Instantaneously Mediated Virtual Visions:
The Transmedia Circuit of Images, Body and Meanings

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Introduction

The contemporary visions and constructions of the world based on virtual imagery and their relationships with reality are a complex media web structure where the transitional model from old media to new media is not sufficient to explain the interactions between technological structures, creative behaviors and images as processes of remediation. The concept of remediation by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin is presented within a context of a digital medium that "wants to erase itself."[1] What Bolter and Grusin do not mention is the overlaying processes and hybridizations between media that create new languages and sublanguages, both textual and visual, generating new recontextualizations.

Bolter and Grusin identify the causes of remediation in a need for immediacy in the media/public engagement. But their brand of immediacy appears to be of a different nature from that to which Pier Paolo Pasolini refers. For Bolter and Grusin it is the immediacy of the artificial construct in creating an immediate and spontaneous style,[2] for Pasolini it is the immediacy of a direct perception with the poetical and mythological realism of human existence.[3]

Either as a process of exploitation, as described by Pasolini, or as a quest to create and achieve a sense of liveliness, as envisaged by Bolter and Grusin, the contemporary transmedia engagements between old and new media are characterized by processes of commixture, hybridization, borrowing and appropriation.

Transmedia and Recontextualizations

Bolter and Grusin look at the concept of repurposing as an elemental part of the media borrowing of remediation and subsume the complex processes of content transfer and recontextualization (cultural, historical and aesthetic) under the concept of remediation, abandoning or relegating to a minor contribution the characteristics of new and old media's specific languages.

Pasolini explained that there is an existence in the object of a mythological absolute and that the inability to recognize the mythological absolute generates a loss of meaning. "Has lost all meaning for you… …like a discarded memory…"[4] The loss of meaning, according to Jean Baudrillard, is caused by the remediation processes of digital media that function as generators of void.[5]

Baudrillard's interpretation dismisses the sensory-perception nature of the media processes that are characterized by a recombination of both mediacy and immediacy approaches with a constant re-appropriation of the distant, recent or even contemporary past. Baudrillard writes that art is "like the worn threads of a piece of fabric, it is an irony produced only by the disillusion of things, a fossilized irony."[6]

However, the role of contemporary visual arts, particularly of transmediated art forms, is that of recontextualizing the existence of the old and revealing its multiple relationships to new media. The transmediation processes happen in a matrix-based relationship between mediacy and immediacy as negotiations between old and new. These are the processes that reveal new meanings and strategic spaces that are not self-referential.[7]

It has to be considered in this context that even the new virtual and mixed reality systems, as art forms and frameworks of visual representations, "abide by what can be fashioned for sense-perception."[8] But is Georg Hegel's statement still valid when the visual neurological stimuli in a Virtual Reality Environment (VRE), with the support of the neurosciences, can be constructed to 'speak' directly to the brain?

The 'unreality' of VRE and the stimulation of particular areas of sense-perception can overcome the impasse of the extermination of reality through the creation of multiple illusions. The focus is shifted onto the brain's absolute perception of visual images, not to recuperate "God or Reality,"[9] as Baudrillard suggests, but to rediscover the immediate sense-perception relationship of the brain with the visual images through mediated experiences.

Visual artworks within VRE change the modalities of experiential engagements through mediation to such an extent that the artworks themselves are transmediated 'beyond' their original existence. Artworks' perception in VRE is achieved through an increasingly refined knowledge and technological support that allows to speak directly to the brain or to target the 'immediacy' areas of the brain through a mediated construct.

The new constructs do not necessarily have to be those of VRE. They can take the forms of mixed realities environments or of hybridizations between new and old media, and be placed from the virtual into a real space that is contextually and technologically different from the medium and space they were created in. It is this possibility of infinite connections and reconnections that, as in the writings of Mark B. N. Hansen or Rosalind Krauss, in her essay *Reinventing the Medium*, offer an understanding of the history of the hybridization processes and their bearing on contemporary digital exphrasis as well as on the phenomena of transmediation. It is the Bergsonist approach to the theory of perception that offers a more in depth understanding of contemporary transmediations, as images become relevant and irrelevant according to a body that is, in Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of Henri Bergson, a "center of indetermination within an acentered universe."[10]

This approach moves away from solipsistc and self-referential media constructions and places a different emphasis on the medium. It is no longer just the remediation claim of Bolter and Grusin that media are "thoroughly and bidirectionally interchangeable."[11] It is a claim that Hansen criticizes, advocating the embodied experience as inseparable from the act of cognition.

Conclusions

In this context, where interchangeability and media specificity clash, Peter Weibel with his notion of a universe without a center and Pasolini with the concept of mythological realism come into play. They support the Bergsonist approach of a universe without center, where the experiences of the object, of its realities and mythological traces, justify more than ever a transmediation approach based on the linguistic visual specificities of Walter Benjamin's idea of medium and its multiple interactions: textual, contextual and technological.

Pasolini and Weibel offer an understanding of the contemporary jamming of reality and virtual not only as a conflicting relationship of a meaningless circuit of images, bodies and meanings, but as a constant reprocessing transmediation that through multiple media vernaculars affords the necessary media experimentations for acts of cognition that are mythological, virtual and at the same time expressions of alternative realities.

1   Bolter, Jay David and Grusin Richard. 2000. *Remediation, Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, p. 45.

2   Ibid. p. 9.

3   Pasolini, Pier Paolo. 1988. *Heretical Empiricism*. Edited by Louise K. Barnett. Translated by Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 172.

4   Pasolini, Pierpaolo. 1970. *Medea*. VHS. London: BFI publishing.

5   Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *The Illusion of the End*. Translated by Chris Turner. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 55-56.

6   Ibid. p. 25.

7   Ibid. p. 56.

8   Hegel, G. W. F. 1998. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. 2 vols. Translated by T. M. Knox. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 1035.

9   Baudrillard, Jean. 2000. *The Vital Illusion*. Edited by Julia Witwer. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 61.

10 Flaxman, Gregory, ed. 2000. *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Phylosophy of Cinema*. Minneapolis. University of Minnesota Press, p. 20.

11 Hansen, Mark B. N. 2004. *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, p. 1.