CULTURAL RECYCLING IN THE POSTDIGITAL AGE

Miriam LLAMAS UBIETO y Johanna VOLLMEYER (eds.)

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This collaborative volume aims to analyse the possibilities and limitations of cultural recycling in the postdigital age, understanding postdigital recycling as a "processing action on a used material, waste, or product that implies its detachment from its initial context and its subsequent return to a new life cycle in the postdigital age" (p. 8). For that purpose, this work explores the continuities between the analogue and the digital, analyses the strategies and practices of cultural recycling, and traces the postdigital signals it contains.

In the introduction, Miriam Llamas Ubieto and Johanna Vollmeyer, the book's editors, provide a way of conceptualizing cultural recycling structured around three novel aspects. First, they state that this phenomenon "inherently implies time and memory (repetition, iteration, and dissemination) as well as movement (circulation)" (p. 8). Second, they analyse recycling by placing it, for the first time, in postdigital condition. According to them, this paradigm is characterized by "the transformation of experience and perception, a transformation caused by technological changes that impacts the forms of (tele)communication; the storage and reconfiguration of knowledge; and the production, reception, and circulation of cultural and literary elements" (p. 8). Third, they offer an interdisciplinary contribution. This aspect provides a general, balanced, and therefore more reliable overview of the phenomenon. Such an approach not only extends beyond the field of digital literature due to its novel postdigital perspective, but also links media studies, cultural studies, and literary studies. Thus, they open a new research field that has scarcely been studied before. Apart from researchers and institutions of the fields of study mentioned above, this volume is useful for other disciplines such as visual studies, communication studies, and digital humanities. In this way, the book contains many valuable aspects for different areas due to the varied lines of research of the authors contributing to this volume. The articles are structured from the most theoretical to the most practical approaches. Hence, the organisation results in a dialogue of theories and

questions posed, along with criticisms and answers tested throughout the work; this renders its reading a well-structured scientific process.

The theoretical foundation of the volume is provided by Miriam Llamas Ubieto's contribution. She demonstrates that cultural recycling is epistemologically productive because it reflects cultural processes and practices, and she analyses its characteristics in the postdigital era. The author begins by proposing a mandatory ontological variation of the term of *medium* in today's postdigital age: the modality of the "medium as a carrier" (p.18), whose changed nature impacts on "practices of organization, access, transfer and reception of knowledge" (p. 18). This environment, where few of these practices exist outside the digital environment and, at the same time, any action is mediated and integrated by it, constituting respectively the two major characteristics of the postdigital condition that the author discovers: the "digital panmediality" (p. 23) and the "digital co-actanciality" (p. 25). Considering this, she states that recycling is the key to understanding these changes. Firstly, because it is associated with the dynamics of temporality (it implies *returning to*, repetition, and cyclical time), movement and the action of use; secondly, because it may be studied at a *macro* level and a *micro* level through the cultural recycling chain. Llamas Ubieto points to the importance of this mixture of codes, mixed-reality environment, and context —understanding *context* as the "horizon of expectations and symbolic sociocultural orders", "the personalised and digitally codified personal context that incorporates data extracted by signals of the subject or the material", and "the virtual-physical context" (p. 42)— to generate value in cultural recycling. In addition to providing all the notions and characteristics that must be considered in order to study any cultural recycling in the postdigital era, the author states two criteria for dealing with the past and semiosis relations in recycling: (1) "the level of automation and datafication in the human-machine synergy; and (2) the type of relations with pre-existing material and of the material with the context established through these synergies, as dependent on the ambivalent potential of the virtual infrastructures" (p. 47). Building on these considerations, Llamas Ubieto's article lays the groundwork for this promising new research field.

Johana Vollmeyer shows how the current postdigital condition has a profound effect on our memory. Based on the reciprocal relationship between media and memory, the processes of digitisation and digitalisation control the way we create memories. This fact is easily perceived in the app Journey and the book *Allegro Pastell* (Leif Randt, 2019). In the first case, the author discovers that "the algorithm behind the platform becomes an active agent" (p. 87). Although it may seem independent and decontextualised, this algorithm has historicity and a manipulative component that determines what should or should not be remembered. As Vollmeyer shows, it may directly address the new "postfactual quality" (p. 83) of our world. Changing the focusing point to the book, the author examines the "dramaturgic component" (p. 89) as a feature of postdigital recycling, as well as the character's behaviour according to an algorithmic logic.

Therefore, the chapter offers an insightful and critical perspective on the postdigital effects on both collective and individual memory.

Linda Maeding aims to uncover the political unconscious of cultural recycling in the postdigital age. She notes that "the postmodern dilation of the present has been radicalised in a postdigital present" (p. 102), whereby we mould the past, meaning that there is no epistemological past. Maeding demonstrates this epistemological absence through the Instagram account @ichbinsophiescholl, which recycles the historical figure of Sophie Scholl. In this case study, the author proves that the potential of postdigital recycling even extends to the creation of a "counterfactual scenario" (p. 110). From a highly lucid perspective, Maeding illustrates that recycling weakens specifically "the teleologically-oriented sense of history" (p. 106), given that recycling attempts to disintegrate the grand narratives. Thus, whereas the postdigital contains ideological implications itself, cultural recycling can be thought of as a critical construct.

Amelia Sanz Cabrerizo decodes some postdigital strategies in the storytelling of the writer Amélie Nothomb. Her article transcends previous paradigms with which cultural recycling is often conflated and examines an exhaustive *pre-digital corpus*. These narratives, however, consistently employ postdigital strategies such as re-composition or contextualisation.

The field of postdigital publishing as conceptual writing is the subject of María Goicoechea de Jorge's contribution. Starting from *The New Art of Making Books* (1975) by Ulises Carrión, she explores different cultural recyclings with various strategies.

María José Calvo detects the recycling strategies that have been used in the multimedia artistic project *Besmette stad*, based on the poetry anthology *Bezzette stad (Occupied City)* (1921, Paul van Ostaijen). Poems that initially described the German occupation during the First World War are contextualised in the Covid-19 pandemic.

Two contributions focus on literary memes: the works of Pilar García Carcedo and Adrián Menéndez de la Cuesta González. García Carcedo's article, "The Creation of Memes Based on Traditional Folk Tales in a Teacher-training Degree Classroom", is based on memes created by students. In another way, Menéndez de la Cuesta González's article also focuses on the interaction of hypermemetic logic this time with the literary canon.

Antonio Domínguez Leiva investigates the proliferation of a specific cultural recycling: monoliths. The author closely traces the trajectory of these mysterious figures. Domínguez Leiva's contribution highlights the increasingly undervalued question of authorship and the growing significance of social media in cultural recycling.

Spiritism and haunted houses are also recycled in the postdigital age. Rafael Vidal Sanz's article analyses these recyclings in *Personal Shopper* (Olivier Assayas, 2016) and *Host* (Rob Savage, 2020). Both films illustrate how technologies of the postdigital age, through the recycling of certain gothic elements, take on different roles.

Silviano Carrasco Yelmo examines the postdigital recycling of *Little Red Riding Hood*'s board and video games. Regarding board games, the author points out two aspects

caused by the postdigital condition: the strategic situation of the production market and the rejection of the recycled strategy of remediation through digital apps. In contrast to board games, the article shows that retro-remediation's strategy is indeed welcomed in video games, visible in the aesthetics, dynamics, and mechanics.

Teresa Cañadas García's approach also focuses on the recycling of traditional tales, but she analyses their relevance for the young reader. Although traditional tales are still conceived as timeless and changeless, the author highlights three types of recycling that contradict that idea. In a similar vein, Begoña Regueiro Salgado's contribution demonstrates the educational productivity of recycling from a teaching perspective.

Ultimately, the postdigital perspective of the book distinguishes itself from related studies by situating its findings within the context of the present. The volume offers substantial value across various disciplines through its distinctive and innovative approaches, supported by an extensive and up-to-date bibliography. Its theoretical framework exhibits considerable scientific rigor, as demonstrated by the case studies, achieving an admirable balance between theoretical exploration and practical application. In essence, this compendium lays the foundation for a promising and innovative field of study.

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