HOW TO TELL A REVOLUTION FROM EVERYTHING ELSE

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In November 2010, when we suggested the work title for this conference, the problem of distinguishing a revolution didn't seem of particular relevance to the present: we chose it with reference to our historical novels, where we narrated of rebellions, revolutions and wars of independence. Since then, riots have come back in fashion in a way that has no precedent in the past two decades, and newspapers and magazines are flooded with articles where the question is whether what's going on in Tunisia or Libya is a revolution, or if Bahrain, Oman and Syria will *really* experience a revolution, and so on.

Before this new Springtime of the Peoples, during the past decade the word that interests us used to be associated with colors and names of plants in order to label some electoral disputes in Serbia, Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Iraq and Iran. Today it is quite clear that those occurrences, far from being true revolutions, were rather political campaigns, in some cases non-violent ones, designed to overthrow a strong and authoritarian parliamentary majority. However, many people still remember them as revolutionary events and those labels of various colors (orange, pink, green, purple) are now part of history.

Further back in time, in 1989, the simultaneous collapse of the pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe had prompted observers to indinstinctly use the word "revolution", even when faced with very different outcomes, such as those produced in Czechoslovakia and Romania.

We are therefore dealing with a phenomenon that has no clear and shared characteristics, nor sufficient conditions: regime changes can be caused by a coup, a civil war, and sometimes they even take place under ordinary political conditions, while a revolutionary situation can even go on for a long time and have an impact on society without leading to a forced transfer of power.

As happens with every diachronic concept, to say that «x» is a revolution presupposes that «x» is a choice of single events, lined up one after another along the thread of time.
For example, if you want to convince me that the rise of Fascism in Italy was a revolution, you can not show me a video of the March on Rome and tell me: «Here, look.» You have to go far beyond the simple exposition of a single event: you have to describe a piece of Italian history. In fact, you have to go beyond description, and link together all the elements of Kenneth Burke's dramatistic «pentad»: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency and Purpose. In other words, you need to produce a narrative of that story that belongs to the "revolution" genre. One genre whose boundaries are rather blurred, on which historians and philosophers have produced several opposing theories. But perhaps, as Wittgenstein would say, a confused concept is what we need.

In contrast, other great historical events have sharper outlines, and the words to name them should be used with less uncertainty.
One can call «war» a war at the very moment a government declares it, or when an army repeatedly fires against another army, and that is why the Italian president Giorgio Napolitano made himself ridiculous when he said that our country is not at war with Gaddafi's Libya. War is self-evident, even when you don't want to call it by its name and prefer less compromising phrases such as «no-fly zone». A war may be the subject of moral evaluation, never of ontological speculation. Of course, as with all words, the term "war" may have extended meanings. This is what allows historians to call a long period of hostilities the "Thirty Years' War," or the "Cold War", but at the core of these extended meanings still lies a stricter, well-defined one. If someone told me that the "Cold War" was not really a war, I would give them a few examples: from Korea to Hungary, from Vietnam to Afghanistan, and Grenada.
Conversely, if someone said that in Tunisia there hasn't been a *real* revolution, we should first compare our ideas of revolution, and then our narratives of that particular story.
This means that, in order to tell a revolution from everything else, we need a good heuristic concept, on the one hand, and a good narrative, on the other. Historians, philosophers and social scientists can help to prepare the former, while novelists and storytellers can tell us a few

things about the latter. Also because, this is not the only link between narrative and revolution, and before proceeding with the analysis, I would like to list at least two others.

The first is that both narrative and revolution revolve around the violation of a rule. In a sequence of ordinary events there is no history and there is no revolution. Without a potential break with the ordinary world, the narrative game isn't worth playing. The revolution is born of the same dialectic that acts as a pivot for any story: the one between conservation and change, between what was and what could be.
Secondly, every revolution is an attempt to tell the world with new names and concepts, both on a symbolic level (eg the reform of the calendar during the French Revolution) and on a material one, with previously unknown subjects, rights and laws. It isn't by chance that coups and civil wars often try to justify themselves through semantic changes that mimic this revolutionary necessity.

At this point it looks clear to me that if we want to deal with a revolution we must handle many more narrative materials than it might seem at first sight. Within these materials, these mythologemes and these rhetoric devices, I would like to identify smokescreens that may confuse our sight, poison the narration and prevent us from distinguishing between a revolution and something else, or rather, between a toxic narrative of the revolution and a narrative of the revolution that's healthy, open and true to its purpose.

Toxic Narratives

To begin with, let us ask ourselves what would be the purpose of a narrative of this kind, that is, of a story that doesn't draw its subject from imagination, but takes it d**i**rectly from reality.
We might answer that such a story must be true, but then we should explain what truth we are talking about: is it truth as correspondence with the facts, which may be enough for reporters, or is it truth as consistency within a paradigm, the kind we find in science and mathematics?
In the case of a narrative - even when it draws on reality - I think it is better to speak of "poetic truth", which is not limited to the faithful representation of single facts, but it's about

their overall significance. A narrative is "true" when it increases our awareness, our comprehension (in the etymological sense) of a sequence of facts. In other words, while mere reporting has the task of describing facts, narration must also make them talk: it must connect events, meanings, and individuals.

A story, as we have said, deserves to be told when it insinuates the unacceptable into the allegedly unmodifiable rule of everyday life. In fairy tales, there's an ordinary world in cr**i**sis and a hero who leaves for the extraordinary world in order to cut a piece of it and bring it back to the village. Or, to quote Aristotle: the poet is superior to the historian, because the historian tells what happened, while the poet imagines what *might have* happened. Each story stems from a "what if" question and thereby introduces a conditional and subjunctive dimension in the realm of the indicative. Not even the most realistic non-fiction says "This happened": it says "this *could* happen." Thus, a toxic narrative, a narrative that doesn't do its job, can be recognized by the lack of subjunctive dimension: a toxic narrative tries to remove the hypothetical, to block in every possible way the drive to "tell the story otherwise" to think of alternative versions, other possible stories, some other poetic truth for the same set of facts.

In this sense, all stories contain a dose of toxins, because - as **George Lakoff** showed in his studies on neural connections: «When you accept a particular narrative, you ignore realities that contradict it. Narratives have a powerful effect in hiding reality.» This does not mean we should throw them away and replace them with cold hard reason. As we have seen, in order to identify a revolution we need to tell its story. Lakoff's proposal is that of a New Enlightenment, in which «we will recognize that cultural narratives are part of the permanent furniture of our brains, but we will at least be self-aware of it.» As a storyteller I would add to this program that I would like to produce narratives that raise such awareness, do all that's possible to restrain their own power to hide reality, and indeed encourage alternative narratives, by providing the reader with hints, occasions, and cracks in the wall.

In the specific case of a narrative of revolution, then, I'd like to understand where the toxins are and what narrative choices play a part in making them dangerous.

To do this, I will start from the narrative structure that our brain uses in reporting of any event, adapting it to the particular case of a revolution.

First of all we have the «Preconditions», that is, the context required for the narrative. In our case, the preconditions are the presence or absence of people with demands that the state cannot fulfill, the situation of human rights and freedom of expression, the presence or absence of a working class, working conditions and the main needs of civil society .

Then there's the «Buildup», that is, the events leading to the main event: protests, riots, civil disobedience, the reactions of government forces, symbolic protests etc.

Such early unrest should already make us able to understand the «Purpose», what the insurgents want to achieve, what their demands are.

In turn, this should help us to better identify the «Main Event», that is, what the narrative is mainly about. Usually, in newspapers and on TV, revolution is about a regime change.

However, this is not over, because the «Main Event» generates the «Wind-down», that is, the events that end the narrative: what happens to the members of the regime, who will replace them for the time being, the celebrations of the population, etc.

Then we should take into account the «Result», that is, the transformation of the socio-political context described in the preconditions, and finally, consider the «Later Consequences» of the whole mobilization, or how long the desire for renewal remains in circulation in civil society and how difficult it is for the new state to renegotiate its international relations without abandoning the principles of the revolution.

What I just described is, obviously, a structure activated over time. Diachronicity, in fact, is one of the main features of a narrative. To tell a story always means to create a chronology, to interpret time, often with reassuring effects from a cognitive point of view, because putting events in a row convinces us that we dominate them and comprehend them. So much so that not infrequently, this temporal link is transformed into a causal link, the illusion that saying "C follows B which in turn follows A" is equivalent to saying that "C derives from B which in turn derives from A". If yesterday I said that today there would be a naval battle, my statement today is false, since no naval battle is raging. But yesterday, the same statement was indeterminate, neither true nor false, and the narrative has the task of restoring that pristine

shade of unpredictability. We must avoid the so-called **retrospective illusion of fatality**, a potential toxin present in any story. Under its action, the sequences of the past become *necessary* sequences and we forget that, on the contrary, there are at any time infinite contingent futures, and that the narratives are made to explore a hypothesis, not to pass it on as in**ev**itable. The fascist regime, in its self-description as the result of a revolution, inscribed in the destiny of Italy, made extensive use of this technique, constantly stressing on the "necessity" of every step, from the foundation of the Party to the March on Rome.

The preconditions

As regards preconditions, it often happens that an analysis of context like the one I described, is made only *after the facts*, because the revolution «broke out» - instead of «ripened», which could be a better metaphor - in a country of which we know little, an area which suddenly drew international attention because of the riots. We end up knowing the preconditions only *after* we have formed an idea about what's going on, because events are pressing but they have to be narrated anyway. However, if preconditions are fished out retrospectively, in a sort of analepsis, they end up butting against an already established frame, rather than helping to establish one. Something similar happened with Libya, where the first demonstrations were instantly seen in the frame "revolutions in North Africa", and only when Gaddafi proved to be able to resist much longer than Ben Ali and Mubarak, the difference was noticed and we all moved quickly to motivate the regime's strength with the peculiar preconditions of the Libyan setting. At that point, however, as the Italian saying goes, the patch was worse than the hole, and pundits ended up attributing too much importance to clan-based and territorial divisions among the Libyans, setting entirely aside the element of spontaneous, radical, political protest.

It must be admitted that in the West, before the recent uprisings, knowledge of the civil societies of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and the Middle East, was heavily conditioned by the *vulgata* whereby an Arab country is a Muslim country and a Muslim country is a country dominated

by religion. Civil society, therefore, is divided between fundamentalists and moderates, and it is religion the only key to understand it and set up a dialogue.
Fortunately for us, if there is a regime that has been revolutionized in recent months, that is our regime of discourse on Muslims and the Arab world. The events of Tunis and Tahrir Square, in this case, have shattered the toxic narrative on preconditions (though for several days, the toxic narrative did prevent many commentators to understand what was happening, and pushed them to look for the role of religion in the riots). As noted by Hayrettin Yucesoy:
«the discourse about Islam in the progressive media and academia was, by and large, similar to Marie Antoinette's oft-quoted but always mis-attributed, "*qu'ils mangent de la brioche*" [Let them eat cake].
Good-hearted true, but it showed no understanding and solved no problems. The uprisings destroyed the concepts of "religious dialogue" and "cultural understanding" as a framework for understanding "Muslims" and "Arabs".»

Another example of a toxic narrative on preconditions is the myth-making carried out by T.E. Lawrence with reference to the so-called "Arab revolution". Between 1915 and 1916, the British attacked the Ottoman Empire at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia, encountering unexpected resistance. This frustrated the hopes of those Arab secret societies that relied upon the war to open a home front for independence. Such societies were composed of bourgeois elements and military officials and had their bases in cities like Damascus, Baghdad and Aleppo. Facing the discouragement of their revolutionary intentions, the British, who were in great need of that revolution, decided to turn to the Hejaz Bedouins. In the introduction to his magnum opus *the Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence justifies this change in strategy with an ideologic-poetic argument imbued with Orientalism. He explains that the strength of the Arabs was born and lives on in the desert, not in the softness of cities. Therefore, it is in the desert that the insurgency must develop, thanks to a *koiné* of nomadic tribes held together by the language and faith in the Koran.
Telling the preconditions of the revolution in this way, Lawrence forgot to say that those tribes were good to solicit Western romantic fantasies and to give the Turks a hard time with guerrilla warfare, but they would never complete a revolution, building the Great Arabia from

the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. They - unlike urban Arabs - were not interested in building a "nation", much less a "state". Only their leaders, at most, could have become national leaders, but in states that would be put up by someone else.

The Buildup

Very often, in order to narrate of a revolution, we bypass the preconditions and go immediately in search of a point of origin, a «beginning» that cast light on what happened. A day to be celebrated in the future, or to be studied in school books. Of course, every story needs a beginning, but in the structure of the "revolution" genre, this kind of beginning has a special symbolic value, as a sort of **original sin**. Its choice is never arbitrary, it cannot be located in any instant of the time continuum: it is extremely unusual to hear a revolution told out beginning *in medias res*. Most of the time the focus is on an event that reveals a weakness of the government forces. This is because, as argued by Charles Tilly, our frame of "revolutionary situation" is structured around three characteristics: the presence of factions that make claims incompatible with state control, the vast adhesion of citizens to these factions and, of course, the failure by the State to respond adequately to their demands.

In all accounts of the North African uprisings, there is already a mythical reference to the gesture of a young Tunisian graduate, forced to make a living as a street fruit vendor, who burned himself alive to protest the decision of the police to confiscate his goods. His suicide prompted many citizens to express their disagreement with a determination unseen for many years on the streets of Tunisia. One such initiative is not only a beginning: it is a genesis. It manages to symbolize the spontaneity of the revolt and its social composition: working class youth with a good level of education. But a revolutionary situation is always manifold, it contains *various* situations, produces multiple changes in many areas and at different times, and focusing on a single point of origin is likely to hide its plural character.
A good narrative of the revolution should have the preconditions as its prologue and as first chapter a beginning that encompasses more than one point of origin.

«Every time the beginning is this moment of *separation* from the multiplicity of possibles" wrote Italo Calvino. Separation, but not exclusion or isolation. We need a threshold that does not forget what it leaves out.

Moreover, excessive attention to the point of origin can make us sick of **chronological myopia**. "Chronological myopia" consists in giving too much importance to recent events, and too little attention to those more remote.
In our case, chronological myopia may lead us describe as a "revolutionary break" an occurrence which, on the contrary, is in continuity with what has been happening for some time. For example, the "Day of Rage" organized in Manama's Pearl square was hastily described as a point of origin of the Bahraini "revolution", whereas such protests have occurred in that country for many years, silenced by the fact that Bahrain is usually not interesting to anyone.
Here, with reference to the onset of narration, we experience a problem that's inherent to any other moment of it. To tell a good story we need to go into detail, but as soon as we do it, this particularity could be viewed as a prototype, representative of a totality, like a poisonous synecdoche where the part hides the whole. The only antidote is to looking for the contradiction, for the one that becomes two.

For example: the people of Bahrain protest in Pearl Square, Manama, against the country rulers. Then, as a good storyteller, you seek the details and ask yourself: «What is the composition of these "people of Bahrain" protesting in Pearl Square?». Answer: they are Shiites. And the country rulers? They are Sunnis. Well, judging only by this detail, one of your readers may form the idea that in Bahrain there is a civil war between two Muslim sects. And because the Shia country *par excellence* is Iran, he or she will deduct that Iran is backing that revolt. To counteract this **Synecdoche Effect** the good storyteller must look for the contradiction, which he or she will find upon discovery that Bahrain workers are organizing large-scale strikes involving Alba Aluminium, the largest aluminium smelter in the world, whose workers' union is headed by Ali Bin Ali, a Sunni. And if our storyteller works hard, he or she will find out that the detail chosen at the beginning, that is, the Pearl Square protesters

are Shiites, could be interpreted as a token of another type, because the Shiites are the poor majority of the country, and therefore a Shiite rebellion is also a class rebellion.

Another example: if someone in Tahrir Square in Cairo had burned an American or Israeli flag, no doubt that particular act, once told by television and newspapers, would have assumed the value of a synecdoche: if someone burns an American flag undisturbed, it means that the rebels are against the United States, which means that they are fundamentalists. (It's interesting to notice that this mechanism also applies in absentia: since no American flag was burned during such big events in a Muslim country, then – for conspiracists - the revolt must be controlled by the CIA).

In choosing the details for my narrative, I'll be also affected by the rules of the narrative genre that I'm practicing. In the case of the revolution, the frame described by Charles Tilly urges us to look for street riots, power clashes, police brutality, regime changes. Apparently, the kind of revolutionary tale which our brain is most fond of is that of the great 20th century revolutions: the people in the streets, the seizure of power. We do not consider that there may be different kinds of revolution-narrative. Nation-States have changed since October of 1917, perhaps our concept of revolution should change accordingly. Also because, as said, a revolution is not always just about power, state control, the right of expression and so on. A revolution is certainly made on the streets, but above all it's a creative drive to change the world, to call it with new names, to try the impossible.
In recent days, an interactive timeline of Middle East protests appeared on the Guardian website, with all the states listed in parallel and the most important events represented by four different symbols:

Protest / govt response to protest,
political move,
regime change,
international / external response.

In such a strict cataloguing, the demolition of Manama's Pearl Monument, ordered by Sultan al Khalifa to erase a symbol of the revolution, was listed as a "political move" when in fact it is, obviously, a semantic move. The revolt has changed the meaning of a major monument dedicated to the pearl divers of the Gulf. People did this by taking to the streets, not by some administrative decision. At that point the regime also had to take to the streets, this time not to shoot the demonstrators, but to destroy their symbols, in a strange pre-emptive reversal of what usually happens during a regime change: the destruction of symbols of power and statues of the leader.

The only attempt that has been done to tell about these riots without looking only to the streets, produced controversial results: I refer to the "twitter revolution" meme, already applied to a potential «colored revolution» in Moldova and then transferred to the case of Tunisia, with a venomous confusion between means and causes. Twitter and social networking sites were useful information tools for connecting the Tunisian protests, but these protests were not held on Twitter. As noted by Tarak Barkawi, «Revolutionaries in France and Haiti in the 1790s received news of one another's activities by the regular packet ship that plied between Jamaica and London.» «**Technophile**» narratives - in the case of North Africa and the Middle East - have had the effect of reassuring the listeners, to make the violation/disruption of everyday life less disruptive. If we say that in Tunisia a "Twitter Revolution" is going on, we feel more comfortable than we might feel hearing of a hard revolt, far from our standards, with people burning themselves alive or rebelling against the price of bread and olive oil for frying food. Likewise, Sultan Al - Khalifa has brought up TV and the images coming from other countries in revolt, to justify the change clamored for by the citizens: "This is not the Bahrain i know," he said. Forgetting, for the occasion, that the rebellion has been going on for years, with hundreds of political prisoners tortured in four prisons in and around Manama.
Twitter and Facebook are in a sense, the twenty-first century «Lawrences of Arabia»: an emphasis on social networks gives us the feeling that these riots are a by-product of the Internet, the quintessentially democratic and participatory tool, which is itself a product of the West. Thus, we say, if Egypt has rebelled thanks to the Internet, then it has rebelled

thanks to us, and so we tend to forget that the symbolic place of that rebellion is not cyberspace: it is a square, because overthrowing a despot via Twitter is not that simple: first, because access to the Internet can be blocked, and at a certain point it was, and secondly because even dictators lurk on social networking sites.

The Purpose

In defining the Purpose, a typical toxic approach is to infer from the authoritarian nature of a regime that the demands of the population consist *only* in "democracy" and "human rights", therefore the revolution is over when the tyrant is overthrown, after which we can invoke an "orderly transition" that takes the most radical demands at bay, and changes everything so that nothing changes. More generally, what is always toxic - as well as narratively ineffective - is the tendency to attribute a **partial intentionality** to the actors of revolution: in order to tell a good story, in fact, one should always give precise intentions its protagonists. Those who have no credible intentions are considered puppets, and puppets need a puppeteer. Thus, a hundred years later, we witness the return of the myth of Lawrence of Arabia, and the heroic West must assume the burden of helping to liberate the East from itself.

This happens because stories tend to accumulate one close to another to form clusters based on similarities and recalls. A trend that can help or mislead the interpretation, depending on the element that acts as an attractor: it can be a superficial feature hiding important differences, or it can be a substantial characteristic, one that's important beyond differences.

Certainly, our understanding of the fall of Ceausescu in Romania wasn't helped by the expectation created by the collapse of other communist regimes in those same months. In Romania, there were features that have remained hidden because of this common narrative. And to assimilate those events to the revolutionary narrative of the people judging the King of France didn't help us either. Whereas in France the monarch's severed head stimulated the revolutionary process, in the case of Romania Ceausescu's death sentence and execution was precisely what it took to hide the "revolutia furata", the Stolen Revolution, which is the phrase used by the Romanian students beaten up by miners, only a few months after that Christmas

Day of 1989.

This can be the consequence of keeping the focus of the revolution narrative on the figure of the dictator and his fall, a step that is often required, but certainly not enough to define any revolutionary project.

Such **personalization** is also present in the stories that come from Libya and is likely to be responsible for a new Ceausescu Effect: we get rid of the dictator so we can tell the world the revolution has taken place, and this is the screen behind which we're going to hide the creeping return to the status quo.

The **narrative accumulation** of the ethno-geographical kind (the frame of «Arab Revolts»), for example, does not help our understanding of the events affecting Oman (a few days ago BBC News asked "whether this previously stable Gulf state with a large and youthful population could turn into the next Egypt or Tunisia.")

At present, in Oman, there are no demands for a radical regime change, however, the toughest protests took place in Sohar, the most important industrial center in the country. And perhaps this could provide a deeper rationale for putting together these stories, and further widen our perspective, making it more universal: If in Oman protests take place in a large industrial center, and if in Bahrain the Alba Aluminium workers go on strike, and protests are carried out by young unemployed workers in Tunisia, state employees in Ohio and Wisconsin, university students with no prospects for their future in Rome, London, Lisbon and Paris, workers and students in Greece, then perhaps there is a broader narrative for what is happening in the world, beyond the Arab world, North Africa and the Middle East.

A deeper narrative accumulation, whereas the toxin lies in a **divide and conquer** story, which breaks connections and tries to separate what would be similar, perhaps insisting on other similarities.

The Main Event & The Wind-Down

The way we usually frame the main event, according to Tilly, implies that the revolution's outcome is a radical change at the top of the state and administration, with large sections of the armed forces declaring themselves loyal to the new government. Here too, the model is

very focused on power and its balance. It's as if we needed to hold on to a stable, definite change, and trusted to find it only in the structure of the state and not in the people's minds.
In the previous examples we have already seen that there are toxic narratives whose purpose is to make the unexpected more acceptable, that is, to tame the dialectic, both the dialectic inherent to a revolution, and the one that's inherent to every story. A "toxic" story is one that insinuates the unacceptable into the acknowledged reality not in order to subvert that reality, but, on the contrary, to tame the unacceptable, so we cannot recognize it.
But there are also cases in which the dialectic is tamed through the opposite process, that is, "inflating" the violation of the rule, putting up the *appearance* of the subversion of daily life, when in fact there's been no such subversion. In this way, what is passed on for radical change is actually the conservation of the old reality. Again, this is the case of the fascist «revolution».
Or else, the dialectic is «inflated» in the hope that the revolutionary event will occur *after* the main event, thanks to the mobilization of a population that didn't initially take part in it. Narratives intoxicated by such wishful thinking were Siad Barre's revolution in Somalia and Gaddafi's «green revolution».

The Result & The Later Consequences

This is the part we most often we forget to tell about, although its importance should not be underestimated. We forgot to tell about it because of our brain. In our brain, every event of a narrative turns on different emotions. The Main Event is an emotional peak, which can flood us with positive or negative feelings, depending on our beliefs. It rarely leaves us indifferent, considering that our mirror neurons light up in the same way whether we live a narrative or hear it told by someone else. If the feeling is positive, after the Main Event our brain, which has received its dopamine release, takes a kind of **post-coital break**. If the feeling is negative, then we are worried or afraid, and norepinephrine reduces our ability to focus. In both cases, we risk to tell with less interest what looks like a simple epilogue to the main event.
In addition, our frame of the revolutionary outcome prompts us to think that the main event, that is the seizure of power by the rebels, coincides with the final result of the narrative.
Actually, history teaches us that revolutionaries, after overthrowing the regime, face extremely

difficult situations and challenges that jeopardize their success. On the other hand, narratology teaches us that a story does not end with victory in the hero's main trial, with the killing of the dragon: other dangers - and often a comeback of his enemies - expect the hero or heroine on their way back home. The significance of an adventure lies in the main character's ability to return home and change the ordinary world, thanks to the lessons he or she learned during trials and battles in the extraordinary world. It's on the way back that the hero must experiment a final litmus test, in order to return to the village with the elixir. It is in that last test that the tragic hero usually ends up dying. The Main Event, on closer inspection, is only half of a story and a story that remains half-told cannot avoid being poisonous.
The real success of a revolution depends on the desire for change that it can spread among all citizens, the level of creativity that they invest in this desire and the duration of such investment in time. In a real revolution, that creativity is maintained, it doesn't congeal after the storming of the Winter Palace. And it's shared, universal creativity, it isn't imposed from above.

Antonio Gramsci considered fascism a «passive revolution», that is, a thesis that co-opted a subordinate part of the antithesis and managed to present itself as a synthesis. But fascism was passive also because it had to impose from above the creativity that revolutions do not need to plan ahead. Fascism's semantic revolution was a coup against the dictionary, the organization of time, the etiquette... It redefined concepts and classifications, but did so in a top-down, mechanical way. This element alone would be enough to acknowledge the toxicity of fascism's «revolutionary» self-representation.

Conclusions

Thus we have completed our excursion in search of toxins along the narrative structure of the revolutionary event.
We have seen the dangers implied in retrospective illusions of fatality, chronological myopia, the «original sin», the synecdoche effect, genre conventions, partial intentionality, narrative accumulation, divide and conquer narrative, Ceausescu Effect, domesticated or inflated

dialectic, and post-coital tiredness.

The danger lies in intoxicating the narrative beyond the level of alert, with the result of hiding the truth and fail to understand what's going on.

Thanks to the empathy of mirror neurons, the brain activities involved in understanding, living, imagining and dreaming a story are not that different from each other.

To understand a revolution and to tell of it effectively, then, equals being able to dream it, which equals trying to imagine it, which equals beginning to live it.

Thank you.

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