

MEDIA. MEDIALITY. IMAGE – MEDIA-PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION IN THE IMAGE-RESEARCH

ERIKA FÁM*

ABSTRACT. Media. Mediality. Image. Media-Philosophical Investigation in the Image-Research. The concept of the media has been redefined many times; the medial interpretation of postmediality is only a critique of existing media-approaches and actuality. The concept of media is hardly going to disappear, its use has become increasingly popular, and the range of interpretation has become wider, the Media Studies brings together more and more sciences; it is not a limit science, but a cumulative science. In W. J.T. Mitchell's approach, the media is more than a medium, the media is a relation, there is no pure media, and all media are mixed. Breaking down the idea of the mixed media, we could make parallels/contrasts between the concept of total mediality and the concept of postmediality. Postmediality sees a way in the passing by overtaking of the concept of media (Manovich) in aesthetics, visual theory, art theory, media theory, but perhaps most of all the media concept should be sought as it is, just a different type of media use which has become commonplace in the digital-galaxy. Totalmediality is trying to point out the use of new media, and beyond this to the open media borders, overlappings, while the media is not just carrier material but also form. The study treats totalmediality as theoretical possibility for overcoming postmediality in Mitchell's interpretation of media and emphasizing the dominance of visuality in the media-applications.

Keywords: *media, postmedia, totalmedia, social media, community media, image, image theory*

Media as a Bottle

The concept of media occupies a prominent place in everyday usage, not only as a technical term, but also as a very convenient collective noun. We have long forgotten the basic meaning of the media, which simply means mediation,

* PhD candidate, Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: fam_erika@yahoo.com

mediating regardless of the how of the mediator and the medium. The difference between the terms media and medium can cause confusion: referring to media, we think of some technical, mostly mass media phenomenon or electronic media, while we relate the term medium to the intermediary subject,¹ all this with a sense of Wittgensteinian language games, because of meaning-fossils ossified in language use.²

If we accept that everything that is used as traveller is media³, not necessarily for the transmission, portage or storage of messages, information, since we ourselves function as medias carrying feelings, thoughts, and memories. Nonetheless, we have to stick to the material aspect of the traveller, since we have to assume it is a perceivable reality in order for it to be able to transmit something. If we consider media as purely information traveller, it is inevitable to think according to Umberto Eco's linear model, where the transmitter, receiver and message are the cornerstones of the mediation. This is a very straightforward task-action line, requires any element of the flowchart for axiomatic reasons only. However, if we take into account any media – and there is no use to limit it to arts in order to see that – the receiver always takes the message, or not, in a hypothetical, aleatory, random and very undeterminable way.

McLuhan⁴ considered media as a human being, the extension of the human body and spirit. We can see that the media is always a replacement, a supplement, aid, which is useful and used for reaching a special goal, resulting even in joy, catharsis, but also manipulation and vulnerability. It seems that it would be more fortunate, if we did not differentiate between the receiver and transmitter, but simply refer to users and focus on the how of media usage, instead of the identity of the transmitter and the receiver or the infiltrated noise, as we can never talk about a perfect receiver, a perfect transmitter or a perfectly delivered message.

The media is just like a message in a bottle, most of the time one has to take into account the time difference, a book is also information in a bottle, written 120 years ago. At this point it is important to talk about the intermediate processes of mediatisation as well, since the book was published just two years ago, the content has not changed, the media format is the same, as the text remained, but

¹ The term *medium* is usually used to describe a person who has some kind of intermediary role; the general meaning of the word is related to spirituality, angels, spirits, and mediators.

² In fact, we are talking about the same term: the Latin *medium* in the singular and the English *media* in the plural version have gained different meanings in Hungarian.

³ Ein *Medium* (v. lat.: *medium* = Mitte(lpunkt), Zentrum, dazwischen liegend, in der Mitte befindlich; Plural *Medien* oder *Media*) ist im allgemeinen ein Träger oder ein Übermittler von Jemandem oder Etwas.

⁴ McLuhan *Medien* Erweiterungen unserer menschlichen Sinne, des Körpers und des Geistes sind.

it appeared in an altered medial environment since we are not reading the writer's manuscript, but a processed, different material, a printed book. The intermediate mediatisation, media/medium exchange, cannot be considered a negative phenomenon, as the content of the text remained; the text has not been damaged; only the traveller has been altered.

Certainly, the reader's attitude changes, but this is only a frame problem, like lighting or temperature in the reader's room, let us not pursue the line with the reader's wool socks through his/her biologist diploma, recalling his/her upbringing, education and the multitude of childhood experiences.

Medias co-exist, not specifically in the context of multimodality, but as each other's aids, building, forming each other, not merely co-existing but generating, creating, complementing, becoming part of each other. When we see a theatrical performance, we usually meet with a complete, written text, the transmission, actualization of a dramatic work. We get into indirect contact with the written text together with the acting, the living, spoken word, the directorial frame, the background. We cannot see the initial⁵ medial presence, but it is reflected in several different media: the actor, the theatre, objects, the set, costumes, music and human voice.

The media acts as a bottle that stores the message, the lucky users who encounter it, have access to the stored content.

The Media/Medium as Relationship

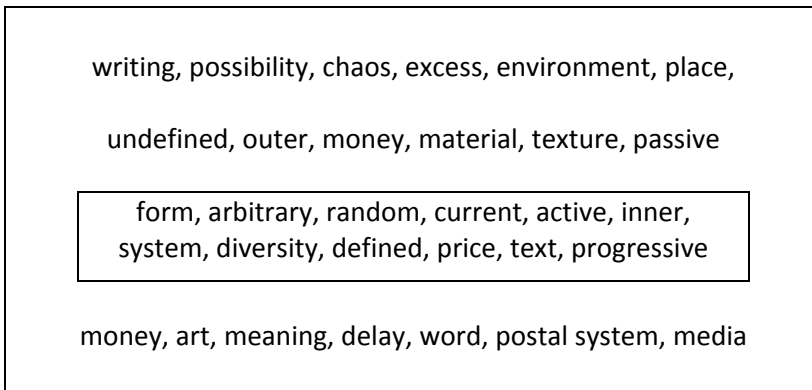
W. J. T. Mitchell, in his book entitled *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* developed a specific model, possibility of the media definition. Mitchell explores solely the relationship between image objects and media, and formulates the fundamental thesis, as follows: Each image object manifests itself merely through a kind of medium – in colour, stone, words or numbers.⁶ In this case it is not of primary importance what can be considered an image, but how does an image exist. It is clear, that an image has to take shape to some extent: it has to become visible, audible, thinkable, and perceivable to the world. At this point, I am only dealing with the mediality of the materialized image; I do not discuss the problem of mental images.⁷

⁵ The manuscript.

⁶ „Ein Bildobjekt vermag nur in bzw auf irgendeinem Medium zu erscheinen – in Farbe, Stein, Wörtern oder Zahlen. Doch wie verhält es sich mit dem Medien?“ – W. J. T. Mitchell: *Das Leben der Bilder. Eine Theorie der visuellen Kultur*, Verlag C. H. Beck, München, 2008. p. 167.

⁷ Mitchell – who among other things – analyzes ontological status and manifestations of the image, points out the difference between the concepts of image and picture (a differentiation simplified in English language use by the presence of these two separate terms and he builds his theory on this

In Mitchell's interpretation media is relation: the media is always »in between«, a »mediator«, a space, a path or a stone, which connects two different things.⁸ As opposed to Umberto Eco's linear model⁹ (sender/emitter – noise – transmitter – signal – channel – signal – receiver – message – receiver), Mitchell undertakes a concentric media interpretation.



slight difference between the two terms) and discusses the mental and material image. „Bilder (images) sind immaterielle symbolische Formen, die von wohldefinierten geometrischen Formen über fast formlose Massen und Räume, erkennbare Figuren und Ähnlichkeiten bis zu wiederholbaren Gestalten wie Piktogrammen, Ideogrammen und alphabetischen Buchstaben reichen. Gemälde (pictures) sind die konkreten, materialen Objekte, in oder auf denen immaterielle Bilder (images) erscheinen. Man kann ein Gemälde (picture) aufhängen, aber man kann kein Bild (image) aufhängen. Das Bild (image) scheint ohne irgendein sichtbares Hilfsmittel zu schweben. Es ist das, was vom konkreten Bild (picture) abgehoben, in ein anderes Medium transferiert, ja sogar in eine sprachliche Ekphrasis übersetzt werden kann. Das Bild (picture) ist das Bild (image) plus der materielle Träger, es ist die Erscheinung des immateriellen Bildes (image) in einem materialen Medium.“ – W. J. T. Mitchell, *Bildtheorie*, Suhrkamp, 2008, p. 285. Mitchell calls this duality of image-picture as a kind of Platonism, more precisely a perverted Platonism, as the two terms can be traced back to the relationship of idea and realia. „Images are immaterial, symbolic forms such as well-defined geometric shapes, the almost shapeless masses, spaces, recognizable figures and their look-alikes, the repeatable pictograms, ideograms or characters. Pictures are concrete, material objects, objects in which the immaterial images appear. A picture can be exhibited, hanged, but an image cannot (...) The picture is the thought, the immaterial image and the material traveler (media).“

⁸ „Möglicherweise besteht darin das grundlegende Paradoxon, das dem Medienbegriff als solche innewohnt. Ein Medium ist ein „Mittleres“, ein Zwischending bzw. Ein (Ver)-Mittler, es ist ein Raum, ein Pfad oder eine Bote, der zwei Dinge miteinander verbindet – einen Sender mit einem Empfänger, einen Schriftsteller mit einem Leser, einen Künstler mit einem Betrachter oder (im Falle eines spirituellen Mediums) diese Welt mit demnächsten.“ – W. J. T. Mitchell, *Das Leben der Bilder. Eine Theorie der visuellen Kultur*, Verlag C. H. Beck, München, 2008. p. 168.

⁹ Die Modell Umberto Eco: Quelle – Geräusch – Sendegerät – Signal – Kanal – Signal – Empfängersgerät – Botschaft – Empfänger

Mitchell's Luhman-diagram builds on Luhman's relationship of system-environment and form-media. The receiver is missing from Mitchell's non-linear model, it is not a targeted model, but it determines the relationship between media and form as a set of conditions, a rising possibility.

The form is the inner content, the media is the traveller, the form defines the genre, and mediality is displayed through a variety of projections. It is not about the message anymore, but rather about presence, ready-made product that is not a specific postal package, a product with a forwarding address; it is an independent, open condition, not a personal, non-individual-oriented, but available, accessible.

In Mitchell's context media appears as landscape,¹⁰ locations, and rooms, as available for everybody. This kind of metaphorical identification is not unusual in Mitchell's creation of concepts, since he considers images to be entities similar to organisms, to living beings. The argumentation is authentic, as the life of pictures (not their setup or structure) corresponds to the scheme based on which living beings are called living beings. More specifically, the images are not living beings, but they behave like them, we relate to them as we do to living beings, their use, their story is the same sequence of events known from wildlife.

Mitchell attaches an interesting question to the problem of mediality in general; he raises attention to the fact that the problem of mediality of media theory¹¹ should be discussed: what kind of media and tools should theory use and in which media should it manifest itself? In the late 70s, Gábor Bódy formulated the question whether film theory should also be a film or not. These are thought-provoking questions, a self-reflexive media theory problem, which is one of the unexplored areas of the given science.

Mixed Media

Mitchell formulates, defines the concept of media in ten points.

1. Medias are modern inventions that exist since human thinking.
2. Rebellion against new medias is as old as Methuselah himself.

¹⁰ „Wenn wir die Medien in einem anderen Sinne »adressieren«, das heißt, wenn wir sie verorten, ihnen einen Ort, eine Adresse zu weisen, dann besteht die Herausforderung gerade darin, sie zu platzieren und sie als Landschaften oder Räume zu betrachten.“ – W. J. T. Mitchell: *Das Leben der Bilder. Eine Theorie der visuellen Kultur*, Verlag C. H. Beck, München, 2008. p. 174.

¹¹ „Eine Theorie der Medien, die diesem wegfällt, hat sich nur daran zu fragen, was Medien sind und was sie bewirken, sie muss auch die Frage stellen, was das Medium der Theorie selbst sein könnte.“ – *ibidem*, p. 174.

3. Media is system and environment at the same time.
4. There is always something outside the media.
5. All medias are mixed medias.
6. Spirit, understanding, consciousness, thinking are all media.
7. Images are the leading medias.
8. Images live in medias, as organisms do in habitats. (All organisms have habitats.)
9. Medias do not have well-defined places or available addresses.
10. We turn to the medias, and similarly, medias turn to us.¹²

I have neither the possibility nor do I intend to analyse in detail the media term formulated in the above ten points within the framework of this paper. However, I try to focus on two statements: on one hand, I intend to confirm the thesis that every media is mixed media; on the other hand, I will try to think further the statement that images are leading medias.

Indeed, no media can be considered pure media. The word itself is mixed media; it is both verbal and visual at the same time: we read it, we see it as letters, in written form, we visually identify it, and then we get close to the content, to the uttered word. This is the simplest, most banal example, but in fact, each media carries on or in itself other medias or is in very close relationship with others. A press photo, the title of the photo, the environment of the exhibition, the lighting of a theatrical productions, a poem from an audiobook, the space of a performance, the structure of a film, all of these assume co-existing medias.

If we narrow down the concept of mixed media, we get to the art theory problem of repetition. It often occurs that various medias migrate, immigrate to other medias, not necessarily as parasites, but establishing possible coexisting life forms. Think of the picture poem, the collage, the simple illustration, the typeface, or even the oldest form, the calligram.

In the case of traveling medias, let us concentrate solely on image/visual medias and examine how do they co-exist and transplant.

It is not unusual that a photo, photos, paintings or other images are displayed in a film, a photo may picture a painting or the photo itself can be the frame, the latter is often used to illustrate press products or studies, visual theory, film essays, technical books. Let us narrow the phenomenon of image transplantation further down and concentrate on films. The film is suitable to include, to record, to show within moving image frames any other media of visual (and not only) length. The picture within a picture (whether or not we are talking about two frames or the

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 177.

pictures melt into each other, in the latter case the guest image, the immigrant-image acts as a moving picture, it has no privileged place in the actual sight, it is added to the other frames, this is called linear editing. If the frame is displayed in the frame, we are dealing with double editing: one linear and one vertical, that is deep editing) always breaks the usual film sequence, even if it is an extraneous film clip that is included, though in this case we are talking about similar media.

The picture within the picture always rearranges the focal point of the host image, more precisely; it expropriates it, as in this case we pay attention to the picture within the picture, especially if it is highlighted in a specific frame. The included picture and thus the sequence will be privileged as compared to the details of the rest of the images and sequences. At the same time, the internal content is reorganized, it emerges, and it regresses in order to give place to the newcomer. (It is a kind of blessed state, pregnancy/expectancy, the duality of giving up and enriching manifests itself in every recipient film image.) Of course, the incoming picture is also in regression, it adapts and fits into the film image as foreign element; it gradually overtakes the properties of the film image without completely losing its medial nature and real content. In the case of exponential images, we are actually talking about a double transformation: both images, both medias are modified and a particular media complex¹³ is formed.

If we see a photo on the film sequence, we can perceive it only in the rhythm and movement of the film image, here the photo loses its properties in order to become a still image and to allow us to set its perceptual contact time, it loses its unique character as well, since it contextualizes, it appears in the environment of the film. The photo is only indicatively, what it used to be, it is no longer its real self, but a migration product, which has evolved into a moving image, its time has been redefined by the new topos of which it became a part.

In Kurosawa's film entitled *Dreams* we encounter a media composition of special effects: in a dream scene, we see Van Gogh's paintings full screen size, in moving image quality. We identify the image, especially as these are famous paintings, but despite its display as moving image, it cannot lose its textural nature, the painting reclassifies as moving image is remedializes several times, it takes a new medial shape, as in a few seconds later, the film sequence does not show the record of a still image, but rather the Van Gogh picture behaving as background for a moving film character, that is, the landscape fixed into painting is revitalized: the painter walks through the landscape, the painting. The director makes use and

¹³ Some examples of films illustrate the characteristics of coexisting, intertwining medias: Zoltán Huszárík, *Szindbád*; Vera Chytilová, *Sedmikrasky*; Woody Allen, *Play it again; Sam*; Jean-Luc Godard, *À bout de Souffle* and so on.

confirms the great possibility of global mediality. Derek Jarman uses a similar camouflaged media change in his movie entitled *Caravaggio* in which the viewer can hardly distinguish between film images made of paintings and tableau vivant, as the structure and content of the living images is exactly the same as the structure of Caravaggio's paintings.

The concept of multimedia is very frequently used in cases when multiple media are juxtaposed. However, we should see that this concept assumes a serial connection, the parallel of media-existence. Most of the time, or rather without exception, medias in contact with each other, are not independent of each other, they do not pass each other without coming into contact.

Therefore, I find it more appropriate to use the term total media or global mediality. In my interpretation, global mediality is the phenomenon when two or more media come into contact with each other and in this relationship they begin to develop each other and themselves, they adapt, they reorganize, they create a special mixed, complex media form. In addition, as according to Mitchell, there are no clear, but only mixed medias, then global mediality would be the life form of mixed media, because they merge, they melt into each other thus creating the medium, or rather media, because there are only media communities.

Images as Organisms – Media as Habitats

It can be added to the definition of media that media is not clearly¹⁴, as Mitchell points out, of material nature, but of dual nature, like the light, it has a wave and particle nature at the same time, the particle nature refers to the material nature, the waves or the mental nature show the ways of manifestation, this can be called genre, more specifically or by way of illustration: the material aspect of a given media may be represented by a computer, a DVD player, a DVD and the genre that is visualized through the computer and the other tools, would be the film itself, which is concept, directing, theatrical work, colour, shape, etc., all together, but no longer as material presence, but seen as an entity modified, transformed into film.

¹⁴ „Medien sind nicht einfach nur Materialien, sondern (wie Raymond Williams einst bemerkte) materielle Praktiken, die Technologien, Fertigkeiten, Traditionen und Gewohnheiten beinhalten. Das Medium ist mehr als das material un (entgegen McLuhan) auch mehr als die Botschaft, es ist mehr als einfach nur das Bild plus dessen Träger – es sei denn, wir verstehen unter Träger ein Trägersystem.“ – W. J. T. Mitchell, *Das Leben der Bilder. Eine Theorie der visuellen Kultur*, Verlag C. H. Beck, p. 162.

Medias – in Mitchell’s approach – are not only material by nature, but they include technology and tradition simultaneously. The media is more than message and more than materialism, more than the image and its traveller. According to Mitchell, every image needs a place to live, to exist and the media ensure this.

It is not a good idea if we pay attention only to the material nature of the media, as media is only a possibility, a possibility that makes it possible for a message to be sent, the media is potentiality for the appearance of the message, because without it is simply an unattainable idea, thought, feeling, concept, which exists inside us and for ourselves, the existence-for-the-other framework is provided by the media.

McLuhan’s famous thesis is: The content of a media is always another media. There are no clear medias,¹⁵ and it increasingly becomes clear that medias co-exist. The images are regarded as organisms/living beings¹⁶ – as understood by Mitchell, not based on their structure, but based on their usage, life events (they are born, used, thrown away, privileged, banned and then they disappear, they die, they are destroyed). How do images resemble organisms? Are they born? Do they die? Can they be killed?¹⁷

Anyway, images have their own lives, in the sense in which they take part in everyday life, their users’ lives, their private, intimate lives are shaped by usage, while they can migrate from one culture to another or become victims of iconoclasm, they can be destroyed, their usage, presence may be prohibited.

Therefore, wherever images are, they need living space. Mitchell believes that the medias are capable of providing space¹⁸ for the images. Similar to living beings, the images can migrate from one media world to another, as a verbal picture can experience rebirth through a painting or a photograph, a media can move into another one. In Mitchell’s view, the media is ecosystem,¹⁹ a living world, a living space.

¹⁵ „Es gibt keine „reinen“ Medien (beispielweise eine reine malerei, Bildhauerei, Architektur, Dichtung oder ein reines Fernsehen).....“ – *Ibidem*, p. 181.

¹⁶ „Wie Organismen können Bilder von einer Mediumwelt zur anderen ziehen, so dass ein verbales Bild in einem Gemälde oder einer Fotografie wiedergeboren werden kann und sich ein modelliertes Bild in die filmische oder die virtuelle Realität übertragen lässt. Aus diesem Grund scheint ein Medium dazu in der Lage zu sein, sich in ein anderes „einzunisten“, aus demselben Grund scheint es möglich zu sein, dass ein Medium in einem kanonischen Exemplar sichtbar wird...“ – *Ibidem*, p. 182)

¹⁷ „Inwiefern ähneln Bilder Lebewesen? Werden sie geboren? Können sie sterben? Können sie getötet werden?“ – *Ibidem*, p. 72.

¹⁸ „Bilder benötigen einen Platz zum Leben, und genau das ist es, was ein Medium ihnen bietet. Eine berühmte These McLuhans lautet, dass »der Inhalt eines Mediums immer ein anderes Medium ist.«.“ – *Ibidem*, p. 182.

¹⁹ „Wenn Bilder Lebensformen sind und Objekte die Körper, die sie beseelen, dann stellen Medien die Lebensräume oder Ökosysteme dar, in denen Bilder lebendig werden.“ *Ibidem*, p. 162.

The design of media as message traveller and the image as a form with message content, is increasingly called into question, since they hardly behave as visual media, as a clearly outlined traveller that can exist anywhere, to anyone, at any time with the same content, they are just present.

The images, as Mitchell puts it, do not want anything,²⁰ they do not say anything, and they just are. The message is content attached to the images, it is not their own, it is not an internal component.

Media-Connections

If we consider Mitchell's media interpretation as starting point, according to which there are no clear, only mixed media, it is completely clear that such concepts as multimedia, intermedia, hypermedia actually refer to the same content of media in general, namely that medias co-exist, we never experience them in singularity.

Before unfolding the problem of multimediality, intermediality, further investigation should be focused on two similar concepts. On one hand, I would like to concentrate on the concept of intramedia, which is primarily used to describe phenomena within a given media, in many cases having a self-reflexive nature.

Another level of intramediality is rarely mentioned, namely, that medias can over slide and in these cases we are not only talking about intermediality, but also about intramediality.²¹ In many cases, transmediality is used to describe the phenomena of media change, as the novel adapted into film or composition entitled "Pictures of an Exhibition".²² The term of transmediality, just like the term of intramediality, is suitable to denominate the processes of media migration. Today's most discussed issue among media analysts is the problem of post-mediality raised by Lev Manovich.

A photo is still a photo even if it appears in a film, only the perception changes; it acts like a moving image, but does not become one. Media forms have the potential to migrate into other media forms, the film could be read as a comic book

²⁰ „Was Bilder wollen, ist nicht das gleiche wie die Botschaft, die sie kommunizieren, oder die Wirkung, die sie erzeugen (...). Bilder mögen ähnlich wie wir Menschen, nicht wissen, was sie wollen, ihnen muss durch einen Dialog mit anderen dabei geholfen werden, sich das, was sie wollen, wieder ins Bewusstsein zurückzuführen.“ – *Ibiden*, p. 66.

²¹ Taking into account their etymological background, inter-mediality is medias existing next to each other, quite specifically, images and texts co-existing in a magazine, but if there is a picture taken of the text of the magazine, that is intramediality, as one media has incorporated another one, we are talking about being inside a media.

²² Muszorgszkij piano cycle entitled "Pictures of an Exhibition" which he composed based on Viktor Hartmann posthumous exhibition.

as well, and the audiobook is a very good example for this kind of media migration phenomena. Medias transplant, transport, transposition, moreover, translate, the message becomes, of course, substantially changed, or moreover it may lose its original centre of gravity. Pictorial/visual repetition, image quotes, reproductions, collages are very good examples of media migration and coexistence.

When Manovich refers to new medias, he assumes a media mutation, more precisely; he does not consider media as media in its traditional sense. However, what is traditional media? Based on Mitchell's response, we can state that there is no old and new media, there is only media or medias, which exist in their diversity and abundance and must comply with only one criterion: to be mediators. Thus, we can question Manovich's statement that the new medias are no longer regarded as medias.

"The new forms (assemblage, happening, installation, performance, action art, conceptual art, process art, intermedia, time-based works) are no longer medias in the traditional sense, the constant addition of new technological forms to the old typology resulted in a new mutation of the concept."²³

The various forms of media are significantly different in terms of appearance and the mode of mediating, but each serves the same purpose, to convey something, they act as storage and means of delivery or displays. The usage and the internal regularities of the medias do not alter the belonging of media to its general category. Manovich proves this with an interesting example: the possibility of digitalization – or more precisely the fact that mold/imprint of any media can be displayed on a web page, that is, I may encounter photos, photos made of photos, photos made of paintings or films made of photos – may lead to the disappearance of differences between medias. At this point, I turn back to the questions discussed in the first part of this paper, namely the definition of the media concept and the diversity of media. Let us start from the simple thesis that there is a great variety of media, these more or less co-exists, as demonstrated previously. The co-existence implies that certain medias migrate into a different media, thus ceasing to be the functions of given material designs, that is to say, a photo is no longer present due to the photo paper, but mostly in a digital environment, but apart from this the photo can be recognized and considered to be a photo.

²³ In addition, if the traditional typology was based on difference in materials used in art practice, the new mediums either allowed for the use of different materials in arbitrary combinations (installation), or, even worse, aimed to dematerialize the art object (conceptual art). Therefore, the new forms were not really mediums in any traditional sense of the term. – Lev Manovich, *Post-media aesthetics*, http://www.manovich.net/TEXTS_07.HTM.

“On the material level, the shift to digital representation and the common modification or editing tools which can be applied to most media (copy, paste, morph, interpolate, filter, composite, etc.) and which substitute traditional distinct artistic tools erased the differences between photography and painting (in the realm of still image) and between film and animation (in the realm of a moving image).”²⁴

Manovich’s unilateral argumentation implies that he approaches today’s culture, media usage in an extreme way, from the user’s perspective and it is also not clear whether the software should have more legitimacy or the concept of media should be changed for the concept of software. The concept of software is strongly linked to computer data storage and processing, and this can hardly be said about culture medial environment in general, because if we approach the problem of media from the user’s perspective, it can be immediately seen that there hardly exists any general rule which would define or regulate usage, even if the traveller is nothing more than a website, where ready-made schemas are waiting for the user, however, the visitor may want to make use of several possible variations of combinatorics and his/her liberty is not limited by the ready-made instructions either.

“The traditional concept of a media emphasizes the physical properties of a particular material and its representational capacities (i.e., the relationship between the sign and the referent.) As traditional aesthetics in general, this concept encourages us to think about the author’s intentions, the content and the form of an artwork - rather than the user. In contrast with this, if we perceive culture, media, and unique cultural products as software, it will help us ensure focus on operations (called commands in programs) offered to the user. The focus is, therefore, shifted to the user’s abilities and behaviour.”²⁵

It is also important to discuss, that the problem of aesthetics, that is the investigation of beauty in its traditional sense, has been reclassified and intertwined with a number of other sciences, but it cannot be ruled out completely. Moreover, without it the other sciences would also be more narrow-minded. The replacement

²⁴ On the material level, the shift to digital representation and the common modification/editing tools which can be applied to most media (copy, paste, morph, interpolate, filter, composite, etc.) and which substitute traditional distinct artistic tools erased the differences between photography and painting (in the realm of still image) and between film and animation (in the realm of a moving image). – *Ibidem*.

²⁵ The traditional concept of a medium emphasizes the physical properties of a particular material and its representational capacities (i.e., the relationship between the sign and the referent.) As traditional aesthetics in general, this concept encourages us to think about the author’s intentions, the content and the form of an artwork -- rather than the user. – *Ibidem*.

of media by software would lock out none other but the user of its alleged scheme, system, since the software is based on automatism. The media is actually a created condition, which will fill its role when it comes into contact with its user, if it comes into contact again with the human dimension. The media was always used at least twice, once when uploaded with content, and when turning towards the media and its content out of curiosity.

“Therefore, instead of the term media, we could use the term software when discussing past media, i.e. what kind of informational operations does a certain media place at the user’s disposal.”²⁶

Total-Media Versus Post-media

According to the principle of postmediality we live in an age where the media as a concept is not suitable to describe different cultural processes and what we have called media has now changed to such an extent, that we need to change the way of thinking about it and related concept use.

However, it seems that media and software indicate completely different contents, not only in the meaning of the concept, but in the public mind and in targeted literature as well. Excluding the concept of media would be such a loss, as depriving ourselves of the concepts introduced by Greek philosophers, because they were not born in the digital era and thus are not admissible in an environment where there are many new phenomena and physical conditions around us. The differences between medias do not disappear, even if they come across each other in collective basin, such as a digital photo or a community site or an advertising space on the internet.

Painting, photography had not ceased with the emergence of television, nor did the printed press with the emergence of electronic media and audiobooks. It is natural, that the appearance of every new element involves some kind of lethargic, ominous fear that predicts the disappearance of an existing one and it is concerned about the exchange of places. In these cases, a complex process begins, medias do not actually change places, they do not exclude side-by-side existence or the possibility of existence within each other, and it is certainly not a primary consequence that the new media destroys the existing, old one, but what rather happens is that the older media becomes part of the new media, as these usually have a more comprehensive, overall character.

²⁶ Lev Manovich, *Post-Media Aesthetics. The Media in Crisis*, [http://exindex.hu / index.php? l = en & page = 3 & id = 227](http://exindex.hu/index.php?l=en&page=3&id=227).

The age of media, medias is not over, on the contrary: the growing, fast multiplying medias result in a colourful and complex media system, where the relations between different medias become more varied, newer, unprecedented configurations are created and the co-existence of special shapes and forms appear. The concept of postmediality proves to be a decadent and destructive term, since it questions the legitimacy of the media in an era when the newest medias coexist with older one.

In the light of the latest media phenomena, when social, community media seems to be one of the leading phenomenon, the most appropriate term is global media, because medias are more and more intertwined, crucibles appear in which the imprints of previous medias are present as references. In the case of global media the materiality of media is transformed, it appears as part of another media, but as form, as having traveller quality and a specific option of expression, it preserves all of its characteristics (in most cases due to its imagery). It is important to note here that any media that has a substance-material dimension as well, (and all medias a material dimension as well), that is to say, it has a visual dimension as well, it can be treated as image, the process of summarizing can be realized specifically as a result of and through imagery.

To give a concrete example: the text, the visual imprint of the spoken word on a web page appears as an image, which due to its internal structure becomes readable, but we can also consider the pages of a book as visual manifestation, since first we have to see it all, in order to be able to read later on. Global mediality²⁷ does not represent anything other than Mitchell's sense of joint medial existence.

Hidden Subject – a Virtual Carnival

Many people suspect that behind these community sites, virtual villages there is strong political background, monitoring information, which has lead several people to reject, leave the system, and move from the village.

This village²⁸ governed by these special rules resembles Béla Hamvas' Carnival, where everybody can select the costume and the role, communication is interrupted,

²⁷ Interestingly enough, the concept of total or global is not part of the technical terminology, but it is present in the form of company names or names of websites.

²⁸ The choice of the term village is more relevant because its proximity is obvious, any member can be reached at any time, you can knock on anybody's door at any time, that is to say, you can check his/her profile – in this case it has to be taken into account that there is minimal security, that you can lock your door from strangers, that is data cannot be shared.

often unilateral, but not impossible, there are no constantly communicating communities, they comment on the comments randomly, therefore short texts, dialogues are created that remind the reader of Örkény's style. The subject is actually hidden in the sense that the user fully controls his/her reactions, situations and appearance. The costume is the information set that the user shares with the community, and this is only part of the real, even if the published information, text, images are regarded as documents, because the process of selection results in a distortion, which directs, regulates self-presentation, this being reinforced by the possibility that their truth and reality value is not checked, therefore, within the limited freedom – I am thinking of the fact that structural forms, sizes, quantities, the origin and selection of information are entirely left to the user. Hence the costume character of profile making: there is a possibility to wear a costume and change it whenever necessary. Most people do not make use of this option to its fullest, they are quite honest, but there is a kind of hiding in honesty as well, because you show the best and the most beautiful of yourself (*most* is, by the way, what some people chose to use, though small in number: the most mysterious, the most terrifying, the most disgusting and so on). It is definitely a self-publicity that can be positive or negative.

These virtual villages have special, fragile and highly variable structures, their functioning is determined most of all by pseudo-intimacy and quasi-honesty and their communication is also very specific. The social/community forum, such as Facebook, can hardly put all of its members into motion on a communicative level at the same time, therefore smaller chat platforms are formed, which can function with up to 25-30 participants at a time, but on average, there are 5-10 comments. The group of the readers, viewers is much larger, those who do not comment, just observe.

These atom-like mini forums create in many cases, compact mini-communities, as it can be observed that responses, posts, comments are given by more or less the same members. It can hardly be called a dialogue; it is more like a set, a pile of comments that start upon aphoristic observations, questions that then generate ironical posts, comments without having an exact line of communication.

Media Jams. The Image as Leading Media on the Web

The most powerful feature of social media is that a variety of media meet, therefore, it can be considered a multimedial, intermedial phenomenon, but it is often called hypermedia as well. The concept of multimediality seems most

appropriate in the case of social media, as the majority of web pages compress multiple media, and at the same time we encounter intermediality on almost every Internet site, as one media covers the other. Hypermediality (the equivalent of hypertext) could actually be a common denominator of multimodality and intermediality, but neither of them can be considered the common denominator of websites; they can be used as characteristics, as features. Media jam is clearly noticeable on all Internet sites, as picture, audio, text and all of their subcategories are displayed, almost without exception, and they melt into each other, they intertwine.

The complexity of media jams puts the user in a difficult situation, because every time s/he encounters an Internet platform, s/he has to set up a hierarchy: on which component should s/he focus first and in what order is to set up between the sub-elements.

Needless to prove, it is everyday experience that images gain priority. At first, unwittingly, we concentrate on the visual components of an Internet site or social media, and only then begin a rational, controlled, conscious user attitude, in order to start selecting from the options (i.e. reading the text on the page or listening to the audio material that is available on the page).

The dominance of images is obvious. However, from where and how do images obtain superiority over other medias? According to Mitchell, images are leading medias. This is axiomatic meaning, without looking for the answer to why.

We could assume, in the case of a complex, global medial product that we turn to images because we understand them better, we can read and comprehend them at first sight. The question remains regarding the origin of image dominance; because we can hardly state that, we can read or comprehend images; however, their attraction, that influences our recipient attitude, is inescapable. Gottfried Boehm used the term *the power of images* in order to outline visual strength, energy through which images fascinate us, attract us, and use their power on us.

One of the controversial and open questions of image theory is how images are able to affect, to influence, how does the visual field of attraction develop and how does it affect us. It is not our intention here to discuss this problem in detail or to find answers to this; we rather analyse the role of the dominance of images, in social, community media. If you open a website, you first take a look at the images. On Facebook we look for and among pictures of long time, no see acquaintances, we might not even read where they live, what do they do, we go for the family album in order to have a peak into their lives, an Internet imprint of their world and only after doing so do we take some time to focus on the reading.

If we accept image dominance as axiom, it also becomes clear why is it that in the case of Facebook for instance, images are so important: users confirm their existence on the community forum first and foremost through pictures, moreover, most communication attempts start out as comments attached to images, pictures, these eventually grow into texts on the border of monologues and dialogues in the form of mostly short sentences, phrases or in the best case extended sentences or very short flow of thoughts.

Imagery has a significant role in editing websites, as the dominant media is the first to come into contact with the user. Website editors, bloggers or Facebook profile editors suspect, feel, know how important the used images are, therefore they select them carefully, while letting a specific form of manipulation work in the background. This kind of manipulation is not necessarily negative, but is rather present in the sense of forming, shaping, transformation and its didactic strength lies in the fact a photo, an image, a video material can create trends on the long run whether in the good sense of the word or having negative connotations. The lack of imagery in the case of the chat is quite strange, more specifically, in the case of the chat we meet with a primary level of text, which is later completed with other medias, including visual content as well.

Nevertheless, let us discuss chat as text-oriented phenomenon, where hiding is of main importance, where image dominance is deliberately eschewed, as if put between brackets and put aside for later, only as a reserve option. This is also interesting, because it is a unique phenomenon of virtual community sites, images do not dominate simply by being absent, but imagination is far more powerful, since it is only the presence of words, conversations that make up an internal image of the partner. In this case games, playing, imagination and the wide sphere of possibilities comes to the front, as the concreteness of the image would deprive – though virtually and on the level of imagination – the users of the best of the possible partners. Though user freedom in editing the webpage and self-portrayal is minimal in the case of chat forums, the freedom offered by *maybe* and *perhaps* in the sphere of thought and verbal expression is greater.

Online Touch – *Message Without Recipient, a Message to Everybody, a Message to Nobody*

In the case of chat, the most common form of communication is bidirectional. In the case of all other medias, including websites, news, sites, there is a clear feature: there is no specified recipient, and there is an undetermined, probable, possible, anticipated user group who is expected to attend, without having a precisely defined or quantified target audience. In the case of social, community sites, the

recipient is always self-appointed, random, casual user. Sending a message in this form assumes the existence of an entirely new communication system, which does not follow Umberto Eco's semiotic schema and does not use the simple sender-message-receiver schema, since we are dealing with a much more complex message, often without a receiver, these are internet messages in a bottle.

When these messages are created, there is no need to put the blame on the lack of marketing or the lack of users, it is rather availability and content that exclude certain users, moreover the subject may be excluding or delimiting. We do not deal with the form of Internet messages in bottles or with the case of personalized advertising when the message is directed to specific recipients, what we deal with instead are those contents as messages, information that are accessible to anyone. These messages can actually speak to no one and everyone, there is no personal connection between emitter and receiver, in fact, there is no connection between sender and receiver, and this is why we cannot talk about sender or receiver at all. In fact, we encounter this phenomenon on advertising pages (self-publicity), on informational sites, on entertainment pages (games) or on community pages.

If we take into account Mitchell's Luhmann diagram, which does not posit media in a linear system but as a circular model, you get a new interpretation of the concepts of message and receiver and emitter,²⁹ they can even be left out of the system.

Mitchell does not use the concept of emitter and receiver, he builds the concentric system on the relationship of form and media (medium - if the transmitter is a person) and media is present as an opportunity for the manifestation of form, without assuming targeted use, it is at hand, available to anyone. Of course, most of the media has a targeted audience, but this audience is fictitious, it is present on the level of planning, preparation, as idealized, ideal option, it helps in editing, in production and creation, but does not generate, create the audience itself, this is formed in a rather aleatory way, under the influence of a number of unforeseen factors. The media is actually that sphere of possibility sector, which, from the user's perspective, is unlimited, available to everyone. Community media usually has one condition: the user should sign up as member of the system, thus getting him/her involved and gaining access to his/her basic data and personalized communication in the form of emails, advertising can begin.³⁰

²⁹ This is not about the invalidity of Eco's model, but the existence of another possible model that is more and more perceivable in the case of newly emerging media forms. Eco's model is still functional in the case of emails, personal communication or traditional postal correspondence.

³⁰ The strategy of advertising pop-up windows on the internet is quite interesting: it works in a personalized way. Who has not experienced seeing in one or another corner of your mail account the advertisement of the online store or site where yesterday you bought something or wanted to buy something, but nonetheless spent some time on that site, you opened it, you showed interest and the next day you meet again.

Let us keep in mind the existing, wandering message that finds its target somewhere, somehow, at someone. The message without a recipient has a very interesting form, which is mostly used by travel agencies, the postcard without a recipient, which appears in your mailbox. At first, the you, the unnamed recipient, are glad that someone has been thinking about you, but you soon realize that it is an advertisement, the text is created in a very personalized manner, but it is actually the advertisement of a travel agency formulated nicely and in an attractive manner, but it not specially for you, it for everybody and nobody.

The message that most social networking sites carry are intended for both the personal and impersonal user, but not just for him/her. The message somehow manages to reach its destination without address and recipient, it comes to me in such a way that I choose it by a simple gesture, I make the Internet connection available, I give power supply to my computer, I open the Internet site and as a self-serving postman I let the online touch get to me, which I get by letting the mechanism operate that can touch anybody in the less physical sense of the word.

This can be understood as one form of vulnerability, or as a form of social expression of automatism or it can be viewed as a particular form of personal freedom.

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