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CULTURAL BORROWINGS

Appropriation, Reworking, Transformation

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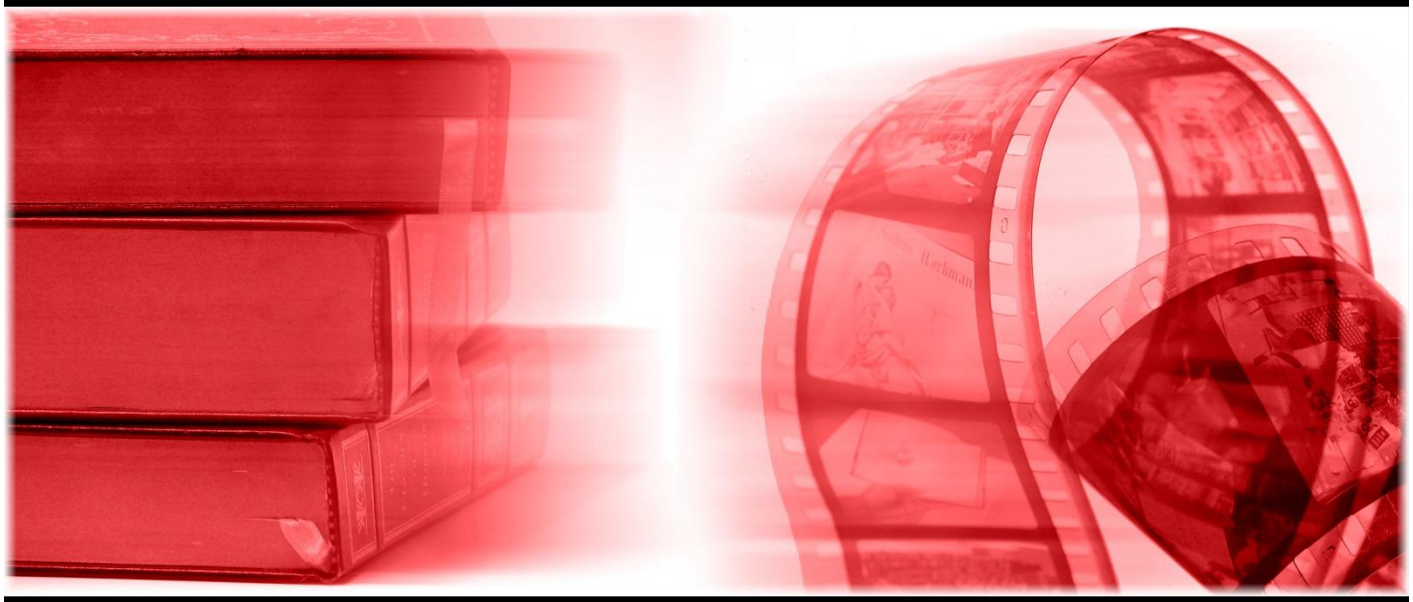

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Music Videos and Reused Footage

By Sérgio Dias Branco, University of Kent

Music videos, like many other art works, are the result of a creative process of image creation that sometimes does not start from scratch. At times this process relies on visual material previously produced that is reused and recombined. The use and combination of pre-existing film footage is an example of this, an appropriation with the purpose of achieving various effects and of conveying different meanings. Such footage may be used as *stock footage* to contextualise or to provide a frame of reference for a discourse -- a common use in documentaries and television news. It may also be utilised as *found footage* to decontextualise -- a utilisation that has been associated with avant-garde film. Found footage is connected with the placement of images in a framework at odds with their original aim and context. It is this disparity that opens the possibility for the creation of novel signification. This kind of footage inherits its name from the usage of objects as ready-mades -- such as Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, a ceramic urinal that the artist signed "R. Mutt" and displayed as a work of art for the first time in 1917. Just like found objects, found footage may be either searched on purpose or found by chance; two complementary ways of construing the word "found". Within the history of art, the genealogy that includes Duchamp makes something else clear: what is *found* is not merely the object or the footage, but a new significance.

The following discussion will be centred on the use of found footage in music videos. It will also deal with cases in which the reframing of footage is not as radical -- or not completely in conflict with its original frame of reference. Consequently, the general term "reused footage" is more appropriate. It is able to encompass any type of reworking of images that already exist.

Almost no attention has been paid to the relation between reused footage and music videos. Carol Vernallis' *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (2003) successfully investigates the conventions of music video, but does not once mention the use of pre-existing footage. It does not, because this reuse is unusual and unconventional, an exception instead of a convention, and therefore it lies beyond the scope of the volume. Yet there is a theoretical connection to be made between music video and reused footage, which from the outset is a good justification for the study of their relation. The music always pre-exists the music video -- even when the video is not simply a promotional tool produced by a record label. In a similar fashion, reused footage already exists and is used after it has been sought or simply discovered. Such a theoretical claim does not fit into Vernallis's broader research project, but it is undeniably an aesthetic consequence of the ontology of music videos. Music videos are a conjunction of images and borrowed sounds, and the images may be appropriated from other works. Music may be defined as borrowed sounds, sometimes altered or supplemented, because they are used and then returned as part of an audiovisual work, a music video, usually presented under the name of the music artist. This feature is made salient in music videos that reutilise and recombine

images. The distinct forms that this reutilisation and recombination take are the focus of this essay. Instead of approaching music video as a uniform form, my analysis will consider music videos as plural, diverse works.

Despite some academic interest in music video, its reuse of footage has remained nearly unexamined. For that fact alone, Jason Middleton's essay "Audio-Vision of Found-Footage Film and Video" (2007: 59-82) is worth consideration. The author draws on Michel Chion's concept of *audio-vision* (1994: xxv-xxvi), a mode of cognition in which visual and aural perceptions are mutually influenced and transformed. He remarks that this happens in works like Julie Becker's *Suburban Legend* (1999) that screens *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) substituting its whole soundtrack with runs of Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Becker's video pairs a motion picture and a music album, two sources that were not originally intended to be audio-visually joined. Middleton argues that the resultant work causes a dual perception, generating two simultaneous and incongruous interpretations that add or create meanings that the two separate works do not express. According to him, some music videos create a similar effect. However, he does not devote his attention to music videos that*actually* use found footage, but to those that elicit audio-vision through newly produced images. In his analysis, found footage provides an analogical and conceptual framework. It is obvious however that a twofold perception and interpretation may also be achieved through found images -- in fact, more easily so. The value of Middleton's contribution to my discussion comes exactly from how he analyses music videos that subtly generate an effect that found footage works commonly produce. Indirectly, he therefore elucidates the possible relationship between music video and found footage. My approach will be more direct, tackling the reuse of footage in music videos as a concrete topic.

Middleton summarises that the music videos under his scrutiny:

> function similarly to found-footage films, but only at the level of the soundtrack. They do not allow for a palimpsestic reinscription of a second layer of meaning on the image track, but we do get a form of dual perception in relation to the song. We are able to simultaneously perceive the song's possible meanings both in conjunction with the image and independently of them. (2007: 81)

Radiohead's "Karma Police" (1997) is one of his examples. We are invited to read it dually because the song and the images are often at variance. The video does not visually illustrate the lyrics and at times Thom Yorke's lip-syncing is suspended. Middleton's detailed analysis is insightful in the way it lays out the enriched meanings suggested by videos with these structural characteristics. Relying on Andrew Goodwin, he sees them as instances of *amplification* (see Goodwin, 1992: 87-88), in which images add new layers of meaning to the words of the song. These ideas suggest further considerations. We do not interpret the music and the images as juxtaposed yet unrelated elements in music videos like "Karma Police". After all, we are invariably aware that the video was made after the song had been produced -- most of the time, with the intention of advertising the music so that more CDs are bought and more concerts sell out. We may not know a lot about the production of music videos, but we know

this much. As a consequence, we are conscious of how videos*intentionally* construct particular relations between music and images, even when these relations are as oblique as in "Karma Police". Thus, it is more accurate to say that, in a case like this, the music and the images are read, not as juxtaposed yet unrelated, but as related by juxtaposition. They are no longer separable within this one of a kind work, even though their outer origins are. Music and images are seen as parts of the unique work in which they are mixed.

The knowledge that music videos are produced after (and based on) the musical piece as well as the subsequent acknowledgement of their intentional nature is crucial regarding the reutilisation of footage. This knowledge and acknowledgement are complemented with the recognition that all or some of the images already existed before the production. Middleton's examples show that dual perception may be elicited without the reuse of footage. In contrast, this double awareness of the pre-existence of the music *and* of the images is specific to music videos with reused footage. It is an effect that found footage films frequently seek to prompt. As William C. Wees remarks:

> [w]hether they preserve the footage in its original form or present it in new and different ways, they invite us to recognize it as found footage, as recycled images, and due to that self-referentiality, they encourage a more analytical reading (which does not necessarily exclude a greater aesthetic appreciation) than the footage originally received. (1993: 11)

Understanding *montage* broadly, as the selection and arrangement of images, Wees distinguishes between three methods of found footage montage*. Compilation* is associated with reality, documentary film, and realism; *collage* with image, avant-garde film, and modernism; and *appropriation* with simulacrum, music video, and postmodernism. Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror" (1988) is to him a representative example of appropriation and post-modern superficiality. Footage of the Bikini atomic tests that took place in 1946 is used in the music video to mark the key change of the song when violence and hopelessness give way to peace and hope. The atomic explosion is "simply one image in a stream of recycled images presented with little, if any, concern for their historical specificity -- let alone logical or even chronological connection" (Wees, 1993: 44). For Wees, collage also decontextualises images, but promotes an analytical and critical attitude towards them that appropriation altogether avoids. He refers only in passing to the emotional resonance of Jackson's music (ibid.), but disregards the personal tone of the track. Goodwin, for his part, points out the disjuncture between lyrics and images in the video, concluding that the images of collective protest unintentionally undermine the lyrics (1992: 88). The private mood of the song is fundamental to make sense of a video that bridges the individual and the collective creating an opportunity for the self-examination mentioned in the lyrics, "I'm starting with the man in the mirror / I'm asking him to change his ways". The video confronts us with emblematic images that only regain significance when re-examined in the context of the song, connecting what is apparently disconnected. Activists like Martin Luther, Jr. are placed beside group demonstrations that can only be actualised by individuals acting together to achieve shared goals. Wees's analysis is not attentive to these details. More generally, the division into three methodologies derives from what are now over-

simplifications about relationships between signifier/signified, modes of cultural production, and aesthetic premises/practices. Within this framework, music video is viewed as invariably tied to post-modern ideas -- following, for instance, E. Ann Kaplan (1987). This view that sees MTV as a synonym for music video was challenged with vigour in 1993, the same year when Wees published his study on recycled images. *Sound and Vision*, a reader edited by Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg, proposed a more thorough historical, sociological, and musicological approach that highlighted the complexity and variety of music videos.

The practices of reusing footage in music videos can be divided into three: montage, assemblage, and collage. This is not a direct response but an alternative to Wees's taxonomy -- specifically devised with music videos in mind. It will become clear that this author provides many valuable insights into the employment of found footage. However, his remarks on the three groups make it clear that he does not separate this classification from an evaluative scale with avant-garde (and collage) as the highest point and music video (and appropriation) as the lowest. My categorisation is indebted to Wees's, but aims at being more precise -- namely in how montage is defined. The identification of these three operations is the result of an effort to describe rather than to evaluate. This framework may be applied to make evaluative claims, but those would be claims about the value of particular uses of these practices not about the practices themselves. Pointing out the differences between the montage, the assemblage, and the collage of reused footage in music videos is the main purpose of what follows.

Montage

The aim of montage is to form a continuous whole out of separate footage. Images are selected, edited, and pieced together to create a connection between them that can be narrative or conceptual. True to its essence and Soviet origins, montage is based on a dialectic connection between images -- they collide to create meaning and to convey concepts. As pointed out before, Wees uses this term in a looser way. For him, it encompasses the processes of compilation, collage, and appropriation. He comments that this method exceeds the realm of avant-garde and that "the conjunction of montage and found footage also appears in other, more widely recognized forms, such as conventional compilation films and, at the opposite extreme, an increasing number of music videos" (1993: 33). As his words on "Man in the Mirror" demonstrate, Wees sees the popular use of montage as superficial because it is not critically informed or politically challenging (ibid.: 5). A more comprehensive knowledge of music video reveals that this is not always the case. The montage of reused images in many videos of the rap group Public Enemy is critically observant and politically thought-provoking -- "Fight the Power" (1989) is an admirable instance of this. Furthermore, as the unofficial Cat Power music video "Maybe Not" (2005) will show, music video is mostly but not necessarily a popular form.

Inspired by the lyrics and the singing of the song, "Maybe Not" constructs a narrative of a fall through various falls taken from various films, from well-known classics to contemporary blockbusters. The video explores the evocative quality

of the words that the singer sings: "We can all be free / Maybe not in words / Maybe not with a look". It associates this desire for freedom not simply with suicide, but with a jump towards death from on high that involves determination and slowness. The leap coincides with the first "maybe not" as Charlyn's voice expands and gains momentum. The song sounds like a slow elegy: she prolongs the "not" in every chorus and this is matched with the suspended fall -- a kind of release -- which is always cut before the collision. Frederik Geisler writes that "Pietsch visualizes the ambivalence between the terrible yearning for death and despairing liberation [...] the ambivalence of freedom" (2007). The original images were not cropped or distorted to fit the same aspect ratio. They preserve their shape and that serves as evidence that this is a work made of different pieces from different film works. The images are independent from the sounds, but they have been arranged and related. They retain their shapes and proportions, but the editing looks for graphic matches to generate a sense of fluidity of movement from one clip to the next. The division of the video further enhances this fluid movement. The first part shows the jump. But the second begins with the "yee-haw" from *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). It is not the first time that the sound of a film clip is heard. In the beginning, before the song starts, the whistle of the wind and the man's respiration from the final sequence of *Shin jingi no hakaba* (*Graveyard of Honor*, 2002) function as a narrative introduction before his leap. The enthusiastic and exuberant "yee-haw" has another function: it celebrates the free fall that continues for some seconds until the video begins showing the crash of bodies -- from *Oldboy* (2003), among others. The replay of the opening clip, without interrupting the man's fall, marks the points from which the music video mixes the soundtrack of the films with the music track. The sounds made by the protagonist of *Die Unberührbare* (*No Place to Go*, 2000) are heard throughout: she climbs to the window, assumes a fetal position and then lets go of the sill. This is followed by a shot from *Lethal Weapon* (1987) captured from inside a car as a falling body smashes the top of the vehicle. The link between these two last shots from different films is one of cause-effect, a classical narrative pattern that closes the video violently -- yet curiously without showing the body.

In "Maybe Not", the German avant-garde video artist Oliver Pietsch uses montage to build the semblance of a narrative -- from the initial jump to the final collision, with a midsection that continually reiterates the fall. As Wees recalls, "Investing disparate shots with a kind of pseudo-continuity is one way of transforming found footage" (1993: 14). Another way is blending reused with original footage. Peter Schilling's "Major Tom (Coming Home)" (1983) recreates a space flight using footage of real space explorations. The song carries on the adventures of Major Tom, a depressed astronaut that first appeared in David Bowie's "Space Oddity" in 1969. The lyrics narrate Major Tom's fatal accident -- and the video closes with the superimposition of a falling space capsule over Schilling, gloomily backlit and with open arms. The space trip sequence is intertwined with images of the singer and cars -- linking two technological creations, space shuttles and automobiles, which inspire awe because they can take us beyond the boundaries of our natural confinements. The production design evokes the American car culture of the 1950s, the decade when spatial exploration officially began with the launching of Sputnik 1 from the USSR. The connection is therefore more intellectual than narrative -- intellectual, in the Eisensteinian sense of

a meaning that emerges from the combination of shots and that cannot be conveyed by them separately.

Assemblage

In assemblage, images are brought together based on their commonalties. This is similar to what Wees calls compilation. But for him compilation and also collage are types of montage. My definitions of these practices, by contrast, describe them as distinct from montage. In assemblage, the footage is not simply gathered or made to fit together like in montage: it fits together because of its origins and characteristics. Music videos that employ assemblage compile diverse images around a common theme, which is often the music artist. Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run" (1987) is a case in point.

"Born to Run" is the title song of the album that Springsteen released in 1975. It was launched as a single in the same year, six years before the inception of MTV. After the Born in the USA Tour, a music video of the song was finally broadcast in 1987. It features a live performance from the singer with the E Street Band intercut with clips of other moments of the tour. The video starts with images from another concert with the singer moving his raised arms down, over the grand opening chords. Short sequences from other concerts return during the second instrumental bridge that includes a notable saxophone solo. They reappear, briefly, in the guitar solo of the next bridge. This pattern avoids the insertion of shots from other performances when Springsteen is singing, but the last part differs from this scheme. The last verse-refrain is the only one that includes images from multiple concerts. Musically, this closing segment is the climax of the song, with an extended vocal section after the refrain, and the video celebrates this visually, assembling images from various concerts. The footage is thus something in between archival and found footage. The images that are synchronous with this particular performance of the song are contextualised -- a kind of archival footage. Although the context of the music tour does not change, the images from other tour performances were not shot with the intention to be later combined with the synchronous images -- a kind of found footage. The shots of the second group are read in a new context that changes their status as recordings of particular moments. They come from different songs with different rhythms, but the video finds a similar energy and vigour of expression in these stage performances as well as in the rendering of "Born to Run". This is what links these diverse images.

The reuse of images in this music video is better understood when compared with another one produced in the following year. This second video is the record of an acoustic version of "Born to Run" that Springsteen performed during the Tunnel of Love Express tour. He sings alone with a guitar and a harmonica. The song is rendered in a slower mode and its tone becomes more sentimental, but not mawkish. The exuberant images from multiple concerts integrated in the first video would therefore be out of place. The way the first video reuses and recombines various images and moments is also related with the various contributions on stage from members of the band -- hence, for instance, the emphasis given to Clarence Clemons's saxophone solo. In the second video, Springsteen performs the song alone and the video preserves the sense of uniqueness of that

rendition by not averting our attention from that event, that performance. The first music video expresses the energy of rock music through the lively performances from the singer and the band of a song that became exemplary of exactly that powerful vibrancy. The second records a unique and intimate rendering of "Born to Run".

Assemblage is most commonly used in commemorative and compiled music videos included in video anthologies. More rarely, a video may provide a background for a flow of images from different eras of a music artist's career. Michael Jackson's "HIStory (Tony Moran remix)" (1997), for example, is not simply made of clips edited together from Jackson's musical and visual history. A girl lies down and puts on an electronic visor and headphones. The images of Jackson's career are introduced in a myriad of projections and screens situated in a celebratory music party that the girl sees and hears. Then, they are directly alternated with the shots of the party, and they lose their status as past images placed within present images.

Collage

Collage is a procedure that reuses miscellaneous and contrasting images that are chosen exactly because of how strikingly they differ. The footage is usually arranged in a frisky, playful manner. Wees contends that collage is the quintessential modern form, incorporating "disparate materials found, rather than made, by the artist," and dispensing "with long-respected principles of coherence and organic unity in art" (1993: 46). This is an accurate description. Although he does not make the distinction, these are also the features that distinguish collage from montage, which does aim for organic unity. New Order's "Turn" (2006) is one example of collage.

"Turn" was created by Thomas Draschan, an Austrian experimental video artist. It is an unofficial music video given that it was not produced or commissioned by London Recordings, the record label of the group. The video was made available on New Order's official website for a while, but it was later on taken off the internet. Nevertheless, it is undeniably a music video of the song -- and it was as such that it entered the competition for the MuVi-Award of the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen. "Turn" is a lively non-narrative work. The images are repeated and edited according to the metrics and forms of the music. The fragments of this collage establish visual motifs (the turning from someone) from key ideas of the lyrics (the chorus begins with "Turn your eyes from me"). The words mention leaves and a girl is shown turning a leaf in her hand. Later, an elephant carrying someone next to a hill and a naked girl swimming underwater accompany the phrase "across the hills and over the sea". This is close to what Goodwin disparagingly calls illustration in music video (1992: 86-87), when there is a literal or figurative synchrony between lyrics and visuals. However, this is part of a formal strategy that is not purely illustrative. Note how during the instrumental part, when the guitars substitute the voice, the images of a man and a boy in a moving car are suddenly intercut with shots from a military aircraft and of army officers -- as if these representations of authority existed *beneath* the first. The playfulness of the video is revealed in its conflation of an assortment of materials -- the use of animation is especially unexpected. It is

thus difficult to delimit its use of reused footage to a single coherent idea. "Turn" constantly turns, changing its course.

When discussing juxtaposition, Wees claims that "[t]he nature and degree of 'complexity and layering' depend upon two factors: the kind of images used and way they are juxtaposed" (1993: 12). Juxtaposition is characteristic of collage, a practice that arranges images to achieve a contrasting effect. Coldcut's "More Beats + Pieces" (1997) is a further example of collage in which reused footage is combined with images produced for the music video on purpose. The video gives visual form to the mix of electronic samples that comprise the music cut together by DJs Matt Black and Jonathan More. The musicians are depicted as two computer-generated round figures within a succession of mixed images selected because of their links with the music rhythm (drums and dance), their accompanying sounds (television commercials and programmes), and their impact (car crash tests and implosions). The jolting and fragmentary collage mirrors the disjoined mixture of the music track.

Reuse and Recombination

Given the lack of significant scholarship on this subject, my objective has been merely to consider the variety of reuses of footage in music videos. These three practices of reusing footage in music videos, montage, assemblage, and collage, were not defined solely by the combination of footage from different origins. My stress was on *purpose* rather than simply on *form*. The intentional formal structure of "Maybe Not" is more accurately described as opting for montage instead of assemblage. It may be argued that the footage fits and has visual and thematic commonalities -- like in assemblage. The artist did assemble various scenes of people falling, but the video rounds off the sequence with an inaugural plunge and a final crash. In addition, it must be pointed out that music videos may follow more than just one of the three practices. Since these are compatible methods and not irreconcilable types, they can be combined within the same video.

Wees's work on found footage was a starting point for this discussion, but it had to be reassessed. He talks about recycled images whereas the music videos analysed here were characterised as works that reuse (and, as a result, recombine) images. *Reused images* is a characterisation that does not imply an evaluative stance on them. *Recycled images*, as Wees defines and studies them, point towards another approach. Found footage is equated with waste that has been processed and converted into something critically valuable and politically meaningful. In other words, the meaning is not just new, but also of higher cultural value. However, the ascription of critical value and political meaning depends on the understanding of the images and their sources. These images played complex functions before their reuse and these functions are not simply supplanted by their role as part of the work that reuses them. Yet Wees believes that his point of view is warranted because:

> recycled images call attention to themselves as images, as products of the image-producing industries of film and television, and therefore as pieces of the vast and intricate mosaic of information, entertainment, and per-

> suasion that constitute the media-saturated environment -- or many would say, postmodern – life. (1993: 32)

This position seems to stem from a bias against mass art forms that include popular film, television drama, as well as music videos. Wees over-generalises about these forms without the same serious attention that he devotes to avant-garde art [1]. It is undeniable that nowadays images circulate and become unwanted and useless in an instant. In this sense, Wees's emphasis on *recycling* instead of *reusing* may seem justified. Yet the latter is a less disparaging and more neutral term. It is also more insightful regarding music videos and more in line with the present. It makes clear that music videos that reuse footage assert and emphasise practices related with their nature -- they reuse, if not pre-existing images, at least pre-existing music. It also reflects how images are repeatedly utilised and shared through the internet.

As stated by Wees, there is a spectrum of use of found footage where montage -- editing, for him -- is in the middle, between films that use footage in its entirety and films that use footage whose appearance has been altered. This distinction is very useful. These two opposite uses define two kinds of footage, *unaltered* and *altered*. Digital technologies, electronic archives of images, video sharing websites, and personal webpages have made it easier for artists and fans to create and to share music videos. A myriad of fan-made music videos is available on YouTube -- most of them made by synchronising the song with footage from sources like anime films without altering the original editing. Some official music videos already reflect this mode of appropriation, making use of digitally altered images of cult movies. The Chemical Brothers' "Get Yourself High" (2003), for instance, adds digital elements to scenes from the kung fu classic *Shao Lin yi wu dang* (*Two Champions of Shaolin*, 1978) and changes the actors' lip movements so that they lip-synch the song.

There are several examples of reuse and recombination of footage in music videos in the past, but these contemporary trends underline the urgency of studying these practices more attentively.

Acknowledgements

The earliest version of this essay was read at the conference *Cultural Borrowings: A Study Day on Appropriation, Reworking and Transformation*, which took place at the University of Nottingham on 19 March 2008. It was then called "Borrowed Sounds, Appropriated Images: Music Videos and Found Footage" and the scope of its research was more limited. Thank you very much to Oliver Pietsch and Thomas Draschan for their collaboration. I am also thankful to Christine Geraghty (University of Glasgow) for her helpful comments on my presentation.

Notes

[1] See Carroll, 1998, for a sustained defence of mass art.

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