DESMA 8: MEDIA HISTORIES FINAL

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**Prompt 1: *Write an essay about the ways in which users deploy the first three waves of media to create their social selves on the Internet. In the Web 2.0 phase of the 4th Wave, what kinds of media do people upload, how do they reference and draw from earlier optical media, and how do their uses of media change and evolve? Jurgenson, The Secret War, and Digital\_Humanities would all be useful here.***

People in today’s society generally have the same daily routine, including checking their phones within every thirty-minute interval, scrolling through their Facebook and Twitter feeds, and binge watching hours of movies on Netflix. These commonplace phenomena have become so normalized in our culture that the matter of its implications on our activity, on and off social media, is not questioned. Individuals fail to realize that they are utilizing the techniques of digital media to create an online identity separate from their own in real life. This normalization of thinking is used to check off the requirements necessary to remain active on the Internet and dictates how we manage our social media sites. It is this ideology too that catalyzes the evolution of media and how we as individuals learn to adapt and coexist with this ever demanding-being that is social media.

Generally, most people today have a Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram where they can share events, ideas, and even photos with their friends and family. This is all possible due to the fourth wave “digital media”. However, it is essential to first and foremost understand that the spectrum of media consists of four main categories in time, photography, cinema, television, and digital.[[1]](#footnote-1) These four distinct eras are integral of today’s society and culture due to their reoccurrence in our everyday lives. Although all occurring one after the other, Lunenfeld notes, “this has little to do with one machine being replaced by another,”[[2]](#footnote-2) replacing the old with the new, but are rather all integral of one another and can coincide with one another regardless of intractability. This is apparent in the average college student that remains active on social media. They begin their day by checking their phone notifications and then continue it by scrolling through their site feeds. This is common of what Lunenfeld coins “downloaders,”[[3]](#footnote-3) or those that only receive and stream information from the network. However, this does not attribute to the individuals development of “internet identity” but rather sheds light on their source of information to late construct it.

The “uploaders’[[4]](#footnote-4),” those who provide information to the network, activities usually range from posting statuses on Facebook and Twitter, to posting photos on Instagram. The posting of photos on Instagram is one manner in which the common person employs the first wave of media to share thoughts and information. Much like how a photo in general has a purpose of immortalizing a person or landscape for nostalgia sake, these photos hold this true and serve to share them with others instantly. Other media like cinema serve importance with applications like vine where you can record a six second video and share it with the world for a variety of reasons whether it be for comedic or artistic. While with medias like television, some individuals will record videos and upload them on websites like YouTube where you can share videos ranging from commentaries to creating your own web series. These are all phenomena that are caused by a trickle of affects. Individuals feel the need to share these photos, clips and videos with others because of a desire of “likability”[[5]](#footnote-5), that Jurgenson describes as a “value” or “point” system for photos, statuses, and videos that we post online. In other words, we want others to be interested in the content that we shared in order to fulfill a sense of self-satisfaction and content in oneself. This places a standard on what we deem worthy of a “like” or “favorite” on these sites and dictates how we reward those individuals whom we find more than adequate. Individuals are therefore actively conscious of what they post and aspire for “shares” that are superior than others.

In order to obtain high “likability” on these websites, people resort to concepts often “relatability” and envy. Photos like “@mxijhe’”[[6]](#footnote-6), which was taken from his Instagram profile, exhibit how individuals have coevolved with media as it progresses. The image showcases a man staring off into the grandiose landscape of Yosemite National Park while his back turned to the camera. This image would receive many “likes” because many people long to do adventurous things simply for the gratification of too posting their own photo of them doing said amazing things. This results in a cycle of people doing things simply for the act of posting evidence of it later. This recycling of ideas is what Philip K. Dick refers to as a “bombardment of pseudo-realities that begins to produce inauthentic humans.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Meaning that because people are only concerned with taking prior ideas from earlier medias to repost to gain satisfaction from other “liking” it, they are losing their authenticity and media as a whole changes from showcasing new and unique ideas to becoming a recycling of already crafted art.

The virtual identities that people create are simply based on a recycling of ideals that they have experienced from other individuals. They then take these ideologies and formulate an efficient identity in order to gain “likability”. This has caused a guise of unawareness towards the origin of the thought process that we undergo daily. It is this ignorance that too keeps us oblivious of the techniques that we utilize in order to formulate our own identities (on and offline) and the manner in which we portray them to the virtual and metaphysical worlds.

**Prompt 2: *We spent a fair amount of time this quarter talking about media in relation to the aesthetic movements, political histories, and military adventures that coincided with their emergence. What through lines can you draw from modernism to postmodernism to unimodernism as they relate to the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Waves as we have discussed them? In other words, how can we talk about the technical aspects of media in a way to connect them to the larger worlds of their use and impact? Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, Jean Baudrillard, and the Secret War would all be useful here.***

Media history is an area of study that consists of four parts, which are all dependent on the former to exist. This dependency therefore implies that not only does a “wave”[[8]](#footnote-8) in media draw aspects from the former, but too reutilizes the attributes of its earliest forms, regardless of succession. Narrowing our scope to the waves that dealt with the three types of modernism, (modernism, postmodernism, and unimodernism) these waves (cinema, television, and digital media) are too, associated with their own era in time as well as their own media movement. However, the three movements still overlap in characteristics and have all made significant impact of aesthetic, political, and militaristic movements.

Modernism began in the early twentieth century and coevolved with the second media wave: cinema.[[9]](#footnote-9) Cinema was comprised of two different mechanisms, the early development of film and the proliferation of the radio. Although our area of focus is the last three of the media waves it is essential to understand the origin of cinema and what sparked the interest for his new field of art. Photography, the first wave of cinema held a vital importance because it was versatile in that it could immortalize people or scenery so that regardless of time you can always look back to see the image as it was. It also was sprung up from paintings and competed with it as well. This is an example of two different types of art not necessarily replacing the other but coexisting because they draw upon one another. Painting had the foundation of capturing an image the best it could paint while photographs perfected the capturing of realistic images. Although this technique was refined it did not eliminate the idea of painting because there are always people who prefer the original technique of any process, thus creating a niche add often-dubbed “elitist” group of art connoisseurs[[10]](#footnote-10). This relates to cinema because the earliest films started as chophotography. Chophotographs like Étienne-Jules Marey’s Pole Vaulter[[11]](#footnote-11) exhibit the intermingling of many photos in one, which was the foundation for creating actual films. This explains how waves of media can relate to one another, but their relations to the world and one another differ slightly through the different movements.

Modernism in relations to media consisted of these earlier forms of film but also full length ones that were premiered in movie theaters similar to the ones we use today. This mode of media was characterized by one relay of information; the individual would go to the source and receive information and then give back information in their daily lives[[12]](#footnote-12). This differed from radio because an individual (and often group/family) would be able to receive information like the ballot readings or political information pertaining to the war, from home. This relay of information allows the “downloader”[[13]](#footnote-13) to take in information from home. This made a huge impact on society because rather than having to go out and find the information to download, one can receive it at home. Information began to become more accessible as well when cinema was becoming a vehicle of nationalistic expression. An example of this is the “French Expressionistic” film, “*Andalusian Dog*”[[14]](#footnote-14) from Salvador Dali, which was not only narrative like most films but also served to represent the depressive and even dark aspects of life that is not usually discussed in daily conversation. This was far different because now they are not communicating information for well being sake or even providing a narrative for the sake of entertainment but are relaying information for the sake of promoting thought and emotional expression. This relates to the next cinema Television.

Postmodernism consists of the television era and is much as expected. However, the relaying of information differs greatly from cinema. Television made it possible to relay narrative information for entertainment directly to people’s homes. People no longer had to go to the source of information but it was in fact broadcasted to them. Although the radio was able to relay information directly to homes, you were now able to receive not only information with a visual but were also able to receive the entertainment. Walker Benjamin described the increased demand for production of photography due to the fact that railroads and trains made it possible to travel longer distances in a shorter amount of time.[[15]](#footnote-15) This efficiency in transporting information thus increased demand for televisions in family homes and sparked the era of family bonding being congruent with TV time.

Lastly relating to the fourth wave digital media. The idea of efficiency was so promoted that it drew upon both ideals of the 2nd and 3rd waves. The computer network made it not only possible for you to receive information from your homes but to also upload and send as well. This interactivity allows people to have full communication with others without ever meeting with them in person. It is almost counterintuitive in the fact that before, efficiency meant going long distances in faster time to exchange information but now efficiency was exchanges information wherever you are on a map.

**Prompt 4: *Studying these media to give us a context for their use and to appreciate their aesthetics are benefits in and of themselves. But as many in this class self-identify as artists, designers, and makers, the question emerges of how to use this kind of study in a generative way. How can these media be deployed today and tomorrow in the work you yourselves plan to make. This question needs to be answered with the same rigor as 1 and 2, but offers a greater amount of personal expression and forward thinking. Marshall McLuhan, The Secret War, and Digital\_Humanities would all be useful here.***

In studying the field of media histories it seems almost obvious that people would assume that it could only assist those in the arts or individuals working in architecture. However, I do believe that there are many teachings from the media arts that can provide a great amount of innovative and technological advancement for the field in biological and zoological studies. Although it deals less with the anthropological aspects of whether or not we as a society are choosing a side in the war of “downloading”[[16]](#footnote-16) and “uploading”[[17]](#footnote-17), it can definitely make a difference in the lives of animals that are forced to stay in captivity for the good of their survival and endangered animals for the good of their species existence.

Lunenfeld notes “all animals download, but only a few upload anything”[[18]](#footnote-18), this is because almost all animals lack the creative psyche that humans have so that they can upload. This is to say that when external factors effect their environments, they are incapable of acting towards it and are left helpless. Some animals that are in these positions, which are caused by an array of factors, usually result in their endangerment and eventually extinction.[[19]](#footnote-19) There are many scientist and researchers that dedicate hours towards replenishing their numbers and habitats but it is done in very inefficient manners. Much like the message that the “procto-automatic pop-up toaster”[[20]](#footnote-20) represents, efficiency is getting their habitats and numbers replenished as fast as possible, because the longer it takes, the greater the risk for the animals.

Relating this to actual media, the manner in which I would utilize these teachings in a generative way would be to utilize photography and digital media to build sanctuaries for specific animals that fit their every need. Too often are animals put into a sanctuary or zoo habitat and it is not congruent with those that they live in the wild. This has negative implications in a few ways; the animals may not know how to thrive in the environment because it unable to find food or water, it isn’t provided a proper sleeping space, or it may get used to that habitat but when is realized into the wild, is now susceptible to starvation because it became accustomed to the artificial habitat that it was living in. Using architectural skills to develop proper landscapes based off of photos and three-dimensional computer software, you can easily develop these habitats to assist in the reoperation of wildlife. Many zoo’s like the San Diego Zoo have also utilized computer systems that provide live streaming of the animals so that people from home can observe the animals in the sanctuaries[[21]](#footnote-21). This can provide research information for those interested in studying animal interactions and can even serve as a surveillance camera to ensure that the animals are kept safe and secure. We can even develop ways in which rather than only downloading from their environments, we can have the animals download information to a computer system for future studies.

Some animals have unique traits or behaviors that only occur when humans are not around, we can indirectly make it so that animals are downloading information into heat triggered cameras so that animal behaviorists can study the footage later. For example, hyenas hunt in packs but due to the fact that they hunt during the nighttime, following them and taking footage of their interaction is considered invalid evidence because human prescience alters animal behavior, but with hidden cameras they will be directly uploading previously unknown data to our network without being aware at all. Although this isn’t exactly the animal uploading the data first handedly, they still are contributing a type of media to the network. Adversely thinking, many of these projects need funding which animal research is always lacking and so we can take a unimodern[[22]](#footnote-22) approach towards raising these funds as well.

To raise money to undergo this habitat changes we can have the animals produce art similar to a Pollock splatter paint fashion[[23]](#footnote-23). For example, place and animal in a room full of pallet of paint and have them walk over a canvas over and over until it is covered in paint. This is an innovative and unique manner to create art that can raise funds by being auctioned off, and thus allowing the animal to upload again unintentionally.

Overall, because of the fact that most wild animals lack the creative psyche, they cannot upload to the network without some human assistance. By doing these creative projects we can assist the repopulation of endangered and hurt animals and raise the funds through innovative projects like the art one.

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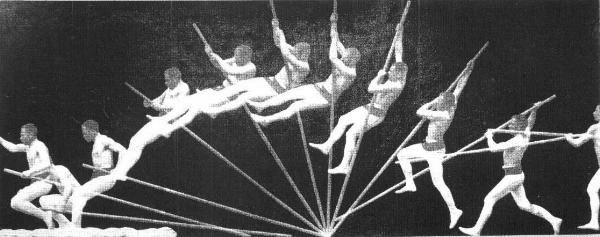
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Appendix



Yosemite Photo. (Citation in Bibliography)



Marey’s Pole Vaulter

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4. Ibid. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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