An Analysis of the Matrix with Special Emphasize on Jean Baudillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* Salini R

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Simulacra and Simulation is a book written by Jean Paul Baudillard in the year 1981. He begins his essay by discussing about simulacrum and simulation. According to him genetic miniaturization forms an important part of simulacrum. That is the real can be produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, memory banks and modes of control. It is called hyperreal. It blurs the distinction between real and imaginary and results in the production of models with simulated differences. He says that simulation is not a sort of pretending. Then he gives the example of religious faith and worshipping of God. The God is reduced to a system of signs that constitute the faith. When God is represented in the form of images we are actually acknowledging his death and disappearance. Thus the God is a simulacrum. The whole system of religion and religious faith constitutes the simulacrum, which is not *exchanged for real but exchanged for itself* without any references. Simulation is different from representation. Because the later arose from the principle of equivalence of the sign and real and the former gives importance to radical negation of sign as a value, having no reference at all. Then he speaks about Ramsy, the Egyptian Pharaoh whose body is mumified and kept in the museum. This accumulation of body also has a meaning. It creates a kind of *doubling*, a life after death, a new model or a simulacrum. Then he moves on telling that Disney land is also a model of simulacra, which is a miniaturization of the pleasures, joys and constraints of America. He moves on saying that Disney land is presented as imaginary world in order to make us believe that America and Los Angeles are real, when they really belong to a hyperreal order of simulation. Today we try to prove everything by following a theory of binaries. We often try to prove the real through imaginary, work through strikes, system through the crisis it faces. We always try to prove something by negating its existence. We reach a thesis through anti thesis. It holds true in case of art, theatre, pedagogy and psychiatry. Through this he is indirectly mocking at the modern man adoration to unnecessary criticisms. The power is exerted through its denial. People actually try to stimulate death in order to escape from the pains of the real death. Many American Presidents like that of John F Kennedy was murdered because of their political power and influences. The simulated murders are necessary to prove that they are just models of power. Earlier the power of the king lasted till his death, but today his body is mumified in order to preserve his power. By doing so we are trying to recreate a new environment. It is very difficult to feign violence. For example, it is very difficult to simulate robbery in a store and convince the security that it was a stimulated robbery. Though we can use artificial weapons and only feign to commit violence, these artificial signs will get mixed up with real elements such as policeman who will arrest the culprit and complicate the plot. The simulated environment gets reduced to real. The law will not work on a stimulated environment. The simulation to do evil deeds cannot be punished. He says that it is impossible to separate the process of
simulation from the inertia of real. Capital played a very important part in the creation of simulacrum and simulations. It played a significant role in fostering the reality and liquidated the rigid notions of wealth and production. It lead to the production of black money and various kinds of manipulation. Thus capital paved way for the emergence of new simulacrum by duplicating the real’s of everyday life. In this era of material production we often try to restore the real by trying to reproduce it by using technology. But the products so formed will only be refractions of the real, which is hyperreal. He moves on saying that even power works by the signs of resemblance. The staged assassinations of political leaders is an attempt to annihilate the power structures, by creating paranoia among the spectators. In modern times the authorities always tries to conceal the death of head of state. It is because they consider him as a simulacrum, which has the power to rule and govern. An image of double is produced here. Similarly the power is also artificially revitalised as the object of a social demand and is not subjected to death and violence. That is one of the reasons for mummification of Pharaohs and continues even today by protecting the burial grounds of mortal bodies of immortal souls like Mahatma Gandhi. He moves on saying that even the work is a scenario which conceals the reality of work and its production. Strikes and works move hand in hand and is essential for the development of social, which emerges as the death of socialism. Ideologies are formulated by considering reality as a system of signs. Just like that simulation is also a duplication of reality which gets manifested in the form of signs. Television (TV) which we watch every day is no longer a panopticon. In 1971, an American channel made a live telecast of the day to day activities of a Loud’s family. The shooting continued for months, it captured the happiness and sorrows of the family and it continued till the family members got separated. Many accusations came forth as, TV is responsible for the breakage of family. And there emerged a popular notion as to “you no longer watch TV, it is TV that watches you”. We enjoy watching TV as it entertains and informs us. In this process we are actually promoting a virtual world formed from the horizons of the real. It marks the beginning of simulations as the distinction between the two worlds get blurred. The news bulletins are just illusions of the actual life experiences. The world of cinema often presents before as a distant order of real as we see in science fiction movies, which often portrays a hyperreal world. In the process the human brain have become screen and the TV watches us. Today people give much importance to artificial memories. TV, mobile phones and laptops erase the memory of man as we became more and more dependent on artificial memory created by the technology. The bill boards which we see in our day to day life acts an observer and it does the task of surveillance. In the process there takes place a simulation, as the observer and observed will get reduced to signs and there takes place a mutual communication between the real and artificial. Then he speaks about a hypermarket, which is different from the traditional markets, as it not only does the process of consumption, but also has the power to disintegrate various functions and create hyperreal models by using the advent of technology. It can operate on every levels and is not hindered by the limitation of time and space. We are living in an age where we gather a lot of information without understanding the meaning of our preferred choices. The mass media always tries to interpret the information and gives meaning and counter meanings and produces simulations which can either support or destroy the system of social conventions. The advertisement is one of the best examples of how we embarrass virtual world. They are made instantaneously and
are easily forgotten. They are usually reflections of present and are not identical with present or future. In the process meanings are formed from that of contents. But the form plays a crucial role in designing simulacrum which leads to the production of various stimuli. Then he goes on explaining about three types of simulacra. They are simulacra’s that are natural, formed from an image. This image can be that of God or nature. The second type of simulacra is productive based on energy. And the third type of simulacra based on models and cybernetics. In the first type of simulacra the author talks about an idealised world as that of an utopia. The second kind of simulacra can be seen in science fiction novels and movies. The third type arises from the idea of moving beyond the imagination of science fiction. These kinds of simulacra emerge from the blurring of boundaries between real and imaginary. In science fiction there always takes place an artificial resurrection of a historical world. The science fiction actually presents before us a world of simulations. It produces various models of the real. The hyperreal indifference created between the real and fake remains the essence of good science fictions. Finally he speaks about Nihilism, which says that God is no longer dead but has become hyperreal. All the religion actually celebrated the absence of God. That’s why we work ship images. It creates in our mind a kind of simulation. Thus religion itself becomes a simulation created by a lot of simulacrums. He ends by saying that meaning is mortal and new meanings will create an alternate world of simulacrums and simulations.

Simulacra and Simulation published by Jean Paul Baudillard in 1983 brings forth a post modern notion of hyper reality which we can see in the film Matrix, released in the year 1999. Jean Paul Baudillard is a French philosopher, thinker and writer. Matrix is a Latin word which means womb. In accordance with the film it marks the beginning of a new hyperreal world. It also resembles that of media which gives birth to revolutions and social change in a post modern world. As said in the essay by Baudillard we are living in a world where media watches us every time producing waves of simulations by presenting before us a virtual world which can transcend to a hyperreal world. In the film it is said that matrix is found everywhere. We can experience it through our senses. That is we can feel it and even touch it. It represents an order of an alternate world. It also pauses several questions to our identity. As the movie progresses we can see how human body was exploited and got reduced to power emitting batteries. The human mind gets imprisoned in a network of computer programs and it shows how intellect triumphs over human body. It also points the estrangement of man, a kind of seclusion created by the technological innovations. When the film Matrix begins, the protagonist Neo had been sleeping and the computer was working. It monitored and informed him just like a surveillance camera. It is similar to Baudillard notion of the end of role of TV as a panopticon. The computer watches Neo and told him that he is found in Matrix and someone is knocking the door. Here we can see a mutual exchange of roles. That is the notion of TV watching our everyday actions. He follows Choi and Dujour according to the instruction given by the computer screen. He follows the white rabbit tattoo and meets Holy Trinity. The white rabbit created in his mind simulations that finally persuaded him to meet Morpheus. There also we can see two pills which are supplied by Morpheus. They are also small simulacrum. Neo finally decides to choose the red pill and enters into a matrix. Through that he actually enters into a different world a hyperreal world. The movie also gives
several indirect meanings through certain signs. For example the number 101, room no of Neo reminds us of binary system in a computer consisting of 0 and 1. It arises doubts whether Choi is a simulacra created by the virtual world of Matrix. ‘The Desert of Real’ which Morpheus talks is also taken from the essay by Baudillard. The real world presented in Matrix is a replica of the ‘desert of the real’. The Matrix actually presents a hyperreal world where there is nothing called real but there are only artificially produced genetic miniaturizations of the real world. It also highlights the paranoia of human beings about a world where machines overrule man. In such a hyperreal world human beings will not be able to govern and will be persuaded to live in a secluded environment. It also has extensively used various Christian symbolisms like Cypher who represents Judas, Neo as the saviour who will save the humanity from the clutches of Matrix and thereby liberate the minds of the people. It also reminds as of the Baudillard claims of religion working as a system of stimulation. In the movie the real beings live in a ship called Nebudchanezzar and they know about real and hyperreal world. So we cannot say that the entire film deals with simulacrums and simulations. The Neo experiences a lot of simulations. The scene where he is first plugged into the matrix marks the beginning of a simulated exercise. It is followed by another simulation which includes the rigorous training programme given by the computer, where he practices boxing and does several exercises. The oracle is also a computer program. The activities of the children inside the house of oracle are also stimulations and they are various types of simulacrums. The film raises many questions about the notions of death, which is a departure from the book. In the film it says that if we die in Matrix then we also die in the real world. But the book says that there is no death in a hyperreal world. There is no reason as to why Neo is chosen to become the saviour of humanity. It also point indirectly to the need of a human being from real world to destroy the hyperreal world ,thereby asserting the importance of real over hyper real. The film talks about the anxieties of a post modern world where man will find it difficult to draw clear cut demarcation between real and virtual. It also shows how the world gets reduced to an intellectual hub where your brain and intellect can become the paradigms of your existence and how the human body gets reduced to batteries to produce various kinds of simulations. It also reflects the anxiety of West over their loss of control on machines. It also shows simulacrum of a nearby future when man becomes enslaved by the machine world. The movie also make us think about a post human condition created by cyberspace, in which the concept of subjectivisation of the human beings will get replaced by intellect ,which works on the principle of mortality of meanings . It mainly focuses on the disembodiment of human beings from real world to live in a hyperreal world under various simulacrums and simulations. To sum up the Matrix is a film which mainly speaks about the idea of real, virtual and hyperreal. In an age where technology determines the life of human being, the film highlights the anxieties of modern man, especially those of the west regarding their capacity to control machines. The simulations can be easily created in a world where there are a lot of simulacrums. Baudillard in his essay points that we are already living a hyperreal world where everything is an artificial revitalisation of the real. He gives the example of TV, hypermarkets, films, religion, God and nihilism to assert the point that we are living in a hyperreal world. The movie also conveys the same thing to some extent. The simulation marks the beginning of film. Television played a pivotal role in introducing us to a world of simulacrums. The dichotomy between man and machine is a subject of constant
debate. It also gives us warnings about an impending future where machines can rule the earth without the help of man. The Matrix presents before us a world of simulations. It shows how the real human beings get reduced to that of a battery and how machines become more humanised. For example the food the people eat in Matrix and the food they eat in boat are different. In the ship, the people eat chemicals, which includes essential body vitamins needed for their body. Whereas in matrix, as shown by Cypher eats delicious food. That is, man becomes like machines which are essentially charged. Sometimes the food he ate in matrix can also be a simulation of the food from the real world. Thus, kind of estrangement suffered by human beings when machines overcome them is a serious issue to be taken care of. The struggle for man to survive is well shown in the film. The concept of God is being celebrated in both the texts. The book considers God as a divine invisible presence, whereas in the film portrays some characters as different incarnations of God. The Neo can be regarded as a God having the capacity to save the world. In the beginning scene where he handles an illegal software to Cho, he is addressed as the saviour of the world. He moves on saying that even mummification has the power to produce simulation. He continues with his argument that accumulation emanates a certain kind of power. That is the reason why the bodies of eminent personalities and political leaders are preserved even after death. The film also shows the assertion of power by computer programs on human beings. The hyperreal world provides a lot of scope for the production of new simulacra because it is a world without death. The indifference between real and unreal is the basis for the formation of a hyperreality. It gives rise to simulations. The film alienates death from the paradigms of hyperreality. The film can also be considered as an attempt to criticize the tendency of modern man to enslave machines. It reminds me of the Newton’s third law of force which says that “every action has got an equal and opposite reaction”. That is, a time will come when machines will rule over mankind. The film talks about the fear of man over advent of artificial intelligence over human intelligence. Thus, the film Matrix is a simulacrum formed from Baudillard simulation of a new world of hyper realities.

WORKS CITED


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