathless as a finished film was long by 30 minutes and instead of cutting out whole scenes or sequences, Godard chose to trim within scene thus creating the jagged cutting style.

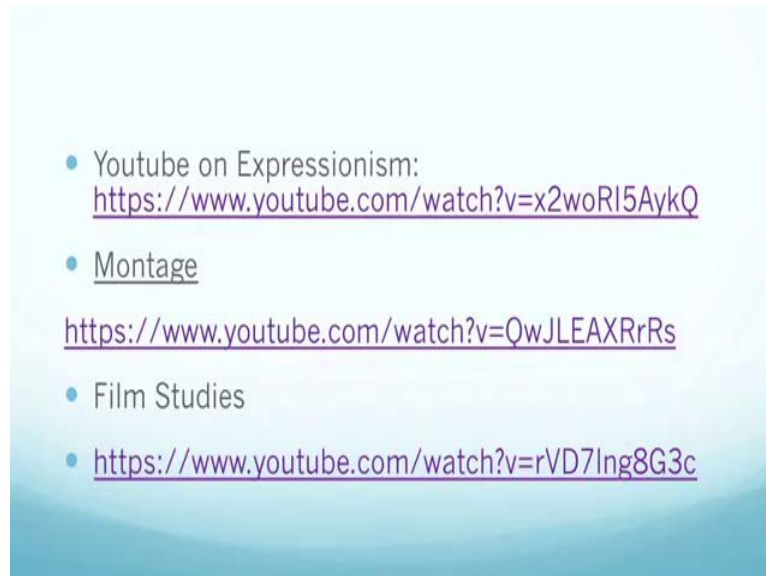
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Now, here I have just drawn a very crude picture, this is from the scene, where the protagonist and his lady love, they are driving in a car and we see the back of her head. So, this is the back of this, imagine this, this is the back of Jean Seberg's head, and then suddenly we find her applying makeup. So, this is the makeup box and we see back of her head is still holding a makeup box; this is a quick example of a jump cut.

But, then if you Google jump cut, you will find several videos, which will show you exactly, what it means.

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And here are a few links to some important websites and references for film theory please take a good look of look at it and make a note. We will continue with our next lecture on film theory in the next class.

Thank you very much.