Remix Semiosis as Ideology Critique:
A Visual Semiotic Study of Critical Remix Video

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Critical Remix Video (CRV) has become a potentially powerful and persuasive alternative to mainstream commercial advertising. Many producers of such work seek to convince audiences that dominant media messages communicate inherently false ideological meanings by exposing contradictions and hypocrisies in these messages. However, CRVs themselves communicate equally contradictory ideological meanings in employing techniques of media manipulation, deception and censorship in their design. This study interrogates and deconstructs the visual signs in CRVs and explores the role and influence of ideology in the construction of meanings communicated to online audiences by such work. The findings of this inquiry should increase our understanding of how CRVs are constructed and why they are produced and enable future producers to improve the efficacy of subsequent iterations by revealing the inherent weaknesses in the current state of the art. A visual semiotic analysis of a representative sample of CRVs was carried out which found that in the process of unmasking the ideology in the subject of its critique, each CRV formulated a counter-ideology and made truth-claims that are equally susceptible to subsequent critique. Inadvertently, CRVs enable us to see more clearly that claims to truth, whether received through mainstream or alternative channels, cannot be accepted at face value and must be critically evaluated and considered in relation to the relative positions of the senders and receivers of the messages. Despite such dilemmas, CRVs represent an authentic opportunity for grassroots activist filmmakers to have their voices heard on a global stage, utilizing the full potential of digital networking and mobile technologies as well as spreadable media content and online distribution platforms.

Introduction

Critical Remix Video (CRV) is an emerging form of experimental video art activism that uses as raw materials previously published, often copyrighted audio-visual content in order to critique perceived wrongs and injustices or to make political statements. The majority of CRVs seek to expose and critique ideologies embedded in mainstream media discourse, for example authoritative journalism, persuasive advertising or political broad-

casts. However, CRVs are equally susceptible to the promotion of ideologies of their own, albeit alternative or oppositional ideologies in contrast to the dominant. Such CRVs purport to promote a more truthful version of reality than the subjects of their critique, yet they resort to similar tactics of manipulation and deception in the production of these criticisms.

CRVs have the potential to persuade and influence vast numbers of people in the same ways that commercial advertising does, as they utilise new media and the Internet to reach their audiences and employ many of the same visual communication and design techniques as their commercial counterparts. Many CRVs achieve the status of 'viral videos', receiving hundreds of thousands, if not millions of views through video sharing websites such as YouTube and Vimeo, and are, more often than not, the product of amateur filmmakers and editors who may not have any other legitimate means of disseminating their work.

Many studies of online video focus merely on YouTube statistics and related online data in their attempts to shed light on this phenomenon. (Kopacz and Lawton 330; Geisler & Burns 480). Such approaches and conclusions tend to be relatively limited and superficial in terms of their quantitative implications and neglect the more interesting qualitative properties of the work. Qualitative analysis of CRVs, such as the methodology adopted in this study, is much more difficult, detailed and time-consuming, however the results offer us unique insights and perspectives that would not otherwise be possible.

CRVs are a relatively recent phenomenon, enabled by the convergence of networked digital technologies over the past two decades. Their conceptual lineage, however, may be traced back much further, through the history of found footage filmmaking, collage and appropriation art during the 20th century. Less than a decade ago, online video became a reality – a part of the daily lives of everyone with reliable Internet access. Such access made it feasible for individuals to "talk back" to the mainstream media, to which they had become so accustomed to playing the role of passive recipients.

In 2008, Barack Obama ran for president of the United States and against the odds, fuelled by the cult of personality and the power of the Internet, won the election, promising fundamental political change. In 2012, with few changes having been implemented, Obama ran for reelection and won a second term in office. This research considers the semiotic meaning of three politically oriented CRVs, the first of which, produced in 2007, criticises Obama's primary nemesis at the time, Hillary Clinton, prior to his nomination as Democratic presidential candidate. The remaining two CRVs, both produced in 2011, critique Obama himself in terms of his hypocritical approach to the treatment of peaceful protesters in the USA and his inability to deliver on the promises he made prior to his election.

These CRVs use found footage, video editing and visual effects techniques to make their criticisms and promote their agendas. Although there have been numerous studies focusing on the visual semiotic analysis of advertising (Moriarty 5; Berger 167; Nöth 419), as yet there have been few studies focusing on how meaning is produced in CRVs (Peverini 135) and how these meanings communicate alternative ideologies.

This study utilises a visual semiotic methodology to analyse the individual visual signs in each CRV in order to reveal the ideological messages being communicated in each case. The manipulative and deceptive production techniques employed in the construction of these meanings are also analysed in relation to the truth claims made by the CRVs, as well as comparisons made with the ideological messages communicated by the subjects of their critique. We show that CRVs, being by definition critical of the behaviors and ideologies of particular individuals and social groups, are equally susceptible to ideological biases as well as manipulative, deceptive and persuasive communication techniques and therefore must always be considered and evaluated in a highly critical manner themselves.

The article has four sections. First, it reviews the existing literature relevant to critical remix, visual semiotics and ideology critique in the formation of a conceptual framework. Then the research methodology is described and analysis techniques are discussed in detail. Next, the findings are presented and summarised. The article concludes with a discussion of theoretical implications and directions for further research.

Conceptual framework

An overview of Critical Remix

Critical Remix defined

The purpose of this section is to provide a working definition of Critical Remix synthesised from the extant literature and to use this definition in an attempt to understand the form as fully as possible through a variety of conceptual lenses.

Table 1. Definitions of Remix / Mash-Up.

Merriam-Webster (2012)	A mash-up is "something created by combining elements from two or more sources".
Navas (2010)	Remix is "the activity of taking samples from pre-existing materials to combine them into new forms according to personal taste".
Manovich (2008)	Remix "combines content within the same media or content from different media".
Lessig (2008)	Remix "may quote sounds over images, or video over text, or text over sounds. The quotes thus get mixed together. The mix produces the new creative work – the remix".
McIntosh (2008)	Remix videos are "critical or satirical works of art focusing on political, social, cultural or economic topics and created by remixing corporate intellectual property and / or appropriated footage, generally without the permission of the copyright holder".
Horwatt (2009)	Remix "refers to the practice of appropriating pre-existing film footage in order to denature, detourn, or re-contextualise images by inscribing new meanings onto materials through creative montage".
Kreisinger (2011)	Remix "combines or edits existing materials to produce something new with a different meaning".

The definition this research takes as a point of departure is as follows:

> **Critical Remix:** (noun) a digital media object composed of previously published media elements, which have been appropriated, repurposed and reconfigured in the creation of a new work that communicates different messages and meanings than the source material. These new messages are often highly critical of someone or something and attempt to expose hidden information about the object(s) of criticism.

This definition has been carefully crafted following extensive research and analysis of existing definitions of the terms "remix", "political remix video", "mash-up", "critical remix" and "found footage filmmaking". Each word deployed has been carefully considered and weighed up against its paradigmatic alternatives in an attempt to produce the clearest, most concise and meaningful definition of "critical remix" possible.

"A media object" – this may refer to any media object type, whether text, image, music, video, animation or code. "That is composed of previously published media elements" – a remix is a composition, a blend of elements – a combination or a mix of various modular components polished into a coherent, composite whole.

"Previously published" – this is what distinguishes a mix from a remix, a combination from a recombination – the "media elements" have been published before, they have been taken from "finished" cultural works: for example, the media elements in a remix might include a voice track from a movie, video clips from a variety of TV shows, animation from a children's cartoon and text and titles from a news broadcast.

"Which have been appropriated, repurposed" - the elements have been "cut" from a variety of finished pieces and then recombined in a different context, that is, the remix. "Reconfigured" refers to the act of blending these disparate elements, re-sequencing them, layering them on top of one another and linking them all together in such a way that they appear as a coherent piece of work.

"In the creation of a new work" – the remix itself becomes a "finished cultural work" upon publication (when it is uploaded to YouTube for example) – a new work, the whole of which is different and greater than the sum of its parts, and which itself can then become source material for future remixes.

Finally, "with new and different meanings from the source material" – perhaps one of the most important qualities of remix is that through the process of remixing, a semiotic transformation occurs – the meaning of the source material changes through its recontextualisation.

The elements of Critical Remix

When considering the elements of remix – the qualities that constitute what we may define as a remix – the following six properties are fundamental (Gallagher et al. 1).

Remix:

1. appropriates and repurposes previously published "texts" (i.e. media content)
2. alters the dominant meaning(s) of the source material
3. changes the order, that is, the sequencing, of the samples used
4. creates new connections or relationships between previously unrelated texts
5. may take the form of any type or combination of media content
6. is primarily perceived aurally and visually.

The first point refers to the appropriation and repurposing of previously published texts. If a media text does not do this, then it is not a remix. This is perhaps the most fundamental quality of a remix. It must directly and materially sample footage, audio, text or images from a work that was previously deemed to be finished and use those samples as starting points or building blocks – elements to be used in the creation or production of a new work, which will be, by definition, a remix.

The second point, in relation to altering the meaning of the source material, is an inevitable side effect of the first. By juxtaposing disparate content, recontextualising it beside, before, after or on top of other content, the interpreted semiotic meaning(s) are automatically altered. The third point regarding the change in sequence of the samples is also a necessary element of remix that often operates in two spheres simultaneously – firstly, temporal montage and secondly, spatial collage. So, the order or sequencing of text, image, audio, video, code or animation can be altered or re-sequenced over time or space, or both. The remaining points are relatively self-explanatory.

The evolution of Critical Remix

Remix is arguably as old as the human potential to communicate and could easily be traced back conceptually through the video art movement of the 1970s and 80s, the Situationists in the 60s, the Soviet re-editors of the 20s and the Dadaists as far back as the 1910s. However, for the purposes of this paper, it would be more useful to trace the origins of the contemporary strain of CRV to those who were early adopters in embracing the democratization of electronic and then digital media tools, namely San Francisco's *Negativland* and Rhode Island's *Emergency Broadcast Network* (EBN), as well as London's *Gorilla Tapes*, who produced and distributed pre-digital and pre-internet CRVs as early as 1984 (McIntosh 10).

EBN's first video remix was released in 1991 (coincidentally, the year the first website was put online) and was a musical remix of the Gulf War, which contained the now well-known George Bush Sr. "We Will Rock You" sequence. The remix was a critical anti-war response to the Bush administration's foreign policies and was distributed by fans on bootleg VHS cassette tapes, becoming a viral underground hit for the group. We could confidently attribute the emergence of contemporary Critical Remix Video to the work of both of these U.S.

media art collectives. It has been possible to upload video files to the web since the early 90s, but it was not until 2004 that increasingly widespread broadband availability enabled the serving of online video on-demand to be a viable possibility and online video was officially born. Thus, the phenomenon of online video as we know it today has a very short history, at less than a decade old, and CRVs as we know them today began to appear less than 25 years ago.

Visual semiotics

Theories of visual interpretation

Semiotics is the study of signs, the primary goal of which is to understand the meaning of signs in different contexts. Visual semiotics applies boundaries to the object of study, restricting the enquiry to visual objects. Moriarty (19-28) has written extensively on the theory of visual semiotics, proposing that semiotics is superior to any prior language-based forms of interpretation, as applied to visual communication, because it takes into account ideas related to perceptual interpretation. Moriarty favours American Peircian semiotics over any other strain, because it focuses on the logic of meaning and the philosophy of knowledge, rather than the European Saussurean tradition, which concentrated on the structure of language as a sign system. While Moriarty's approach has been successfully applied in visual semiotic analyses of both print and video advertisements, this study is less interested in the perceptual psychology of audience interpretation and more so in the ideological analysis of media texts. Thus, the analysis undertaken here is influenced by the Barthesian tradition of visual semiotic analysis, which primarily extends the theories of Saussure rather than Peirce.

Saussure, who is widely considered to be one of the founding fathers of 20th century linguistics, posited that a sign is comprised of a signifier and a signified, where the former is the specific form of the spoken word or phrase, while the latter is the mental concept to which the signifier refers (Saussure 67). The meaning of a sign can be arbitrary and conventional, which means that a particular signifier is open to multiple interpretations by different people in different contexts. Despite the potential of polysemy, most signs tend to have a dominant interpretation within a given society (Hall 136-8; Williamson 77).

While Saussure focused his analysis at the denotative level, Barthes (15-31), borrowing from Hjelmslev (114), described the various "orders of signification" or "layers of meaning" communicated by a given sign, focusing primarily on the connotative level. While denotation is akin to a literal dictionary definition or a verbal description of what one sees, the connotative message operates at a higher, symbolic meta-level and refers to meanings beyond the image itself. Connotative meanings produced by images operate in the domain of ideology, containing hidden meanings beneath the surface level of appearance, which are often used to legitimate existing forms of social organisation and the power structures that support them. Connotations can come about either as a result of the cultural associations that we share about particular signs, or else as a result of specific aspects about the way they are presented, such as photographic or filmic tech-

niques. In *Mythologies* (1957), Barthes focused on the former approach, while *Image-Music-Text* (1977) explored the latter. Barthes has frequently been credited with originating the contemporary conception of visual semiotics, through his semiotic analysis of visual advertising in "Rhetoric of the Image" (Van Leeuwen 92; Sonesson 1).

Metz (108) also explored the formal properties of filmic signs and identified several categories of syntagmatic relationship between the shots in a cinematic sequence. While not easily applicable to all types of films, many of Metz' categories have proven useful in considering the meanings produced by the specific syntagmatic arrangement of signs in a moving image text and have influenced others, such as Hodge and Tripp (20) who successfully applied similar techniques to advertising and television programming. One of Metz's categories in particular, the "parallel syntagm" or "montage of motifs" has resurfaced in an unusual way in relatively recent remix history, in the form of the now ubiquitous "supercut" (Baio 1).

While most film semiotics research has focused on the syntagmatic aspect of filmmaking, that is, editing and montage, paradigmatic analyses of media texts have also been undertaken by Eco (144), Fiske (84) and others, whereby binary oppositions associated with the signs in particular texts are identified and analysed. Examples of such oppositions include nature/culture, real/ideal, general/particular, subject/object and establishment/anti-establishment, the latter of which was well illustrated by Floch (33) in an illuminating paradigmatic analysis comparing Apple's logo with that of IBM. This example is of particular relevance in relation to the analysis of the *Vote Different* remix in section 3 of this article, which utilises paradigmatic replacement in order to alter the semiotic meaning of the infamous Apple *1984* Super Bowl commercial. In the original ad, through the use of visual metaphor, Apple was portrayed as a colourful, rebellious upstart within a conformist Orwellian prison overseen by "Big Brother", representing IBM. In the remix, the metaphors are cleverly switched, transforming Apple into Obama and IBM into Hillary Clinton, or "Big Sister".

Ideology critique

Ideology critique defined

Ideological analysis has its origins in Marxist theory, specifically the concept of False Consciousness developed by Marx and Engels, which was later adapted and developed by European 20th century Marxist thinkers. It has continued to evolve, maintaining some elements of its Marxist origins, while developing increased complexity to deal with the very different concerns of 20th and now 21st century societies. Hall argues that, in an important sense, one can never be "outside" of ideology. Each of us lives our lives according to our own unique blend of personal beliefs about the world around us and at least some of these beliefs are the result of ideologies within the societies in which we live. The primary goal of the ideological critique is to discover and make clear the dominant ideology or ideologies embedded in an artifact and the ideologies that are being

muted in it. The ultimate outcome of an ideology critique is the emancipation of human potential that is thwarted by existing ideologies.

Myth, ideology and hegemony

Mass advertising, as we know it today, originated in late 19th / early 20th century America through the early public relations industry. Ewen (25-57) has explored the roots of consumer culture in detail and concludes that industrial capitalists saw the need to shape the consciousness of a new generation of industrial factory workers to complement their existing control of the workplace. This functioned as a double ideology, providing those who could afford it with new practices of consumption that would change their lives for the better. Those who could not afford the luxury consumer lifestyle were given something to aspire towards. Of course, for life to remain "better", one would have to succumb to the trap of engaging in ongoing consumption to maintain this "contented" existence, enabled by the acquisition of increasingly sought-after material possessions.

Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony begins with the premise that we do not see the world in a neutral, objective manner, but rather in ways that are determined by the attitudes that we naturally take for granted. These attitudes, values and perceptions through which we come to understand and relate to the world around us, are what Marx refers to as ideology. For Marx, ideologies are economically determined. Gramsci felt that this was not correct, but rather that ideologies are relatively autonomous and absolutely crucial in order for a society to function successfully.

He maintained Marx's concept of societal class struggle, however, while emphasizing the role of choice and human agency, claiming that class struggle always occurs through ideology. Gramsci posited that ideas were capable of bringing about revolution but, equally, of preventing it. The theory of hegemony describes how the ruling class dominates the masses in two primary ways. The first of these is through pure economic oppression, that is, the power to hire and fire at will and control the amount of money available to the multitude. Controlling such factors grants incredible power over people's lives to Capitalists, who can coerce their workers into doing almost anything, under the threat of termination of employment. The second, and for Gramsci, the more important method of domination is to control the ideas, that is, the ideology of the workers. This manipulation of social consciousness and control of ideas is what Gramsci terms hegemony, which he believed was an essential component of domination over sub-classes of society, to complement economic and physical force. The actual process of hegemony involves establishing a set of circumstances whereby the consent of the workers appears to be of their own free choosing, that is, the dominant class "manufactures consent" among the dominated class, a concept further developed by Chomsky and Herman (1-36).

Woodfin (122) notes that there are four overarching requirements in order for hegemony to occur: 1) the majority of society must buy into and aspire to the picture of life represented by those in power; 2) the moral and political values

associated with this way of life are those of the ruling class; 3) the ideology spun and projected by the ruling class becomes common-sense for the majority of people, who believe it "natural" to subscribe to this way of thinking about the world; 4) for the most part, consent of the majority is arrived at peacefully as most people believe they are choosing to think about the world this way of their own free will; however, economic and physical force may be used to punish dissident minorities who do not support the dominant ideology.

Methodology

Sampling

Three examples were carefully selected from over five hundred critical remix videos, which were curated over the past five years through a variety of sources, including online blogs such as *Recycled Cinema* (Horwatt) and *Political Remix Video* (McIntosh and Kreisinger), with the vast majority gleaned from *Total Recut* (Gallagher), a video remix community website founded in 2007. These five hundred CRVs were subject to a rigorous filtering process, whereby approximately fifty per cent were excluded from the study, based on a variety of both quantitative and qualitative factors, such as duration, video quality, date of production, conceptual interest and ideological focus. The remaining videos were sub-divided into ten sub-categories according to the subject of their critique, each containing twenty-five CRVs, bringing the total number of the sample under consideration to two hundred and fifty.

The remixes were naturally divided according to those that were critical of politicians, critical of the media, critical of copyright, critical of war, critical of capitalism, critical of pop culture, critical of corporations, critical of advertising and critical of diversity. The final category included historical examples of critical remix, charting the origins and evolution of CRVs throughout the 20th century. The final stage of selection involved choosing twenty-five CRVs, from each of the sub-categories of the full sample, to act as a representative overall sub-category. The three CRVs under analysis in this paper come from this representative category. They are *Vote Different* (De Vellis 2007), *I Am Not Moving* (Ogilvie 2011) and *Man of the Year: How Jon Stewart Became President* (Gallagher 2011).

Fig. 1. Three Critical Remix Videos (Critical of Politicians).

Analysis

Each of the CRVs was subjected to an identical seven-stage systematic process of visual semiotic analysis, as developed for this study. We will focus primarily on one of these as a case study, the *Vote Different* remix, to illustrate the methodology in action. This remix has been viewed 6.3 million times on YouTube at the time of this writing and the original Apple *1984* commercial, from which it takes most of its source material, has been viewed 9.7 million times.
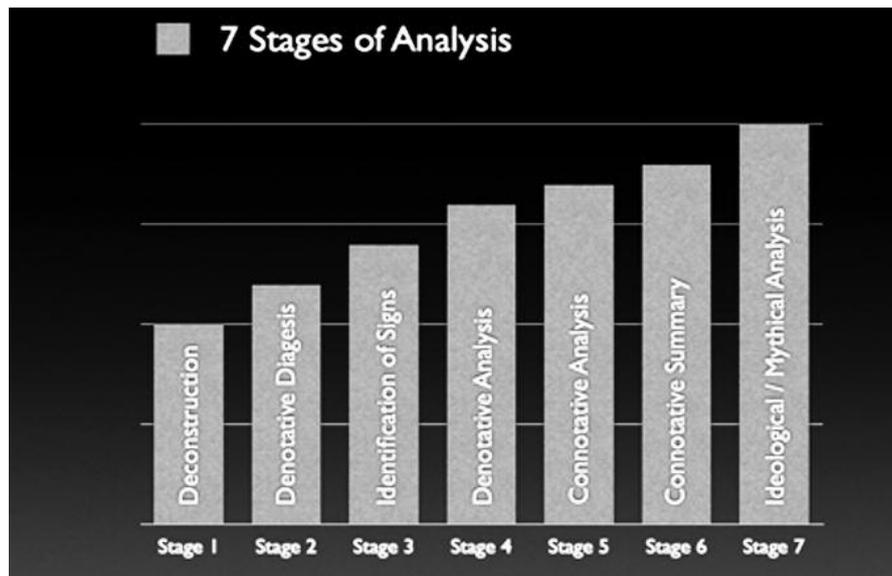

Fig. 2. The seven stages of visual semiotic analysis.

The first stage in the process is to deconstruct the remix video and in the Barthesian tradition, break it down into its smallest divisible parts, which in the case of video, as argued by Metz (86), is the individual shot. This stage involves producing a set of storyboards from still frames, screen-captured to represent each of these individual shots. A description of the activity in the frame, including any dialogue that occurs, is added as text beneath the image. The second stage is to compose a diegesis of the entire CRV from beginning to end. At this point, we are merely interested in describing what we see in words by translating what we have captured visually in the storyboard into verbal language.

Stage three is the identification of visual signs, which can become increasingly time-consuming, depending on the duration of the CRV and the number of signs within it. Barthes (15-31) famously analysed an advertisement for Panzani Pasta using visual semiotics. In this poster, there are approximately 10-15 separate visual signs, each of which Barthes analyses and considers in relation to the others. In *Vote Different,* a 72 second video, there are 30 shots, each of which contains a number of separate visual signs, culminating in a total of 71

unique visual signs. *I am not Moving*, a 6.5 minute video, contains over 130 shots and more than 260 individual signs, while *Man of the Year*, at 10 minutes long, contains over 150 shots and upwards of 300 unique visual signs, each of which must be analysed in isolation in order to construct a complete picture and fully comprehend the meanings and messages communicated through the signs. Compared to Barthes' Panzani poster, we must appreciate the relatively overwhelming complexity of semiotic video analysis.
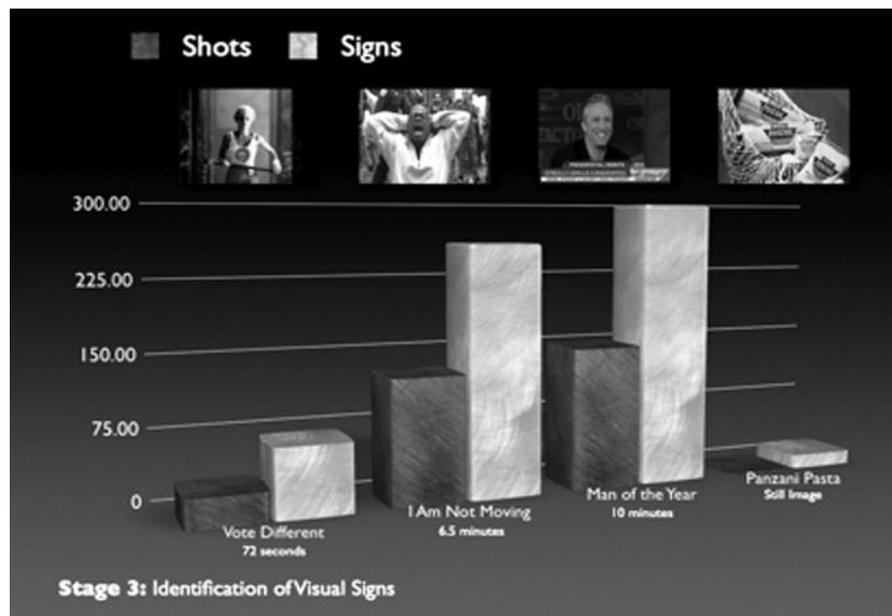

Fig. 3. Visualisation of the number of shots and signs in three Critical Remix Videos.

The fourth stage is denotative analysis, where a denotative meaning for each of the signs is produced. This meaning essentially responds to the question "what is the sign?" and the answer is akin to a dictionary definition, the dominant cultural interpretation of the time. As *Vote Different* bears substantial visual similarities to the original Apple commercial, it was necessary at this point to list the primary audio-visual differences between the remix and the original, of which there are eight in total. The original *1984* commercial itself has been analysed elsewhere by Berger (167-174), Moriarty (1-15) and Scott (252-73).

Stage five is connotative analysis where each sign is analysed once again, but this time through a symbolic lens, essentially answering the question, "what does the sign represent?" In order to answer this question, we must begin to consider the relationships between the signs, their connections and cultural connotations – implicit and explicit – and what they might suggest about the meaning of the shot in which we find them. For example, in *Vote Different*, we

can deduce, without too much difficulty, from the Obama logo on the girl's tank top that the girl, as a connotative sign, represents the Obama campaign. Of course, in order to deduce this, we must have at least some familiarity with the codes associated with American politics of the time and also be able to recognise the logo. If we do not, then the connotative meanings associated with these signs will escape us or be interpreted differently than intended.

Fig. 4. Comparison between original Apple 1984 ad and Vote Different Remix.

If we look a little more closely at the girl's attire, however, we notice that she is wearing orange shorts and a white tank top. If we consider these signs in isolation, they do not have any special significance, except perhaps for the dominant colour connotations associated with orange, such as joy and creativity. However, if we consider both of these signs together as part of a codified sign system, we discover that the dominant interpretation of this dress code in the United States is that the girl is wearing a Hooters uniform. We can crudely demonstrate that this is the current dominant cultural association of these signs simply by typing "orange shorts white tank top" into a Google Image search, at which point we will be inundated with images of Hooters waitresses.

   With this knowledge revealed, further research uncovers the fact that the first Hooters restaurant was opened in early 1983, the same year that Apple's famous *1984* commercial was produced. With all of this contextual information in mind, we can now read into the *Vote Different* remix that Obama and his campaign have become unintentionally intertwined with the Hooters franchise and all of the cultural connotations with which they are associated.

   This example illustrates the complexity and wealth of cultural associations that may become attached to particular visual signs in specific cultures and societies and how their meanings may change over time. It is highly unlikely that the producer of this CRV consciously realised the implications of his actions in this regard.

   Once the connotative meanings for all signs have been considered, our

analysis moves to stage six, the connotative summary. At this point, we reflect upon the significant connections between the important signs and what they mean in relation to one another, as well as the overall connotative / symbolic meaning of the CRV as a whole. Stage seven, the final stage of analysis in this process, is that of higher order signification, that is, the level of myth and ideology.

To fully comprehend the ideology communicated by the CRV, we must examine the sign relationships through the lens of syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis. In terms of remix, the syntagmatic relationships are the order or sequence of the signs over time and in space. If we consider the scene in *I Am Not Moving* where the Georgetown University student makes his passionate plea, we notice that, as he speaks, the video cuts to black-and-white footage of Martin Luther King then back to the student repeatedly, producing a syntagmatic relationship between the student and King and transferring to the student all of the cultural associations that the image of Martin Luther King represents, in our shared cultural experience and collective memory.

In contrast, paradigmatic relationships are relationships of substitution. An example of paradigmatic substitution occurs in *Vote Different* when the sketch of the Apple Macintosh on the girl's tank top in the original ad is replaced with the Obama logo in the remix.

This simple act of substitution clearly illustrates the potential power of subtly altering the paradigmatic relationship between signs in the production of new meanings. Each of the important signs and their relationships are then considered in terms of their ideological function, especially in terms of the relationship between what we see and what we hear. For example, in *I Am Not Moving*, we constantly hear condemnations from both Obama and Clinton regarding the unacceptable manner in which Middle Eastern governments are dealing with their protesters, yet while they speak, we see footage of excessive police brutality on American protesters.

Finally, we must produce a summary of the ideological message being communicated by the subject of critique in the remix and then compare it to the alternative ideological message being communicated by the remix itself. In *Vote Different*, Hillary Clinton's speech communicates her ideological message about the importance of two-way communication between politicians and constituents. In *I Am Not Moving*, Obama and Clinton deliver speeches that communicate the ideological message of the American government in relation to the condemnation of the abusive treatment of protesters by foreign regimes. In *Man of the Year*, Obama reiterates his ideological message of hope, change and economic recovery in the run-up to his 2012 re-election campaign.

In all of these cases, the remix highlights the contradictions in each respective ideology by juxtaposing the words we hear against contrasting and seemingly contradictory visual imagery that exposes their ostensible hypocrisy and apparent falsity.

Fig. 5. Three Critical Remix Videos depicting the subject(s) of their critiques.

Findings

Following the rigorous application of this seven-stage process of visual semiotic analysis to each of the CRVs, it became possible to produce summaries revealing the ideological messages communicated by the remixes themselves, as a result of the particular arrangement of signs within the texts and the relationships between them. Often, characters, objects and events in a text take on an archetypal or mythical quality at this stage of the process, as these are cultural associations that many different cultures share at a subconscious level, which is why their meaning is generally elusive, non-obvious or hidden prior to a detailed analysis of a given text.

Table 2. Ideological summaries.

Vote Different (De Velis 2007)
Clinton is an archetypal villain and her followers are mindless sheep, part of a broken political system that enables corrupt politicians to maintain power by deceiving and controlling its citizens. Obama is a force of good and his campaign offers the promise of hope and change that will transform the political system into one where genuine freedom of choice and expression exist, but only if Clinton and her followers do not stop him first. If we do not vote for Obama, we will be condemned to a future of Orwellian surveillance, deception, thought-control and ultimate enslavement under Clinton's regime.
I Am Not Moving (Ogilvy 2011)
Occupy Wall Street protesters are wrongly persecuted heroes, victims of a totalitarian regime. They are potential martyrs of a cause worth dying for. Obama and his government are hypocrites and liars and covertly treat American protesters in the same brutal way that Middle Eastern regimes overtly mistreat their protesters. They have disregarded the American Constitution, especially the First Amendment. There is only so much the Occupy protesters will take before they rise up and overthrow the American government.
Man of the Year: How Jon Stewart Became President (Gallagher 2011)
The office of president of the United States has become a joke, a media spectacle, a popularity contest, with the prize of president being awarded to the most likeable candidate, as opposed to the best man for the job. Obama was the recipient of this prize in 2008 based on a campaign of lies and false promises, which were never fulfilled. Obama is so disliked now by so many, that anyone would be a better replacement, even a comedian or late night TV show host. The Internet has the potential power to enable such an unlikely candidate to be elected.

Discussion

The methodology outlined in this paper enables us to see both sides of the arguments presented by CRVs with increasing clarity and objectivity and as a result we are less likely to be so easily influenced by persuasive techniques employed to convince us of one particular point of view over another. In each of the examples presented here, we have seen the unmasking of an ideology through the formulation of a counter-ideology. These alternative ideologies are considered by the producers of the remixes to be more truthful versions of reality. However, in each case, techniques of manipulation and deception have been employed in the pursuit of critiquing their subjects.

In *Vote Different*, sections of Clinton's speech have been intentionally removed and the remaining parts have been edited to become ideological soundbites, which are then easily rebuked through intentionally contradictory imagery, carefully selected by the producer.

What we see in this remix is one ideology being torn apart piece-by-piece and replaced by another, alternative one. Clinton's ideology is portrayed as "false" and "wrong", while the alternative view is, by implication, promoted as "right" and "the truth'" at least from the perspective of the producer of the remix and those who believe in this ideology. Of course, from Hillary Clinton's perspective, we can confidently presume, these assumptions would be reversed.

In *I Am Not Moving*, several scenes are over-dramatised and suggestive connections are made in relation to arrests and excessive violence, which did not actually occur as portrayed. In the original video of Robert Stephens, the Georgetown University student, for example, we see him attempting to coax the police into arresting him, however they refuse to do so, telling him to "get up and go home". Eventually, following repeated begging on the part of Stephens, they arrest him, reluctantly. In the remix, this has been cleverly edited to make it appear as if he is being arrested against his will, for dramatic effect.

In *Man of the Year*, editing techniques are used to construct a fictional narrative in which Obama is portrayed in an excessively negative light, by juxtaposing audio and video footage completely out of context to make it appear as though Obama is being simultaneously criticised from all sides, which simply did not occur as portrayed in the remix. *I Am Not Moving* in particular, is produced in such a way as to appear as if it is a legitimate documentary, which is self-evidently "true", however, as we have shown, this remix has been carefully constructed at all levels of production to appear this way, by editing and recombining disparate found footage elements.

Through the systematic use of visual semiotic analysis and ideology critique, this study highlights the biased and one-sided nature of the ideologies communicated through CRVs. In *Vote Different*, Clinton is painted as an utterly irredeemable character. The ideology in this remix is itself a form of pro-Obama propaganda, hypocritically attacking those who challenge *his* message, namely Hillary Clinton in this instance. It offensively dehumanises Clinton's constituents and portrays Clinton herself as an evil, villainous tyrant. It promotes Obama's

ideology of hope and change, which as we now know in hindsight, was little more than empty rhetoric leading to a symbolic regime change, but ultimately resulting in more of the same. Arguably, American citisens are worse off now than they have been in decades and ironically, closer to an Orwellian reality than they were prior to Obama's ascendance to power (Fletcher 1; Munnell et al. 6; John 1).

As this study shows, it is possible to identify and interpret ideology in Critical Remix Videos using a detailed visual semiotic methodology, however, the question of which ideology is a more accurate representation of reality and to whom requires further consideration. A sociological and psychological study of audience interpretation and reaction to the CRVs examined here would significantly benefit the advancement of knowledge and understanding in this area and complement the findings of this study.

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