Zixuan Wen (Vince)

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The Kino-Eye in the 21st Century

Visual media has changed significantly due to technological maturation. One of the indicators of such a revolution was the conceptualization of the Kino-Eye theory, which evolved as the concept for uncovering the truth. It is a technique widely adopted in the 21st century and remains timeless in the future. The human eye and camera interactions reflect the link between image and reality. The Kino-Eye theorist Vertov revolutionized the film production industry by allowing the camera to see and subject the viewers to an immersive world. He promoted the idea of "film truth," where the camera captures raw, unfiltered reality, revealing truths about society and human behavior that might not be apparent in scripted films. The Kino-Eye theory underscores the instrumental power of the camera to reveal the events that occur in the real world by organizing visual fragments and editing them together in the form of a montage.

The evolution of technology since Vertov's era has vastly expanded the filmmaker's toolkit, allowing for innovative storytelling methods that challenge the Kino-Eye theory. Scholars such as Sobchack (1992) argue that contemporary digital technologies blur the line between fiction and reality, making Vertov's goal of a purely objective camera increasingly unattainable. Sobchack (1992) claims that immersive CGI environments and virtual reality (VR) experiences create worlds that might seem authentic but are fundamentally constructed, thus

undermining Vertov's notion of "life caught unawares" as an unbiased representation of reality. L Mulvey (1989) adds that the inherent biases embedded in digital production often reflect the dominant cultural and ideological perspectives of the creators, suggesting that modern digital cinema cannot capture a universally objective truth (Mulvey, "Visual and Other Pleasures").

On the other hand, proponents like Thomas Elsaesser argue that advances in CGI and VR provide an opportunity to realize a more immersive version of Kino-Eye, where viewers can explore deeply constructed digital worlds with a heightened sense of immediacy and truthfulness (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015). By enabling filmmakers to manipulate time and space freely, these technologies expand Vertov's concept of revealing what the human eye cannot see, pushing the boundaries of storytelling and perception. Elsaesser and Hagener (2015) suggest that rather than diminishing Vertov's theories, digital technology allows for greater experimentation with montage and perspective, aligning with the spirit of Kino-Eye in revealing hidden aspects of reality (Elsaesser, "Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses").

The Kino-Eye montage concept focuses on organizing pieces of films, which refer to frames, into cine-things. It involves writing cinematic elements with recorded shots. Rather than merely selecting pieces of shots to make scenes and subtitles, it utilizes scenes to attain the status of total truth in a film. Lens precision forms an integral component of Kino-Eye production (Latific, 2018). The unerring camera lens is at the center of the action of real facts, which are films outside the studio without actors, sets, or a script. In *Free Guys*, for example, the camera plays an integral role in defining what constitutes reality before a viewer. It merges live-action characters and establishes a digital visual environment with overlays to establish the wild reality of Free City, which is dominated by an authentic personality (Levy, 2021). This practice results

in the development of different characters based on preliminary blueprints and diagrams of different forms.

The Kino-Eye montage model is based on the constructivist principle. It aims to derive its desired effect only by connecting individual shots into a cinematic whole. Viewed independently, such shots are fully devoid of meaning, which is derived only by organizing and relating them to each other. Before connecting each shot, the scenes are shortened and made dynamic (Romm, 2023). Merging the shots generated generates new esthetic forms of reality, which, through montage, produces space and time independent of the space and time of the receding shots. As a result, the constructivist school of thought demonstrates that meaning in cinema is expressed only through visual language and that viewers cannot decipher without connecting shots. The constructivist principle reinforces the Kino-Eye model by stressing that the effect of an artistic utterance rests precisely on the deployment of the work and configuration of its internal components. In that regard, the filmmaking process unfolds under the guidance of a camera machine and the eye. The Kino-Eye theory considers the organization of cinematic composition from the dimension of the length of movement and focuses on the relationships between foreshortenings of perspective, light, shadow, and the filming speed.

The visual editing process that aligns with the Kino-Eye model aims to showcase what the human eye cannot see, which is the truth that is visible only beyond the limitations of the natural eye. The microscopic machine, the Kino-Eye. Vertov’s notion of utopia was also based on the concept of mutual equality among people, who would be mutually replaceable. Such as machine components (MacKay, 2022). For instance, the *Kino-Pravda* film highlights the aesthetics of human motion, approximating the operation of a machine. Thus, the camera

machine takes center stage in embodying their project of a large-scale reorganization of the world and the outcomes of social progression in the cinematic stage.

Each Kino-eye production is shaped by montage from the phase of theme selection to the actual release of a film. Montage refers to the process of organizing film fragments into objects. It implies writing something cinematic with the recorded shots as opposed to choosing the fragments for scenes, such as theatrical bias. In that regard, Kino-Eye film editing occurs during the entire process of film production. Through such a continuous procedure of adjusting and editing, three phases of production become critical (Griffith, 2020). First, editing occurs by gathering an inventory of all documentary data directly or indirectly linked to an assigned theme through objects, film clippings, and photos. The outcome of such a montage is an inventory that groups the more valuable visual data into a pan of themes that become clearer and emerge in the editing exercise. Visual editing also serves the human eye that sums up observations on assigned themes (Romm, 2023). For example, the montage of people's observations is the outcome of a shooting plan that stems from the selection and sorting of observations. In developing such a selection, camera movements consider the indications of thematic plans and the distinct properties of the machine (the Kino-Eye).

The tension between critiques and defenses of Vertov's Kino-Eye theory invites a deeper theoretical analysis rooted in contemporary media theory. Postmodern thinkers such as Jean Baudrillard (1994) and his concept of hyperreality further complicate Vertov's original goal of an unbiased camera by suggesting that modern media create simulations that overshadow and replace the reality they intend to depict. Baudrillard (1994) argues that, in a hyperreal environment, representations no longer reflect a tangible reality but instead form a new layer that we perceive as authentic, thereby complicating Vertov's desire for objective cinematic truth. This

theoretical framework challenges the Kino-Eye concept by highlighting how digital technologies can create compelling illusions that viewers accept as truth, making it difficult to distinguish between constructed simulations and the original reality they supposedly represent.

Additionally, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's theory of remediation provides another layer to this analysis. Their idea that new media constantly reshape and repurpose old media aligns with how digital filmmakers blend various forms—CGI, virtual reality, and traditional storytelling—to create new narratives that pay homage to earlier techniques while expanding upon them (Bolter & Grusin, 2000). This concept of remediation suggests that modern digital filmmakers are not abandoning Vertov's ideas but are instead reinterpreting them for the digital age. The Kino-Eye framework finds relevance in how these hybrid narratives uncover new truths and perspectives, emphasizing the creative potential of immersive digital worlds. Ultimately, these critical theories highlight a duality: while modern cinema may struggle with achieving Vertov's pure objectivity due to the inherent biases and hyperreality of digital simulations, it simultaneously opens new avenues for filmmakers to explore Vertov's spirit through innovative techniques. This combination of theoretical critique and adaptation underscores the evolving nature of film theory itself, demonstrating that the principles behind Kino-Eye still resonate in contemporary storytelling, even as they face new theoretical challenges.

The *Kino-Pravda* (Vertov, 1925) film reflects the principles highlighted by the Kino-Eye as a way of decoding the world by obtaining different images and manipulating them to create a subjective experience. Kino-Eye is a film-making theory introduced in 1925 by the Russian filmmaker. The technique encourages using the camera objectively without subjective interpretation or interference by the director or producers (Vertov, 1925). Latifić (2018) adds that

in the Kino-Eye concept, the camera is used to capture life as it is by bypassing the director. *Kino-Pravda* proved the success of Kino-Eye as a montage when the director, Dziga Vertov captured archival material, horrors, animations, images, and pieces of footage together to convey the unconventional wholeness. *Kino-Pravda* adopted the Kino-Eye concept to prove that the camera can be an unbiased observer by capturing detailed events as they unfold, similar to how the eye sees without interference or influence (Gabara, 2020). This means that the camera helps in capturing "life caught unawares" (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015). Hence, inspired by the Kino-Eye theory, Kino-Pravda laid the foundation for capturing real-life events and stories without heavy scripting or staging to promote emancipation from the director's influence. As a result, the Kino-Eye concept is crucial in understanding mediation and remediation, as proposed by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, who argued that new media remediates old media. For example, *Paranormal Activity* (Peli, 2009) improves upon the old media using the Kino-Eye theory by employing the found footage where the cinematography unfolds through the montage of footage captured by the characters themselves. Such an approach reinforces the theory of capturing "life caught unawares" and refashions filmmaking by borrowing the idea of documentary production or home video recording. *Paranormal Activity* achieves this by incorporating a documentary approach in production; hence, blurring the line between fiction and reality.

Kino-Eye concepts foster an understanding of how *Paranormal Activity* repurposes the old media to enhance the audience's immersive experience. Bolter and Grusin (2000) argue that all media functions to achieve immediacy and hypermediacy. According to Bolter and Grusin (2000), immediacy makes the situation resemble reality or become transparent. In *Paranormal Activity,* immediacy becomes apparent when hand-held cameras record the events in the

bedroom to reveal paranormal events occurring in the bedroom. Natural lighting in the room adds an immersive experience as they feel present in the room. Han et al. (2023) defined immersive experience as a concept where the viewer is fully transported to a virtual environment, making them truly present in such an environment. Thus, *Paranormal Activity* adopts a documentary-like approach to immerse viewers in tarrying environments while acknowledging the aspects of Kino-Eye in promoting the authenticity of film creation and storytelling. The Kino-Eye theory emphasizes the power and ability of the camera to portray reality in an entirely accurate manner.

Kino-Eye perspective and the concept of remediation are prominent in *Ready Player One* (Spielberg, 2018), which employs virtual reality to indicate the influence of digital theory in filmmaking. According to Bolter and Grusin (2000), virtual reality (VR) promotes transparent immediacy and supports the current definition of an individual becoming the roving point of view (p.161). The authors argue that VR is refashioning how film editors consider the point-of-view. As a result, *Ready Player One* reimagines the concept of Kino-Eye in the virtual realm. Set in a dystopian world, *Ready Player One* shows how the camera objectively captures reality in the virtual environment. For instance, Wade Watts, the protagonist, wades through the OASIS using Parzival and experiences the virtual world through his eyes. In this film, the camera captures the virtual environment as Wade Watts navigates the OASIS. As a result, the viewers experience a subjective but immersive experience by following the unfolding of the occurrences in the virtual environment (Fan, 2015). In addition, the race at the beginning of *Ready Player One* incorporates real-world and virtual-world elements to support the concept of remediation.

Virtual reality promotes and remediates the old film forms to make it relevant to viewers while reinforcing itself as a transparent medium. In traditional paintings, films, and photographs,

viewers look beyond the frame, giving them a sense of immersion. In the same way, VR remediates these traditional forms by strengthening the immersive experience while facilitating interaction (Williams, Love, & Love, 2021). For instance, the camera in *Ready Player One* serves as a tool that separates viewers from the visual sea of overblown, action-heavy blockbusters. Rather than reducing its role to a camera that merely receives commands from a videographer, it spins, moves, twists, and gradually flies around the action (Spielberg, 2018). As a result, it employs a grounded technique that captures all the climax events and critical angles that distinguish active from inactive scenes. Through Vertov's Kino-Eye perspective, *Ready Player One* borrows and incorporates different media forms to immerse viewers in the virtual environment. As Bolter and Grusin (2000) noted, VR remediates point-of-view innovations because it renders these earlier ways of seeing obsolete. Therefore, *Ready Player One* promotes immediacy and remediation by evoking the feelings or emotions one would experience in the real world.

Moreover, intertextuality theory supports immersion and remediation of film forms. Intertextuality suggests texts are not isolated works but rather interdependent, with meanings shaped by their interactions with other texts (Griffith, 2022). Intertextuality is critical in films as it serves as an important element in engaging the audience by evoking nostalgia. Intertextuality is applied in the movie to briefly describe some scenes, enabling the viewer to understand the context of events and allowing them to resonate with them (Griffith, 2022; Latifić, 2018). Hence, intertextuality in contemporary is vital as it adds a rich layer to storytelling. Intertextuality creates a layered viewing experience, where audiences are encouraged to recognize and interpret these references within the story's context (Griffith, 2020). For example, *Ready Player One's* virtual world of the OASIS is a prime example, combining elements of science fiction, fantasy,

and adventure in a way that feels both familiar and new. The movie reinforces the theory of intertextuality by showing how the texts bring out reality in the film, which makes it possible for the audience to interpret and connect the events to their daily lives.

Hybridity and embedded contradictions are essential principles because they create a new perspective on digital filmmaking principles that challenge traditional forms of storytelling. When filmmakers merge Kino-Eye concepts with hybridity, it results in immediacy and remediation by introducing elements that engage the audience actively and create an immersive experience. For instance, *Free Guy* (Levy, 2021), set in a fictional video game world known as "Free City," where the boundaries between the natural and virtual worlds are blurred, explores the concept of hybridity, which places the viewer in an immersive world. This blending of realities reflects the hybrid nature of digital filmmaking, where real-world elements are combined with digital effects to create a seamless and immersive experience (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015). *Free Guy* blends elements, including science fiction, action-adventure, “Free City” video game culture, and romantic comedy, to create a hybrid story (Levy, 2021). Hence, *Free Guy* explores themes of agency, identity, and freedom within the confines of a digital world, raising questions about the nature of reality and the impact of technology on society.

Hybridity and embedded contradictions are essential because they allow filmmakers to explore new creative possibilities by combining the strengths of traditional and digital techniques. This can lead to visually stunning and thematically rich films that engage audiences on multiple levels (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015). In *Free Guy,* hybridity has been applied to edit natural scenes and integrate them with digital techniques, eventually combining virtual reality and natural settings. The same principle is applied to *Ready Player One,* in which virtual reality has been combined with traditional filmmaking techniques to make them appear natural. Digital

filmmaking has made filmmaking more accessible to a broader range of filmmakers, leading to greater diversity in storytelling and perspectives. Hybridity allows filmmakers to experiment with different techniques and styles, leading to a more dynamic and diverse film industry (Heras et al., 2021). In *Paranormal Activity,* hybridity and embedded contradictions have been applied to create an impression that the events are real. Using digital technology can raise concerns about the authenticity and integrity of the filmmaking process. Some audiences and critics may view digital effects as artificial or lacking in emotional depth. Furthermore, Hybrid filmmaking is sometimes associated with technical challenges, such as integrating live-action footage with CGI or maintaining visual consistency across different techniques (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015). Therefore, filmmakers must carefully balance these elements to create a cohesive visual style.

The mediation-remediation theory corresponds with the Kino-Eye model since it is premised on the idea that the media can be effectively understood from its human-camera interaction rather than in isolation. To that end, films serve as artistic media that orient other media (Gallagher, 2020). Digital camera shots and edited scenes comprise high-resolution, color, and accurate reproduction of scattered materials but are later organized into one insightful piece. Cameras transform the experience of engaging with their analog originals (old media) by allowing viewers to observe these picture movements instantaneously. Thus, the remediation theory holds the view that digital media projects stem from old media. It offers an instrument for comprehending the digital film from a genealogical perspective. According to the theory, the media continually remediate or remodel other media in their self-development (Gallagher, 2020). Such a claim is reinforced by the camera movements captured in *Ready Player One*, which breathes life into the Kino-Eye theory. In it, the producer blocks and shoots the scenes in a manner that narrates the entire story within a single setup.

Although technological advances have continued to expand the notion of “life caught unawares,” they continue to undermine the concept of objectively using the camera. Utilizing models such as the mediation and remediation frameworks can broaden understanding of the power of visual effects and camera shots on film plot development and perceived outcomes. Movies such as Paranormal Activity, Ready Player One, Free Guy, and Kina-Pravda adopt the theory of Kino-Eye to emancipate viewers by achieving the aspect of immediacy and remediation. Such films reinforce the thesis that the film genre goes beyond literature and theatre to incorporate visual representations of society.

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