THE MOVING IMAGE AND SOCIAL MEDIA:
THE CHANGING POWER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
CREATOR AND SPECTATOR

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ABSTRACT

The power of the moving image is such that contemporary history is composed not of events but of pictures. This power is based in part upon the level to which audiences can become enthralled by its content, whether in film, television, video, or other digital formats. Traditional moving image research examines how the theories and findings of empirical science can shed light on the power of the art and craft of film, television, and other audiovisual media.

The advent of social media has ushered in a change to the creative process for moving images by allowing audience members to become co-creators with the potential to alter the nature of the power relationship between the creator and audience thus giving rise to spaces where the audience becomes essential participants in the narrative creative process. To further this research we examine how this power has shifted as the moving image has found it's way onto social media platforms.

INTRODUCTION

Changes have begun to occur in the power relationship between creator and audience of the moving image as social media platforms allow the audience to become co-creators of the narrative process.

In the past audiences of the moving image were for the most part passive receivers. However trends towards participatory culture, media convergence, and the rise of the Internet have created an intersection where audiences/consumers of moving images can take a more interactive role in its creation. These resulting spaces can be observed in "Fan Films" in particular, and interactive video games in general, constituting the first waves of this new day.

Traditional Theories of The Power of The Moving Image

Traditional theories that explain the power of the moving is galvanized between two dominate notions.

Cinema of Attractions ~ Tom Gunning

Influenced by Fernand Leger, Tom Gunning (2000) strongly believed that the "harnessing of visibility, this act of showing and exhibition was the strongest, most powerful characteristic of cinema before 1906. Gunning contended that cinema had the quality and ability to show something - to directly solicit the spectator's attention, inciting curiosity and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle of unique event.

Gunning contends that the history of early cinema has been written and theorized under the hegemony of narrative films. He argues instead that early cinema (pre-1906) was not dominated by narrative conventions. One particular theory derived by pioneer filmmakers, Luminere and Melies, saw cinema as a "series of views," fascinating because of its illusionary power, its realistic illusion of motion and its magical illusion.

Cinema's relation to the spectator setup by the films of Luminere and Melies differs from primary relations that were setup by narrative cinema post 1906. Other theories by early modernist including theories by Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists follow patterns similar to Leger. Similarly, Gunning suggests that the fascination and power of early cinema was held captive by traditional art forms, particularly theater and literature. Gunning believed the relation to the spectator set up by many of the filmmakers pre 1906 had a common basis, one that differed from the primary spectator relations set up by narrative after 1906. Gunning coined the earlier conception of cinema, the "cinema of attractions."

The Power of Movies ~ Noel Carroll

Noel Carroll (1996) attempted to answer the question, "What makes motion pictures our dominant mass art? One that is so widespread, internationally pervasive, and accessible across boundaries of class and culture, and what makes the response to movies so intense for so many, especially when compared to other art forms such as opera and theater?" Early film theories presumed that the power of movies was due to film's realism and power to disseminate ideology. Presumably this intense engagement was attributed to film's realism and narrative features within the stylistic choices in film genres.

Carroll attributed the power of movies to two factors: Wide spread engagement and intense engagement. According to Carroll, wide spread engagement was described as features of movies that make them "highly accessible to broad audiences." His notion was that these features consisted of pictorial representations that are picked up quicker than language. He further posits that:

> . . . pictorial recognition that does not require any special
> learning process would also explain how movies, whose
> basic constituent symbols are pictures, are immediately
> accessible to *untutored* audiences in every corner of the
> world. These audiences do not need any special training
> to deal with the basic images in movies, for the capacity
> to recognize what these images are about has evolved part
> and parcel with the viewer's capacity to recognize objects
> and events (1996).

Intense engagement consists of features of movies to depict a "very high degree of clarity." Carroll's notion is that movies "reorganize and construct" through actions, events and variable framing with legibility and economy. He contends that the power of movies is derived from realism, the narrative, and the features within the stylistic choices that distinguish one genre from the other.

Contemporary Modes of Spectatorship and the Moving Image Content
Innovations in Social Media/Digital Storytelling

Social Media is aptly defined as a social instrument of communication, which allows for interaction with information while disseminating information.

The advent of the Internet and the social instrument of communication called social media has ushered in interactive digital storytelling (IDS), allowing opportunities for readers of content to interact with information through the ability to alter the telling and outcome of an interactive story. This interactive digital storytelling lends itself to an interactive moving image form that requires a new aesthetic approach that includes a new way of spatial-temporal construction and a new role for audience members as physically active during viewing.

New Modes of Moving Image Content
Interactive Storytelling

1. Fan Fiction: The Audience contributes to existing intellectual properties of moving   images. Fans take characters and write/tell alternate stories, sometimes   taking themselves out of the story world and creating alternative   universes. The experimentation of these Fan writers in this alternative   environment can serve as a training ground for those wishing to become   professional writers of moving image content. Fan creations never get   officially acknowledged or branded but producers have been known to hire some of these individuals.
2. Fan Films: Fan filmmakers create independent films based on original moving image   content   and   popular   characters   by   source's creators.
3. Social TV: Content creators conduct surveys, polls and games during TV broadcast   for   audience   engagement.   For   example,   the Oscar's telecast engages   audience while show airs live.

Four Levels of Audience Engagement by the Creator
1. *Broadcast:* The creator of the content says to the audience, "I'm sending you my show." The creator does not interact with the audience*.*

2. *I'm Listening:* The creator of the content says to the audience, "I'm watching you. I may make changes, I might not but it's still my story world." Creator watches audience response to their moving image content on Facebook, Twitter, etc.

3. *Welcome to My World:* The creator of the content welcomes audience in but still maintains control of moving image content.

4. *Here Take It – It's Yours:* Creator is no longer in control. Audience free to alter the story world. Included are Fan Fiction, Fan Films, and Fan Wikis. Examples: *The L Word (*where show's producers produced fan fictions), and *Supernatural* (Here fans wrote and altered the shows cannon. The creator incorporated their alterations).

The Five New Jobs of the Audience
1. *Audience as Collaborator:*
The Creator uses the audience to solve story challenges; audience can play in an alternate reality games; Creator gets feedback from audience.

2. *Audience as Guardian (Super Fans):*
Audience/Fans help maintain authenticity of the moving image content thereby maintaining the show's integrity.

3. *Audience as Storyteller:*
Fans work within the cannon of the creator's well-defined story world.

4. *Audience as Influencer:*
Super Fans influence the community and often have direct contact with the Creator of the moving image. For example, the "behind the scenes" content where any Fan can get into the Creator's story world.

5. *Audience as Marketer:*
Fans become Brand ambassadors (flag bearers/standard bearers) for the moving image content. These Fans love what the Creator is doing as long as the creator allows them to carry the standard for the show.

CONCLUSION

At the same time as creators of moving image content have found new ways to tell their stories and engage their audiences, consumers of moving image content, the here-to-fore spectator, have become empowered in their ability to share in the creation of moving image content whether as super fans and flag bearers, interactive collaborators, and/or storytellers themselves in the never-ending story.

When attracted to moving image content within social media, the attraction is to some sort of spectacle or attraction. So we seem to have come full circle back to Gunning's theory ~ the power of moving image content is now based on a "cinema of attraction."
This power shift is democratizing media and communications. The genie can't be put back into the bottle; therefore moving image storytellers will have to   accommodate these collaborative participatory experiences for their audiences. We are now on the frontier of new discoveries and theories that will explore the power of convergent and interactive media.

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