

Mess Media and the Tactic of Resistance

The shift from the Web 1.0 to the Web 2.0, how can this be interpreted? Is the scientific researcher to utilize the rather obvious term of “paradigm shift”, the same paradigm shift that has characterized the various steps of the scientific revolution with each and every new discovery? Is Social Media to be seen as one of such “discoveries”, a revolution that has taken place within an already established paradigm, that of the Web 1.0 and its user crafted web pages? This paper will debate that this is arguably the case and that the dominating culture industry has, as in other previous examples, hindered the development of media driven cultural languages by turning it more “social”, or, vulgarly speaking, “conversative”, despite the potential offered by new media forms.

In his 1960s autobiography, towards the end, Charlie Chaplin accounts on his creative struggle when the talkies came about, when the cinematic pantomime, to which he was unquestionably the master throughout the 1920s and the beginning of 1930s, got threatened to extinction by the perfecting of audio visual synchronization. Again, reading his autobiography readers perceives a rather reluctant Chaplin, unwilling to embrace such a new technical possibility. In this respect he was "resisting" in his about to be obsolete paradigm, as Thomas Kuhn would put it. Out of this resistance however, we do not perceive from Chaplin any breakthrough, nor any further development in the pantomime like cinema. The talkies, on the contrary, named after their primary focus on conversation rather than on action, became the popular mainstream form of cinema. The development of a cinematic language per se, seems here abrupt. Was pantomime cinema really at its peak? Has it had fully accomplished its evolution with the introduction of audio and chatting which did not required the artistic expertise of highly talented pantomime as Chaplin or Burton, who on the contrary seem to emerge rather naturally from a theatrical genre. Theodor Adorno here seems not to make such distinction between these forms of popular cinema, he did not in fact seem to appreciate Chaplin, placing him certainly within the culture industry production.

It is a fine distinction however to be kept in consideration, a media like cinema shifting from a theatrical art form where the skill of the protagonist is vital, to a more "social" form, where the chatting and talking among the actors become the main consideration in movie making. It seems here that, in this transition, something is lost, namely the full development of a cinematic language. Dropping the Chaplin example, we could instead look at the other abandoned development of the cinematic language where the social aspect was not the main focus. We could look at a Russian Constructivist movie like Dziga Vertov's "Man With The Movie Camera" or at an Italian Neorealist example such

as Roberto Rossellini's "Paisá", both silent depiction where the language of cinema finds its development and it is able to capture reality, to impress it on the eyes of the viewer to affect his or her perception and nourish his or her aesthetic sensitivity. This pure visual language that can speak universally and by itself is also later dismissed for a more common human language, the vulgar language of spoken languages or the overdose of catharses expedients as adopted later in the Fellinism movie making, possibly a symptom of the capitalist surplus of 1960s Italy.

It seems here that the audience itself, which in a culture industry paradigm is the one selecting what art form is to survive or not, is the one who do not wish to invest in the learning of these new languages and rather approves the more common and vulgar language they are used to converse with, in every day socialization. Going back to Adorno again, it is a cultural promotion of jazz-like versus a hindering of more classical-like forms of artistic productions. The distinction here being the public that assesses the production, shifting drastically from a cultivated an aristocratic elite to a semi-cultivated mass willing to be entertained for the sake of entertainment, of distraction from a state of social captivation and enslavement, rather than seeking a sort of personal self-formation through the culture they consume.

If on one side then we find a shift between a private to again a public media, we may also detect another, less visible form of media, another "p", the third "p" along the private end public new media cycle. We can detect a form of partisan media, media which do not wish to collaborate with the obvious overtake of the media industry of also the new media ground, the no longer new frontier. The bellic metaphor is not all together wrong considering the evolution of wars, from a skirmish only involving soldiers within a set time and space to a war invading, with the technical progress, the civic realm, thus enlarging the spatial but also temporal sphere and to some extend diluting the violence, from physical to psychological, from a clear enemy to ghosts (or zombies as some more trendier researchers would call them or as, in Slavoj Zizeck's terms, Wim Wenders has depicted in his prophetic "Until the end of the world"). Social media in this respect could be compared, and some analogies may lead to some constructive criticism, they could be compared to battlefields in which, if not the real physical battle is taking place, a psychological fight occurs on a daily bases, not a mass against another mass, not really any solidarity in this respect occurring among the different soldiers of the different regiments but rather, the very user against the mass, exposing to the entire mass at large, ironically a community to which a state of antagonism cannot be avoided, in the very fact that each and every user's willing diverge from one another. If Lev Manovich then redefines Social Media as yet another

form of Mass Media, we may go a step further, also considering Jean Baudrillard, and attempt to think of Social Media as both a form of Personal Media and Public Media, an arena in which the personal is made public together with other personals, as an arena of gladiators suddenly placed to confront one another, a “Mess Media” overlooked by several small emperors observing and taking notes from too far to be able to distinguish any particular, only patterns.

The Mess Media thus occur. While still on the edge of the platform, a once free terrain where the fences of the arena had been erected by corporations, at the edge and on the shadow, where they can't be really seen, the partisans operate, disconnected from the messy mass they still behold the once promised terrain, yet no longer exposed they keep up their media practices possibly pursuing the true potential implicit of new media, developing the very language, based on the short and intense experience of the pre Social Media age. These are the Partisan Media practitioners to which, in a Foucauldian manner, research should turn to, a marginality from which the public opinion has drifted away from but in which, it is concrete to believe that the true potential may survive and keep struggling but, at the same time, progressing, and in which a new anomaly and the emergence of a paradigm shift discovery is likely to occur. Thus let's watch out.

To conclude, it is arguable that it is no longer possible to apply the paradigm shift theory to cultural evolution, possibly not even to politic, economic and scientific revolutions either. As the mainstream takes on in a more dominant and fascist-like manner the emergence of any current and prematurely creates a large culture establishment out of it, the paradigm shift theory here can be applied as completely inverted, in a state in which the shift is continuously occurring, or at least the corporative mindset is always boasting for it, leaving no stable platform in which the actual anomalies can be observed and a true revolutionary discovery can be made. There might be, culturally speaking, new discoveries, however again this constant shift of platforms, might in the long run demotivate the cultural producer, to pursue such discovery. In this respect, a contemporary cultural producer is rather to adapt and normalize, as Karl Popper would certainly argue, to the mainstream provided tendencies, fashionable and neutral trends which differs from actual discoveries and do not lead to any consistent maturation. It is only this fulfillment of a cultural maturation which might have an impact, particularly on society. In this respect, one may come to the conclusion that, at least in the official domain of culture, production can be of no profound social impact due to the condition in which the very culture industry, which in this respect can be seen as clustering all media productions, hinders the maturation of an artistic language. Thus, here we bring forward the partisan resistance, abstaining from any direct criticism, which is rather

engulfing and has led to the much sterile and phobic ground of political art, the partisan resistance might in fact be the place where a contemporary cultural language can mature, this by means of resistance onto the base of the platform governing and organizing contemporary human life, still in this case the Web, and refusing any serious involvement with Social networks. The individual, the cultural producer, in his autonomy can therefore constitute the autonomous network for his production, relating to still unexplored cultural forms that new media has to offer and which has been dismissed with the global and mass driven excitement. He or she may not however think of an independent detachment from this arena but, as the autonomous movement as shown, play a double game with all the implications that this might imply.