

### The Matrix (Intertexts)

In the world of science fiction films, the genre usually reworks and repeats the same formulas within the structures of the storylines. In the readings by Colin McArthur he suggests that within the last several decades a new type of intertextuality within post modernism films emerged in the form of new quotations within the text of the genre. Several popular genres within post modernism didn't create an original text and instead borrowed the text from past films and genres, some that even were considered dead. For instance in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, Scott took the original text from the film noir and the private eye films which were greatly popular throughout the 40's and 50's and revived it within the science fiction genre. His film *Alien* was another movie that can be looked at as a simple slasher or monster movie taken from the Universal Monster days of the 30's, also with the slight touches of gothic noir.

Within these post modernism films, these texts were less original and borrowed more from earlier sources but with several distinct differences. In the readings Colin McArthur brings up the classic David Cronenberg film *Videodrome*, and discusses on how the film has several distinct themes of the psychological horror film, but also includes several themes that explored the violence in the media, which were current topics that were being explored in the headlines at that time. *The Fly* is another famous science fiction film, and along with *Alien* included themes

of the monster movie but with a unique *Beauty and the Beast* like romance. Cronenberg's *The Fly* also brought in themes of disease and body deterioration, which could be looked at as a metaphor on the rise of Aids which was just being discovered at that time in the 80's.

Starting around the late 70's, the science fiction genre became mixed with the action genre, especially with the rise of special effects, most famously with George Lucas's *Star Wars*. Within time action and science fiction became the norm with films like James Cameron's *Aliens* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. And yet the Wachowski Brothers surprised everyone with their surprise film *The Matrix* in 1999, because they not only included action and science fiction, but also a touch of martial arts, and themes of philosophy and religion. Colin McArthur's exact definition of intertext is the idea of works of art and discourses feeding off and dissolving into each other which suggests that intertextuality works are not just within and between cultural production of art but more broader and at the level of discourses. Films are also caught up though, in discourses which operate beyond the boundaries of text and genre, like for instance with *The Matrix*.

In the readings of Mark T Conard, *The Matrix* is more than just a science fiction action film and when looked at deeper, is a very spiritual and philosophical film that takes from Descartes and Plato. They're many themes to the film, like the existence of God, whether we have free will or not, or if our mind is a different existence to the body. Most of us believe what we can touch is physical and real but Plato for instance thinks the opposite. He believes what you can touch, smell, taste and hear is less real and it's your intellect that is what is truly real. Plato's famous analogy of *The Cave* which tells the story of prisoners living in a cave is a depiction of a human being's intellectual journey of grasping forms that we believe is real. In the story of *The Matrix*, we are like the prisoners in the cave and the physical world is reality. If we can see

beyond that, that is what can enlighten us because we are finally taking off our blinders and seeing the truth. When Neo is unplugged by the Matrix he asks Morpheus why his eyes hurt and Morpheus tells him it's because he never used them before. In the story of *The Cave* the prisoners believe the shadows they make are real, and in the film the people believe the Matrix is real, and because of that we become prisoners of our own senses, and to leave the Matrix is the same as the prisoners leaving the shadows behind in the cave.

Descartes explains how *The Matrix* is a story about Christ, and the film's main theme is relying on faith that Neo is 'the one' who eventually dies and rises to free the humans, and will be able to remake the Matrix as he sees fit. There are several Christianity hints within the storyline, especially when one of Neo's customers in the beginning of the film states to Neo, "You're my savior man... My own personal Jesus Christ." The film also uses themes from the classic story of *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz* throughout its plotline and even makes slight homages to them. In the beginning of the film Neo gets an anonymous message to 'follow the white rabbit' which was a tattoo located on a woman's shoulder, which leads him to finally meet Trinity and Morpheus. Later on he is given a proposition by Morpheus to either take the blue pill or the red pill and when he finally sees the truth Morpheus says "I imagine now you feel a bit like Alice? Tumbling down the rabbit hole..."

The Matrix is a brilliant and original story and yet its intertext is taking from several other older sources whether it's older films or literary adaptations. Genre's nowadays aren't just classified within genre's, but they're now subgenre's within that genre which make the films in post modernism not necessarily original, and at the same time very original by using new concepts and ideas within older formulaic texts.