

From the Death of Theory and the Rise of the Media Shepherd

There is something implicit in media practices, the practitioner becomes inevitably aware of his surrounding, he is able to stop it and re-examine it, he is in fact able to stretch the digitally documented time and space and inevitably make a through analyses of it. In other words, media practitioners and particularly those who report through new media devices about their surrounding are, without really knowing it, the most relevant researchers of our time. On the other hand, the socially financed researcher who would see these media practitioners as just "artists", are in fact, without knowing, the real artist, this referring to the negative connotation of Narcissuses which the traditional romantic painters have transmitted to even these contemporary practices.

While media practitioners are far from being recognized as the humanists of our time, writing a new humanity with the media languages they develop, the official humanity stagnates in a typographical mannerism, going constantly back to what feminists would rightly define as the marriage with "white dead men". In other words, the "official humanities" has officially become the history of humanities and no progress can be made but a constant deconstruction and reconstruction of inorganic matters which have now for long lost their relevance and has since a long time migrated in other niches. While naturally, the media practitioners of our time would take their place, they keep on transmitting their "canonical tradition", a tradition which can only survive via the artificial establishment they have created.

Is there a border line between this stagnating form of knowledge production maintained by the establishment and the knowledge production generated by "hunters" like those populists standing on the opposite side of academia, those who have already brought allot of mass destruction with their socially agitating theories (e.g. implicitly Karl Marx and more explicitly Adolf Hitler)? Biblically, this in between would certainly be represented by the shepherd, whether a Cain opposed by Abel, or the more successful version of it, Jacob opposed by the brutal hunter Esau. The shepherd of our time, is possibly the media practitioner with portable devices, bringing his beloved sheep, the various parts of his practice on meta journeys, seeking for greener grass and seeking to constantly revive with new meanings his contained herd which, in fact, cannot but become more numerous with the encounter with new surroundings and the encounter with each other.

This shepherd-like media practitioner is in fact balancing between a state of autonomy and a state of dependence from the very "green grass" he seeks in the environment. He

does not transgress the environment and think to just turn it upside down. He assimilates in fact, he dwells with it for some time but then moves on to other pastures as soon as his sensitivity tells him that such grass is no longer fresh and is in fact fermenting, hallucinating him. He moves on also, in this respect, feeling the eternal revenge of the jealous academics, the Philistines-like monks of the establishment, always ready to get rid of him as soon as he exposes himself with his knowledge production, threatening the inarguable principles they keep on dictating.

Aside for Abel and Jacob, we might now shift our attention away from these biblical examples of shepherds and rather look into a more polytheist example such as that we can find in the Odyssey, the example of the Cyclops. If on one side then we have the tragic Abel dying innocently, and on the other Jacob stealing with his ingenuity his bigger brother inheritance, the last example wants a shepherd, the Cyclops to be merciless and a quasi-god himself.

What is most striking about this last form of shepherd is not only his authority, but also the organization within the cave. One could affirm in this respect that the word Encyclopedia might not only refer to the Cyclops for its “cyclopic” dimensions but also for the Cyclopes very organizational skills within what it could seem like a Platonic cave where he not only carefully organize his cheese productions but also separates the different kinds of sheep from young to middle age to older etc.

This is possibly the effect on the sedentization of the shepherd figure, from having no place and dying innocently like Abel, to having only a tent and surviving out of his ingenuity like Jacob and finally to have a whole cave for storing but then becoming himself cheated by others' people ingenuity like the Cyclops. Among this three different kinds of being a shepherd, the media practitioner, the new modern shepherd, should probably be able to identify himself and possibly try to keep the middle solution at hand, that of the semi-sedentary and semi-nomadic shepherd like Jacob.

It is interesting however to notice the implicit characteristics of the media practitioners, also drawn into archiving and organizing meticulously the product of his immaterial labour, his digital operandi representing himself and his social surrounding as well as the cyclops' cave could be a valuable source for a media archaeologist to understand the cyclops and the very island where he operates, being both his dwelling and his “testament” or, in fact, his burial mound. As there wouldn't be a better site to represent the Cyclops than his very cave then, we cannot forget that media practitioners are not born cyclops but use their ingenuity to become such.

By constantly documenting himself and his surrounding, the media practitioner obtain the comprehensive understanding, the over viewing map, the absolute point of view that the Cyclops, with his high positioned eye has. The media practitioners is more similar then to Ulysses however, not only for his ingenuity but also for the fact that he does not confine himself to a patriarchal island but roam the world with a cave that in fact is not a material establishment but rather an immaterial projection, a spiritual kingdom which can only set itself to rest in an quasi unreachable Ithaca (or promised land to rephrase this biblically) that he might be able to reach only when old.

Parallel to this discussion, digging further into the actual contrasts between the media practitioners and the cyclops, we could in fact state that, as an Ulysses, the media practitioner is in fact a reversed Cyclops, only occurring to end up, by the hands of providence, in the establishment of the Cyclops of which he makes his acquaintance, placing his life at risk. Such Cyclopes' island for today's media practitioners could be in fact academia and the Cyclopes it selects as absolute truth, a common truth made universal for better control. These Academic Cyclopes, the great authors are meant to preserve the establishment, training the sheep to pasture on their terrain and producing the cheeses, the academic publications, to store within such caves. While Ulysses then builds a valuable human narrative, an immortal one despite the precarity of his existence, the establishment's objective seems to be rather that of preserving itself, like these cheese which are likely never to be eaten but forcedly until sickness to every one who get trapped in the cave and decide to play the sheep eating from its own milk rather than an original Ulysses.

To conclude then we could see the very media practitioner as the modern shepherd taking his media practices around in search for greener grass and feeding them with one or the other based on the type of grass. Such a shepherd also produces his dairy products, just like the Cyclops, but these are kept and consumed to allow him to keep moving. The "media-shepherd" then, as we may at last call him, prioritizes the freshness of the grass his sheep eats to the establishment he might be able to put up based on his production although there is a constant tendency to draw him to civilize and become in fact a merchant. To this, we could add that he is certainly willing to share and exchange his products but within specific types of "markets", nothing for supermarkets then, but more farmer-like markets or wherever he might end up trading informally his production. He then keeps wandering half way between the civilized word below that he so much despises and the one above which he contemplates but do not dare to reach, putting at risks his sheep.