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Remediation
Jay David Bolter

Remediation as a term in media studies was defined by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin in their monograph of the same name, published in 1999. The term is meant to describe the complex relationships of rivalry and cooperation among forms and genres in a media economy (see RELATIONS BETWEEN MEDIA). Bolter and Grusin begin with the observation that new media forms do not simply spring into existence, but are instead outgrowths of technologies, techniques, and practices of older media. The medium of film, for example, grows out of a series of technologies of the moving image in the nineteenth century (such as the zoetrope, the phenokistoscope, and the zoopraxiscope). At the same time the techniques of filmic representation and the genres of film in the first decades of the twentieth century have antecedents in stage production and the novel. This relationship is universally acknowledged. However, under the influence of modernist aesthetics, media scholars and popular writers often assume that such relationships represent a beginning phase that is surpassed as the new medium or media form develops a language based on its own essential properties. Bolter and Grusin argue that these remediating relationships never end, even after the new medium has supposedly developed its own expressive forms. Newer and older media forms continue to borrow from one another as long as they remain part of a flourishing media economy. Remediation describes all the various relationships of cooperation and competition, rivalry and homage, and can involve form as well as content. Classic Hollywood film remediated nineteenth-century literature (e.g., the novels of Dickens, the Brontes, Hugo, and so on) by retelling their stories in the new visual medium. At the same time film borrowed and creatively refashioned the dramatic arc of earlier melodrama to create the standard so-called three-act film. Remediation need not be slavish borrowing; it can and often does involve creative and even radical refashioning.

Contemporary digital forms remediate a host of different forms from older media, which themselves remain important in today's media economy. The World Wide Web is a vigorous remediator. For example, news websites such as the *New York Times*'s nytimes .com remediate principally the printed version of the newspaper, while CNN's cnn.com remediates its own television networks. Web-based services (such as Hulu and Netflix) that stream television and film remediate these older media. Political blogs remediate the political pamphlet, the opinion pages of printed newspapers, and, with the addition of video, the politically oriented news channels and commentators. *Wikipedia* explicitly

remediates the printed encyclopedia, whereas social networking sites such as Facebook remediate letter writing and phone calls, as well as the sharing of photographs and the playing of games among friends (see SOCIAL NETWORK SITES [SNSs]). Remediation can also function in the other direction; older media forms such as film and television can appropriate conventions and materials from digital media (see FILM AND DIGITAL MEDIA). Broadcast news shows such as CNN employ a composite screen consisting of (moving) text as well as the video image in an obvious remediation of the web page. Hollywood now often turns popular video games into films, as it has done with the *Resident Evil* or *Tomb Raider* series. The latter is a good example of what is now sometimes called cross-media or transmedia, because the original video game franchise has spawned a series of media artifacts, including comics, novels, films, and even theme park rides. The current interest in transmedia can be understood as a vindication of the premise of remediation: that media forms are intimately related and produce various strategies of cooperation and competition.

In every act of remediation, there is an implicit, if not explicit, claim of improvement. The designers or producers of the remediating form are suggesting that their product can do something better than the original. They are claiming to provide an experience that is more compelling, more authentic, or more "real" than the original. The claim of greater reality or fidelity is particularly clear when the remediation takes older material into a newer media technology. For example, Hollywood films of the 1930s often took classic novels or plays and remediated in the new medium of talking pictures. There was certainly an element of respectful remediation here, an act of homage to canonical authors and narratives of the past. At the same time, film was being offered as a superior medium for telling such narratives because it could make them vivid and visual. A contrary claim was and is still made by supporters of the older medium of print: that reading a novel is more compelling precisely because more is left to the reader's imagination. The argument about the relative power of filmic and print narrative is the classic argument of remediation: it focuses on which medium can claim the greater capacity to represent or engage with the real. A similar argument is made today between traditional Hollywood film and the newer media of video games and interactive narrative. Proponents of digital media forms emphasize the quality that these media have and that is lacking in the earlier forms of visual and verbal storytelling. Digital media are "interactive" and can therefore involve the reader (who becomes a user) as never before (see INTERACTIVITY). The reader/user participates in the story and can affect its outcome or meaning. Enthusiasts of the older forms of film or the printed novel counter that this interactivity amounts to little, because the reader/user cannot effectively participate in the story without destroying its essential, authored intentionality.

Bolter and Grusin went on to identify two general strategies of representation which artists and designers can pursue in a wide variety of media forms: immediacy and hypermediacy. The strategy of immediacy, which might be called "transparency," was favored by painters in Europe from the Renaissance until at least the nineteenth century. The development of linear perspective and other illusionist techniques enabled painters to claim that their pictures were accurate reproductions of what the eye saw when it looked on a scene in the physical world. Their techniques therefore made the painting into a transparent window onto the world, and the medium (paint on canvas) effectively disappeared for the viewer. The strategy of immediacy or transparency, which seeks to make the medium disappear for the viewer or user, remains an important aesthetic for

popular media today. Hollywood cinema and so-called serious television drama generally employ this strategy. The drive to create photorealistic graphics for video games and virtual reality is a contemporary example of the desire for transparency.

The counterpart of transparency is hypermediacy. If the strategy of transparency seeks to make the medium disappear, hypermediacy foregrounds the medium and the process of mediation for the viewer or user. In the twentieth century, hypermediacy was associated with avant-garde painting, photography, or film, but in recent decades hypermediacy has become an increasingly popular style: examples include music videos and the multimedia, multiwindowed style of many websites, including popular social networking sites such as Facebook. The strategies of both hypermediacy and transparency can function for the remediation of other media forms. The desktop graphical user interface, for example, can remediate various forms of information (text, photographic images and graphics, and videos) in multiple windows. The screen becomes hypermediated as the user moves back and forth among windows reading and editing all these forms. Transparency can also be a remediating strategy: for example, virtual reality has been used to allow a viewer to "walk into" a Renaissance painting.

As a media theory, remediation has been criticized as reductive and formalist. It focuses on the way in which new media constitute a formal refashioning of older ones. For example, film refashions the novel by transforming prose into a visual narrative with camera work and editing. Video games refashion films by making their stories procedural and interactive: putting the user into the action. The criticism is that an emphasis on formal remediation ignores the socioeconomic aspects of media production and competition.

Richard Grusin (2010) has recently supplemented the notion of remediation with what he calls "premediation," calling attention to the ways in which popular media anticipate or prefigure future events, particularly in the political realm (war, terrorism, etc.), as in effect to lessen the trauma and potential political backlash.

■ See also ANALOG VERSUS DIGITAL, BOOK TO E-TEXT, CHARACTERISTICS OF DIGITAL MEDIA, HISTORY OF COMPUTERS, OLD MEDIA / NEW MEDIA

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Remix
Aaron Angello

Remix is both a verb and a noun, a process and a product. It involves the appropriation of preexisting media (text, image, audio, video) and the recontextualization and/or reshaping of those media with the end goal of creating a new work. This new work doesn't pretend to be a unique creation of the remixer, but rather remains transparent;