A Critical Overview of the Methodologies for the Study of Music Video

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RESUMEN:

En los últimos treinta años el estudio del vídeo musical ha despertado el interés de muchos campos académicos, dando lugar a una gran cantidad de obras y a un buen número de metodologías para el análisis de este producto audiovisual. El objetivo de este artículo es ofrecer una revisión crítica de las principales líneas de pensamiento y los principales conceptos relacionados con el videoclip para explicar la evolución de este campo de estudio y promover el debate en torno a este tema. Esta revisión es especialmente necesaria en la actualidad, cuando están surgiendo nuevos productos audiovisuales en internet, como *mashups*, *lip dubs* o *flashmobs*. Defendemos la necesidad de un marco teórico riguroso en el estudio del videoclip para desarrollar metodologías y perspectivas apropiadas que sean capaces de analizar estas nuevas tipologías de vídeos.

Palabras clave: vídeo musical, metodología, análisis, medios audiovisuales

ABSTRACT:

In the last thirty years, the study of music video has attracted the attention of many academic fields, generating a big amount of literature and a wide range of methodologies for the analysis of this audio-visual product. The aim of this paper is to offer a critical overview of the main trends of thought and the key works concerned with music video in order to explain the evolution of this field of study and to promote the discussion on this topic. This review is especially necessary nowadays, when new audiovisual products, such as mashups, lipdubs or flashmobs, have become a reality in the internet. I am concerned with the need of a rigorous theoretical background for the study of music videos in order to develop appropriate methodologies and approaches to analyse these new typologies of videos.

Keywords: music video, methodology, analysis, audio-visual media

1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of music video studies during the last twenty-five years deals with several issues. The statement that this field is interdisciplinary and so it admits different perspectives in its analysis responds not only to the possibilities of music video for bringing together the characteristics taken from other media, e.g. television and cinema, and for rearticulating a new discourse, but also to the activities surrounding the consumption of this audiovisual genre, its relation with music industry strategies, and its capability to fit in different media: television, Internet, mobile phones, etc.

First of all, it is necessary to set the birth of music video in the context of music television programmes during the 1970s, when video technology was starting to be incorporated to the main television channels in Great Britain and in the USA. It is at that time when artists such as David Bowie, Roxy Music or Queen used this medium to reach success abroad without going on a concert tour. Music video becomes an important issue in the promotion of artists in the Anglophone world, and record companies start investing money in its production. Nevertheless, it was the set up of satellite and cable television at the end of the seventies, and the creation of MTV (1981) in this audiovisual system that gave the definitive push to the establishment of music videos in the music industry.

At the same time we witness the success of postmodernism as a prevailing idea in cultural theory as a result of the poststructuralist approaches of the seventies. The assessment of music video as a multimedia product and its recent incorporation to the new television structures makes it very popular in the different academic fields involved in the postmodern perspective. It is not possible to identify the existence of a single methodology for the analysis of music video; we should rather talk of a multidisciplinary approach in which different academic fields appeal to music video as an example of a polysemic medium that enables it to be deconstructed, and afterwards re-constructed and interpreted in many ways.

However the postmodern approach shares several theoretical points and conceives of music video as a mixture between high and low art, and as an alternative to the narrative discourse of classic cinema. Music video becomes a popular topic not only for the audience, but also for academic studies, and as Simon Frith states "pop video is now more heavily theorised than pop music" (1988: 205). Nonetheless, it is in the field of media studies and film theory that we find the most interesting works and the development of a research line that constituted the main path in music video analysis during the eighties.

Many articles published during the eighties explain the postmodern condition of music videos. Kaplan´s book, *Rocking around the clock: music television, postmodernism and consumer culture* (1987), can be considered a summary of the interests of cinematographic theory in music video and an example of the methodology employed for its analysis in this field. It is also the first attempt to study this medium and its relations with postmodernism offering a classification of different types of music videos that takes into account the lyrics of the song and the images of the videos, but it ignores the role of music and its contribution to the resulting meaning. Kaplan focuses in the videos aired on MTV, and admits that the book is the result of research started in 1982, when MTV was the only channel putting on air music videos. In spite of the failings Kaplan´s study may have it is fair to recognize her effort and her pioneering challenge in trying to organize and make sense of the disparate perspectives involved in music video analysis. This book was much criticized by later authors (e.g. Goodwin, Walser, Cook), but it has to be understood in the context of the enthusiasm of postmodern theory for the study of mass media culture and at a time in which media and communications experienced a significant expansion and affected the practices of culture consumption. In these circumstances there was the belief that the implication of new media in the education of youth could result in a new generation that would no longer embrace the values of traditional society.

> …MTV reproduces a kind of decenteredness, often called "postmodernism," that increasingly reflects some people´s condition in the advanced stage of highly developed, technological capitalism evident in America. As an apparatus developed only in recent decades, TV may be seen as at once preparing for and embodying a postmodern consciousness. MTV arguably addresses the desires of young people growing up in a world in which all traditions are being blurred and all institutions

questioned –a characteristic of postmodernism. (Kaplan, 1987: 5)

Kaplan assumes the statements of postmodernism and focuses her analysis in the examination of gender identities articulated in the visual narratives of music videos. She implements the study of gender and identification in cinema, long developed since the seventies, to the case of music videos, making a classification based on the assessments of Lacan´s Edipus complex and Laura Mulvey´s male gaze. Gender studies found in postmodernism and deconstruction a useful tool to analyze the roles of patriarchy, therefore the study of gender identities was present from the early research on music video.

Lisa Lewis, in her book *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference* (1990), avoids the psychoanalytical perspective developed in film theory during the seventies and eighties, and focuses her analyses on the presence of women in the music videos aired on MTV during the eighties. She explains how videos served women to articulate new roles of identity, giving them access to spaces that were considered exclusively masculine (such as the street), and helping them to adopt signs and expressions that allow the creation of a sense of community in women, such as dance. Lewis focuses on the music videos of four women: Madonna, Tina Turner, Cindy Lauper and Pat Benatar, and she points out the contributions of each of them to the creation of new possibilities in the definition of gender identities for women.

Music videos became a sign of modernity and also a key promotion tool for the most successful artists during the eighties, for instance Madonna or Michael Jackson. At the same time, MTV, created in 1981, turned into the most popular television channel in the following years. This fact attracted the attention of many sociologists who started to study the impact of music video consumption in teenagers and the influence of this activity in their education. Sociology has a long tradition in the study of popular music; it is possible to go back to the Frankfurt school to find work on music audiences, such as the essay "On popular music" (1941) by Theodor Adorno. This discipline continued studying this field with the works of David Riesman (1950s), Stuart Hall (1960s) and Dick Hebdige and Angela McRobbie (1970s), both of them associated to the Birmingham school. If we consider the attention paid to music and youth, and the increase of television consumption during the eighties it is not striking to find sociologists working on music video audiences since those early years. Despite its relation to mass culture studies, it is not possible to include sociology within the postmodernism perspectives; this academic field used its own tools to approach music video analysis. The most common method to this end employed in sociology is to make a questionnaire for teenagers in order to obtain data that will allow sociologists to create a profile of the music television consumer. Once this has been done, they derive the consequences of television consumption and relate it to several conductive behaviours in youth: violence, school failure, racial discrimination, etc. As an illustrative example of this kind of approach we can point out the research of Keith Roe and Monica Löfgren done in Sweden about the impact of music video consumption in the academic performance of high-school students, and also in the adoption of certain roles that create in those students a sense of belonging to a distinguished social group, in this case young population.

Sociology is a discipline that will continue to be present in music video research; nevertheless, in the last fifteen years, especially in media studies, it is easy to perceive a change in the approaches and in the methodology employed by sociologists in their analysis. The aim of their research is not anymore to identify the consequences of mass culture consumption in a certain social group, considering the audience as a passive agent, but to study the way in which different audiences confer different significations to a single cultural product. As Francesco d´Amato states, the point "is not in the power of music on somebody, but my power with the music, thanks to the music… the sense I give to the music is the same the music gives to me"[1] (2001, p. 60). Undoubtedly, the influence of the new social context characterized by "glocalization" and multiculturalism, and the weight of postcolonial theory, is present in the evolution of the principles of contemporary sociology.

2. MUSIC ANALYSIS IN MUSIC VIDEO RESEARCH. SEMIOTICS AND MUSICOLOGY

The study of music in music videos was practically absent during the eighties. The success of postmodernism and the attention paid to the fragmentation of the visual narrative made of music a subordinated item in the audiovisual analysis; most of the time music occupied only a simple paragraph, and the terminology used by the authors lacked a proper knowledge of music theory.

It is by the end of the eighties when the first voices denounced this situation and stated the necessity of considering music as part of the analysis of audiovisual genres. Simon Frith, in *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop* (1988), dedicated a chapter to giving an overview of the research on music video. Frith considered absurd the absence of musical references in the analysis of a production elaborated by the music industry; he also states that "the treatment of videos as purely visual texts is also an effect of the current orthodoxy of screen theory in film and cultural studies departments" (1988: 207). For him, the condition of music video as a distinct audiovisual medium implies the analysis of the characteristics that make it different from the others; therefore, it is not possible to explain the nature of music video from the statements of film theory. Frith quotes Robert Pittman[2] to support his conception of music video: "people don´t watch these clips to find out what´s going to happen. They watch to feel a certain way. It´s a mood enhancer. It´s the essential appeal of music translated into visuals." (1988: 209)

Nevertheless, as some authors maintained later on, it is not fair to blame the authors that made contributions to the study of music video from the perspectives of their own disciplines, we should blame the musicologists that did not study the use of music in the audiovisual media[3].

The analysis of music is common to the study of several audiovisual media at the end of the eighties. On the one hand, Claudia Gorbman, in *Unheard melodies: Narrative Film Music* (1987), asserts the active role of music in the configuration of meaning in narrative cinema, and the necessity of considering it as a language integrated in the audiovisual relation. On the other hand, Philip Tagg, in his article "An Anthropology of Stereotypes in TV music?" (1989), demonstrates the existence of a range of visual links to music, which depends on its character and its mood. He elaborated an inter-subjective comparative method to study how the audience makes connections between musical sounds and images, especially those referring to spaces and historical periods. He bases this analysis on the premise that "nonverbal, yet meaningful, sound plays a central part in learning processes during the most formative stages of a human's development" (1989: 17). This would implicate the existence of a range of musical meanings shared by all the members of the same culture, in a process related to the concept of

connotation in Barthes´ semiology. Tagg searches the visual-verbal associations (VVA) in the responses of the audience to music by making a free-induction test to a group of people that are supposed to write the stimuli, feelings and images that come to their mind when they hear a certain piece of instrumental music. Then he establishes semantic relations between the responses, and finally he finds out the VVA with the music and attempts to make a pragmatic application to the articulation of musical meaning in society; he illustrates this process by making an analysis of the stereotyped associations made by the respondents to several gendered musical pieces. In spite of the obvious value of this analysis, Tagg recognizes the restriction of this method for instrumental and stereotyped musical examples, because of the difficulties to find an agreement in the responses when the classification of music is not clear. This is a question that deals with the definition of musical genres and the problems in labelling a piece of music, for instance, as pop, rock or pop-rock. On the other hand, he does not pay attention to the responses made by males and females to define gender stereotypes in music, but he takes for granted that the musical examples played in this method can be defined in terms of gender identity. Both Claudia Gorbman and Philip Tagg use semiotics as a fundamental tool to develop their analysis. Semiotics became very popular in musical analysis during the seventies; the works of Jean-Jacques Nattiez in this field and the structural study of the score elaborated by Fred Lerdhal and Ray Jackendorff (1983) were meant to identify the inner structure of music and the way this language works. We also find the application of semiotic approaches to the analysis of audiovisual media since the late sixties; it is worth mentioning Christian Metz (1974), who established the language structure of cinema. Even Philip Tagg worked in the study of the function of music, and analyzed the title tune of a television serial (*Kojak*) aired in the seventies.

However, after the crisis of postmodern theory for the study of audiovisual media, semiotics was re-launched in the late eighties. The need to rethink the task of the different media involved in the audiovisual discourse made necessary a reconsideration of the structure of the primary text. Michel Chion attempts to present a wide approach to the study of the audiovisual media in his book *L'audio-Vision: Son et image au cinema* (1990). He takes into consideration the relationships between image and soundtrack (intended

as the sum of dialogue, music and sound) and establishes a hierarchic classification of the associations of both components in various media (film, music video, spots) in order to identify the formal characteristics of audiovisual media. Nevertheless, Chion´s perspective is overly influenced by his work on film theory and, as a result of that, he focuses on cinema and dedicates little effort to other audiovisual media. Furthermore, his musical analysis lacks a proper use of the terminology and he does not consider the contributions of the inner language of music to the creation of audiovisual meaning.

It was during the early nineties that some musicologists from the field of popular music studies became seriously involved in the research of the role of music in audiovisual media. Music video revealed itself as the most useful medium for this purpose, because it is in this medium that the image is set to the music once the song has been finished, even after the song has demonstrated its capacity to create meaning independently from the visual aids. This argument is taken as a premise by Andrew Goodwin and Alf Björnberg to elaborate their methodological proposals for the analysis of music video. Goodwin develops his approach in the book *Dancing in the distraction factory: music television and popular culture* (1992), where he recalls the need for a musical analysis in audiovisual media, and elaborates what he calls a "musicology of the image" in order to make clear the contribution of music to the audiovisual discourse. He appeals to the synaesthetic nature of music, and its ability to generate images in the process of consumption, as an essential idea to demonstrate the subordination of visuals to music in videos. Goodwin takes into account the semiotic verbal-visual associations from Tagg and develops them as a process in which "an aural signifier generates another, which is visual, simultaneously with the mental production of the signified" (1992: 58). Even though, as he points out, according to semiotic terms there is the problem of identifying "which signifier attaches to the signified, or whether indeed the sound-image fusion is sometimes so great that the two signifiers are actually one." (1992: 58)

Goodwin maintains the necessity of a musical analysis of the song as the starting point in music video analysis. He points out a list of some musical parameters that influence the configuration of the visuals in the video: first the tempo of the song that is reflected in the movement of the camera, the montage, the lighting effects,

the movement of the personae, etc. Goodwin explains how musical rhythm is not mirrored in image through the cut on the beat, in order to avoid monotony. The second parameter would be the voice, most of the time represented visually by presenting the singer lip-synching the lyrics of the song; it is also common to employ gesture as a way of symbolizing certain expressive qualities of the voice, the grain of the voice[4], etc. Finally, there are several ways of representing changes in the melodic-harmonic structure, such as a significant camera movement, the change of setting, or the alteration of colour patterns in the image.

The methodology proposed by Goodwin constitutes a step forward in the musicological analysis of music video; the attention paid to music in this particular audiovisual medium served to make researchers aware of the active role of musical parameters in the creation of meaning. Nonetheless, probably his bigger mistake was to assert his theory on the basis of synaesthesia, a complex concept that has to deal with a certain kind of perception that is not common, nor usual, in human beings.

Alf Björnberg contributes to the semiotic analysis of music video in two articles: "Music video and the semiotics of popular music" (1992) and "Structural relationships of music and images in music video" (1994). Both of them follow semiotic methods and consider music video an audiovisual text in which "the visual dimension is governed by the music´s syntax and verbal lyrics" (1992: 1). As Goodwin did, Björnberg suggests the need of a musical analysis in order to understand how the audiovisual relation is constructed. However, he focuses his analysis on the structure of the text, and avoids a cultural interpretation of the videos; he is "concerned with primary texts rather than secondary musical signification and with the signification of syntactical processes, as opposed to particular, individual musematic meaning" (1994: 4). Björnberg organizes his method tracing a path from the micro-level to the macro-level, that is, from the syntactic links between the parameters of music and image to the study of the semantic relationships between those structures.
Both methods, as designed by Goodwin and Björnberg, constitute a new perspective of music video analysis. They initiated a path for musicology to become useful in the study of audiovisual media by trying to explain the role of music. Nevertheless, since these approaches focus mainly on structure, and do pay little attention to the

connotative meanings articulated in the consumption process, it is necessary to consider them as helpful tools for analysis, but not as a way of achieving a definitive investigation on music video. That is why these methods are planned as universal, and seem to be designed for the study of an ideal video; once we start to apply the methods to a range of music videos we realise the difficulty of keeping the model unaltered because of the heterogenic nature of this medium and the necessity of taking into account the singularities of each case. Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand the success of structural semiotic perspectives in the study of the form in its historical context, i.e. as a reaction to the postmodern analysis favored during the prior decade.

3. SOCIAL SEMIOLOGY AND THE STUDY OF THE CONTEXT

Structuralism was soon outdated and it was considered insufficient for a satisfactory analysis of music videos. In the early nineties we witness the rise of a new approach to audiovisual media based on the assessments of a poststructural use of semiotics; this theory focuses on the study of the context in which the text is produced and how the audience uses it to create meaning. The so-called social semiology does not deny the semiotic method, but it uses it to analyse the current signs present in the context, instead of in the primary text; this procedure takes into account the cultural references of the text and the various interpretations made by the audience, considering the production of meaning as a process in continuous evolution, and taking analysis not as a practice to find the definitive sense of the text, but as the interpretation that analyses "the latter connotation." (Barthes, 1990b) One of the main topics concerning the context of consumption in music is the different creation of meaning depending on the spatial-temporal situation in which a piece of music is listened to. Jody Berland develops this theory applying it to the consumption of music videos and referring to the common representation of the body in this medium; she bases this on what Henry Lefebvre called the "centre for the production of space around itself" to evidence the importance on the one hand of the performance of the artist in the video (as a character), and on the other hand of the activities executed by the spectator during the consumption of the video. Thus, she establishes different levels of spatial-temporal links in the audiovisual medium that make the analysis of these texts more difficult. This is the reason why

audiovisual productions are considered by some authors as hypertexts that require the involvement of several disciplines in their analysis.

One of the most important works elaborated from the perspective of social semiology is Robert Walser´s *Running with the Devil: Power, gender, and madness in heavy metal music* (1993). This author analyses various issues involved in the production of meaning in heavy metal; he develops the analysis of this musical genre paying attention to the music, but also to the imagery and the way it is configured throughout media, live concerts, photographs, etc. Thus, he dedicates a chapter to the analysis of heavy metal videos, focussing on the study of masculinity and gender identities. Walser combines the study of the structural parameters of music (rhythm, pitch, modal-tonal) that define the style of heavy metal with the analysis of the meanings attributed by the audience to this musical genre.

Keith Negus (1996) is also concerned with the contexts of consumption of music video. He criticises the "ideal consumption" implicit in the analysis proposed by Goodwin, and centres his attention on the variations derived from the increasing use of the domestic audiovisual technology since the early eighties. By doing so, he links the study of the music video with the history of media and the evolution of the technological devices; thus, he introduces another topic to be aware of in the study of audiovisual media. Negus affirms that music video directors are conscious of the fragmented consumption of their productions in the domestic context; therefore they employ "hooks" combining music, image and lyrics in order to attract the attention of the spectators and make easier the understanding of the audiovisual discourse without watching the complete video.

4. NEW THEORETICAL PROPOSALS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

In the late nineties we see the culmination of the synergic process initiated in the late seventies; this evolution was favoured by the concentration of the cultural industry in the hands of a few companies. The strategy of the companies was to use the new technology (satellite, cable, Internet, etc.) in order to achieve an international expansion, and so get the most from their productions. This is a risky practice that needs the investment of significant amounts of money; that is the reason why the companies started to make tie-ins to

launch related products involving different sectors of the industry, as a way of making more effective and cheaper promotions. "As audiences become fragmented (i.e. smaller) the idea is to move the creative material across as many outlets as possible to justify production." (Burnett, 1996: 22) The development of media technology offered new possibilities for the consumption of culture and caused a crisis in the identity of media. At the same time, the relationships established between the audiovisual genres complicated their analysis and made theory more cautious in its assertions about the identity of a single medium and the inner relations of the languages involved in it. Thus, the structural methods of the early nineties, based on the premise of the supremacy of music in video seem to be infeasible at the end of the century, when the general tendency was to approach music video as a product integrated in the context of the audiovisual media. Even if Michel Chion (1990) had attempted to analyse the audiovisual as a whole, it is in the late nineties when we find several works aiming in this direction. Due to these approaches, the normalization of the status of music video becomes a reality, and finally this medium is understood as a result of a progressive evolution in the practices of music consumption, and also as a natural consequence of the increasing importance of audiovisual production in modern society. The new context in audiovisual research questions the identity of some established media, such as cinema (Anahid Kassabian, Andrew Darley) and television (John Ellis, John Caldwell), and by doing so other media (e.g. coming attractions and music video) are taken into consideration and get access to the audiovisual studies as an independent and, at the same time, integrated realm in academic research.

In *Popular Music on Screen: From Hollywood musical to music video* (1999) John Mundy develops the ideas of Robert Walser and Keith Negus about the analysis of the consumer context and includes a historical perspective in the study of audiovisual media. Thus, Mundy considers music video as the latest medium of music industry for the promotion of music in the same way that musical cinema functioned as an advertisement of popular music since the thirties. This book does not focus exclusively on music video, but it offers an overview of the use of audiovisual media by the music industry, paying special attention to the particular meanings derived from the consumption of music in the different "screens" (cinema, television), that is in different contexts (public, private). Mundy

remarks that most of the approaches to music video, especially the postmodern approach, have been avoiding the historical perspective, and pretending that this medium emerged from nowhere, as if by magic.

> The rejection of "history" as ideological category often meant ignoring the quite specific and substantial commercial, ideological and aesthetic history of popular music and its relationship with the screen which, as we have seen, starts in the late nineteenth century. (Mundy, 1999: 28)

This perspective still continues, and it has flourished in Italy, where in the last ten years several works have appeared, most of them from the field of media studies, studying music video in the plural media context and focusing especially in the process of production and consumption, as well as in the influence of the development of media technology. The methodology used by most of these authors in music video analysis is clearly influenced by structural semiotics; nevertheless, it is interesting the way they place music video in the history of media as part of the contemporary audiovisual production, demonstrating the existence of a synergy that blurs the classical distinction between media. Some of these authors are: Gianni Sibilla, Isabella Pezzini, Bruno di Marino, Luca Marconi or Paolo Peverini.

However, the analysis of music video as a text did not disappear; it rather initiated a more complex path to the development of new methods. The effort in finding the "correct methodology" for the analysis of the videos has no sense in a context in which the audiovisual media are being redefined; therefore the study of the text at the turn of the century aims to explain the relations between the languages involved in its configuration, as well as to consider the analysis as an interpretation of a single text that would have to be modified to be applied to another text. To this respect, one of the most important works is the book of Nicholas Cook: *Analyzing musical multimedia* (1998); this author defends the need of analysing music, image and lyrics without a previous assessment on the role of each component in the formation of audiovisual media. As he states "the issue, however, is not so much the primacy of the image, but rather primacy *per se* (…) The problem lies in an approach that begins by identifying one medium as the origin of meaning." (1998: 115)

Cook considers the configuration of the audiovisual products as a "multimedia" relationship that can be called "intermedia" when there is an interaction between the languages involved in the text. He proposes to evaluate the relation established in each text and to analyse what he calls "instant of multimedia" (IMM), that is, any moment in the audiovisual text in which various languages coincide. Cook explains the different models derived from the multimedia connections and puts his method into practice analysing different audiovisual media (a television spot, a music video and a piece of film) in order to illustrate its multiple applications and its ability to adapt to the singularities of each case. He wants his method to be considered a useful, but not definitive, tool for an analysis, and he recognizes the impossibility of setting up the ultimate meaning of a text "Inter-media relationships are not static but may change from moment to moment, and that they are not simple intrinsic to ´the IMM itself´, so to speak, but may depend also upon the orientation of the recipient" (Cook, 1998: 113).

The method proposed by Cook focuses on the analysis of the primary text and shows a strong influence of the structural approaches made in the early nineties. Nevertheless, while in the structural methods the attention was centred in the dichotomy between image and music (or sound, if we attend to Chion), taking in consideration the lyrics as an added parameter, Cook conceives music, image and lyrics as independent media that establish connections in the multimedia text; therefore, he begins his analysis by studying the creation of meaning throughout the inner relations of each component. He denies the idea, defended by Goodwin, of a fusion of media in the audiovisual text, and he rather believes in a relationship in which each medium contributes to the audiovisual discourse maintaining its own independence.

Carol Vernallis agrees with Cook in her analysis of Madonna´s music video *Cherish*. Vernallis elaborates a method that considers the study of the text as well as the interpretation of the possible meanings derived from it. She understands the audiovisual as a new text in which "many of the meanings of music video lie in this give-and-take between sound and image" (1998: 175). Therefore, even if the image, the sound and the lyrics may each work as an independent medium, once they appear in the context of the multimedia they lose their autonomy and

are conditioned by the others. Vernallis developes this methodology in her book *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and cultural context* (2004), in which she attempts to recapitulate the main parameters for the analysis of music video, explaining her point of view as to how they should be considered; she also reviews the most controversial issues in music video analysis (origins of the form, narrative discourse, performance, space, etc.). Vernallis aims to set the music video in the audiovisual context, but also to point out a range of specific characteristics of this form that will allow her to prove its singular identity. She attempts to do so in the belief that the continuous evolution of music video, at least since the late seventies, served to evidence the stability and autonomy of this medium.

Vernallis does not propose a new methodology to approach the music video analysis, but she develops Cook´s structural model for the study of the context, offering more possibilities in the process of interpretation derived in any case from the primary text. She puts this model into practice in three music videos demonstrating the capability of music, lyrics and image relations to multiply the significant potential of the audiovisual text in order to communicate cultural values, such as race and gender identities.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study of music video has had a short trajectory if we compare it to other media, such as cinema and television. Nevertheless, the interest in this form shown by many disciplines resulted in a considerable number of works from different perspectives. It is worth noting that this was possible because of the consolidation of music video in a period in which postmodern theory was in its height, which made of this audiovisual product one of the key elements to prove its assessments. Thus, sociology and media studies were the first academic fields to consider videos at a time when most of the musicologists involved in popular music studies were still defining their field and approaching some basic concepts to define their corpus. The reaction to postmodernism at the end of the eighties affected the study of every single audiovisual medium; it is the period for the access of new perspectives to this field to vindicate the research of new components and to contribute to the redefinition of the audiovisual media. It is the time to go back to the structural analysis of the text in order to avoid the excessive stress in non-referenced secondary interpretations, and

to establish the function and relation of the inner components of each audiovisual medium.

Music video has become a more complex medium during the nineties, because of the synergic relations in cultural production supported by the development of the technology related with communication. Thus, the study of this product developed a range of complementary perspectives that aimed to contribute to the comprehension of this medium and approached its analysis as interpretations of case studies, aware of the difficulties to apply a holistic research to this form. It is, especially, the production of meaning by the audience and the influence of the consumption context that complicate the assessment of a single methodology. The integration of music video analysis in the history of media (Mundy, Sibilla) and the approach to it as an audiovisual genre (Cook, Vernallis) served to normalize the study of this form and gave an autonomous identity to a medium that already has a large patrimony and a trajectory of several decades.

The aim of this paper has been to offer an overview of the evolution of music video studies, and also to establish a link between cultural theories and the development of this medium in the context of contemporary society. The lack of music analysis in the configuration of the audiovisual discourse has been responded to by several musicologists during the last twenty years; yet, there is still much research to be done in the study of the contribution of music to audiovisual language. No matter if there is a fusion, an overlap or a juxtaposition of media in the audiovisual text, the multimedia is a new product that embraces several independent forms of expression. Thus, even if the study of the audiovisual phenomena is interdisciplinary, we cannot avoid the responsibility of musicology in contributing to the comprehension of music in the audiovisual media and from a multidisciplinary approach.

The analysis of music videos should "situate" them in the context of production and consumption. This process will allow us to study the role of videos in a determined period, helping us to understand the meaning of music and the visual conception both of the artist and the genre at a given moment. This *extratextual* analysis is not isolated from the formal one, but it is also useful in order to comprehend the aesthetic background that influences the elaboration of a music video. In other words, we should develop a method that goes from the textual-semiotic analysis of the video, attending to

the interaction of media in the "audiovisual conversation" (Bettetini, 1984), to the production of meanings and the relations established by the audience with these videos: the way audiences consume them and the way they negotiate their identities through them. And all throughout, we must take into consideration the political and socioeconomic situation which constitutes a backdrop that conditions the evolution of the basis for the development of music videos, i.e. music industry (production and distribution) and media (emission).

Far from disappearing, nowadays music video is being redefined as an audiovisual product, especially in the Internet. Mash-ups, lipdubs, literal videos, etc. are recent video formats with specific characteristics that need of new paradigms to be analyzed. Thus, the challenge is to find the tools to approach these videos properly in the context of an interdisciplinary research, adapting to the new situation the methods developed in the past, and looking for inspiration in the methods of other disciplines that may be involved in the study of music video.

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ENDNOTES

1. My translation from Italian.

2. Robert Pittman, known as "the father of MTV", created programming for this channel, and was the president and chief executive officer of MTV Networks during the years 1983-87.

3. This point is supported by various scholars, such as Andrew Goodwin (1992) and Philip Tagg (1995).

4. Concept generated by Roland Barthes and explained in his essay "The grain of the voice" (1990a).

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