

Flowing Forms, Pt. 1: Real Bodies

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Real bodies of the users of digital media are reshaped through their mediated experience. In my study, I examine the way digitalized media technologies reframe the agency of the media users in relation to the power structure. Through media technology, the users can have renewed cognition of the world and redefine the boundaries of their physical body, imaginative subjectivity. I will introduce two examples that show how changes in media technology reshape the bodies and the agency of the media users using 1) visual, and 2) oral computer technologies. The technologies in my examples are used by East Asian popular culture fans for their user-generated practices on the online platforms: the first example discusses the alternative use of screencast software used by transnational K-Pop fans who try to gain access to live streaming events banned in certain geographic locations; the second example discusses voice synthesis software "Hatsune Miku" and how listeners can voice themselves in digitally mediated music.

Mediated vision on the computer screen reframes digitized identity of human users. The example of "pirated live streaming" by transnational K-Pop fans illustrates how visual framing based on computational grids can visualize the symbolic rendering of its viewers as part of virtual networks. Based on the premise that people in the digital era have digitized selves, I argue that the user's vision of computational grids contributes to reshaping themselves in relation to their redefined spatiality. Because the screencast software used for live streaming enables the users to subvert hierarchical and nationalist logic in internet protocol, the cognition of the imaginary landscape and virtual networks of affinity supported by screencast software are different from spatiality generated by non-digital framing techniques. The screencast software not only enables the viewers to have access to the blocked television streaming events, but allows them to encode back what they want to see, or even their digitized selves to the hierarchical digital system. In this way, pirated live streaming by transnational K-Pop fans who use screencast software in order to resist against the protocological control that demarcates national boundaries online.

Voice synthesis technology functions as a tool for the listeners to express their voices by restructuring the networks of vocality in digitally mediated music. The democratization of voice synthesis technique allows the people who were formerly mere listeners and fans to voice themselves through the voice that is different from their own bodies. Electronic music becomes the transcendental space of non-hierarchical connection for identities that have been repressed by the singular imposed identity. Fan-based practice using voice synthesis technique makes it possible to bring multiple identities of the fan producers, or listeners, or heterogeneity into the music they listen to and produce. While voice in music is considered to represent certain identity by its iconicity of the corporeal referent, the voice is no more of the single corporeal referent in digitally mediated music. Especially, the autonomous nodes in the form of connections in multiplicity in the voice, or networks of vocality, are brought by made possible by the active intervention of listener-producer. In this distributed networks of vocality, listeners can voice themselves through the voice that does not come from their physical bodies.

My case studies discuss the fusion of analogicity of human subjects and the digitality of the media they use. The inquiries that were raised can further be extrapolated to discuss

transcendental potentials for physical bodies in the virtuality for the traditionally disempowered subjects to gain access to the empowerment. The first example of transnational K-Pop fans' use of screencast software pertains to diasporic subjects in the digital era. How can we redefine the meaning of borders and citizenship when boundaries across the nations and within subjects are virtualized? The second example of voice synthesizer software shows how digital media can subvert the power relations by allowing the users to explore virtual identities different than the ones directly related to their physical bodies. As much as control and surveillance become intensified with digital technology, new techniques of entitlement and empowerment will always follow, in order to reorder and reframe the seemingly autocratic, yet hackable power.