Trigger-Narratives: A Perspective on Radical Political Transformations

Author: Sarit Larry

Boston College

The Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences

Department of Philosophy

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a dissertation

by
SARIT LARRY

Abstract

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By Sarit Larry

Advisor: Richard Kearney

This work addresses an important phenomenon in the contemporary philosophy of narrative and coins it as a term. Trigger-narratives denote myth-like stories that ignite certain mass social participation. Juxtapose to five well-established philosophical concepts of narrative this work demonstrates that while trigger-narratives share formal characteristics with all, they fail to be meaningfully and comprehensively subsumed under any. I use three protagonists as comparative case studies to illustrate trigger-narratives: Rosa Parks (US), Mouhammed Bouazizi (Tunisia) and Daphne Leef (Israel). The sociopolitical reaction to trigger-narratives exceeds them in content and in size. Yet, these protagonists continue to serve as catalysts and perennial symbols of the transformative events that follow their protesting acts. Trigger-narratives are not lived-narratives. They do not disclose what Arendt's refers to as a unique *who* or MacIntyre's unity of a human life. They do not answer the ownmost rhythm of Heidegger's Being-toward-death or operate like Ricoeur's or Kearney's concepts of testimony. The protagonist perspective is rarely heard or seriously considered. Unlike historical narratives trigger-narratives are not the product of research. They form quickly and in their aftermath they resist change. Trigger-narrative protagonists draw their power from being portrayed as context-less, weak and uncalculated while historical leaders draw power from descriptions of authority, skill, and deliberation. Trigger-narratives have the effect and/or aspiration of metanarratives. They aim at a new order. However,

they spring from articulated singular accounts rather than form an all-encompassing tacit sub-current narrative. Adding a sixth sociological concept of narrative I refer to issue-narratives. Trigger-narratives congeal around an issue. But they instill a far greater expectation for change. I conclude that: 1. trigger narratives are closest to fiction 2. They operate through a condensation of Ricoeur's mimetic cycle configuring and refiguring reality in a rapid rotation that ossifies them into a mobilizing form, and that 3. Interpreting trigger-narratives through the perspective of world-creating myths illuminates many of their typical characteristics in a unifying, comprehensive manner. The study points to two new research directions: 1. trigger-narratives' aftermath operations (specifically rituals and newly erected institutions).2. Further interdisciplinary cooperation between contemporary political philosophy of narrative and the sociological methodology of frame-analysis.

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An Introduction: Three Protagonists and a Question

> *The smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation*
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> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 190

This work coins a term. Some monumental sociopolitical changes, such as revolutions or major changes in policy happen in response to a small, myth-like, narrative. This study suggests that we name such narratives: trigger-narratives. Radical political transformations such as revolutions or other fundamental sociopolitical changes that stem from mass resistance leave us sometimes with questions concerning the reasons behind their success or failure. Why did this revolution happen now? We might ask. Why not at another time? Why here and not elsewhere where grievance was bigger? Where the government was weaker? We look for a reason, a pattern, a way to explain our surprise. This need for a cause and a reason can develop into a more practical quest. If we know what "makes people" go out to the streets and change their worlds, we can possibly "make it" happen again. Social activists do little more than wonder how they can "make" something happen. I say this as a part of this community. Most activists want to mobilize people to bring along change. We want our issue to be at the center of the agenda. We hope that it will receive public interest, which would translate to power and to possible transformation. Mostly we fail. It is not easy to get people to protest together and for enough time. It is hard to predict what might work. Of course, the activist way of thinking about political arenas runs the risk of comparing it to the field in which humans make artifacts, what Arendt would call, work. We can shape inanimate matter, into things. We can learn as we create one thing how to better create it next time. But I am persuaded by Arendt's claim that the political is governed by the possibility of radical novelty brought about by action in concert. This fact

wedded with the interconnected web of human relations that the political is, makes one, for better or worse, expect the unexpected in matters of political action.

The aim of action, as oppose to radical novelty and regardless of the unexpected outcome, is always to create something that will outlast us. People act together in order to create a world that will carry their name and will furnish a good life to those who come after them. Action is the attempt to build stable sociopolitical structures in an arena governed by novelty. This almost tragic look on political action that Arendt propounds makes the description of forms in the unexpected relevant theoretically and practically. In the light of this stable aim we write political philosophy and towards its horizon we act. Coining the term trigger-narrative is an action of discerning a form in the midst of collaborated radical novelty. This is not so we could "make a replica" of the events that we are about to discuss. It is to helps us map the deep waters of the unexpected so that we can navigate better as we act in concert to create structures that we hope, against all odds, will stand forever. This coining is intended as a part of a certain grammar of the political, articulating one form, among many.

Historical Background

Three historical events stand at the heart of this work as examples and as case studies. Two of them, the beginning of the democratic Revolution in Tunisia and the beginning of the Israeli Social Justice Movement took place in 2010 and 2011 respectively. One of them, the beginning of the US Civil Right Movement transpired in 1955. The first two were the impetus to write this work. They presented a question to me. I chose the latter case not only because it is a great instance of the term that I am coining, but also because it was further away chronologically and it allowed me a distance that the other occurrences, especially the Israeli case, did not. It is harder to judge and discern forms in events that are still unfolding. The democratic revolution in

Tunisia and the Israeli Social Justice Movement are still part of the news and evaluations as to their meaning, success or failure are still unsettled. This uncertainty, however, does not change the claims that I make here nor are such uncertainties frequently come to a point where they are completely settled and solved. A trigger-narrative may start a process that fails and of course the political arena in all its undulating complexity renders success and failure intricate terms to define. The Israeli Social Justice Movement, for example, is referred to as a failure quite frequently. Since it did have achievements I use this sense of failure to indicate what the expectation was. The expectation was a wonderful new and just world. This, as I will shortly show, is part of the definition of trigger-narratives. Trigger-narratives always aim at a new and just order. In that sense all trigger-narratives, to an extent, entertain unachievable goals. They are all doomed to a degree of failure. Even the monumental success of the Civil Rights Movement that could not possibly be overestimated didn't succeed completely. Racial equality in the US is sadly not a settled and done with issue. Change and disintegration always lurk in the political. We act against the tides. Of course this could be said about almost any social movement or revolution not only those revolving around a trigger-narratives. The following analysis offers a descriptive account of a phenomenon that could develop in several unexpected ways. The point of the coining is to draw attention to and conclusions from the fact that trigger-narratives aim at the same thing and in very similar ways.

The descriptions below which are my points of departure for this conversation are not detailed and comprehensive in a manner that can even resemble adequate historical descriptions. They are not intended as such. I am interested in the way that these historical events came across and still resonate in the *popular* outlook. Our question emerges from the way that these events are generally depicted and described regardless of historical accuracy. The descriptions here

focus intentionally on what happens long before we have the time to academically process and analyze. The reason behind this particular choice is that I am analyzing narratives that *trigger* mass participation. This triggering is rarely, if ever, an outcome of academic in-depth work. It is usually communicated via the media, pamphlets, newspapers and in our times the social media as well. These events are usually inculcated in the communal memory in their inception forms. Time hones them into a certain compelling structure that becomes a landmark. As such they tend to resist change. I want to look into the ways that the heroines and the heroes at the center of these events are popularly conceived and portrayed and outline the form of their compelling power.

Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement

On March 2 1955, Claudette Colvin, refused to give up her seat for a white woman on a bus in Montgomery Alabama when she was asked to do so by the bus driver. She was subsequently arrested. The headline in *The Alabama Journal* read: "Negro Girl Found Guilty of Segregation Violation". The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P) received more than 100 support letters.[1] She was 15 at the time of her arrest and she later became one of the five plaintiffs in the case of Browder vs. Gayle which by the end of 1956 ended bus segregation because it was unconstitutional. If you google "the other Rosa Parks", her name comes up.

Nine months later on December 1, 1955 Rosa Parks did the same thing. Got arrested in the same way and became the undying symbol of what became the US Civil Rights Movement. Parks' story is usually told without this historical context and her background as a seasoned

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[1] Brook Barnes. "From Footnote to Fame in Civil Rights History". *The New York Times – Books*. (New York: Ochs Sulzberger, Jr. November. 25, 2009)

activist, investigator,[2] and the elected secretary of the local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. It is not usually part of the story that she organized the Committee for Equal Justice for Mrs. Recy Taylor prior to her famous bus incident. This is not to say that these facts are secrets. They are readily available to those interested. It is just not common knowledge and not part of the glorified story we repeat briefly on December 1 or Martin Luther King Day to a child or a student hearing about the US Civil Rights Movement for the first time. Why not? It seems relevant enough. Parks knew Colvin. Colvin was a member of the N.A.A.C.P Youth Council. In fact Parks let Colvin spend the night at her apartment sometimes after Colvin was arrested in March 1955. Parks also was the one to process the support letters Colvin received after her refusal. [3] It seems significant to the story that Parks was an activist that knew there were plans to harness such rebellions for non-violent resistance. Why is it not part of the popular story? Why did telling these details of the story elicit an apologetic justification and a demand for correction? Three days after the article about Colvin was published in 2009 *The New York Times* added this correction:

> An article on Nov. 26 about Claudette Colvin, who protested segregation on the Montgomery, Ala., buses nine months before Rosa Parks did and is the subject of a book for young people that won a National Book Award last month, referred imprecisely to Mrs. Parks' protest. While the boycott that followed her arrest for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger was planned by civil rights leaders who were waiting for the right case, her protest itself on Dec. 1, 1955, was not 'carefully planned'.[4]

Parks became one of *Time Magazine*'s 100 most important people of the 20th century.[5] The bus she was riding before her arrest, No. 2857, became a museum exhibit at the Henry Ford

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[2] Janell Ross. "Rosa Parks is the name you know. Claudette Colvin is a name you probably should". *The Washington Post*. (Washington DC: Fred Ryan, December 1, 2015)

[3] Brook Barnes. "From Footnote to Fame in Civil Rights History". *The New York Times – Books*. (New York: Ochs Sulzberger, Jr, 25 November 2009)

[4] Brooks Barnes. "From Footnote to Fame in Civil Rights History". *The New York Times – Books*. (New York: Ochs Sulzberger, Jr. 25 November 2009)

[5] "Heroes and Icons of the 20th Century". 153.23 (New York: Time Inc., June 14, 1999)

Museum. Streets are named after her. Needless to say neither Claudette Colvin, nor the bus she was riding before she was arrested made it to *Time Magazine* or the museum. Why is it important that we perceive Parks who indeed acted bravely as unplanned and politically almost context-less? Let me be more exact, even if Parks was unplanned which would be an extremely hard term to define considering the context (does imagining doing such a thing count as planning? What kind of planning does not getting up when asked necessitates? Etc.), why is it important to us? Why is it important for the story that she did not plan this? After all she succeeded either way and there is nothing immoral in planning. In fact, the danger she put herself in front was the same danger, plans or no plans. Why is it that it ruins the story when we learn about the context?

Mouhammed Bouazizi and the Arab Uprisings

At 11.30am December 17th 2010 Mohammed Bouazizi, a 26 year old vendor in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia self-immolated in front of his town's governor office in protest of the confiscation of his digital scale by a police officer an hour earlier. His subsequent death three weeks later sparked a regime change in Tunisia during which the ousted President Ben-Ali had to seek refuge in Saudi-Arabia. Bouazizi's act continued to spark what was later called the Arab Uprisings. The news around the world kept referring to the monumental surprise of the event. It was describes as a

> [...] breakthrough [that] was akin to an inexplicable 'big bang' which created its own chain reaction, irreversibly converting singularity into plurality across an emerging Arab Spring geography. [6]

Indeed it was referred to not only as a Big Bang, but also as a last straw[7], a kick-start[8], a revolution-bug,[9] an igniting spark[10] etc. Bouazizi's act created a monumental change in a sudden

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[6] Larbi Sadiki "The Bouazizi 'Big Bang'". *Aljazeera.* (Al Jazeera Media Network, 29 Dec 2011).

stroke and the choice of metaphors echoes that. The abruptness of the event and the disparity

between the singular individual act and the monumental wideness of the consequences it inspired

are key features in its popular descriptions.[11] Bouazizi who, to the best of our knowledge, was

not an activist like Parks is remembered much like her, spontaneous, unplanned and from a

vulnerable background. He remains the undying honored symbol of the democratic revolution in

Tunisia and the Arab Uprisings although his protest was not articulated as a quest for a

democratic revolution or even any revolution at all. Like Parks, he too was recognized by *Time*

Magazine. He became The Person of the Year in 2011[12] and streets were named after him.

Daphne Leef and the Israeli Social Justice Movement

On July 14th 2011 after being evicted from her rented apartment in Tel Aviv, Israel and

having to find a new place to live, Daphne Leef, a 25 year old film student, took a sleeping bag

and a tent and went to camp at Rothschild Boulevard at the city's center as protest against the

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[7] Draggan Mihailovich and Nathalie Sommer. "How A Slap Sparked Tunisia's Revolution". *60 Minutes.* (New York: CBS News Productions ,February 20, 2011)

[8] Ivan Watson and Jomana Karadsheh. "The Tunisian Fruit Seller Who Kickstarted Arab Uprising". *CNN World.* (Atlanta: CNN International News, March 22, 2011)

[9] Khan, Mohammed. 'The Project For A New Arab Century', *Al Jazeera English*,(Al Jazeera Media Network February 22,2011).

[10] Robert F. Worth. "How a Single Match Can Ignite a Revolution". *New York Times.* (New York: Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.,January 21, 2011).

[11] In his novel *World Shadow* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2013) Nir Baram is outlining a fictional world-strike that also answers these formal terms and resonates with the events of 2010-2011. The trigger of the universal movement the book describes is a dream its founder dreams. Nir Bar-Am writes:

> so they claimed that there was no founding dream and that it was the biggest hoax of the 21st century at least so far, a brilliant invention of media consultants and that this is the best evidence to the fact that our entire story was fake to its core. It could be the case that we didn't deal with the dream story properly. I think it is fair to say that we definitely fell in love with it a long time before it became a symbol, but we didn't make anything up. If Christopher wouldn't have dreamt that dream nothing would have happened. My translation.

אז הם טענו שלא היה שום חלום מכונן שזו התרמית הגדולה ביותר של המאה ה21, לפחות בינתיים, המצאה גאונית של]
יועצי תקשורת ושזו הראייה הטובה ביותר לעובדה שכל הסיפור שלנו היה מזויף מן היסוד. יכול להיות שלא טיפלנו
היטב בסיפור החלום. מן הסתם הפרזנו בהשפעתו ובהחלט ניתן לומר שהתאהבנו בו זמן רב לפני שנהיה סמל, אבל לא
[המצאנו כלום: אם כריסטופר לא היה חולם את החלום הזה, שום דבר לא היה קורה!

[12] Kurt Andersen. "The Person of the Year: The Protester" *Time Magazine* 178.25 (Time Inc. Dec. 14, 2011)

rising prices of housing. She and eight of her friends opened a Facebook event and invited the world to join them. The Facebook event read:

> True, most of us get by, work hard, and borrow a little from our parents so that out check to the landlord won't bounce. But why are we paying so much damn it? Why is this real-estate bubble our problem? Why doesn't anybody care? Why is a one bedroom apartment with a gallery, a falling apart kitchen costs $750 [a month s.l.] why can't young couples even dream of buying their own place surely not in the center of Israel? Why isn't there a fair and just solution for all? Why is the city we love [i.e. Tel-Aviv s.l.] becoming a city for the rich only[13]

Within weeks Leef was joined by thousands of other demonstrators and Israel's streets way beyond Tel-Aviv teemed with tents, walks, cries and signs. Leef soon became a symbol of the biggest civil disobedience movement Israel has ever known since its foundation in 1948. At its peak, the movement brought 6% of all Israelis to the streets. In the US such a percentage would have meant 18 million demonstrators. If one adds to this monumental event the fact that Israel does not have an elaborated history of civil disobedience the depth of its magnitude emerges in its full.

But something strange happened to this movement. The gap between the igniting event and the transformation it inspired presents itself in content as well as in scale. Under its signature slogan "The People Demands Social Justice"[14] a proliferating assembly of contents, on occasion mutually exclusive such contents, dynamically clustered. To give a very partial picture of the proliferating reaction Daphne Leef's call received, below is a collection of signs one could find in the 2011 demonstrations: "Egypt is Here", "Gilad [Shalit s.l.] – we are waiting for you", "Stop

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[13] Ezri Amram. "Tel Aviv Municipality Vs. The Tents Protest". *Mako News.* (Israeli Channel 2. 14 July 2011). My translation

[נכון, רובנו מסתדרים, עובדים קשה, מלווים קצת מההורים רק שהצ'ק לבעל הבית לא יחזור. אבל למה לעזאזל אנחנו משלמים כל כך הרבה? למה זאת הבעייה שלנו בועת הנדל"ן הזו? למה אין אף אחד שאכפת לו? למה דירת חדר עם גלריה מעל המטבח המתקלף עולה 3000 ש"ח ?למה זוגות צעירים לא יכולים אפילו לחלום על לקנות בית ובטח שלא באיזור המרכז.למה אין אפילו תהליך לפתרון הולם וצודק לכולם? למה העיר שאנחנו אוהבים הופכת לעשירים בלבד?]

[14] "העם דורש צדק חברתי"

racism", "Bring peace", "Saving Our Home", "Justice for All", "Education for All", "Through Capitalism to Fascism", "They are Afraid", "Love Your Neighbor". There were banners quoting Theodore Hertzel, talk of women's right, Bedouins rights, Bedouin women's rights and single mothers' rights. Israeli Palestinians were invited to publically speak on several of the new stages erected in major cities while a group of settlers built a tent inviting people to live in the Occupied West Bank. There were educational tents for all sorts of subjects, religion and politics most prominently. A reading of the Israeli declaration of independence was organized and one could find Che Guevara posters alongside balloons of the Jewish religious gay community.

Once again one heroine became the symbol of this event. If you mention the Social Justice Movement in Israel, for better or worse, it is accompanied by Leef's story. And then the movement died out and Leef disappeared. She did not really disappear. She lives in Tel-Aviv and she is doing important and innovative social work. What I mean is that the heroic protagonist that made so many waves is nowhere to be found. Her power and influence do not apply in almost any other political realm in a manner even close to the effect she had during the movement. As I said, the Israeli Social Justice Movement is many times referred to as a failure popularly and in the press although it has palpable achievements. It changed the Israeli agenda substantially; many social organizations emerged and grew stronger. It even produced two members of Knesset. It failed, however, to create a completely new order of things. It did not succeed changing the world in the "swiftness we hoped for when we were in the tents"[15] says the Member of Knesset and one of the former leaders of the Israeli Social Justice Movement Stav Shafir.

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[15] Rotem Shterkeman. "Who Is Threatening Stav Shafir and What does She Think of Silvan Shalon, Oren Hazan and Yinon Magal". *TheMarker*. (Tel-Aviv: Amos Schocken. 25 December 2015). My Translation.
["לא במהירות שדמיינו כשישנו באוהלים"]

The Conundrum

These three protagonists share some characteristics and diverge greatly in others. They all ignited mass participation that wanted a fundamental change in the order of things. The movements and revolutions that ensued exceeded their acts in size and content. Namely not only were they monumental in comparison to the singular actions in the story, but their demands were much wider than the demands implied in the action. Tunisia's revolution and most of the Arab Uprisings were about democracy and not about commerce and/or police brutality. The Israeli Social Justice movement was about the many forms of possible Social Justice and not about the rent prices in Tel-Aviv. Finally, the Civil Rights Movement was not only about bus segregation but carried people to demand a much greater change in their political arena. The issue at the heart of each of the single acts was not the issue of the socio-political transformation that ensued. There is a leap from a specific issue to much more encompassing values.

These two similarities make the third similarity into a question: all three events centered on a heroine or a hero depicted similarly as unplanned, lacking in connection and generally seeming not powerful. This insistence, which in itself is curious and will be addressed here, is even more peculiar if we attend to the first two similarities: the gaps in content and size. The three protagonists become symbols of these events. This would have not been surprising if the change thee figures inspired was something they aimed at. But in all three cases the change exceeds the deed not only in size, but also in content. If indeed the gap between the commencing events carried out by Parks, Bouazizi and Leef and their consequences is so big, why did they remain such heroic symbols? Why would movements that moved away from the content and size of their first igniting-moment, keep this moment and its protagonists as their *indisputable symbol*? This is the question at the heart of my quest for the coining of trigger-narratives. In

what follows we attend to their uniqueness in form and content and reflect on their role in the immense force that trigger-narrative manage to gather and exert.

The status of narrative

One of the theoretical debates going throughout this work addresses the status of narrative in human comprehension and action. The two opposing extremes of this debate are: On the one hand, the claim that action and comprehension are normally structured as narrative. Narrative is depicted as constitutive of comprehension and action and spinning out of narrative is an experience marked by a certain lack. Stories, as a consequence of this view, take their forms from life and not the other way around. The opposing extreme propounds that narrative is but an artificial construct imposed on the aggregate random events that truly make up our lives. On this gamut there are more dialectic descriptions of comprehension, action and their relationship with narrative. I could coin trigger-narrative on any point on this interpretational gamut. Trigger-narratives can be described as a constitutive part of comprehension, or alternatively as a construct that I am imposing on otherwise chaotic aggregate. They can also be a part, and they are mostly portrayed as here, of a more nuanced dialectic movement. This makes the relation of this work to this debate ambivalent. On the one hand, it is not necessary to fully delve into the niceties of this debate because it does not touch the heart of my argument and it diverts us from its trajectory. On the other hand, this issue stands at the foundation of my ongoing conversation with narrative philosophers, and emerges in the work several times. In what follows I will offer two perspectives on the issue that are relevant for my argument and that frame both my stand and the tangent points in which this debate affects my argument.

First, it seems problematic to me to define narratives as artificial and randomness as true or the other way around. If one of them is truer than the other, I do not see how we can possibly

determine which is which. We more often than not understand ourselves, the world and others via narratives and therefore, we might conclude, narrative is the "fuller" way to experience life. The prevalence and dominance of narrative as a mode of comprehension, to my mind, need not assign a lesser status to existence that is outside of narrative form. There are parts of experience that are chaotic, beyond words *and full*. Defining them as a form of lack misses something about them. Even if when we are in such modes we are grasping for words, as Carr suggests, this is not a proof of the superior or fuller status on narrative. It is only a proof of our discomfort. Minute quantities can still be full. Losing a loved one, falling in love, being betrayed, being tremendously disappointed - all might leave us speechless as great beauty and great horrors might. These are full moments of life *defined by* speechlessness. As an aside I would say that these are the places where the great moments of poetry can emerge. Poetry captures the ineffable with words and this might be the reason why it leaves us speechless. We are amazed when reading a good poem because it caught the part of existence that seems too nuanced for words and many times we can say very little about poems because once again we will be using words and failing to describe the nuance. So we nod. Or gesture. Or sigh. Trigger-narratives can contain such moments because they are intense experiences. We can be in awe. We can find ourselves disappointed beyond words or horrified. A time which is punctured by such moments is defined by them and by their fullness. We grasp for words to describe a feeling that escapes them not in order to do away with these moments or in order to subsume them. We grasp for words because we want to communicate and we agree to let some things be lost in translation.

Second, I think that finding the rare events in which we explain ourselves and understand ourselves and others outside of narrative as a proof for the fact that narrative is not ubiquitous, is not necessarily helpful. It matters very little to my mind if narrative is ubiquitous in the way we

come to understand the world or almost ubiquitous. It is enough for almost any important political debate that narrative is extremely fundamental, prevalent and hard to resist. Epistemologically the ubiquity of narrative is a great and fundamental question of course but politically it has little consequence. If our goal is to understand the way we act, empathize and communicate than I think it is enough to say that narrative plays an extremely important role in all these functions.

As I said, any position on this gamut allows for my argument. I converse with narrative theories throughout this work be their position on the matter as it may. I use and address the parts that I find relevant, illuminating and helpful. I do try to contextualize the different positions and mine as I advance from one chapter to the other for the sake of a fuller perspective. We break in and out of two authentic and constitutive modes when it comes to narrative. The moments that we grasp for the explanation, as the moment in which we are "fully narrated" are both, to my mind, full, authentic and normal. Narrative is almost ubiquitous and this work because of its political topic addresses it as ubiquitous.

Sources

This work oscillates between a discussion of academic sources and popular press. It leans substantially toward the former but it does give a considerable enough space for popular description of reality to justify a comment and an explanation in the introduction. The space between academic and popular sources is an odd place to conduct philosophy. This work emerged from a conundrum presented to me in the news. It is thus entangled with news items and other forms of popular reporting through and through. Its subject matter, the three case studies that I elaborated on, serve as an example that could, I think, be applicable in the interpretation of other historical events and onto future occurrences. But I use the news not only

around these three cases but other more current events. I would like to say something about the choice of using the news as a philosophical source.

In the four years that I was teaching philosophy at Boston College I would ask my students to bring news clips, works of art, or music clips to class while reading Plato's *Republic*, or Locke's *Second Treaties of Government* or whatever other philosophical text that I put on the syllabus. The student's assignment was to explain how they thought the material we read and the item they brought to class were relevant for each other. Some of them brought great new connections that illuminated the texts and the items in new light. Some were a bit far-fetched. But I think all of the students in my class went through the process of reading the news more and that they all attempted to find the relevance of our class in it. It is an activity that I hoped would surface for them later in life. I wanted them to know that everyday life and philosophy were relevant to each other. That if they were not relevant at all, there was a problem. The border between the research desk and the street, between class and life is of interest to me. This is a work of philosophy. It relies on philosophers, builds on and argues with them. It is engaged in abstract debates and philosophical questions such as the possible status of narrative structure in human comprehension, and the truth claims fiction can or cannot make. But the urge to write it, came from the news. It came from the description of people in the streets demonstrating. Sometimes this person was me, demonstrating in Tel-Aviv. Looking around for philosophy and bringing it, just like my students, back to the pages to explain how it was relevant, what shape it had, and how all that I read and wrote applied.

Outline of the Chapters

Most of this work, the first four chapters, is a proof by comparison and elimination. What I am doing in the best part of this work is show that the events we describe here cannot be

successfully and meaningfully subsumed under existing concepts. By the end of chapter four there is a clear concept of trigger-narratives against the backdrop of other possible names, concepts and definitions. The last chapter, Chapter Five, adds to this discussion a perspective that unifies trigger-narratives under one framework and not only via a new name. This gives this work, in a sense, two endings: one, at the end of chapter four where a formal concept exists but does not have a coherent and unifying framework. The other is at the end of Chapter Five where a unifying framework for interpreting trigger-narratives is suggested.

Throughout this work I sometimes use the term trigger-narrative as if it is a given although this work is coining the term. Until Chapter Five this will be done to denote the three case studies that stand at the heart of the current description.

Chapter One examines trigger-narrative against the gamut that stretches between lived-narratives and fiction. Trigger-narratives, I conclude, are formally closer to fiction than to lived-narratives but they include one aspect that makes them a very strange kind of fiction: one can and is even compellingly invited to join in. This comparative analysis revolves around five concepts: (a) authorship, (b) cohesion of plot, (c) status of character, (d) the fourth wall and finally (e) truth claims. Fiction has a declared author, usually more or less coherent plot at least in the sense of beginning and ending points. A story starts in the first page and ends at the last. The characters of fiction come second to the plot. They are reflection, mirrors and outlines something true about life. We normally care about these characters only when we are engaged with the story. Fiction of course has a fourth wall which allows us to dive deep into feelings of fear, sadness, anger knowing that we can at any given time get back to our own lives where we are more careful and safe. Finally, fiction can be truthful or untrue but in a very different sense than a lived-narrative would. While fiction's truth claims refer to the narrative's world coherence

and its ability to reflect something true about life, truth claim of lived-narratives refer mostly to soundness. Lived-narratives, in addition, do not have clear authors. Their plot breaks in and out of cohesion and of course they have no fourth wall. Most importantly lived-narratives assign the most substantial status to the protagonist. Their focus is always the person whose life is being described and she need not mirror or reflect anything true about existence. A lived-narrative is a disclosure of the unique *who* someone is or was.

Trigger-narratives are a compelling amalgam. They have neatly arranged plots. These are stories that have a beginning and end point that are not necessarily birth and death. Their stories do not center on their protagonists' uniqueness as persons. These protagonists are portrayed in general lines that do away with much personal data. In that they are very similar to fiction. Their author is not a fiction author of course but neither is it similar to lived-narrative author. The protagonists of these narratives, if they survive their act, many times protest or at least correct the way they are depicted. Trigger-narratives of course have truth claims that refer to soundness. But these are rarely at the center of events as they take place. Verification does not figure much in these events. Most interestingly these narratives do not entertain a fourth wall and it is this fact wedded with their fictional aspects that renders trigger-narrative very dangerous and exciting fiction narratives since one can actually join them. They offer an entry into a very clear world in which all that was until recently impossible is suddenly, and usually quite quickly, rendered possible.

Chapter Two deepens the analysis of trigger-narratives as participation-based forms of fictional narrative by elaborating on the ways in which trigger-narratives are neither lived nor regular historical accounts. The uniqueness of these narratives emerges as we map the differences between lived and historical narratives. I concentrate in this differentiation on two

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main features: (a) revelatory vs. scientific truth; (b) the status of being-toward-death. Lived-narratives, as I said, center upon a revelatory truth the aim of which is to disclose a unique *who*. A radical uniqueness that is close or reminiscent of Levinas' concept of the face. History, on the other hand, uses personal stories in order to put together an image of a world. I compare the status of personal stories in this historical process of putting a world together to Husserl's process of pairing. The persons in this process are of the same order of other things in the world. History builds a world from many pieces brought together all of which serve as building blocks. It reduces testimonies into a clues and it unifies different kinds of evidence in service of one descriptive goal. The second difference between history and lived-narratives that we focus on builds on Heidegger's concept of being-toward-death. Lived-narratives I propound move to the very specific bit of an impending radical ending. History does not. In fact history is where mortals with lived narrative seek eternal life through fame.

Trigger-narratives are neither lived, nor historical narratives. These are not stories that are oriented towards death. Unless a heroines dies in her act of protest we are unlikely to know how and when she died after her deed. We usually know very little about the protagonists of trigger-narratives. These are not regular historical narratives either. These narratives congeal quickly and spread widely. They start to operate and have an effect long before any historical analysis can take place. More than that, trigger-narratives offer a story that is almost without context. When research finally takes hold of these events, their context, and the many forgotten details the triggering already took place. Most interestingly, such elaborations ruin the force of trigger-narrative. They make them transform and disappear. The fact that Parks was an experienced activist and not the first to refuse to give up her seat and get arrested does not help the story. Very little can help these stories be more effective. They come in a specific compelling form and

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changes in this form weaken them. Their protagonists must be weak, spontaneous and courageous. A hint that they were planned or well-connected undercuts their force and allure. A hint that they were not acting from choice but a threat or personal gain would hurt the story. These are specifically formulated stories that answer neither the demands of the detailed worlds of history nor the rhythm of finitude and radical singularity of lived narratives.

I proceed in **Chapter Three** to look into the ways in which trigger-narrative relates to historical accounts. Specifically we ask how the protagonists of trigger-narratives are different from other historical figures. The answer is three-fold: first, trigger-narratives are not written texts that were deeply researched. They are stories that travel through communities and disseminated either orally or via popular press and social networks. This process hones them down to the very essence of their activating aspect. These are narratives of an event that has already happened but is now acting as an invitation to join and participate. Acted out narratives, as written narratives, are kernels of temporalities that carry meaning. These kernels call for action. They unfold against the imagined possibility of success or failure. Historical accounts do not have that component. They tell stories the end of which we all know. They might discover a new meaning to these events or uncover something that shatters the meaning we all have. But we all know who won WWII. And we all know what became of monarchy during the French Revolution. The second part of the answer does not touch on the way that we describe the protagonist of trigger-narratives as oppose to historical figures but rather on the different expectation we have from either kind. We prefer out trigger-narrative protagonist weak, uncalculated spontaneous and brave. We prefer our historical leaders calculated, skilled, experienced, and powerful. We might be unhappy if spontaneity figured in their conduct too much. Finally, the answer touches on our modes of engagements with the two kinds of

individuals. Our engagement with the stories of the protagonists of trigger-narratives is closer to the engagement with fiction than it is to the engagement with history. The struggles of trigger–narratives are not "safe bets". We do not join them because we calculate all risks. We join them, if we do, as one opens a book: open, curious, ready to be positively surprised. The absence of a fourth wall and the status of the story as "not-yet", means that the suspense is active which brings us back to our assertion in Chapter One that trigger–narratives are fiction without a fourth wall. Historical figures are either dead in which case we do not contemplate joining them. Or if they are alive and in power and we decide to follow them – we tend to calculate their possibility of success. In the wake of trigger-narratives the streets fill with people writing together the fantastic story of a great battle the end of which they do not know yet but against all odds strive to achieve together.

Chapter Four addresses the leap in size that trigger-narrative elicit. These are relatively small actions done by one person that sometimes change the state of things in a substantial and a dramatic way. The aim of this chapter is to juxtapose trigger-narratives as we defined them so far to existing *politically* mobilizing narratives. To do that I am borrowing from the sociologist William Gamson the trifurcation of the politically mobilizing narratives into meta-, issue and personal narratives. Trigger-narrative, I then demonstrate, share characteristics with each of these narratives but cannot be meaningfully and comprehensively be subsumed under any of them.

Metanarratives are tacit and ubiquitous. They dictate the way that we might decipher events and point to the preferred values and behaviors. Rather than provide one clear narrative with a protagonist and a plot, they provide a framework that materializes via the dissemination of many narratives in which we are all entangled. Metanarratives of the idea of progress, for example, appear in many versions of songs, newspapers, articles of scientific innovations,

children's books and TV shows. They emphasize the advance of science as the advancement from darkness to light and by the time we actually learn the word "progress" or "enlightenment" we already know the narrative. Since they are all encompassing and deep reaching when metanarratives change, they bring with them a new order of things. The change is monumental.

Trigger-narratives are not tacit or ubiquitous. These are not deeply layered narratives passed down for generations. Rather trigger-narratives are articulated narrative centering on a protagonist and a plot. However, trigger-narratives have the effect or aspiration of meta-narratives. They aim to create and sometimes manage to create a new order of things: a new political arena or a substantially new understanding of values. Their impact and the expectation stirred in the wake of trigger-narratives is a fundamental and all-encompassing change.

Issue narratives are a term borrowed from the sociological school of frame analysis. This school which emphasized the interpretive and meaning-giving aspect of mobilization is extremely fitting perspective to this work of contemporary philosophical narrative analysis. Issue narratives are narratives that congeal around current events and echo already existing concerns and shared beliefs and values. This congealing of a narrative is a mobilizing force that is composed of the internal way that the issue-narrative is constructed and the way it echoes its political environment. A good example would be a leak in a nuclear plant that is structured as an enraging story about the placing of this plant close to living neighborhoods or, alternatively, an enraging story about the damage to the environment. In arenas where such concerns (safety and environmental concerns) circle, this issue narrative might become a good mobilizer. Trigger-narratives start off as what seems as issue narrative. They are stories that points to an issue. But the events that follow trigger-narratives soon exceed their issue by far greater aspirations. Yet they keep their moment of beginning as their symbol and inspiration.

Finally personal narratives and testimonies play a crucial part in the political arena. These could be testimonies that support the metanarratives and then their role is ceremonial. For example holocaust survivors' testimonies in Israel are not told to convince or mobilize but rather to remember and respect. Testimonies could also be challengers of the metanarratives in which case they are usually vulnerable to two reactions that testimonies supporting metanarratives are not: forgetfulness and extreme need for validation. Unlike testimonies that support the metanarrative, challenging testimonies do not enjoy the support of the system. They do not have commemoration days and sites. They are not included in the study books. If they are not repeated they could be easily forgotten. This need for repetition helps such testimonies against their other challenge as well: extreme requests for validation. Because such narratives challenge long held beliefs they elicit suspicion and doubt. It is not always easy to prove something really happened. Repetition helps. If many people recount stories from the same event over and over again it becomes harder to dismiss it and it is more likely to receive some serious investigation. Trigger-narratives are a sort of a testimony to a grievance. They are a challenge to the existing metanarratives in the form of a singular story. They are also repetitive but in a very different way. Rather than offer many testimonies of one issue. They offer one story, of an act of protest that is repeated many times over.

And so we end the analysis of these four chapters with a concept of trigger narrative as a form of fiction in the sociopolitical arena which formally shares in the shape of three different politically mobilizing concepts of narratives. This patchwork conceptualization is in essence an argument about the necessity of a new term. It is not yet an elaboration on the nature and the dynamics of these narratives regardless of the need for a new coining. To this we turn in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five suggests a perspective through which we could understand and further investigate trigger-narratives as myths anchored in the present. Trigger-narratives, I claim, are world creating narratives that are shaped after a formula of a great battle between a small but courageous heroine or hero and a monster. We begin with establishing world creation as part of the definition of myths and the battle of monsters as a highly prevalent formula within mythological narratives. We then differentiate between Kant's sublime and the monstrous claiming only the latter could be fought and that in front of the former we recoil in ineffable fear and trembling. No human made evil, I claim, should ever be treated as an ineffable and/or sublime. The protagonists of trigger-narratives transform the ineffable into a form that one can resist. They free us into the possibility of resistance and action. They remind us that the great *Wizard of Oz* is just a man in a room. This reminder is so empowering. It fills the participants with a sense of capability and world creating powers.

Chapter One: Fictional and Lived-Narratives

Rosa Parks, Mohamed Bouazizi and Daphne Leef invite us to participate in unsafe stories.[16] Trigger-narratives,[17] inhabit the border between fiction and reality and by virtue of this position harness and release the great powers that fiction awakens in an arena that is not fictional. They let us into the world of heroines and heroes. They make authors, editors, audience and protagonists of us. We live our lives "entangled in stories".[18] We are born into personal, national and tribal histories, implanted in the languages, symbols and culture which produce books, sayings, songs, and rituals all of which carry a story along with them and more often than not, roles in these stories for us. From the moment we arrive in the world a new story, our story, deeply intertwined with others' stories is weaving itself around and through us. Trigger-narratives are players in this deeply layered web of interlocking stories. They shake, tear, scar and transform these networks creating orders and doing away with orders. They encourage massive and sudden participation, solidarity, empathy, courage, rage and hope. What is it in trigger-narratives that calls upon us in such a way? The task ahead is to begin mapping their characteristics against existing conceptual frameworks. As the excerpt opening this chapter suggests this chapter takes its cue from the demarcation line and the overlapping spaces between fictional and lived-narratives. To what extent are trigger-narratives fictional? To what extent are

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[16] This work, since it comments on three specific historical events that are used as case studies, could not be fully understood without the brief historical background about these three protagonists that I provide in the Introduction (p. 2-11)

[17] I refer to the narratives at the heart of the events that we are examining as trigger-narratives throughout this work. Clearly coining the term is the goal and we cannot assume the uniqueness of these narratives as proven at his early stage. Until the end of Chapter Four when the defining process reaches certain formal fullness, the term trigger-narratives should be treated as an abbreviation for "the narrative at the heart of the events that we are examining." In Chapter Five I use it as a defined term.

[18] Paul Ricoeur, "New Ethos for Europe". *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*. (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 6

trigger-narratives a form of lived-narratives? What are the implications concerning their force, allure and influence if they are one or the other?

> Narration is

> a theory of symbolic actions – words and/or deeds - that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create or interpret them.[It] has relevance to real as well as fictive worlds, to stories of living and to stories of the imagination[19]

The discussion of the relation between fiction and lived-narratives could start from either fiction or life. The former, "the return path from fiction to life"[20], would revolve around the aim of fiction, the awe it inspires and the relation between fictional narratives and human life of action. The latter would be concerned with the narrative structures in human life, their status and ways of operation. Does human life have a structure? Is this structure story-like? Do we come to understand human life through the form of a story? What does this form contain that makes it essential and constitutive? The two perspectives overlap. The narrative structures in human life are not detached from forms of fiction and fiction takes its cue from nascent narrative forms in human lives. For the extent that it is possible and for the sake of discussion we are making a divide between the two. The former question which takes its departure point from written fiction will be a substantial part of the discussion in chapters three and five where we discuss literature and mythology respectively. Here we inquire into the latter.

When asked, in interviews, dates or breaking-the-ice social activities, to tell the story of our lives we usually pause for a brief moment before commencing on a well-rehearsed concise narrative. It is likely that we were expecting something like that might come up and yet, one usually takes a small breath before she begins. While telling the story, we become a listening audience as well. We might get tired hearing ourselves telling the same story again. It might

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[19] Walter Fisher, "Narration a Hunan Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument", *Communication Monographs*. 51.1. (1984), 2
[20] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 159

please us because things are going as we planned or maybe even better. It might frighten us because they are not. We are the narrative's authors, editors and the heroines at its midst. Peculiarly we are also the audience. Why do we pause before beginning? Why do we listen to the story we author and already know?

In very broad strokes, lived-narratives, the stories describing our lives, differ from fiction in five essential features: (a) the degree of authorship; (b) the coherence and unity of the storyline; (c) the coherence of the protagonist as a character (d) the existence of the 4th wall and finally in (e) the kind of truth claims they can and attempt to make. Sharing a narrative about our lives entails a five-fold leap between the structures and dynamics of fiction and the structures and dynamics of life. Even if we are persuaded by MacIntyre that

> Human life has […] the *form* of a certain kind of story. [And thus] it is not just that poems and sagas narrate what happens to men and women, but that in their narrative form poems and sagas capture a form that was already present in the lives to which they relate[21]

the gap stands. If we take the five features above as indicators than it is clear that the forms of narrative that exist within human lives are not fully fledged narratives but pre-figurative structures that are narrative-oriented. Our finitude, temporality, symbolic and linguistic-cultural orientation are fecund ground to the cultivations of the activity of emplotment. Comprehension itself is deeply connected to narrative form. But life does not have an author, a plot, characters, a 4th wall or truth claims in a manner that is identical to fiction. Life is not fully emplotted and the relationship between fiction and lived-narratives is dialectical. As Nussbaum clearly puts it:

> Narratives are constructs that respond to certain pattern of living and shape them in their turn. So we must always ask what content the literary forms themselves express, what structures of desire they represent and evoke[22]

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[21] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981),124. My emphasis.
[22] Martha Nussbaum. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. (New York: Oxford

in any given moment. Ricoeur suggests that a plot is a mediator between individual events and the narrated story. The event in a plot, according to him, is promoted from its status as a distinct occurrence to a step in a configured temporal structure that moves into a meaningful end-point.[23] Carr and MacIntyre, for example, argue against the possibility of coherent, distinct and "narrative-less" lived events. Their view gives narrative an even more fundamental role in the structures of human lives.[24] However, neither position fails to recognize the difference between the two forms. We will elaborate much on the debate of the status of narrative in human lives. This is just to situate the discussion in a general context.

There is a gap not only between narrative structures and that which is not of a narrative structure in life (e.g. symbols, "as yet untold story"[25]). There is a gap between the other narratives that we could have told about our lives and the one we actually chose to articulate. I might tell a great story of professional success and not tell a throbbing narrative of loneliness or personal anguish. I might present my life as developing logically from one point to the other when really the feeling is that other forces were at work. In both cases telling a narrative of one's life is a process of reduction, extraction, condensation and adaptation. As we come up with a coherent, concise and well developed plot, for a fleeting moment before we turn to present ourselves as characters in an ongoing play on the stage of our life, the gap between the current story and the other stories, between any story and non-story, makes us pause and listen.

Kearny defines the common function of every story as "someone telling something to someone about something"[26]. This definition recognizes the necessary setting: the author/s, the

University Press, 1990), 310

[23] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 64

[24] David Carr, *Time Narrative and History*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press,1986); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981)

[25] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 75

[26] Richard Kearney, *On Stories,* (London: Routledge, 2002), 5

audience, and the story itself.[27] The word "something" points to the reified aspect of stories and it is exactly in the name of this aspect of stories that their structure appears *in* human life and at the same time is detaches them *from* human life as a flow. Aristotle defines tragedy as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude".[28] Trigger-narratives which operate partly as plays since their protagonists are not writing a story but rather are in the process of acting one out, exhibit an amalgam. Trigger-narratives follow human action in a complete way. They are reified into completed bundles of somethings that someone tells someone else *about someone/s' complete action*.

We are, as was pointed out, entangled in stories. We are passive participants of stories. The stories around us could be stories that frame our lives in a constant and silent manner. Familial, historical and cultural stories emerge from time to time to remind us how deeply they structure reality for us, but serve constantly as frames within which we act. There are also smaller stories, revolving around events that we tell and hear as we go about our days. We could describe our day to a spouse, or share an occurrence with a friend. This chapter touches upon the small and the large narratives that structure and emerges from our lives. However, in relation to the comparison with fiction, it concentrates on life-stories: The stories we tell about ourselves and/or others which revolve around the ongoing or completed action of a life of a person. In what follows I will develop each of the five differences between lived-narratives and fiction mentioned above. The concluding section (VI) will outline the peculiar nature of trigger-narrative against this fivefold discussion. The point of the next five sections is not to develop an exhaustive discussion of the topics at hand. Authorship, coherence of plot and character, the 4th

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[27] Carr makes the same observation. "To our concept of narrative belongs not only a progression of events but also a story teller and an audience to whom the story is told", *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press,1986), 46

[28] Aristotle, *Poetics.* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 42

wall and truth claims open vast philosophical arenas the full exploration of which exceeds the scope of the current discussion. The next five sections outline the relevant issues at the service of the goal: defining trigger-narratives.

I. *Authorship*

"Real stories, in distinction from those we invent, have no author"[29], says Arendt. We are born into a world without choosing. The time, the family our genetic, historical and moral contexts, are a given and a dynamic changing given at that. We leave the world most often than not without choice and when we make the choice to leave it is many times fraught with circumstances that we did not choose and/or want. The obvious response to this observation of our degree of authorship in life is that this is only partially true. "We are never more (and some-times less) than the co-authors of our own narratives"[30]; but we are co-authors nonetheless. We are authors of "slices of life"[31]. We get to plan and execute as planned some of the time. And even in the extreme of all situations, we get to be the authors of the meanings of our lives.[32] Victor Frenkel's *Man's Search for Meaning* describes an author of meaning in a situation where the plot, "the sequence of events"[33], is out of one's hand. Did Sisyphus author his life story? In one sense no. He did not wish to become "the useless worker of hell". But in another sense yes. Under his gaze and his memories the "series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate" is a life upon which he is, despite the gods, a master.[34] We are, as Sisyphus and Frenkle, co-authors of our lives.

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[29] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958),185
[30] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981), 213
[31] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 162
[32] Ibid.
[33] Aristotle *Poetics,* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 56
[34] Albert Camus. *Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur L'absurde*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 168. My translation.
"travailleur inutile des enfers"; "suite d'actions sans lien qui devient son destin, cree par lui, uni sous le regard de sa memoire"

We are not only the co-authors of the great story of *the* meaning of life. The more mundane many meanings in living are also couched in narrative structured contexts. If I am kneading dough at a pastry making competition, my actions make sense because they emerge from and couched in a story that endows them with meaning in the sense of intelligibility. If, as I defense my PhD thesis, I knead dough, my actions raise question all of which are seeking a story that will locate my action in intelligible context. "Sarit is going to explain something about trigger-narratives with dough". "In Sarit's country it is a great honor to make dough as defending one's dissertation". And so on, even the conclusion that I lost my mind tells a story. If none of the stories fit the situation my actions spins out of intelligibility. We inhabit a ghost writer, interpreter and editor that translates, chooses and arranges our actions in the already existing web of meanings. This author is not as glorified as the author of the meaning of life since her task is to answer the question "what is that?" Her task is mundane, unending and daily. If she authors, she authors under great constraints and gets no credit. The co-author of *the* meaning of life, in contrast, answers to the more dramatic questions. The meaning of life responds to questions like "who am I?" or alternatively "why did/should I do that?" Be that as it may, the author of *the* meaning of life depends on the author of the meanings in living.

The meaning of life could be lost through the experience of the many meanings in living. Camus and Sartre speak about these moments of absurd and nausea respectively:

> *Sometimes the scenery collapses*. Wake up, take the train, four hours at the factory, a meal, the train. Four hours of work, sleep and Monday Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday in monotonous pace. Most people walk this path easily. But one day awakens the "why?"[35]

Likewise Roquentin in Sartre's *The Nausea*:

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[35] Albert Camus. *Le Mythe de Sisyphus* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 29. My translation.

> I was thinking of belonging, I was telling myself that the sea belonged to the class of
> green objects, or that that green was a part of the quality of the sea. Even when I looked
> at things I was miles from dreaming that they existed; they looked like scenery to me.[36]

It is from the many meanings of living that flow steadily and monotonously that suddenly the great meaning of life disappears, collapses as a scenery in a theater or revels itself as part of a foreign nature. The meanings of actions that as part of the process of living answer the question "what is this?" repeatedly, decrypting and decoding the world for us, vanishes. The meaning of life author which asks: "why?" finds itself taking the spotlight. Camus and Sartre describe an abandonment and detachment that arise from saturation in the many meanings of living. It is an outcome of a longing to some grand answer that is lost. It is also pointing to a need humans have that their lives would cohere and unite to a complete meaningful whole. The meaning of life quest is not necessarily to be fraught with existential angst. To give but few examples, MacIntyre speaks about the narrative unity of life with none of the questions concerning suicide and death. Arendt and Ricoeur talk about life as a project the meaning of which could be communicated in narrative form without the gloomy mood as a backdrop. The meanings in living, of course, have very little to do with longing or angst that the Existentialists describe. They are likely to admit that as well. If everything goes well they serve the larger meaning of our lives silently. If all goes not as well, the meaning of life and the meanings in living overlap partially and some of the time. And if all went very badly our daily existence has nothing to do with the meaning of our lives.

Now, as we come to outline the character of the co-author in life as oppose to the author of fiction we can see that the author of the meaning of life is quite similar to the author of fiction in its aim and aspirations. This author, in accordance with our definition of narrative, is looking to be the only teller of the story and thus control its form. The co-author of life and the fiction

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[36] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea,* (New York: New Direction Publishing Cooperation, 2007), 127

author attempt to follow the essence of human action from a beginning to end. The story should have some kind of resonance that is concise and, if successful, universal. However, unlike the author of fiction the co-author of the meaning of life is bound to the author of the meanings in living and to the protagonist's point of view and temporality. These convergences translate into the three necessary conditions that deprive the co-author of the meaning of life from becoming a fully-fledged author: the condition of plurality, her temporality and life's pure contingency.

> First, in relation to the condition of plurality: A specifically human life is a
>
> moment between birth and death, as long as it could be represented as a *narrative* and shared with *other men*.[37]

The lack of authorship Arendt is addressing in the quote opening this section is the condition of non-sovereignty which is the outcome of the condition of plurality. Non-sovereignty, the lack of total authorship, is an inherent part of the human condition and all attempts to do away with it are attempts of stoic or otherwise resignation from the real world into "an imaginary one where […] others would simply not exist"[38]. We are the creatures who would like to be their grand authors of their lives but given the fact that others like ourselves are also the authors of their own stories, we are co-authors in an unpredictable and highly dynamic arena. Arendt's claim at the beginning of the section then is a warning from the *hubris* of solipsistic philosophy, not a condemnation of agency. Second, the option of total authorship is frustrated because of the specific temporality of the protagonist. The author is limited by the fact that she is also the heroine. She is in the time of the story and while she can project forward and backwards, she can only do it from her place in the present. Furthermore, the co-author/protagonist is never at a

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[37] Julia Kristeva. *Hannah Arendt: Life as Narrative*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2001), 7-8. Emphasis in the source.
[38] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 234

position to end the story, nor was she ever in a position to begin it in the full sense of the word. Kierkegaard says:

> It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards. And if one thinks over that proposition, it becomes more and more evident that *life can never really be understood in time simply because at no particular moment can I find the necessary resting point from which to understand it—backwards*[39]

The fully-fledged author of the meaning of life is condemned to co-authorship by time itself. Finally, life is unpredictable and full of contingencies. We surprise ourselves, are surprised by others and could simply be found unprepared for a number of completely random reasons. Even within the space that one can author her life. Life might and does many times resist.

All of the above clarifies that co-authorship in life is making the determination of responsibility not an easy task. The degree to which one is the author of her actions determines her responsibility and culpability. Entangled as we are in other stories, circumstance and contingency the amount to which we are the authors of an action demands the abstraction of narrative. This work does not develop this ethical debate. Here we are concerned with defining a specific narrative operation in the political arena. But, looking at the comparison that we are making in this chapter between lived-narratives and fiction, we might want to note that although the differences between fiction and life concerning responsibility seem obvious, they do not offer a real binary. Of course when *Crime and Punishment* is concerned and a special care is taken to describe a murderer with intent the distance from what usually reality offers is substantial. However, since literature follows human action it communicates its gray areas as well. Was Oedipus to blame? Was Meursault in *The Stranger*? As was said in the opening the discussion taking its departure point from fiction will be developed in other chapters. Suffice is

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[39] Kierkegaard's Journal for 1843. In Bernard Williams, "Life as Narrative" *European Journal of Philosophy* 17.2 2007, p.310. My emphasis.

to say here that if fiction is an experiment and a model from and against which we examine

paths of action and issues of responsibility in real life, it follows that the complexity of real life

with its limited sense of authorship figures in it as well.

II. Plot Coherence

Aristotle says:

> Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for
> poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular[40].

Arendt says:

> Whoever consciously aims at being 'essential' at leaving behind a story and an
> identity which will win 'immortal fame', must not only risk his life but expressly
> choose, as Achilles did, a short life and a premature death[41]

Being essential or universal, "being-a-narrative", "being a poem", if we may, demands that we

cease being all together. The coherence of a plot centers on two features: integrative, succinct

content and the reification in time. Fiction attempts to follow and articulate something universal

about life and leave it behind as an artifact for others. This in turn means that narrative must have

clear boundaries that separate it from the flow of life and allow it to maintain itself against and

for it. It must be reified, meaning it must have a beginning and an end.

> In a good story […] all the extraneous noise or static is cut out. That is, we the audience,
> are told by the story teller just what is necessary to 'further the plot'. A selection is made
> of all the events and action the characters may engage in and only a small minority finds
> its way into the story. In Life, by contrast, everything is left in. All the static is there[42]

And it must entertain a certain grasping-together of heterogeneous element characteristic of

plots. The twofold demands of coherence, if filled successfully, support a verbal artifact that

resonates diachronically and universally in human public arenas. *Othello* is considered to be a

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[40] Aristotle, *Poetics*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 1451b5-7
[41] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 193
[42] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 57-8

successful work of art because it is timeless and could "survive" cultural translation. The play travels through time and locations reflecting and mirroring the crystalized human essence. One finds herself in awe when watching or reading such play because it is still so acute in following human action and because of its relevance through the ages and across cultures. How does one reify a universal essence from the subject matter of the life? One could not possibly be the author answering the demands of coherence and the protagonist at the same time. How can one stabilize into an integrative whole the essence / moral / meaning of my narrative against the many unpredictable changes life brings? Can one furnish a beginning point and end-point? Need life cease in order for us to make poetic sense of it? Even if we have an Archimedean viewpoint (e.g. posthumously inquiring writer) will life cohere in content from birth to death?

I am taking a small detour to address a discussion that has been occupying the backdrop of the conversation that is developed here and in the preceding sections. The discussion concerns the existential status of the author as the one responsible for unity and coherence. Are we essentially animals that author (to paraphrase Macintyre's famous "story-telling animal")? Or is the author's perspective imposed on random and meaningless human actions? If we go back to the example of Sisyphus given in the introduction, is Sisyphus fooling himself, trying to find order and meaning in what is truly meaningless by nature? Or are Sisyphus' actions inevitably narrative-oriented? This work takes the latter position. It seems obvious that we can look upon our lives and care about where it is going and where it is coming from. These are author-oriented concerns that assume a protagonist looking for a plot. Asking "where is this degree / relationship / job going?" Is really asking: What story is this? Who am I in this story? Do I want to create another story? Of course these questions also point to the possibility of living while lacking of narrative. They point to a desire to something that is not-yet, a quest or a loss. The status of

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authorship and coherence in lived-narratives transpires between the desire for narrative coherence and the fact that life refuses to cohere and many times offer several ways they can cohere as.

> Narrative coherence is what we find or effect in much our experience and action, and to the extent that we do not, we aim for it, try to produce it, and try to restore it when it goes missing for whatever reason[43]

As temporal finite beings with a beginning and an end and as creatures that seek meaning, we are condemned to author. The correlation between temporal experience of human existence and the activity of narrating story is not accidental. "The composition of the plot is grounded in our pre–understanding of the world of action"[44]. And this pre-understanding is manifested in meaningful structures, the symbolic resources and the temporal character of the world of action.

> Our lives are constantly interpreting themselves […] in terms of beginnings, middles and end […] Our existence is already to some extent pre-plotted.[45]

Our temporality weaves the past into future projects. It views the present in view of what came to pass and what will. Every point in time is encompassing a possible future and a certain perspective on the past. Our actions are directed at goals and it is always in the light of cumulative experience that we aim at a certain direction.

Yet, this chapter opened with the observation of a certain violence narrative does perform on experience. We pause, I said, before we narrate our lives and we listen to the story as if someone is telling it to us. Between the prefigured and the figured, the pre-narrated and the narrated, or to use Ricoeur's terms, between mimesis$_1$ and mimesis$_2$, mediates the process of

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[43] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 90
[44] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 54
[45] Richard Kearney, *On Stories,* (London: Routledge, 2002), 129

emplotment.[46] The two levels of narration differ temporally, structurally and symbolically. An individual event becomes a moment in a plot via integration. Narratives add beginning and end-points. The symbolic order is based on syntagmatic rather than paradigmatic relation. There is a transition between the two, and in the transition something is created, the plot, and something is lost, the pre-plot and the many other possibilities it potentially could have materialize as.

Human lives are not reflective at all times. We might be doing the dishes, driving, running. We sometimes meditate to escape thought or use repetitive actions to enter meditative-like state. As we examine these moments, however, we can never do so outside of the glasses of time, symbolic structure and meaning structure. We always experience in time. Even when we are captured by the "fascination with the absolutely unformed"[47] we are fascinated via symbols and through meanings. The narrative-perspective creates what Kant named possible-experience. Pre-figurative perspective outlines the arena of possible-(narrative)-experience. This possible-(narrative)-experience arena could be just a small part of a wider non-narrative noumena existence that is, as Williams suggests, unformed. We can experience it speechlessly. But whenever we would want to talk about it, it will be in the form of a sequence of events that relate to each other in some way or another and become entangled in, vulnerable to and productive of stories. We can probe the extent to which human life is infected / impregnated by stories and the extent, limits, depths and status of the un-narrated noumena around the possible-(narrative)-experience. As we do that, we will be telling a story about it. We have no Archimedean point to examine this. Every time one will turn to describe experience as unformed she will find herself entangled with forms. So we find ourselves answering the questions concerning narrative forms and human life with a compromise: One has no access to the absolutely unformed but neither are

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[46] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 66-68
[47] Ibid., 72

we fully-fledged protagonists in a well-organized story. Life is a potential story and as such it can come to full fruition but it only sometimes does. If that is so, we see narrative and we see the not yet formed events at the same time. There is no need for the dichotomy between order and disorder. "Emplotment is never the simple triumph of order"[48]. It is a combination of consonance and dissonance. It is exactly though the unpredictable that the identity of a character and its plot-inscribed fate emerge.[49]

In our context two points are crucial: One, going back to the dichotomy between the author of the meanings in living and the author of the meaning of life, the possibility of ubiquitous presence of some level of narrative form in life pertains only to the author of the meanings of living. We can easily exist without being a part of a drama that is the story of our life in each passing moment. I might go to the doctor for a regular check up and be absentminded about it. Around me are weaved the stories that support my identity, my actions, and the regular check-up I about to do. These stories rest silently around me helping me make sense of things. If at the doctor's I learn either devastating or wonderful news the author of the meaning of life emerges immediately, marking the moment as this or that. Looking back on what has passed and arranging it to fit the moment. Looking to the future and figuring the new possibilities. Two, since the discussion concerning the status of narrative coherence concerns the meanings in living author, we can leave the question be and delimit the boundaries of our current discussion: we are discussing the narrative coherence perspective only in reference to the moments when our meaning of life author is on a quest for a narrative, or at the midst of a narrative. It is enough that the co-author/protagonist point of view is extremely fundamental in times of self-reflection. It is

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[48] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative I*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 73
[49] This discussion of Ricoeur discordant concordance is further elaborated in the next section which integrates the above two sections into the issue of narrative identity.

sufficient that whenever one reflects on her life and the lives of others, she either sees a story in the making or troubled that she does not.

Coming back to our discussion of the possibility of "being a narrative" every narrative endows with meaning and at the same time misses another possible meaning about life. Essential narrative aiming at eternal-fame might miss more since it demand monopoly on one story. In that sense Acheilles died twice. Once physically and he died again when the more complex and layered aspects of his life story were overtaken by one specific narrative of his end. But this ossification of one coherent whole is never a complete and done matter. The brevity produced by the process of condensation and extraction becomes action itself when it is reenacted,[50] told again and understood differently. If one uses the image of Sisyphus on a flag of freedom fighters or in a book about the meaning of life in 20th century France, the reified coherent content of the dead person, becomes alive again and differently. By virtue of its intersubjective character "the outcome [of a narrative] is never final. […] narrative is an open ended invitation to ethical and poetic responsiveness"[51].

Finally, in life we do not have the luxury of being disentangled from other narratives. Every *Hamlet* has its *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Every *Wizard of Oz* has a possible *Witch*. [52] We are always a part of several stories that crash into and out of ours in a manner that might be challenging to coherence of form and content. Additionally it is clear that the notions of beginning and ending in the sense of fiction are absent in lived-narratives. Beginning is "lost in the haze of early childhood" and death of course can only be recounted by

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[50] Julia Kristeva, *Arendt: Life is Narrative*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2001)*,* 19
[51] Richard Kearney, *On Stories,* (London: Routledge, 2002), 156
[52] The former is a play by Tom Stoppard telling the story of Rosencrantz and Gilderstein, the latter is a musical telling the Wizard of Oz from the point of view of the witch.

others.[53] This, claim advanced also by Williams and Arendt assumes the necessity of the historian perspective. To an extent, of course, it is correct. The story emerges from an action that is already passed and is never separate from many other stories. Yet, in a sense it is not. As we said narrative is a fundamental feature of our gaze upon the world. Narrative coherence in real life must be seen as a frame we fit into and break out of repeatedly. Its reification is not eternal and is dialectically forming and collapsing as well as competing with other possible frames. This does not mean it is non-existent. Lived-narratives beginnings and endings are moments of life which we insist upon as such because we took initiative, because we met someone, because we saw God, because we stopped seeing God, because we got sick, or healthy and gave this or that meaning of a beginning, or an ending, or both. Told and written fiction narratives have first and last pages. Lived-narratives have declared first and last pages.

III. Character / Protagonist / Hero

The protagonist in Aristotle *Poetics* is second to the plot. It is merely implied by it.

> Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities […]The plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy; Character holds the second place[54].

Authors, much in the same way, matter even less to the plot they tell. They figure only marginally in the *Poetics*. Referred to in their personal name, they are discussed from a historical standpoint of documentation of the particular and not poetically. Their specific existence serves as an example. They do not receive the place of a principle of any order in the *Poetics*. Authors occupy a paradoxical place since they are the creators of the plot and yet are completely redundant to its content and the effectiveness once it is released as an artifact to the public arena. As in the *Symposium* all that playwrights can do after the creation is done is drink together and

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[53] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 160
[54] Aristotle, *Poetics,* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 1449b25-1450b3

let their hangover subside. Furthermore, their actual existence interrupts the relation of the audience/readers with the narrative:

> When we happen to meet an author and speak to him about his book we experience a profound disruption of the peculiar relation that we have with the author in and through his work. […] [T]o Read a book is to consider its author already dead and the book posthumous.[55]

In lived-narratives, however, the protagonist/co-author, the agent, is the first principle. When we tell a story of someone's life we do not tell a story in order to follow something about humanity in general. We tell such story in order to follow the uniqueness of the person at their midst. The *who*[56]. We could of course learn something about humanity from personal stories of lives but this is a byproduct of the main goal. When a story becomes more of a moral or a universal lesson about humanity it departs from the realm of lived-narratives and transferred to the realm of fiction. This is as we said Achilles' second death: A that life is reified into something much more coherent and more essential that it could have possibly been. The co-author as well receives a better place than the author of fiction. The co-author only *declares* last pages and scenes, but she doesn't really have the privilege of departing. When the co-author and the protagonist are the same person we have a very involved author, who runs the risk of bearing the responsibility of the outcomes of her chosen narrative and a very conscious protagonist whose existence in the time of the story includes an attempt to determine a path as if she is standing at the standpoint of a fiction author or even a judging fiction author. The co-author and protagonist materialized in one and the same person intensify each other to create an agent.

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[55] Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action,* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1991), 107

[56] Arendt calls the absolute uniqueness "who-ness". She also differentiates between otherness and uniqueness which is the human form of distinctness. Distinctness she ascribes to everything alive and otherness to everything that is. Humans *decide* to disclose themselves in their uniqueness among other humans through voluntary deed and speech, which echoes respectively their natural birth and the condition of plurality. *The Human Condition.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1958), 175-180

Now the connection between the primary position of the agent and lived-narratives emerges from a difficulty. On the one hand, it is impossible to verbally solidify an unequivocal account of the living essence of a person. Try as we may explain or outline who a person is or was, we end up with a list of characteristics she shares with others and an inventory of things she did. This intense uniqueness of lived-narratives is produced through action. This is most obvious in the case of romantic love. Romantic love entails acute awareness of the extreme uniqueness of the other. Trying to flesh out this uniqueness into words we find ourselves at a loss. To make matters worse, it is with words that we attach to our deeds that we announce ourselves in the realm of human affairs. The all-pervasive presence of conversation, MacIntyre points out

> [as] a feature of the human world [...] tends to escape philosophical attention [...] Conversational behavior is not a special son or aspect of human behavior, even though the forms of language-using and of human life are such that the deeds of others speak for them as much as do their words. For that is possible only because they are the deeds of those who have words.[57]

Yet, it is a basic feature of our understanding of a human life that our heroines, friends, colleagues and loved ones are unique. If conversation cannot capture, describe and or articulate a living person's essence and conversation is the most crucial part of what we consider the quintessential form of human communication, how do we come to know each other in our uniqueness?

Action has a revelatory character. Although most of the interaction between agents revolves around the objective world and/or deeds that relate to the objective world, what takes place as persons go about their cooperative projects is a disclosure of themselves as agents to each other through their cumulative intentions, words and deeds. This second-order residue organizes itself between people in a web-like structure: somewhat intangible and lacking one

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[57] *After Virtue,*(Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981), 210

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center yet ubiquitous and all-encompassing. In it we are not only active contributors but also passive listeners, sufferers and spectators of occurrences. What makes certain actions eternal is the fact that they are memorable. Memory is in the hand of the spectator

> who complete the story in question, and they do so through thought, thought that follows upon the act. This is a completion that takes place through evoked memory, without which there is nothing to tell. It is not the actors, but the spectators, if they are capable of thought and memory, who turn the polis into an organization that is creative of memory and/or history/histories. [58]

The actual telling of a story is a continuation of a state of narrative saturation that we are thrown into.[59] And it is in this ubiquitous web of tellers and listeners, actors and sufferers that we are revealed in our unique who-ness.

"[T]he 'web' of human relationships"[60] allows each person to have her own existential "finger-print". From the synergetic dance of suffering and acting a story of an agent slowly emerges as she discloses herself in speech and deed while affecting uniquely the stories of those around her. This revelatory aspect of action is true for both fictional and lived protagonists. Dostoyevsky could have summed up the character of Raskolnikov in one sentence. "Raskolnikov was a confused young man that committed two murders for no apparent reason and regretted it very much". We would have known very little about Raskolnikov as a unique *who.* It is through the accumulation of actions and sufferings, reactions and initiatives that one slowly gets an image of who someone was. So it is in lived-narratives. Only here the story congeals and breaks repeatedly reveling a complex *who* that is only at times a coherent character.

Who is this *who* when the lived-narrative breaks? Can there be a protagonist without the unifying frame of a finished or at least a stable story?

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[58] Julia Kristeva. *Hannah Arendt: Life as Narrative*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2001),16
[59] Paul Ricouer, *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)*,* 75
[60] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958),183

> The life of a fictional character is necessarily something that our lives are not, a given whole. However coherent or incoherent in everyday terms their lives may be represented as being, they have a special unity that no real life can have, that the end of them is present at their beginning. This peculiar unity of their lives cannot help us in trying to find coherence in our own. It is essential to fictional lives that their wholeness is always already there, and essential to ours that it is not.[61]

Fictional characters, Williams points out, are not temporal. In that sense they do not have a future or a past but a represented future and past both of which exist before we started reading the story. This unity of fictional characters manufactures a style from which we can imagine them doing other things than they are represented as doing. But how do I go about living from moment to moment using this model? Williams insists we cannot for the lack of style which is the outcome of a unified, even if not coherent, whole. He admits that one could subtly or less subtly imitate the repertoire of fiction[62] either while one lives her life or as one reflects on a life that have passed. Either that, says Williams, or the case is that we impose narrative and a character on otherwise naturally disordered events.

This brings back the discussion of the status of narrative in the more specific context of the character. It points to the interesting subject of style. Style according to Meriam-Webster dictionary is:

> a particular way in which something is done, created, or performed, a particular form or design of something, a way of behaving or of doing things.

It is an excellent perspective on uniqueness and character fictional or lived. It is not clear why style would emanate only from a given whole though. In life one can have a sense of style "so-far" that one uses as a guideline. One can change styles or suddenly become aware of her style or sense of style. We can find ourselves say "this is not something that I would do". "I do not want to be the kind of person that does that". "I suddenly realized this was something I could do".

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[61] Bernard Williams, "Life as Narrative" *European Journal of Philosophy* 17.2 2007, p.311
[62] See also Ricoeur *Oneself as Another,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 145-159

"This is the kind of person I would like to be". These are all considerations of style and they emanate from a certain sense of existing wholeness, but not necessarily a completed life. One's style could be a result from many elements. Some children suddenly exhibit a sense of style that surprises adults around them. We develop style in a patchwork manner, by comparison, past experiences, sheer chance in the present and projections to the future. We express uniqueness and stability, the two pillars of the *who*, through it. Fiction authors, much in the same way, might not know what the style of the character they are creating is and yet possibilities would present themselves. The style of the character will emerge *as the book is being written*. Not only after. It could be that a style of a character becomes very clear to an author before any writing takes place and it dictates the narrative weaved around her. Actresses sometimes try styles on a character and see what "fits". They look for what feels right. They look for something that "clicks" and defines the character further than the text. They cannot choose just any style. A certain gamut is opened with every role. One tries them on and slowly a unique style emerges. Style, my point is, whether in fiction or life, whether written or preformed, is a matter of a process not of a complete whole. Williams is right to point out to the specific sense of style that emanates from complete wholes. After the fact one might find that a style that was not intended emerges. However, this does not exhausts the ways in which style affects the ways we act.

Williams makes another point that if followed through seems to undermine his argument. He suggests that other people already lived lives look like narratives to us posthumously because imposing fictional narratives on natural disorder

> help[s] us make sense of some larger set of events, or [receive] reassurances that there can be some immanent meaning, if no more, in the totality of our variously improvised moves from one set of circumstances to the next.[63]

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[63] Bernard Williams, "Life as Narrative" *European Journal of Philosophy* 17.2 2007, .313

This is reminiscent of the French Existentialists debate that was discussed above. It is pointing to the function of narrative as world creating and organizing. If humans have this capacity and need to apply a narrative perspective to already lived-lives, why can't they do the same to their own lives as it proceeds? If humans make sense in this way of events looking at another life from the outside, why can they not do the same as they live their own? Finally, the epistemological sterile debate about *noumena* and things-themselves lurks at the backdrop of Williams' observation. If narrative perspective is an aspect of human perspective – in what way is it fiction and not natural?

> [T]he idea of a 'mere' or 'pure' sequence of isolated events […] proves to be a fiction, in this case a theoretical fiction: perhaps we can conceive of it, but it is not real for our experience. As we encounter them, even at our most passive, events are charged with the significance they derive from our retentions and protentions'[64]

The concept of a character is challenged in the arena of real lives. But it is, as Williams suggests, meaning giving. As we move from one step to the next in our lives, planning ahead again and again in accordance to all that we did not expect, is there a reason we should not use this meaning giving capacity in our considerations as co-authors/protagonists?

I turn now to the divisions between character and plot of this chapter. The division is an abstraction for the purposes of discussion. While it is helpful it is important at this stage to point to the nuances it misses.

> What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is a picture or a novel that is not of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way;[65]

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[64] David Carr. "Narrative And The Real World: A Narrative for Continuity", *History and Theory*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 1986), p. 122
[65] Henry James. "The Art of Fiction" *Longman's Magazine* 4 (September 1884). reprinted in *Partial Portraits* (Macmillan, 1888)

"Characters […] are themselves plots"[66] and both advance in a dialectic of discordant concordance. The movement of all narratives synthesizes the heterogeneous in that it is defined both by the unity of the story and by the reversal of fortune that are perceived as threatening this unity. It transforms contingency into the necessity of narrative. For example, if I recount a day in which I had to catch a train in order to attend a wall-street job interview that has the potential of changing my life professionally and financially and as I go about my day I find a deserted dog and commit to saving her thus ruining my outfit and missing my train. At this point the encounter with the dog is contingent in the sense that it is ruining the expected course of action. Later on, the story goes, I discover that I much rather work at a dog shelter than be at wall-street. The contingency, is transformed into narrative necessity which itself always implies narrative contingency.[67] The relation of the character to the plot emerges from the fact that the character is the one acting/suffering in the narrative. The concordance and dis-concordance happen to her as a sufferer and emerge from her as an initiator. Character and plot proceed in a joint process of emplotment and identification creating a narrative that answers questions concerning both: *what* happen? To/by *who*? And *why*? The narrative constructs the character and vice versa.[68] While this connectedness is true for fictional and lived-narratives, it echoes differently. In fiction we learn something about life from a complete action. An essence is attempting to communicate *through characters*. In lived-narratives the *who* takes the spotlight. Fleeting and unique it reveals

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[66] Paul Ricoeur *Oneself as Another*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 143
[67] Paul Ricoeur *Oneself as Another*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) ,141-2
[68] Ricoeur goes on to inscribe this discordant concordance in the dialectic of sameness (*idem*) and selfhood (*ipse*). Between these two poles of permanence around which personal identity revolves dialectically fictional narratives experiment and expose the possibility of selfhood without the support of sameness. Very briefly sameness is understood to be based upon lasting dispositions. Namely it follows the Aristotelian description in *the Nicomacean Ethics*. Selfhood revolves around the identity when dispositions change, or disappear. Ricoeur find its core to be accountability. We expect one to keep her promises regardless of her change in dispositions. This brings to light a different sort of identity that is mostly coexistent with sameness however cannot be equated with it. Narrative identity, the identity that emerges from a narrative exposes the dialectic of character between selfhood and sameness. In different events their centrality or lack of thereof is exposed through the initiators and sufferers. Paul Ricoeur *Oneself as Another,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 115-168

itself *through the plot* leaving its fingerprint in the public arena for other people to remember and know. Of course the story of one's life is not a given. The synergy of discordance and concordance is not just circumstance interrupting a flow. It can also be interpreted as a struggle for narrative. Authorship in a lived-narrative is driven not only by trying to fit events into an existing narrative but also in trying to figure out what the narrative is about.[69]

IV.   The 4th wall

Catharsis, Aristotle's famous term describing purgation by pity and fear via art comes from the Greek root *Cathros*, meaning, clean. *Catharsis* purifies through feelings of pity and fear emerging from art. This means that *Catharsis* purifies through feelings of pity and fear and the existence of a gap between the stage and the audience, the book and a reader, the painting and the observer. The gap between fiction and reality is firm. The actors on stage do not die. The characters in a book do not materialize in our reading space. We read the news and are horrified with the horrors we see. We go to the theater and we are fascinated with the horrors we see. Only in the latter the difficult feelings of fear and pity purify. In real life they taint. The gap between fiction and life allows us to plunge deepest to our fears and emerge purer than before. Even though "[c]athartic awe stops us in our tracks, throws us of the kilter, deworlds us"[70]. It is as the quote opening this chapter suggests, safe. This break between fiction and life also allows for a perspective that life does not. I hear a siren in Tel-Aviv and the fear for my life trumps all possibility of perspective. I must smother a deep sensation of fear if I am to not terrify the child and dog at my care. Pity, the ability to empathize with strangers, is also afforded by this gap. We need not protect ourselves and we can dive into the story and into the lives of others unafraid for ours. Unlike our own, we could always just leave them. Fiction allows us to examine our lives,

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[69] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 90-99
[70] Richard Kearney, *On Stories,* (London: Routledge, 2002), 138

and others', to truly fear, and truly feel pity, but from a distance and for a limited amount of time. After the book, the play, the movie, we slowly come back to lived-narratives from which we cannot escape and in which we are only co-authors, sometimes less than that.

What makes *Cathartic* experience possible is a combination of deep involvement and a certain distance that cannot be done away with. This amalgam of being deeply captured and interested in and sympathetic to the fate a certain character on the one hand and being at a safe de-worlded distance on the other endows us with an ability to observe a deeply troubling situations with vibrating clarity that life does not entertain.

V. *Truth / Referential Claims*

Chapter 3 will take on the topic of historical vs. fictional narratives as another perspective to define trigger-narratives from. Lived-narratives, in virtue of being a form of history, (e.g. family histories, personal histories etc.), share certain characteristics with history as an academic discipline.

> Both history and fiction refer to human action, although they do so on the basis of two different referential claims. […][H]istory may articulate its referential claim in compliance with rules of evidence common to the whole body of science. […] But the very meaning of this truth-claim is itself measured by the limiting network which rules the conventional descriptions of the world. This is why fictional narratives may assert a referential claim of another kind. […] This referential claim is nothing other than the claim to re-describe reality according to the symbolic structures of the fiction[71].

Unless they are a part of a written biography or autobiography, lived-narratives are not expected to obey the academic standards of rules of evidence. One would not normally ask a person telling her life story for more sources of verification, to inquire into their mediating factors and seek competing interpretations. One would expect her nonetheless to describe things that actually happened and could consider certain representations as a lie if they do not correspond to events

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[71] Paul Ricoeur. "Can Fictional Narratives Be True?" *Analecta Husserliana*. Vol 14 p.11

that occurred. Lived-narratives obey a softer version of history's rules of evidence and share with it "the limiting network which rules the conventional descriptions of the world".

Fiction, describing the world as well, is not expected to obey the historical rules of evidence. In fact, from the outset the assumption is that imagination is allowed to create things that did not come to pass while using or not using things that did. Poetic license is exactly this permit to play with reality and/or depart from it. However, matters of plausibility do figure in fictional narratives in relation to the truth claims they can and must make. First, since fiction attempts to re-describe the world, it can do so successfully or not. Cheap romantic novels, for example, might fail to capture the nuances and the universal dynamics of falling in love. They thus also fail to resonate deeply diachronically and universally as works of art. Second, we could say that a novel is true-to-life in the sense that it describes certain events as they might have happened[72] if they were real. One could leave a book or a theatre because the narrative presented became "untrue" and/or "unreal". We could claim a narrative did not end in the right place. We can say it ended too soon or too late.[73] Indeed, if fiction writers were free *from* in an absolute way, "how could we explain the anguish and suffering of artistic creation?"[74] This "un-realness" is a truth-claim of another order. It does not refer to realism or soundness. Fantasy narratives could be assessed as "very real" or "very true". The truth claims of fiction refer to an internal rhythm of the fictional narrative. Fisher calls it narrative probability.

> the hanging together of the story's formal features. [Narrative probability is] the perspective through which we check if the story coheres and if it has contradictions[75]

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[72] Carr, David. "Narrative and the real world: a narrative for continuity", *History and Theory*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 1986), pp. 117

[73] Noel Caroll, "Narrative Closure"

[74] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 192

[75] Walter Fisher, "The Narrative Paradigm: An Elaboration", 349

The internal constraint on novelistic creation could even be said to be "more imperious [than the one imposed on historians] in that it does not coincide with the external constraint of documentary facts".[76] There are certain limits to every fictional world. These limits emerge as the story progresses and their aim is to create a "vision of the world that animates the narrative voice".[77] The characters in a story and the plot they create and emerge from, dictate a rhythm or a style (as Williams pointed out earlier in this discussion). This rhythm and/or style command a fictional arena in which the characters can act. It means that their "realness" is not necessarily supported by accuracy or even probability or likelihood.[78] As the story progresses a fictional character acting in the arena can, for example, surprise or disappoint us. The ability of a fictional character to create such an effect on the reader is the outcome of a rhythm that was already created. One cannot be surprised in the first sentence of a narrative by the behavior of a fictional character. One could only be surprised by the plot after a certain "normalcy" was established. Something was expected and these expectations were not met. This amalgam brings us back to Ricoeur's synthesis of the heterogeneous. The synthesis is rule governed. It has its own "limiting network which rules the conventional descriptions of the world". Cross the limits and the fictional world will come crashing down in untruthfulness.

Fiction, then, exhibit two kinds of "truthfulness": One is external and pertains to the success or failure of the narrative to re-describe the world we live in in the sense of mirroring some truth about life. The other is internal and pertains to the plausibility of the plot and characters within the world that was created. The two are related to one another. For example, if the story's internal rhythm does not manage to stand and resonate there is a little chance that the

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[76] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 191-2
[77] Ibid.*,* 192
[78] David Carr. "Narrative and The Real World: A Narrative for Continuity", *History and Theory*,
Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 1986), pp. 117

external referential claim would be a successful one. An obvious example for that are soap operas. Soap operas extend their style and rhythm until they collapse in two manners: first, their characters go through repeated, extreme and finally unbelievable occurrences and relationships. They get married, they go through complicated operations, they find new members of family, they lose their memory, they regain their memory and then they do it all over again with new characters that were added to the plot. Second, the plot is not designed to have a climax and end. It has repeated and similar climaxes and the assumption is that it will not have an end before it looses its audience which usually takes years. Without unity of form and coherence of content such stories say very little about life. Their internal lack of truthfulness is translated to an external impossibility to say anything substantial about existence. If we look at this relation from the other way around a lack of external truthfulness will condemn a well-made story to a level of diminished cultural appreciation. A story like *Cinderella*, which fails to capture something about feminine and masculine relationships, is destined to be a fairytale, a children's story. This is not necessarily because its events are super-natural. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is quite super-natural, as is *Blade Runner* and they are both considered to be an acute mirror of human existence. It is the ability of the story to reflect an essence of existence that later on can be translated into its higher or lower cultural resonance. Fictional narratives are an amalgam of unpredictability and teleology.[79] They unpredictably and creatively operate in a delimited and structured arena.

It would be inaccurate to leave the description at that without pointing to the overlap between fiction and lived-narrative in regards to truth claims. Every biography struggles with the border of documentation and fiction and every life is an autobiography in progress. To begin

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[79] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981),216

with, it is hard sometimes to discern a memory from imagination when a certain amount of time

has passed. Additionally,

> up to a point, it is possible to tell several stories based on the same events (however we
> may then give meaning to the expression: the same events)[80]

Every lived-narrative, describing a life, is part fiction and every fiction no matter how fantastic

both attempts a truth about actual life and arises from a certain social, linguistic and historical

context. If this discussion is sketching a dividing line, it is only in order to deepen our

understanding of overlapping spaces and their full complexity.

VI. Trigger-narratives

The most interesting and volatile corollary of the above discussion refers us back to the

quote opening the chapter. Trigger-narratives are very close formally to fictional narratives yet

they lack a 4th wall and they have historical truth claims. On the one hand trigger-narratives have

the coherence and unity of a fiction story and on the other they call us for real and immediate

political action. They are an amalgam that is as irresistible as it is frightening. The real is rarely

as clear as fiction and the fictional is forever close to us as participants. Trigger-narratives offer

real life stories a part of which we can be, stories that are made of the clear and normative matter

of legends and myths. This is why, as the opening quote of the chapter indicates, they are unsafe.

They are an invitation to be a part of a story that, like fiction, is both fantastic and captures

something essential about existence. We stand, similarly to protagonist in *The Never Ending*

Story, [81] between the safety of the bystander/reader and the fantastic and alarming possibility of

taking part.

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[80] Paul Ricoeur. "New Ethos for Europe". *Paul Ricoeur :The Hermeneutics of Action*. Richard Kearney Ed., 6

[81] Wolfgang Petersen, Herman Weigel and Robert Easton. Based on Michael Ende's Novel *The Never Ending Story*. *The Never-Ending Story*. Dir. Wolfgang Peterson. (1984; Burbank, California: Warner Bros. Pictures. Video release year1985). Film.

Out of the three formal featured discussed in this chapter (authorship, plot, character) the coherence of plot and character behave in the most distinct manner when figuring in trigger-narratives. I will begin from them and then turn to the more complex matter of authorship. As we said coherence of fictive narratives answer two demands: unity of the plot in the sense of beginning and end point and the integrative content in the sense that it is following a complete action of a person. Lived-narratives, we concluded, *declare* their beginnings and endings and break in and out of integrated sequences in life. Trigger-narrative exhibit both demands of fiction coherence. If we look at the Bouazizi case we can see clearly that we have a beginning point. It is in a scene at the market place and his scale is being confiscated. If we want a beginning point with Leef we have her decision to erect a tent in Tel-Aviv and send a Facebook status. If we look at Rosa Parks, we can imagine her go on the bus and sit. Now, the point is not that these people didn't exist until they materialized in what became their famous scenes. Fiction characters, more often than not, are considered to have a history that precedes them and, sometimes, proceeds after the written narratives have come to an end. The point is that like fiction characters, we lose contact with what came before and after the protagonists of trigger-narratives. These living persons, the protagonists of trigger-narrative, have a sort of last page *as if* they are characters in a book or a play. At that point in time their lived-narratives are told, arranged and function as fiction. For example, we may have a vague idea into what Leef's, Parks' and Bouazizi's life were before that scene but this information is neither prevalent nor common knowledge. We have almost no information about what happened to them after. Two of the three persons survived their political action and continued their lives. One of them (Leef), lives in the same city as me. If I wanted to find out what she did after the Social Justice Movement ended, I could. But if I asked the many people that joined her in the streets in the summer of 2011 – it is likely

that they would not know. It is not common knowledge. These persons take on the form of heroines in a story with a clear beginning and they end with the story's end even if their lived-narratives continue. In lived-narratives we break into and out of clearer and less clear narrative sequence, but *we never leave the scene*. This brings us to the next feature that marks the protagonists of trigger-narratives as fictional characters: the status of character.

As we said lived narrative disclose a *who*. Fiction, on the other hand, discloses a universal about life *using* a who. The protagonist in trigger-narratives is not disclosed in her unique who-ness. Bouazizi's real life story and Park's real occupation are not a big part of what they are remembered for. Like Achilles their life story is condensed to one narrative reflecting an essence. The democratic revolution in Tunisia and the civil rights movement is what stands out as the real hero of the story. The protagonists facilitate the communication of a perspective on life (e.g. values, political agency, courage, despair). Their status is the status of fictional characters not only in virtue of the fact that their stories have clear beginnings and endings but by the virtue of the fact that they are facilitators of a deeper essence and issue than themselves. They come, as fictional characters do, second place.

We can now turn to the status of the author in trigger-narratives. The main protagonist of trigger-narratives is an interesting hybrid. On the one hand there is a clear agent who initiates an action and one could say that these persons are co-authors/protagonists of their lived-narratives. Yet, the extent to which the protagonist takes part in the way things evolve is so disproportionate to the outcome that the "co" becomes almost redundant. In the discussion concerning the coherence of the character (section III) we mentioned extreme circumstances such at the ones described in Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* as well as Camus' perspective on Sisyphus. We quoted Ricoeur in this context and said the "co" in these situations is limited to

the authorship of meaning. We give meaning to radical circumstances that are not in our control. This kind restricted authorship does not help us describe trigger-narratives. While Frankl as Sisyphus give *personal* meanings to a situation they did not initiate and do not control. The protagonists of trigger-narratives did initiate the situation. Moreover, whatever personal meaning these persons (Leef, Bouazizi, Parks) are giving to the enormous event that took place in their lives, these meanings are not a part the trigger-narrative. They might be an interesting subject to those writing their biographies and those who read them. But this authorship of meaning does not take part in the trigger-narrative itself. We do not know what Leef thought or thinks about the movement her action created in view of her own life story. We have no idea what Parks thought and of course persons that do not survive the act are experiencing the end of their lives and not the narratives that their action triggers. The author of meaning in lived-narratives is the author that gives *personal* meaning to extreme events not in her control. The authors of trigger-narratives voice the *non-personal* meaning of an action initiated by the protagonist.

But who is this mysterious author? We already suggested that the personal story, i.e. the lived-narrative of the protagonist, is not part of the trigger-narrative. Trigger-narratives mainly communicate an essence and do not revolve around the disclosure of their protagonists as unique who-ness. But who does author these narratives if not the co-author/protagonist? Trigger-narratives are well emploted - who gives them their form? Tradition, the known patterns of fiction and history, offer a plethora of forms to which we relate, from which we borrow, and against which we narrate. In our context it seems like great powers: the media, the audience, the participants, the social media is authoring the trigger-narrative as it goes. Some of the media might try to play-down an event and others to uphold the meaning of the event. The people in the streets might "correct" this or that interpretation in protest and in producing more media

interpretations. For example, they might say that Leef is a rich person that got paid by tycoons to rather than a small simple person deciding to challenge the government. The protagonist backed with power from the street will oppose the narrative, through demonstrations, evidence and interviews. The media will then try another narrative which will correspond to events better etc. The author that emerges from this sequence of events is a combination of intertwined great forces that form the events into a narrative via a confrontation process of trial and error. The poetic license that the author of trigger-narrative assumes involves the "forgetting" that, Bouazizi's mother vehemently declares he was not a political person or that Leef grew up in one of Israel's most well to do suburbs. Or that Rosa Parks was an experienced activist. The public-discourse-author narrating via the news, the social networks, pictures, awards and prizes, monuments and naming of squares "fictionalizes" these stories by reducing or better yet, honing them to a clear normative narrative.

It is true that the author in the case of trigger-narratives is not completely a fiction author. First, it is involved in the situation. Second, it does not have the god-like perspective or a free-hand at carving the event to her desire. Third, the author shares the same temporality of the story and finally, the protagonist does have a say. The first three objections stand. What is important to note is that even if the trigger-narrative author does not parallel fiction authorship completely, it is still closer to it that to lived-narratives. The *who* comes second after the essential plot. The protagonist is not the author and finally the author 'leaves' the creation when it is done. Whoever the author is and the extent which it is saturated in the time of the story, it is an author that disappears with the end of the story as a fiction author would. The last objection concerning the involvement of the protagonist in the authorship, we must remember that fiction characters 'have a say' as well. In virtue of the style of the character and the rhythm of the plot, several ways to

advance the narrative exist, but they are all limited by a style the character dictates. If Leef touches upon the hearts of the masses, than stories about her tycoon connection will not hold water. In the same way attributing greed to Robin-Hood would destroy the story as we know it.

Formally then, trigger-narrative exhibit the characteristics of fiction. But in their relation to their readers/audience these narratives refuse the first iron rule of fiction: they not only allow but invite the audience to join in. The 4th wall, the imperviousness of the fictional, is our license to join-in emotionally in fictional narratives. The fact that fiction lets us entertain a possible world without risking the existing world acts as a safety net, an anchor, a shield. We can be brave under their protection. But where are we at if the fictional enchantment from a story suddenly invites us to take part in the real? Once again one cannot stop turning the pages and at the same time wishing to shut the book closed for fear of what is to come and become of her. If the hero who ignites the possibility of a change has an "essential identity" emerging from similarly "essential" narrative, then suddenly we are all part of the fantasy. We all have a part. We can all be heroes and goddesses and the future of the world as its form lies in our hands. If indeed we summon the courage to join the narrative and not shut the book closed than enchanted with our heroines we jump-in to become heroines ourselves, to help them and become their fate or deus-ex-machina, or to avenge them and guard the world they sought, promised and helped us imagine possible.

Although trigger-narrative assumes the coherence and character status typical to fictional narratives, they do not allow for the experience of *Catharsis. Catharsis* – the process of purgation by fear and pity is facilitated by the gap between fiction and reality. Trigger-narratives do not have such gap. One is not a free theater spectator because the option of joining-in is very tangible. With that condemnation to choose, καθαρός, literally being clean or purged is

impossible. A sense of exhilaration does accompany these processes in a very clear manner. What the spectator is going through in these cases is not a catharsis but rather a very different kind of involvement. The enchantment with the hero persists as in theater; we are taken by the story feeling pity and fear. Yet we are not purged but *burdened* by this experience. We are a part of the picture and it is up to us to decide which part. We are burdened with co-authorship/protagonist role. Our agency, in other words, is being tested. Are we on the part of the forces aiding our heroine? Or are we on the side that by action or inaction disrupts her path? Deprives her from the world she deems worthy? And leave her to face her calamity alone. Will Bouazizi's sacrifice go unnoticed? Will Leef disappear and be remembered as the strange lady from the towns square or our national heroine? Would Parks refusal be just another humiliating moment for a woman under segregating rule?

This call on agency is more acute than usual because of the specific form of the truth claims of trigger-narratives. The aim is, on the one hand, completely fantastic. An "edited" and well-made story is offering an opportunity to join in and drastically change the way the world around us works. It is the sort of offers characters in fantastic stories get: A massive change and a new order are propounded implicitly or explicitly. On the other hand there is complete claim for soundness. There is nothing of the fantasy in these fantastic offers. The aim is to change the world here and now. Trigger-narratives offer both the escapist utopian thrill and the promise of a changed reality. We can be the helper of the protagonist and take the story to its unbelievable happy ending. This is not a purifying experience. Rather than *catharsis* upheld by a gap that facilitates a certain detachments, trigger-narratives are an invitation for rising-up. Rather than καθαρός, clean, the noun appropriate is ενεργός, active. Rather than the process of *catharsis*,

purification via art, what comes to pass is the process of *energasis,* the process of becoming publicly active via politics.

Chapter Two: Lived and Historical Narratives

What is between a lived-narrative and a historical account? Are they the same thing in different levels of intensity? Are they two different kinds of narratives? What is the importance of a lived-narrative to a historical account and what is the significance of history to the individual? Trigger-narratives tell the story of one person in the midst of a great historical transformation. How are they situated between the two? The last chapter positioned trigger-narratives in an overlapping space between fiction and lived-narratives. Trigger-narratives, we said, exhibit two characteristics that are closer to fiction than life: coherence of plot and status of character. They are similar to lived-narratives in the option of participation. Our conclusion was that trigger-narratives force and allure emerges from this amalgamation. They evoke the enchantment of fiction and release it in the field of possible action, novelty and change. The next step in defining trigger-narratives will narrow the gamut that stretches between lived-narratives and fiction. This honing brings to the fore two relationships: first the relationship between lived-narratives and history which is the topic of this chapter and second, the relationship between history and fiction, which will be the topic of the next.

Although it seems almost obvious that trigger-narratives play on the gamut that stretches between lived-narratives and history, the aim of this chapter is not to position trigger-narrative between them but rather to eliminate this space as a conceptual arena from which trigger-narratives emerge and in which they have an effect. One could wonder why discuss this conceptual arena only to eliminate it. First, this specific arena seems almost natural to trigger-narrative and an opposite claim warrants an explanation. Second, the relations between lived-narratives, fiction, history and trigger-narrative are complex. The four categories overlap, join, intersect and share several characteristics. The bracketing of the space between history and

fiction, which will be the next step of the argument, will not be full and exhaustive if it failed to account for the forces that define the wider field in which this bracketed segment operates. Nor will such a description be able to stand the dynamics of the complex and multilayered arena in which events and/or narratives synergistically interact, emerge and disappear. Locating trigger-narratives on the section of an abstracted linear line stretching from lived-narratives through history and culminating in fictional narratives is a helpful way to define them as a starting point. However, since this is a mere abstraction for the sake of definitions and clarifications it must be qualified and contextualized. If such a description is done against an elaboration of the network and the overlapping connections in which this linear line functions, the abstraction is less deceiving and can be seen for what it is: an introductory aid describing one important and pivotal relation in an arena in which several such relations take place simultaneously.

I.   *Truth*

Lived-narratives and history, as was noted in the last chapter, are next of kin. A lived-narrative is a form of history. They are both grounded in "the desire for faithfulness"[82] to the past. This desire to faithfulness entails similar dependency on memory, testimony and relics which in turn gives rise to procedures of search, narration and verification. The procedural aspect is clearly more formal and rigid in the case of history. But the difference between the two is not only a quantitative matter of intensity degrees. History and lived-narratives have two different objects that they desire to portray truthfully. The underlying appeal of the testimonies at the core of both narratives is "I was there", "believe me" and "if you don't believe me ask others".[83] The status of testimonies and the status of the person who is testifying are different.

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[82] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 58
[83] Ibid., 164-5

Historical accounts are arguably not primarily or directly about individual's experience, actions and lives but only incidentally[84]

In history the individual, who is considered the protagonist in lived-narratives, assumes the status of a witness whose testimony will be a part of a bigger story and whose heroine, in most cases, is not the witness. This difference stems from two senses of faithfulness to the past. In the case of lived-narratives but not in the case of history the faithfulness is to the understanding, recognition and comprehension of the particular *who*. The object of history, on the other hand, is the past. This object is more obscure than the object of lived-narratives for several reasons. First, we all know people and at some point in our lives want to know more people. Lacking this need to socialize to a substantial degree is usually a cause for some kind of medical concern. Lacking it to a less substantial degree is likely to cause social concern and curiosity. The past and history stand in a less obvious existential position. We do not call the doctor when someone does not know or care about history. Certain circles might look down on such a person but it is not a cause for social and definitely not medical concern. History, as we see it in everyday life, is not a part of existence in the same way other people are. It would be, however, far-fetched to claim that the practice of history is disconnected from individuality only because its aim is not an understanding of the individual. After all historians and those who read their work are all individuals and it is far from a rare profession or an infrequent topic of conversation. The past, even if it is non-personal, is socially significant to individuals.[85] Why is it socially significant? Who or what is it that we are looking for in the case of history?

One possible answer is that in the case of history we are not seeking to understand others but ourselves, our present situation and options. History, thus understood, is a form of contextualizing and a wider perspective on the state of things. The desire for faithfulness to the

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[84] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 100
[85] Ibid., 102

past, according to this reading, is a form of self-comprehension via comparison. It puts our current social practices in conjunction with other possibilities and grounds our ability to evaluate, judge and compare our world to other worlds. History, Ricoeur points out, exposes the potentiality of the present. It offers 'imaginative variations'[86] that challenge and echo the present. It opens the actual to the possible. Unlike Aristotle who propounds poetry as describing "things that may be", and history as "things that came to pass",[87] Ricoeur points out that the events of the past still stand as present challenges, warnings and guides to the existing. We both hope and fear repetition in history: Events of the past act both examples that we want to strive to and cautionary tales we want to avoid. Furthermore, this depiction of history suggests history could offer a form of universal ought and guidelines. It is not necessarily as Aristotle claims that "poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular"[88]. History's particular descriptions could, for example, come with implied forms of the Good, the Evil, and the Just and act in the present as a moral and a goal.

A corollary of these functions of self-understanding via comparison and examples is at the heart of history as an academic discipline with a quest for truth. The end of the 19th century was marked by the emerging understanding that the epistemological procedure through which the truth about the past could emerge does not present itself in a clear cut manner. Unlike the physical sciences, "no single linguistic protocol succeeded in carrying the day among the historians (or the social sciences in general)".[89] Rather several adequate and different ways of viewing history competed succeeded and failed in different audiences.

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[86] Paul Ricoeur. "Can Fictional Narratives Be True?" *Analecta Husserliana*. Vol 14 ,16
[87] Aristotle, *Poetics*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 1451b5-7
[88] Ibid., 1451b5-7
[89] Hyden White. Metahistory. (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins UP, 1973), 429

> What was at issue throughout the nineteenth century, in history as in both art and the
> social sciences, was the form that a genuinely 'realistic representation of historical
> reality' ought to take.[90]

The conclusion of this observation culminates with White's assertion that the choice between the different forms of historical truth seeking procedures is not and cannot be scientific since they each provide a closed formal system that makes sense within itself. The reasons behind the choice of one way to analyze data reliably rather than the other could be either moral or aesthetic.[91] To these we could add habit, fashion, career oriented reasons, financial interests and many other factors that are not guided by truth but by some sort of benefit. If one perspective is more prevalent, more easily funded and treated more seriously than others – one might adopt it simply because it is more advantageous.

It is not only the choice between systems that is at the bottom line arbitrary. Within a certain interpretational systems several options offer themselves.

> In my view, no given theory of history is convincing or compelling to a given public
> solely on the basis of its adequacy as an 'explanation' of the 'data' contained in its
> narrative, because, in history, as in the social sciences in general, there is no way of pre-
> establishing what will count as 'datum' and what would count as 'theory' by which to
> 'explain' what the data 'mean'.[92]

"History", in other words, "does not belong to the document but to the question posed by the historian".[93] The historian chooses that which is worth preserving in her eyes and this decision is never simply factual or objective. It is always a part of a set of cultural habits and biases as well

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[90] Ibid.,432
[91] Ibid, 433
[92] Hyden White. *Metahistory*. (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins UP, 1973), 429
[93] Ricoeur is arguing against the positivist hope that was invested at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in the document. The document is posed in *Time and Narrative I* as the opposition of the monument. The document unlike the monument is full of the promise of objectivity. However, Ricoeur points out in *Time and Narrative II, "*in every document there is a monument hiding" (118). The quote above (in the text) claims the same. In the final analysis we cannot get a truly objective account in the sense of the positivist perspective. Every historian deciding to take on a historical research comes already and necessarily with a set of implicit and explicit axioms and choices.

as interests and circumstances. Furthermore, history and historians belong for the most part to institutions: Archives, for example, are the products of institutions. The institution decides to conserve, and gather documentation on a certain topic for the sake of history.[94] They also decide which historian is getting which and how much funding. Data lends itself to several narratives. Even the choice of questions, topics and evaluation means dictate a certain story among several that are possible. White is using history in order to challenge the hegemony of a certain prevailing practice. Our object is the process through which this prevailing practice came into being. This process of attempting to challenge the present with other options that were prevalent in the past is an attempt to reach a procedural Archimedean point of certainty in the absence of an actual one. The present is viewed through a wider perspective that either demystifies it or affirms its superiority. Of course, this procedural vantage point suffers from all the biases any historical research would. To begin with, it is sought in order answer a question already posed by a certain historian.[95]

Husserl's development of historicity is a mirror image of White's. Husserl seeks to couch the endeavor of philosophical truth-seeking, in the pre-given world it emerges from in order to *avoid* the problem of competing systems and interpretations.

> What is clearly necessary (what else could be of help here?) is that we *reflect back*, in a thorough *historical* and *critical* fashion, in order to provide *before all decisions,* for radical self-understanding: we must inquire back into what was always sought in philosophy, what was continuously sought by all the philosophers and philosophies that have communicated with one another historically; but this must include a *critical*

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[94] Ricoeur *Time an Narrative III,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 118
[95] The subject of fiction, history and narrative will be properly addressed in the next chapter.

consideration of what, in respect to the goals and methods [of philosophy] is ultimate, original and genuine one which once seen, apodictically conquer the will.[96]

History once again is used in order to better understand, inspire and control the present. As individuals we inherit certain perspectives "questions, goals, concepts and methods"[97] that we needlessly take for granted. Through history we could, Husserl hopes, not only free ourselves and reexamine our point of departure but also determine the best way to proceed methodologically.

The meaning of documented and researched history is wider than the theoretical need for at least a relative point of certainty. Through the work of or predecessors we also further our knowledge. Scientists will avoid answering medical questions that already been answered. They are taught and will try to use unfinished projects of others and build upon them. We also make sure that we document new discoveries and keep them both safe and for the most part available. We do not only use history in the present. We prepare ourselves to become other people's history. This activity, the activity of building on the projects of others and documenting our own for those who will come after us, touches upon a deeper constitutive and existential current of the status of history in individual lives.

Humans organize themselves and their scientific and otherwise endeavors in relation to the past and the future. They do so in their daily lives but they also do so in a generational manner. As McIntyre's story-telling animal for example, we are dependent on the concept of setting. In order for an action or an intention to be intelligible to the agent and others, it must be a part of a setting.

It is central to the notion of a setting [...] that [it] has a history, a history within which the histories of individual agents not only are, but have to be, situated, just because without

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[96] Edmund Husserl. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1954/1970).*, 17-8

[97] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),106

> the setting and its changes through time the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible.[98]

The cohesion of a life as a story, the meaning of the actions acted, described and intended only make sense in a multilayered historical setting in which both personal and non-personal socio-historical narratives play a part. A person marching with a Palestinian flag in August 2014 in West Jerusalem is a life–risking rebel. She maybe even considered suicidal. The same action in Ramallah, some 20 minutes away, is unlikely to draw significant attention. This difference owes itself to the '67 war as it owes itself to the Gaza war in the summer of 2013. We are embedded in stories through which our actions gain meaning. Furthermore, history

> can be seen as contributing essentially to the sense, for the individual, not only for what he or she is doing but even more strongly of what the individual is.[99]

This historical horizon could be distinct or vague, it could be opposed or continued – but it could not be shaken off. A Palestinian has a story she is born into as does an Israeli. What we do and who we are, is always also in relation to that story. Even if at times history's role in our current project is less explicit - we are historical as we are social.

Heidegger's account of historicity elaborates on this essential status of history we relate to at the beginning of this section while diminishing the status of it as a profession. Heidegger's concept of historizing emerges from the way in which Dasein maintains itself in self-constancy and clarity of vision as it stretches along between its birth and death. He names this stretching along the "connectedness of life" [*zusammenhang des Lebens*][100]. It is a primordial integrating structure that links past, present and future for the individual. As we confront our finitude, our temporality becomes clearer and more tangible; the science of history is an outcome of this temporal dynamics in the existence of Dasein. Dasein is not temporal because it stands in history

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[98] McIntyre, *After Virtue* 207-8
[99] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),115
[100] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962), 425-8

but the other way around: It exists historically (authentically or not) because it is a temporal being. This in turn means that "seeking and acquiring knowledge of the past is only one way and by no means the only way of being historical in Heidegger's sense".[101] Heidegger offers a critical reading of historiology as we know it today. The science of history, Heidegger argues, assumes a need to connect a subject to an object, in this case the history of the world around Dasein. It gathers and documents while forgetting that Dasein is a being who is in-the-world and for whom, everything, even nature, is historical.[102] Historiology then is based in inauthentic historicality because it assumes a severed existence that is cut off from its past.

> Everyday Dasein has been dispressed […] if it wants to come to itself, it must first *pull itself together* [*zusammenholen*] from the *dispersion* and *disconnectedness* of the very things that have 'come to pass'[103]

Several questions arise with this description. Most importantly we might want to know what *should be* the status of gathering and documenting? And if this practice is inauthentic how do we learn and connect to the past? Heidegger refuses the predicate "past" to Da-sein. Instead he makes a distinction between past (*Vergagen*) and having-been-there (*da-gewesen*) attributing only the latter to Dasein. The point is that even when Dasein no longer exists, its inexistence is not the waning away of a demising object. It is a having-been-there of a specific way of being-in-the-world concernful and in care toward the world and others. Ricoeur wonders what this dichotomy between past and having-been-there truly mean. Is it not the case, he asks, that we approach the having-been-there (*da-gewesen*) on the basis of remains from the past? Is not the whole of our ability to know something and relate to the past, in the final account, based on the historian's practice? In fact, if Heidegger refuses to consider methodological problems, how can we arbitrate between conflicting interpretations? And how do we connect between the intimate

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[101] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),108
[102] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962)*,* 440-442
[103] Ibid., 441-2

time of Dasein and the "vulgar time of everyday which the natural formalize and employ for calculation?"[104] History, says Ricoeur, should be looked at as a creation that emerges from the "interweaving of the phenomenological perspective and the cosmic perspective on time".[105] The former perspective is constructed on the fact of our finality to which Heidegger adheres. The latter is an eternal passing in which humans appear and disappear. In between historical time is constituted via three connectors: (a) the calendar, (b) the sequence of generations and (c) the trace[106] "through which we join not only our predecessors, contemporaries and successors but also the universe and cosmological time".[107] These connectors of course necessitate human systematic and diligent activities. Humans create the calendars, and maintain them through repetitive activities and documentation. They do the same with genealogies. They search for relics, analyze them, write, compare, comment and store. Furthering knowledge, ordering it for others, trying to keep it as accurate as possible – is a way of maintaining history. In other words, our existence finds the connection between its phenomenological present and future to the past through things left behind by creatures like us that died.[108] Arendt who addresses the reification

[104] Peter Kemp. "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas" *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*. (London, Sage Publications, 1996), 47-8
[105] Ricoeur Time an Narrative III, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988),123
[106] Paul Ricoeur *Time and Narrative III*, (Chcago:Chicago UP, 1988), 104
[107] Peter Kemp. "Ricoeur Between Heidegger and Levinas" *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*. (London, Sage Publications, 1996), 48
[108] To give a fuller conceptual picture on Ricoeur's theory: Phenomenological time is the time Heidegger would characterize as the time of Care which is a temporality directed to the future and more precisely toward death. Cosmic time or its enumerated derivation: calendar time which is constructed from a succession of events is not oriented in any particular way in any direction and does not offer an end in the radical sense of the word. Cosmic time, Ricour propounds, does not offer any tangible point of beginning. Every calendar has three essential features: first, it has a "zero point" which is determined by a founding event. Second, this founding event manufactures two temporal directions from the past to the present and vice-versa. Third, every calendar determines temporal units that rely on cosmic phenomena. In comparison with phenomenological time which stretches between its radical beginning and immanent ending, we have here two temporal systems. Both contaminate each other, says Ricoeur, in historical time. History and its reflective tools, (relics, calendar and the succession of the generations) "cosmologizes" lived time. Namely, it enumerates and aligns the time of narrative, psychic time, personal time with astronomical and biological phenomena. It also "humanizes" cosmic time since it enumerates it in accordance with cyclical natural phenomena (e.g. the rising and setting of the sun, the waning and waxing of the moon etc.) *Time and Narrative III*, (Chcago:Chicago UP, 1988),104-9

of the world in length as part of her distinction between work and labor, points to the socio-

historical importance of the fruits of productive labor in the present and the past.

> It is the mark of all laboring that it leaves nothing behind, that the results of its effort is
> almost as quickly consumed as the effort it spent. And yet this efforts despite its futility,
> is born of great urgency and motivated by a more powerful drive than anything else,
> because life itself depends on it[109]

Work, on the contrary, is marked by the fact that it "adds new objects to the human artifice"[110].

This difference has a twofold relevant sociological and historical significance. First, it gives rise

to the "familiarity of the world, its costumes and habits of intercourse between men and things as

well as between men and men"[111]. Second, it ensures the communication, durability and

remembrance across generations of human action, speech and thought.

> In order to become worldly things that is deeds, facts and events and patterns of thoughts
> and ideas, [human action, speech and thought] must be first seen, heard and remembered
> and then transformed, reified as it were, into things – into sayings of poetry, the written
> page or printed book, into paintings or sculpture, into all sorts of records, documents and
> monuments […] Without remembrance and without the reification which remembrance
> needs for its own fulfillment […] the living activities of action, speech and thought would
> lose their reality at the end of each process and disappear as tough they never had been[112]
> [113]

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[109] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 87
[110] Ibid.,88
[111] Ibid.,94
[112] Ibid., 95
[113]As Arendt points out in her *On Violence* the essence of action is never reification though it could be reified and culture depends on it being reified. The essence of violence, on the other hand, is to be found in the ability to make certain things: weapons. The instrument is that which will mute words and destroys the power that transpires whenever people decide to act together. Reification then is not only a way to allow for the communication and stability of "the living activities of action, speech and thought" which is the root of power. Reification could also grounds action and power's very opposite: violence. Ardent is using the word "instrument' in two ways in this book. Only one of the two refers to actual things. First, violence is grounded in actual things as we describe above. Second, violence is instrumental in the sense that it is never an end.
> Power is indeed the essence of all government, but violence is not. Violence is by nature instrumental;
> like all means it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end I pursues. (San
> Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Company. 1969), 51.
Additionally in *The Human Condition* the productiveness of work could spin out of control and evolve into the opposite of durability. Consumer society is a society in which consumption of the product of work has become

The way to materialize this fundamental structure goes through the forming of calendars, the memory of genealogies and the quest after and analysis of traces. The science of history then, as a form of an elaborate self-comprehension, is deeply rooted in the currents of our temporality. Are lived-narratives different?

We can self-reflect and self-understand through lived-narratives like we can through history. We can be inspired by a lived-narrative. We can be moved to question our present by it. We could be motivated to think of truth differently because we hear a different interpretation to a familiar set of data or give new meanings to our own actions through the lived-narrative of the other. Additionally, like history, lived-narratives also answer to deep currents of our temporality.[114] But at the center of all these possibilities stands the core of the lived-narrative which does not constitute the core of the historical narrative: an encounter. History is faceless. At the heart of every lived-narrative there is a face.

What is it that we mean when we say history is faceless? Clearly history deals with persons and written by persons to other persons. How are such descriptions, writings and readings different from the lived-narrative encounter? In order to further our understanding of the fundamental difference between lived-narratives and history we will stretch a conceptual line between two kinds of philosophical accounts of encounter: Levinas' face and Husserl's concept of paring. Lived-narratives and history are situated in different positions of this conceptual line.

Levinas says that the encounter with the Other alone

introduces a dimension of transcendence, and leads us to a relation totally different from experience in the sensible sense of the term, relative and egoist[115]

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similar to the endless consumption of the fruits of labor: food. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 248-326

[114] More about that in the next section of this chapter, "Death and Birth"

[115] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* (Pittsburg Pn: Duquesne UP: 1961), 193

Levinas is arguing against ego based phenomenology such as Husserl's. Beyond the introspective analysis of vision and the logical deduction of the existence of the other from her similarity and difference to me, stands Levinas' Other whose singularity and absolute alterity is revealed in speech. Levinas' other "maintains a relation to me by discourse" breaking off the "solipsistic dialectic of consciousness".[116] She is not added to the body of knowledge stemming from the phenomenal *cogito* point of view. She is "the ab-solute exteriority which can present itself to the separate ego by the *epiphany* of the face"[117]. She is a window that maintains a relation to the ego via speech, a singular irreducible *who*.

> To manifest oneself as a face is to *impose oneself* above and beyond the manifested and purely phenomenal form […] the very straightforwardness of the face to face without the intermediary of any image, in one's nudity[118]

The encounter of the other is the imposition of the exteriority of the Face on interiority and economy of the Same. Husserl's phenomenology, on the other hand, starts and remains in the interiority and economy of phenomenological consciousness. The *cogito* tries to win the existence of others and the world from and within its own domain. All objects have a necessary absent aspect. Consciousness is made up of the ability to "fill-in" the empty spaces via the process of appresentation. Husserl takes this mechanism further and describes encounters with others with the same dynamics. The primordial intentional structure from which Husserlian otherness emerges is that of anticipation. Appresentation is the ego's expectancy of an object's hidden facet by virtue of the facets it actually perceives. Proceeding from this primordial sphere of perceptive anticipation involves a number of levels. Since every objective description is

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[116] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* (Pittsburg Pn: Duquesne UP: 1961), 195

[117] Peter Kemp. "Ricoeur between Heidegger and Levinas" *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action.* (London, Sage Publications, 1996), 54

[118] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* (Pittsburg Pn: Duquesne UP: 1961), 200

preceded by a "definition and articulation of the primordial sphere"[119], this "immanent transcendence"[120] gives rise to "secondary objective transcendence"[121] of others, which emerges through a process that Husserl names "pairing". Transcendental egos "pairs" (*Paarung*) similar but not identical intuitions the result of which is the experience of another transcendental ego. One recognizes that the body of the other is both similar and dissimilar to one's own: its physicality and the way that it is animated are similar, however the other is by definition and always in the mode of *There,* while I am always in a *Here* mode; this experience of physical similarity on the one hand, and a there-ness that is essentially different from the here-ness of my own, on the other, results in an experience of another. One experiences another person as an ultimate lack: namely, the other is an initiator of anticipation that is not fulfilled in the present and that could never be fulfilled in the future. Much in the same way that objects are always absent pertaining to our limited and specific point of view, others are absent too. However, the experience of the other person differs from that of a physical inanimate object since no point of view could ever wholly penetrate and grasp the other person for me; I never experience directly another transcendental sphere but my own. I, consequently, derive, transfer[122] and analogize[123] others from this discrepancy and on the basis of the structure of my primordial sphere.

Husserl makes clear that such an inference by analogy is not just a process of inference, but rather a direct instant grasping rooted in primordial experience of oneself which is available to us always. Still the disagreement about the nature of encounter between him and Levinas is clear. "Absolute versus relative otherness"[124]. Either others are a more complex form of

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[119] Edmund Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. (Martinus Nijhoff, 1960),108
[120] Ibid.,107
[121] Ibid.,106
[122] Edmund Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. (Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), 110
[123] Ibid.,111
[124] Richard Kearney. *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*. (London, UK: Routledgem 2003), 17

perception that are defined by being other than me. They are relative to who, what and how I am.[125] Alternatively others are absolute alterity that cannot be subsumed by comparative or analogous perception.

It is clear that we at least *also* see others through regular perception that we use for objects. It is sadly clear we are very capable of treating others as things as well. It is possible and prevalent. It is also possible (and hopeful) that underlying this perceptual activity is a more primordial encounter of absolute alterity accompanied by a call upon our responsibility. It is even clearer that this is not a question that has a definite answer. What stands out in our context is two conceptual ways of looking at encounters. I do not want to claim that lived-narrative is what Levinas had in mind when he spoke of discourse. Or go into the detail of Husserl's paring in the context of professional history. Such a discussion far exceeds the scope of this chapter and work. What Levinas' face and Husserl's paired other offer here is two different atmospheres and directions against which we can see the differences between lived-narrative and history more clearly. When a lived-narrative is told a person in its infinite uniqueness and fragility emerges. One can see a person every day in a work environment through one's regular perception and never have a clue *who* that person is. A moment comes and she tells one of her possible lived-narratives and what is disclosed and exposed in partial or fuller amount is a vulnerable *who*. Telling such a lived-narrative of a colleague to another without the permission of the person, for example, is likely carry a sense of betrayal. This is telling. The lived-narrative need not be

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[125] Richard Kearney. *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*. (London, UK: Routledgem 2003), 19. Being troubled by the ethical question of the ability to tell the difference between a stranger and a monster Kearney offers a third way of interpreting otherness. In his diacritical hermeneutics Kearney suggests a third way between the romantic hermeneutics of the same and the radical hermeneutics of the other. At the heart of this reading of otherness is the concept of the carnal which eschews the binary we are demonstrating here with Husserl and Levinas.

> It is not knowledge, in the purely cognitive or theoretical attitude […] but it is some kind of savvy nonetheless. Sense as primal interpretation, reading between the lines of skin and flesh. ("What is Diacritical Hermeneutics?" *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, (2011), 1-14)

extreme or shameful for unauthorized sharing to be considered problematic. One could tell another that Sarit Larry used to be a religious Jew, a teaching Fellow at BC and an actress. None is a secret in the age of Google. My lived-narrative, however, by virtue of being the story of *my* life, *my* fingerprint, exposes me in my absolute singular vulnerable existence. Perception alone cannot bring about such an encounter. "The word", as Levinas says, "is a window".[126] Of course perception is crucial. We learn a lot about people from the way they appear to us visually. Sometimes, as we hear a lived-narrative our amazement stems from the mere fact that we already told ourselves a completely different story about this person simply from the way they looked. The point is not that others are completely opaque until we hear their lived-narratives. They are clearly not. The point is that the peak of understanding who a person was or is, transpired in her lived-narrative.

Historians sit in archives and read testimonies of others. Alternatively, they look at relics to construct and conjure, to "fill-in" the missing gaps in the aim of producing a new body of knowledge. Is this an encounter with the absolute other? On the one hand we would like to say that it is because it involves a lived-narrative at least in the case of testimony. It is also "through some transfer from Same to Other, in empathy and imagination, that the Other that is foreign to me is brought closer"[127]. One reads the story of a refugee in Smyrna and might have a clearer idea of her *who*. However, this possibility is incidental in the case of historical narratives: The aim of the historian's narrative does not end with a single testimony. The testimony is one block in a bigger picture. This is true about relics as well. We might care to know about the *who* they belonged to but their historical value comes from a different place. "The specific character of the past which makes it something historical", says Heidegger,

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[126] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* (Pittsburg Pn: Duquesne UP: 1961), 205
[127] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 184

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[126] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* (Pittsburg Pn: Duquesne UP: 1961), 205
[127] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 184

does not lie in […] transience which continues even during the Being-present-at-hand of the equipment in the museum […] What is 'past'? Nothing else than that *world* within which they belonged to a context of equipment and were encountered as ready-at-hand and used by the concernful Dasein who was-in-the-world[128].

Historians are engaged in a search for a *world* not a face. Their entities are anonymous.[129] Testimonies and relics has a role of equipment even if they incidentally make one summon the possible *who* that they once were. History, as we said, is no doubt understood in relation to the individual in an essential way. However, the person whose testimony the historian reads, or whose pot is looked at, is an abstraction or a reified testimony. It is no longer the living story of an experience that is told so that a life could be known, or spared, or pitied. It is ossified into a building block in a description of or an argument about a world. This historical procedure begins with the lived memory, then communicated via testimony, goes through the archived document and reaches its "end" as a documentary proof for a certain depiction of evets.[130] Such a process of translation entails a twofold transformation of loss. First, a historical "fact" supported by documentary evidence is a story uprooted from the continuity of the "conscious life of the witness"[131] in a service of a certain question in the mind of the historian. Second, unlike the personal appropriation of a testimony given in ordinary conversation and in a certain time in a context of a life, the archived testimony belongs in the final account to no one, is addressed to whoever and could be looked for whenever. There is no sense of disclosure, exposure and trust. If we return briefly to the conceptual line that we stretched between Levinas' and Husserl's concept of encounter, the distinct procedures of verification that both lived and historical narratives necessitate become clearer. Historians are "Husserlians" method-wise. They "fill in" the gap in a process much like appresentation and the others in this process are of the same order

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128 Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962), 432 emphasis in the source
129 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)*,* 177
130 Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992)*,* 161
131 Ibid.*,* 178-9

as other things. Lived-narratives are more "Levinasin" in nature. At the center of their depiction stands an Other in her fully fledged uniqueness and vulnerability. This other does not share the same status with other things in the world. It is assigned the most primordial status possible and it is assigned this status exclusively.

The Husserlian and Levinasin tendencies of historical and lived-narrative respectively need not be taken too far. They are but general trajectories. Like history, lived-narratives have a structure and they are made out of details arranged in a certain sequence. Like history which moves further and further away "increasing [its] absence along the length of the memorial chain"[132], lived narratives battle against forgetting with relics and documents. This battle materializes in history as the ever developing practice of professional documentation. The fact that lived-narratives are not normally subject to such a process of verification is not to say that they are not subject to such a process at all. Although the truth that we are looking for is not a scientific truth about the structure and dynamics of a certain world but rather a revelatory truth of a singular person, it is still a certain kind of truth and it entails a certain kind of referential relationship to reality.

The US press recently had a case of a lived-narrative that was challenged publically. It is worthwhile to look at our reaction to it as an example to the structures of our expectation with respect to lived-narratives procedure of verification. When Professor Rachel Dolezal's lived-narrative was substantially contradicted by relevant others, in this case her Caucasian biological parents who claimed she was falsely presenting herself as a biological African American, her lived-narrative as an African American woman was challenged on the basis of the rules of evidence. It was challenged to the extent she had to resign as head of Spokane National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P) chapter. Shortly after her

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[132] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 115

resignation Professor Rachel Dolezal claimed in an interview that her lived-narrative is true. She didn't suggest that her biological parents lied.[133] "Are you", asked the interviewer, "an African American woman?" "I identify as black", Professor Rachel Dolezal answered. "When did you start deceiving people and telling them you are black?" "Well" Professor Rachel Dolezal continues, "I do take exception to that [wording] […] It's a little more complex than me identifying as black or answering a question are you black or white?" Professor Dolezal then shared her experience as a child drawing herself as an African American rather than Caucasian. On the one hand it is clear that evidence do play a role in the process of verification of a lived-narrative. The story is interesting because the lived-narrative is factually contradicted or at least challenged. However, it is also clear that the evidence matter in a way that differs from how one would use it in following a story from the perspective of professional history. Nobody but Professor Rachel Dolezal will determine *who* she is. What we are seeking as she speaks is her story behind the interesting and contradictory sets of facts. The facts and her narration present us with a story: She identifies as black. She is biologically Caucasian. The process of verification in the case of lived-narratives is not so much a process that seeks to determine if Professor Rachel Dolezal is correct in her identification or biology. That would not make sense. The facts align and organize into a process of *clarification* and the weight that is given to her experience, point of view and interpretation is much greater than the place any serious historian could ever give an object of examination. This distinct procedure of clarification is central to lived-narratives because their aim is not the aim of historians. It is the cohesion, coherence and outline of life path. Prof. Rachel Dolezal lost her job in what seems like a dispute about identity and

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[133] Eun Kyung Kim. "Rachel Dolezal Breaks Her Silence on TODAY: 'I Identify As Black'". Online video clip. *Today News*. NBC News. 16 Jun 2015.

transparency. But the truthfulness of her experience is untouched by this professional judgement. If anything it makes one rethink her assumptions about racial identity.

It is worthwhile to note that the processes of clarification and historical professional verification can be applied to the same narrative. If, for example, we read a lived-narrative of a person that passed, our approach to it, Husserlian or Levinasian, determines its character. Oscar Wilde's last years, for example, could either be looked at historically and reconstruct in detail the world in which homosexuality is a crime. Or it could be look at as a lived-narrative and portray Oscar Wilde as never before in his suffering and religious transformation. Such choice of approaches is also possible in the case of less dramatic stories. Every lived-narrative could be made into the building block of a world-constructing perspective. Every such world is built from the contents *who*s and at the expense of their particular visibility.

Although the focus of lived and historical narrative is different and their claims for truth are different, their procedures have similar features: Like history lived-narratives can rely on testimonies, and non-testimonial evidence. Both kinds have a generational relation to what came before them and will remain after them. Relics and testimonies play a similar role in lived-narratives. First, relics play a part in the narration of a lived-narrative of a person that has passed away. Second, within lived-narratives that are told by their protagonists, relics can bring to life and into narrative things from the past we forgot or repressed. For example, relics can help us verify claims. Show us where are memory betrayed us. They can assist in supporting assertions and making them more tangible for the listener. Pictures, documents, cups, pots, a present we received, a note we wrote to someone else a long time ago - all the things that we suddenly re-encounter as we move from one apartment to another or as we clean the house or renovate it, remind us of our own past and can have an effect on our lived-narratives. Such moments of

remembrance could challenge the present much in the way Ricoeur suggests history does. Relics can remind us of lost or achieved dreams, capabilities, fears, moments of courage or regret. In other words they can challenge or affirm the present.

Lived-narratives, centered on the particularity of the person, are not an island. The stories we tell about ourselves are already embedded in a tradition that is cultural and linguistic. We emerge from and against it in both ways of generational communication. We receive the story of our belonging and we react to it. Being like our mothers, unlike them; like our sisters, unlike them; being like the former generation and unlike it. Among other things of our lived-narrative co-authorship we are seeking to make sure that our narrative will be right or better or good. Narrating means that we attempt to distill a form from the flow of events. Although one could make the point that lived experience and action are lacking the point of view of the reflective narrator what White would call the ironic narrator, even in the most basic and passive Husserlian phenomenological experience

> the present is not something to which we are confined in isolation from the future and the
> past […]the present is only possible for us if it is framed and set off against a retained
> past and protentially envisaged future [134]

All we need to do in order to feel this to be true in all of it palpability is think of persons that have a short-term memory loss. Their detached short-term memory makes their experience substantially different. Our lived narratives, our "faces", endlessly unique as they are, are a part of a world. More often than not lives-narratives carry the hope that our life, unlike or like those before us or exactly like those before us. However, the world we are seeking in the case of lived-narratives is not a world constructed around the question "what kind of a world was it?" rather it is a world constructed around the question "whose world was/is it?" or better yet "who was/is at

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[134] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),59-60

the center of this world?" It is a world put together, arranged and crystalized around a face.

There is another crucial way in which lived-narratives are fundamentally different from history. "The brevity of human life" says Ricoeur, "stands out against the immensity of indefinite chronological time".[135] To this difference we turn now: The meaning and weight of birth and death in lived and historical narratives.

II. Death and Birth[136]

Lived-narratives, we said break in and out of coherent and unified "slices of life" and declare their beginnings and endings. History books and oral accounts do the same. Their declarations are written and like lived-narratives they are a part of a larger chain of events that stays out of the story told. Yet, unlike lived-narratives that ultimately are stories with a radical beginnings of births and the final endings of deaths, history is the

> great story without beginning and end. […] History ultimately becomes the storybook of
>
> mankind, with many actors and speakers and yet without any tangible authors[137].

What is the meaning of birth and death in lived-narratives and what is the meaning of their particular absence in the case of history?[138] The absence of death gives history a fantastic status

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[135] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992)155

[136] This part of the chapter is predominantly discussing the existential meaning and weight of the fact of death rather than birth. In that sense this subtitle could be deceiving. The reason for this dissonance between the title and the content of the next ten pages is twofold: first, birth is not an event in the past that we remember and thus can narrate. We are born into the stories of our births and they are many times part of our narratives but they are a part in which we cannot take an active part practically. It is true that

> birth is not and never is something past in the sense of something no longer present-at-hand; and death
> is just as far from having the kind of Being of something still outstanding, not yet present-at-hand but
> coming along" Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London : SCM Press, 1962)*, 426

However, even if I choose to tell the story of my life in relation to my birth, the actual story will begin with a later action and meaning this random fact had on my life as adult. Of course, most times we have no say in how and/or when our Death will happen. However, unlike our birth it dictates anticipation and fear which in turn dictate a distinctly human attitude and rhythm. (The Greek gods for example are defined by the fact that they are immortal. This is enough to make them not human. The fact that they are being born does not make them less godly). Since this discussion centers on attitude and rhythm in lived narratives and history, Being-toward-death figures in it more dominantly. Second, I could not name this section simply "Death" since birth does play a part in the rhythm of a lived narrative. In fact Being-toward-death points to Being-toward-birth and includes a comprehensive point of view on one's finitude. Being-toward-birth is addresses in footnotes throughout this section.

[137] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958),184. My emphasis.

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of immortality. "[H]istory is the history of mortals. But death is also thereby superseded".[139] It is in the quest of immortality that humans enter the political. "The polis was supposed to multiply the occasion to win 'immortal fame'".[140] We can see the same notion in Kant's "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent" where the fulfillment of the human species could only achieve through a generational sequence and perspective. Yet, of course death cannot be ignored in history. The meaning of history revolved around the lives of mortals for whom the fact of death is of monumental importance.[141] In fact, the very human desire to win immortal fame through action in history is the outcome and an indicator of the crucial role death plays in our lives.

Let us outline the role the fact of death play in the case of lived-narrative and deduce the implications of its absence in the case of history. Heidegger describes the condition of Being-toward-death as a primordial and essential ontological structure of *Dasein*.[142] This means that even if *Dasein* never thought of death, it is still comported toward it. The self of everyday life, the *they*-self, gives approval to cover-up the true effect of Being-toward-death by tempting us toward tranquilization and evasion. Meaning we could possibly encounter the deaths of others but still manage to tranquilize the shocking effect of the certainty and unpredictability of the fact

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[138] Another question that obviously emerges from this distinction is: Can we speak of a story at all if a beginning and an end are lacking? This question will be central in Chapter Three which will look at the overlapping space between fiction and history.

[139] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 115

[140] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958),197

[141] Carr claims in this context that the actual fear of death, Being-toward-death is a part of communal existence as well. Every community, he claims, has to deal "not only with possible external threats of destruction but also with its own centrifugal tendency to fragment". "Narrative and The Real World: A Narrative for Continuity", *History and Theory*, 25. 2 (May, 1986), 117. In what follows it will become very clear that Being-toward-death is peculiarly individual in certain crucial respects. The fear of possible communal disintegration is different from the certain, absolute and necessary fact of one's impending death.

[142] Heidegger speaks of the effects of the fact of birth as entailed by Being-toward-death. Death says Heidegger, is not the only end of life. Life has two ends.

> Only that entity which is 'between' birth and death presents the whole which we have been seeking. […]Not only' has Being-towards-the~beginning remained unnoticed; but so too, and above all, has the way in which Dasein stretches along between birth and death. The 'connectedness of life', in which Dasein somehow maintains itself constancy *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962), 425

of our own impending end. Since "proximally and for the most part the Self is lost in the "they"" (*Das man*),[143] this sedated state is our most prevalent mode of existence. It is a state of fleeting from an anguishing but important and fecund primordial structure, of *falling prey,* to inauthenticity. The *they* is manifested in idle-talk which expresses

> the way things have been publically constituted […] *does not permit the courage to have Angst about death*[144]

Authentic Being-toward-death, on the other hand, starts from being the opposite of the perspective of the *they.* Being-toward-death cannot evade, cover-up or participate in any other form of flight and reinterpretation the *they* might offer in order to avoid *Angst.* In fact it makes manifest Dasein's power to wrench itself from the *they.* This in turn reveals both the lostness of the *they*-Self. It also brings to the fore the power of Dasein. In the face of its certain finitude Dasein's potentiality and power are clearly manifested: Dasein can choose authenticity. Second, Being-toward-death is a possibility of *Dasein*'s Being. It is not a ready-at-hand or present-at-hand encounter. *Dasein* is comported toward this "most extreme possibility of its existence"[145] not in a state of awaiting expectation (*Erwarten*) which is oriented to the actualization of the possibility of death. That would amount to leaning toward the actualization of for one's own demise – a suicidal tendency and orientation. Being-toward-death as a possibility of *Dasein* is comported toward in anticipation (*Vorlaufen*). Anticipation which brings Dasein closest to the possibility of impossibility makes clear one's "ownmost and uttermost potentiality for Being – that is to say, the possibility of *authentic existence".*[146]This anticipation has four formal aspects all of which ground the finitude and mortality of *Dasein* as the horizon from which it receives it

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[143] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962), 436
[144] Ibid., 235. My emphasis. Angst unlike fear has no object since its object is exactly an event one will *not* experience.
[145] Ibid, , 235
[146] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962),307

freedom to act and be whole. First, Being-toward-death is *nonrelational*. It belongs to *Dasein* in an undifferentiated way and grasps it as an individual. Second, Being-toward-death is *not-to-be-outstripped*. It is imminent. It defines us as finite and in that allows us to grasp the "whole-potentiality-for-Being".[147] In Being-toward-Death authentically we see the whole of Dasein in advance. Third, it is *certain* in a primordial sense which does not emerge from other cases of deaths encountered. It is a certainty that does not belong to the "order of degrees of evidence about things objectively present"[148] but rather to what Carr calls "the intimate time of Dasein"[149] and finally it is *indefinite*. One does not know when this certain, not to be by passed, ownmost occurrence will take place. This closeness and certainty radically mixed with unpredictability translates into a constant threat which results in *Angst*.

Authentic and inauthentic Being-toward-death have a great impact on one's lived-narrative. Lived-narratives, as broken and patchwork as they sometimes are, all have a unifying form that is radical and final: we become suddenly completely alive and at some point we absolutely stop being alive. This fact, and the evasion or *angst* that comes with it dictates a certain temporal structure that produces a rhythm of a life. One can decide to live very intensely so that one accomplishes all that she wished for. Alternatively, one could decide to get out of the rat-race and enjoy each moment as it comes with no plan to accomplish. Both options and the many shades of grey in between are a form of reaction to the certainty of one's finality.[150] And this kind of urgency and rhythm is absent from historical accounts. This is not to say urgency in

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[147] Ibid., 309. It is within this characteristic of Being-toward-death that birth emerges as a defining event of Dasein. Dasein see its life as a segment with a beginning and an end.

[148] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962),244

[149] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 110

[150] In her *Being-Toward-Birth* Snavely describes an existential rhythm in the context of birth:

In natal beings, this moment appears to include our initial "push" out of the womb, the own kicking life force we each bring, plus a sort of general 'gravity' of the plurality into which we are born. We both carry ourselves and are carried along by this force of generality", *Being Toward Birth*. (Boston, MA: Boston College, 2009), 77

general is absent but only that the urgency that emanates from the fact of one's definite

immanent and unexpected death is absent in historical accounts as a driving and central force.

Albert Camus describes this particular absurd urgency in striking poetic precision:

> [For] two living persons the world gives the same amount of experiences. We must be
> aware of that. To feel your life and your rebellion, your freedom as much as you can
> means to live as much as you can […] the only obstacle […] is premature death[151].

However, not all lived-narratives are told by their protagonists. Some lived-narratives are

told about others while the person is alive and some after her passing. Such narratives that seek

to encounter the who-ness of a person seem free from the urgency of Being-toward-death. In

such cases it is not the narrator's death that drives the story. Indeed the non-relational aspect of

Being-toward-death

> reveals the fact that any being-together-with what is taken care of and any being-with the
> others fails when one own potentiality of being is at stake.[152]

This statement is dramatic in the context of *Being and Time* since Heidegger describes human

existence as essentially *with* others and ascribes plurality a primordial and intrinsic status of

human existence. It is also dramatic in the context of this discussion because if indeed Being-

toward-death is an isolating form of Being that trumps Being-with, than history and lived-

narratives told by others are divided in an irreconcilable way from lived-narrative told by their

protagonists. In this awakening, in a certain important and fundamental way, a person is alone.

And it is thus only *that* person who is alone that could really tell her lived-narrative. The division

with history seems fair enough. History is written by the many and it is not oriented by the

experience of Being-toward-death. Yet the divide within the category of lived-narrative is more

alarming. Are lived-narratives that are told by others a different kind of narrative? In the context

of the current discussion it is important to answer this question if we want to fully understand the

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[151] Albert Camus. *Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur L'absurde*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 88-89, my translation
[152] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962), 243

nature of lived-narratives. Lived-narratives could be told from several different perspectives: divided broadly we have the possibility of either first or third person perspectives. The latter could be further divided to posthumous accounts or accounts that relate to a living person. This amounts to three formal cases of lived-narratives.[153] The closest form of a lived-narrative a historical account is the posthumous biography.[154]

What is it that makes a story a lived-narrative? Is it simply the aloneness of Being-toward-death crystalized around a narrating protagonist? What is our relation in this context to others that narrate lives? What is the relation of Being-toward-death to such narration? We already mentioned the tension in *Being and Time* between the amount to which other people are central to existence and the sense of aloneness that Being-toward-death brings about. In what follows we will use Heidegger's Being-with and Being-toward-death as a perspective through which we untangle this relationship and clarify the nature of lived-narratives vis-à-vis their various possible narrators.

Heidegger's Being-with is a part of a more basic and comprehensive understanding concerning *Dasein*: Being-in-the-world. "In clarifying Being-in-the-world", Heidegger says,

> we have shown that the bare subject without a world never 'is' proximally, nor is it ever
> given. And so in the end an isolated 'I' without Others is just as far from being
> proximally given[155]

Dasein as part as its Being-in-the-world, encounters other entities such as itself which are not thing-like and thus neither present-at-hand nor ready-at-hand. *Dasein*'s world, as a consequence,

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[153] These are not all the cases possible of course. Stories could be about a person that one knows, a famous historical figure, the audience could be a close circle of friends or immense communities all over the world. These three cases do not aspire to exhaust all the possibilities of lived narratives in form and content. The aim is to outline the main forms possible and in a manner that is relevant in the context of defining trigger-narratives.

[154] Howell, Martha & Prevenier, Walter *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 6-7. Until the 14th century compiling biographies for a moral and political aim was not a practice separated from the practice of documenting past events. The *who* was not the aim of the biography. In medieval times, early and late, many biographies were written for religious and secular nobilities in order to assure their place of power before the people.

[155] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962),152

widens with the introduction of other *Dasein*s to contain yet another kind of entity and with it another way of Being. The distinction between the encounter of things and *Daseins* revolves around a new kind of Being-in which Heidegger in the context of Being-with is naming solicitude (*Fürsorge*). Heidegger then juxtaposes solicitude to concern (*Besorgen*) which is the parallel kind of *Dasein's* Being-in towards non-Dasein-like entities.[156] In the context of this chapter there is an existential difference between the historian perspective which makes a world from things and the lived-narrative narrator whose description of herself or encounter with another revolves around a particular *who*. Only the latter is based in solicitude. The former which is building a world in a process that reifies testimonies into relics, is of course not without a comportment of being-with. Being-with is a primordial way of existence. However, being-with is not the subject matter and/or the aim of the modern practice of history.[157] This is exactly Heidegger's complaint about history as a science. It starts from a divided position which misses the point. Dasein is *in* the world. We have already discussed in length the importance of the science of history and its dividedness in materializing and substantiating the *Dasein*'s historicity. Be that as it may, the product of this science, historical narratives, is indeed different from the more intimate historical narrative of a life.

Heidegger goes about establishing his account of Being-with and offers three descriptive ways that point to the way *Dasein* is not. First, Being-with is explicitly not emerging from the self-other dichotomy. Dasein does not relate to others as those who are defined by not being her.

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[156] Solicitude (Fürsorge), care (Sorge) and concern (Besorgen) are etymologically connected to each other in a manner wholly lost in translation. Yet, if we are to understand solicitude as juxtaposed to concern within the limitations of translation we can do so through the help of antonyms. Solicitude's antonym is negligence. Concern's antonym is closer to indifference. Solicitude as an essential existential of Dasein means that one could either be attentive or negligent towards another Dasein, but one can never be simply wholly indifferent to it in the way one can be toward things.

[157] Heidegger would object to this description on the ground an authentic version of historiology should emerge from Dasein's primordial connectedness of life and being-in-the-world. It should not be the gathering of reified matter. History in this discussion- refers to the profession of history as it is practiced today. Namely the rebuilding of a world from gathered and organized reified testimonies and relics.

Rather, the others are to be understood as "those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too".[158] Being-with is a mode of togetherness or sharing. "The *world"*,[159] Heidegger says, "is always the one that I share with Others"[160]. Second, Being-with is not to be confused with empathy. Empathy is the result of *Dasein*'s Being-with, not a result of its own relation to itself (as Husserl might suggest) or a result of something external to it that disturbs or surprises its economy (as Levinas might suggest). In short, *Dasein*'s Being-towards-itself is not, according to Heidegger, the more primordial source of its Being-towards-others. Rather "Being towards Others [is] an autonomous, irreducible relationship of Being"[161] which constitutes *Dasein*'s existence. Finally, Being-with is not contingent on ontic existence or communication with other *Dasein*s. Rather it is an essential property of Being-in-the-world and as such, even when alone, *Dasein* is oriented towards other *Dasein*s in a mode of solicitude. When *Dasein* pass each other by they are oriented towards each other through the unique structure of Being-with. The mode of Being-with in unfriendly or what we might call "indifferent" is simply a deficient mode of solicitude.

This brings us back to the relation between Being-toward-death and Being-with. Solicitude in its non-deficient mode could be either authentic or inauthentic. I.e. it can either relieve the other from the trouble of care by leaping-in[162] (*einspringen*) in her place, or it can put the other in the proper relation to her own sense of care in leaping ahead (*ihm vorausspringt*). Solicitude in its positive mode either induces forgetfulness on the part of the other and, in that sense relief, or it bring forth awareness and in that sense authenticity. Heidegger's concept of

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[158] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (London : SCM Press, 1962),154
[159] Heidegger gives four senses of the word world. Two of which he uses extensively: world without quotation marks designates "wherein a factical dasein as such can be said to 'live'"" world with quotation marks designates simply the totality of entities that can be present-at-hand (namely, not Dasein), 93
[160] Ibid.,155. My Italics.
[161] Ibid.,162
[162] Ibid., p.158

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sharing between several *Dasein*s is very far reaching: nothing less than Dasein's own Being is to be receives from the other in authentic solicitude.

> [T]he Other *leaps ahead* (*ihm vorausspringt*) […] not in order to take away his 'care' (as the inauthentic solicitude would do s.l.) but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time […] This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care […] it helps the other to become transparent to himself *in* his care and to become *free for* it [163]

And here we return to the shocking effect of another's death. One could receive her very ownmost from another Dasein and this within the economy of *Being and Time* directs us to Being-towards-death which pushed *Dasein* to hand itself down to itself. *The height of Being-with then is the handing of the other to her death.* Paradoxically we hand the Other to that which is un-sharable. My death indeed cannot be taken away from me in my singularity, but it can *be given* to me from another. It could be handed to me. I could be awakened by another to the meaning of my Being. I can be directed towards it. Handing one to her own death is exactly the recognition of uniqueness that corresponds to this grasp on Being. One could even venture to say, that it is exactly our wish to become one with the other *and* the inability to do so that exemplifies the Being-with in all of its tension.

Lived-narratives are always oriented toward death regardless of who the narrator is. The narrator of a lived-narrative is confronted with the kind of comportment that Being-with entails in a substantially more direct way than any historian. A person's life and endeavor is to be described, arranged and contemplated. This could result in authentic or inauthentic solicitude. Either the description of another's life relieves me from care or it brings me to contemplate my own Being-toward-death in an authentic way. But while history is concerned with the things that made the worlds, reifying testimonies in the service of larger descriptions and arguments, lived-

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[163] Ibid., 158-9

narratives in virtue of their *who*-oriented structure are never allowed to venture so far on the gamut that stretches between inauthentic and authentic being-with. They are at the heart of the encounter with the other in her singularity. This position also points to the fact that every lived-narrative, be the narrator the protagonist or a stranger, is always moving to the rhythm of Being-toward-death. First, the narrative itself, a narrative of a life dictated the necessary rhythm of Being-toward-death. If one told me a story of a life that did not end with the death of a person, I am likely to ask "and where is she now?" the lived-narrative only truly ends with death. If someone tells me a seventy years old woman it taking swimming lessons or a seven year old girl is doing the very same action, I hear different rhythms of life in these stories because I know being seven years old and being seventy years old are different positions vis-à-vis being-toward-death. This might make these two actions resonate very differently. Second, since the narrator is necessarily also comported authentically or not towards death and authentically or not toward the other, she is either relieves of the feeling of Being-toward-death or confronting it. She cannot completely avoid it. The rhythm of a lived-narrative of a person is always one that responds to finitude.

III.   *Trigger Narratives*

It seems clear that trigger-narratives are not lived-narratives. Trigger-narratives center on the protagonist in a very different manner than lives-narratives and their Being-toward-death urgency and rhythm is far from acute, fundamental or central. If we ask the educated reader to tell us what came to be of Leef, Parks or Bouzizi without going to Wikipedia first, chances are they would have little to no idea. What do we know of Parks as a person? What do we know of her death? What do we know of her childhood? What do we know about Bouazizi? Do we know what Leef is doing these days? These lacunas are not accidental. The protagonist of a trigger-

narrative serves a greater goal. Her particular *who*ness is not a big part of the story. We could open Wikipedia and find that Parks is a child for divorces parents and that her ancestry includes Irish decent. That already in 1944 she arranged a very large campaign of equal justice. We could find out many interesting details about Leef and Bouazizi as well and learn as we piece them together *who* they are or were respectively. The point is that all of that readily available information is not part of the trigger-narrative that we know. In fact the story works better without this personal information of a life. In the next chapter we will take this claim further to argue that this uprooted aspect of trigger-narratives from their lived contexts is indeed part of what makes them work. We *prefer* our trigger-narrative protagonists detached from their real life contexts.

The rhythm of trigger-narratives, as a consequence, does not answer to the rhythm of finitude in the same way lived-narrative do. Unless the death of the protagonist of a trigger-narrative was a part of the event that triggered social change, we are unlikely to know when and how they died. We are unlikely to know if their life projects aligned with their dreams and expectations. We are as unlikely to know whether or not the protagonist of trigger-narrative lived authentically free toward her death or not. None of the many details that make a story of a person a lived-narrative is a crucial part a trigger-narrative.

Are trigger-narratives a form of history then? This is a complex answer and it will be addressed partly here and to a greater extent in the following chapter. Here we would just point that trigger-narrative are, to an extent, historical accounts. We are presented with a narrative that has a substantial effect on many lives and is documented formally. The events that we are discussing are mentioned in many historical courses, conferences and books in universities and colleges around the globe. However, two things stand out and differentiate them from what one

would normally expect from a historical account: first, trigger-narratives form quickly and spread widely. In their initial form they are far from systematic historical accounts. These are short stories that portray a weak protagonist acting spontaneously and bravely. It is in *this* form that they affect their surrounding so astonishingly and in *this* form that they enter history. The story could later be amended, corrected and described in the systematic historical way. Yet, this analysis would have to include the original version of the story which acted as a trigger and this fundamental kernel could not possibly be further away from a historical account. These are short, un-researched narratives that do not elaborate on their contexts or aim to adhere to any rules of academic evidence. They create a heroine that gives the feeling that she spontaneously sprang into action and changed the world. Second, this narrative kernel can be destroyed by the practice of history. History dismantles it. Learning Parks was an activist disappoints us. Most of the details that would put Leef and Bouazizi in context might disappoint us. The gamut that would leave the story as effective as it is in its original form is very narrow. Trigger-narratives portray non-powerful and uncalculated heroines that decided to do a deed against all odds and triumphed. Their fragility and courage is what calls on us to act. Their vulnerability in the face of greater powers enrages us, urges us to do something, pushes up to join. A simple person wakes up one day and decides to change the world. This person does not have any great powers behind her but she does not care. She goes out of the door of her house and to the street, the bus, the city square, against the prevailing order just the same. It is her lack of power and planning amalgamated with the danger and courage that makes the story alluring in the first place.

Like with a fiction character, we get deeply entangled for a brief time with these protagonists. We suspend our disbelief. We suddenly care deeply about them. We *worry* for them. We identify and sympathize. Unlike real persons though this interest is short lived and

limited to a "slice of life". They are context-less creatures that flicker, change the world and disappear. We do not assume to truly know *who* they are or were and more often than not we forget about their endeavors once we reach the last page of "the story".

Chapter Three: History and Fiction

It is not completely accurate, as suggested in the last chapter that history is faceless. History has its heroines and heroes. It has its villains. True, the faces that history raises or condemns may appear in a manner that is different from the way that they would appear in their lived-narratives. History only deals with individuals to the extent that their actions were important for their society and/or significant to more global developments and processes. It is not concerned with the unique *who*-ness of its heroes and villains. When Ghandi, for example, writes his autobiography he starts it with his great grandfather and ends the book before he becomes Mahatma Ghandi. The story we all know of him as a historical figure, is not part of the story he tells of his life. Ghandi could have of course written an autobiography that illuminates his life in a manner that does include his time in India as Mahatma Ghandi. But even if a lived-narrative of a known historical figure does overlap greatly or even completely with their time as public figures – we, as readers, entertain two different perspectives when we address lived or historical narratives of individuals. The light illuminating the professional story of a public figure's previous engagements, achievements and work is not the same as the light that looms from a narrative aiming to bring to the fore her lived-narrative. The latter is revolving around who she was the former around what she did in and for her community. No doubt in order to understand who a person is we many times recount what they did but the endeavors relevant to lived-narratives are wider and the weight we are likely to give to the experience of the protagonist is substantially greater. It matters a lot to the lived-narrative of Bashar al-Assad, for example, that he planned to be an ophthalmologist and not the president of Syria. If we are interested in his lived-narrative, we might want to answer questions that refer to his feelings towards the turn of events that made him president. Was it a good thing for him? Did it frustrate his wishes to be a

doctor? Will he return to medicine after his career as the president of Syria? All of this matters little to his role as a historical figure. Be his personal feelings and aspirations as they may, in his time Syria violently fell apart. We might consider his wishes in order to account for his failing. Maybe he did not succeed as a president because he did not really want to be one. We might, in other words, use personal information to account for historical explanations. But we are unlikely to bring them up as ways to deeply comprehend Assad and who he is. Such information in any event would be anecdotal in any historical account. If Ghandi would have said that his most important moment and turning point was some night in 1932 when he adopted a dog, it would not bear any significance to his status as one of the greatest historical leaders of civil disobedience and the liberator of India. A mentioning of such fact in a historical context might put the seriousness of the work, and the discerning skills of the writer in question. Lived and historical narratives of the same person are not only different in their perspectives, their span is different. A story of a lived-narrative is never fully told until death comes. This is not true of historical figures. We can hear a full story of a historical figure and death, assuming it took place, need not come up as an essential part of the story. It is only essential to historical accounts if the death occurs mid the public-career/action or has socio-political reasons. Finally, lived and historical accounts of the same person could be contradictory or stand in tension with one another. Not all conceptions of the historical character are indeed in complete congruence with the character's actual lived experience, self-understanding and even ambitions.

Saying all that and pointing to the fundamental difference between the narratives of historical figures and their possible lived-narratives, historical narratives are still many times the stories of those *individuals* that stepped into the public arena and made a difference. Even if their existential uniqueness is not the center of their public narrative, a part of it, is. This part renders

history more complex in comparison to trigger-narrative protagonists. History does crystalize around the *faces* of heroines and heroes, winners and losers, those who were tragically wrong in their prediction and those who in retrospect are viewed and judged as astonishingly clairvoyant. Every community knows the story of its heroines' rising to power, of their great or deplorable, expected or unexpected, successful of failed attempts, deeds, initiations and effects. How, if at all, are the protagonists of trigger-narratives different from the many heroic faces that punctuate history? If as we said in Chapter One of this work trigger-narratives, as fiction, disclose a universal about life *using* a character, to what extent is that different from the stories of the faces of history? Is there a difference between a historical account centering on a character and the stories at the heart of our current discussion? Why, if at all, would Leef, Bouazizi, Parks and other similar characters merit their own term?

I.   *Reading, Writing, (Narrative) Participating*

The Narrative Turn in the late 1960s marked the academic establishment of an alternative answer to the scientific desire in the field of history and other fields to describe the human world through law governed behavior similar to the way the natural sciences describe the behavior of non-human objects. This development owes itself to Dilthey's project of systematizing the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschafte*) and differentiating them from the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaft*). The differentiation hinges on the distinction between explanation (*erklären*), understanding (*verstehen*) and interpretation (*auslegung*), mutually exclusive processes and perspectives through which one can achieve scientific objectivity. Dilthey's terminology defines explanation as a derivative of the natural sciences that was used mainly by positivist historians with aim of making history closer to the natural sciences. Interpretation, on the other hand, is defined as an operation that belongs to understanding. Understanding is the

process that describes other mental lives through the manifestations of their signs "in sensory events, gestures, words, and actions"[164]. Dilthey, who, treated history as a subdivision of psychology[165] defines interpretation as an activity belonging to understanding which uses a particular such manifestation of the human mental life: "those residues of human reality preserved in written form"[166]. In fact, as Ricoeur points out, interpretation understood in Dilthey's terms uses at least two manifestations of the human mental life: writing and reading.[167] Every writer aims at a reader. Every reader, reads a writer. Writing and reading are of a particular interest in our context because there are the main and most central rout of communication for both history and fiction. Before we answer the question comparing historical figures to the protagonists of trigger-narratives, we must answer a question concerning the difference in the modes of communication of trigger-narrative as oppose to history and fiction. Trigger-narratives revolve around actual political change, action and participation. How are narratives related to such political changes and how, more specifically, are trigger-narrative related? Trigger-narratives, as their name suggests, trigger (action via) narrative. The action at the center of which they stand, as the introduction to this work points out, is rapid and intense. Can we speak of narrative formation in such quick unwritten and unmolded transformations? If so, what is the nature of this dynamic? How does it allow for narrative formation? And how does the rapidly formed narrative operates as a trigger?

Interpreting Dilthey's concept of interpretation, Ricoeur offers dialectical relationship between explanation and interpretation. Ricoeur suggests the process of explanation is rooted in

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[164] Wilhelm Dilthey. "The Rise of Hermeneutics". *New Literary History: On Interpretation:* 3.2 (Winter) (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1972), 231
[165] Frederic Jameson, "Note from the Translator" "The rise of Hermeneutics by Wilhelm Dilthey, *New Literary History: On Interpretation:* 3.2 (Winter, 1972), 230
[166] Ibid., 233
[167] Paul Ricoeur *From Text to Action*, (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 128-130

linguistics and not in the natural sciences. As a consequence explanation should not be seen as coming from an epistemological attitude which is essentially foreign to the human sciences and their texts. Rather explanation is simply a mode of internal structural analysis which in the case of written texts treats them as closed systems rather than referential creations aiming at an external world of objects and subjects.

> [I]t is always possible to abstract systems from processes and to relate these systems whether phonological, lexical, or syntactical-to units which are merely defined by the opposition with other units of the same system[168]

We could analyze internally all symbolic systems and there is thus no need to insist on Dilthey's dichotomy. The human and the natural sciences are separate in their expectation for different outcomes from their analytical processes. The former aims at educated probability and the outcomes of its logical procedures are never certain in the empirical sciences meaning of the term. It simply points to the more probable and plausible interpretation; the latter aims at certainty.[169] But both kinds of sciences engage in processes *explaining.* The case of the text, by virtue of the separation between meaning (that the texts allows and invites) and intention (that the author might have had) facilitates according to Ricoeur a dialectic between explanation and interpretation. The two qualify one another. Since all texts are open to several readings and yet we would not want to claim all readings are plausible, a process of validation centered upon probability and plausibility could be applied to texts. Could communist manifesto be read and

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[168] Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text". *New Literary History*, 5.1 (Autumn,1973), 111
[169] MacIntyre defines the differences in generalization between the generalization of the social sciences and those of the natural sciences in three aspects: (1) the social sciences generalizations can exist with counter examples without being refuted by them; (2) the social sciences generalizations have no scope modifiers and universal qualifiers. Namely they do not offer a certain gamut of conditions that make their conclusion necessary always; (3) the social sciences generalizations do not offer an application of their conclusions beyond their observation. *After Virtue.* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981), 88-106. If we apply this to Ricoeur's point about the logic of probability in the interpretation of text then clearly we validate a certain interpretation but do not stand in a position of refutation of the other. It is more a competition of probability. We certainly cannot offer a rule that will be applicable to all texts or even more specifically to any text but the one we are analyzing at the moment.

understood as a recipe for pumpkin pie? Could it be applied of the suffragist feminist movement? "[T]he validation of an interpretation applied to [a text] may be said, with complete legitimacy, to give a scientific knowledge of the text".[170] Such validation process circumscribes a gamut or better yet an arena in which several plausible interpretations of text can compete, negotiate and influence each other. It additionally rejects unlikely interpretations.

Changing the direction and advancing from explanation to understanding, all formal analysis without the final recourse to the wider possible meanings of the text as a referential piece is missing the essence of the activity of writing and reading altogether. Interpretation is a meaning giving process of many possible readers all of which *fulfill* the text in bringing it back to discourse. This point is crucial for the purpose of understanding narrative in the field of action. Ricoeur makes two opposing yet complementing moves in his analysis of explanation and understanding texts. On the one hand he recognizes that there is a suspense entailed by a text. If we compare reading and writing to a conversation, than textual narratives separate the interlocutors from one another: The writer does not have a reader in front of her when she writes and the reader does not take part in the process to writing. The two are eclipsed from one another as they are uprooted from the circumstantial world around them. The text in that sense and at that stage and moment is worldless. It is lacking the temporality of subjectivity, the temporality of otherness, and abstracted from being an event which could only transpire in a world amongst interlocuters.[171] But here exactly lies the power of the text. A text can transcend and travel in time and space. It can be re*activated* and en*acted* by its interpreters and explainers. The text is an invitation for a generational communal discourse as older interpretations meet new ones

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[170] Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text". *New Literary History*, 5.1 (Autumn, 1973), 107
[171] Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text". *New Literary History*, 5.1 (Autumn, 1973), 96

opposing them, transforming them of adopting them anew. Reading the written is not just an abstraction, it is an act of "emancipation from the situational context, [thanks to which] discourse can develop nonostensive references which we called a 'world'".[172] It is an invitation to action as the words of other times echo in the present, challenging it to change, disintegrate, mature or invent itself anew.

Ricouer's text calls for action and communal discourse. The text is a reification of speech that is specifically not an ossification. It is not a thing that exists with*in* life or *out*side of it. It is not a mere perspective through which we understand or mold the reality in which we acted already. Rather the text fulfills its potential when it configures and refigures in a spiral movement of abstraction and concretization, advancing away from the realm of action and then towards it. The text is at its most advanced stage when it mobilizes, challenges, enrages and ignites our imagination with the possibilities of other worlds. Ricoeur formulates this action oriented aspect of texts in his cycle of mimesis. Narratives abstract and form a separated textual entity that could be considered and understood through the internal and worldless science of semiotics targeting only the internal laws of the text while in the next moment

> it is the task of hermeneutics […] to reconstruct the set of operations by which a work lifts itself above the opaque depths of living, acting and suffering, to be given by an author to *readers* who receive it *and thereby change their acting*[173]

Texts according this reading are at the very heart of participation. The text's physicality, mobility and wordllesness make it into a travelling kernel of discourse around which ripples and circles of interpretations undulate. But this reading of Ricoeur is specifically speaking of written historical and fictional texts. Even when Ricoeur applies this analysis of text to action, his object

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[172] Ibid, 102

[173] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)*,* 53 my emphasis

of examination is the *written* document and/or record "rescuing" the action from its own fleeting nature.

> An action leaves a 'trace' it makes its 'mark' when it contributes to the emergence of such patterns which become the documents of human action.[174]

This is of course true and it is a point Arendt makes from a different perspective when she speaks of the fleeting nature of action.

> Acting and speaking men need the help of *homo-faber* in his highest capacity. That is, the help of the artist, of poets and historiographers, of monuments builders or writers because without them the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all[175]

Both Arendt and Ricoeur are speaking of events that have had the time to become the object of prolonged, organized and institutionalized analysis. Of course such an analysis does not simply record in the sense of supplying chronicles. Every account chooses the actions and battles it deems important. So the "rescuing" is far from an objective process and "rescue" might not be an illuminating enough word for the process of scribing. But more importantly to our context, it is leaving out the status of impromptu oral narratives and shorter "texts" that are less organized or even stable as documents or monuments.[176] How does the conceptualizing of the historical and fictional texts as a call for action apply to political action and participation *before* it had the chance to congeal into a well formed narrated manuscript?

Carr suggests that actions, not necessarily political action, unfold in temporal phases that are conceptually, psychologically and physically inseparable. Additionally, these inseparable phases normally gravitate towards narrative form in their temporal development. Carr gives the

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[174] Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text". *New Literary History*, 5.1 (Autumn, 1973), 101
[175] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958),173
[176] I am leaving the debate about truthfulness of texts out of this discussion because our subject is *effectivity* rather than soundness. However I chose specifically the words "documents" and "monuments" to allude to the discussion of the epistemological difference or seeming difference between the two. See p. 64-5. Footnote #93

example of a tennis player aiming to hit a tennis ball describing the interdependent phases are specifically "not a series of sub-actions".[177] An action's phases are future oriented, they aim at a goal. This, Carr admits, is reminiscent of Husserl's description of time consciousness describing the temporality of action "not [as a] sequence but a configured sequence"[178] in which every moment of the present is constituted by the past and the future. Yet, he adds three caveats that differentiate the temporality of action from that of experience: first, the phenomenological view on experience is oriented more towards the passive observer than the active agent. Second, although the phenomenological perspective takes it departure point from the Cartesian cogito, Husserl's phenomenological descriptions assumes the language and perception of a third person detached viewer. Action unfolds differently:

> When I am at the midst of it the future completion of my action is not something that I predict on the basis of available evidence, nor is it a mere expectation that springs to mind by habitual association. But even less is it a mere representation, the entertaining of a possibility. Terms like prediction and expectation at least convey the fact that we are 'ontologically committed' to the occurrence of the future state, But they do not capture the obvious fact that this future occurrence is something that I *effect*.[179]

As agents we aim to bring about the future. The future of action differs from the future of Heidegger's Being-toward-Death, for example, because the coming about of the future of an action is exactly *not* a necessary fact of existence. The materialization of an action depends on us at least in part. The occupation of the horizon of the agent, regardless of the success or failure of her actions, is completely saturated in achieving the actions' end. This brings us to the third difference Carr points to between his view and Husserl's. The horizon of action is futuristic; its background is formed by the present and the past. Husserl's phenomenology, on the other hand, emphasizes the present against the background of the past and the future. The inseparatebleness,

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[177] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),33
[178] Ibid., 44
[179] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),36

kernel-like form of the phases of the temporality of action is dependent on this futuristic orientation. An action starts by aiming at a goal and goes through phases all of which are involved with achieving it.

There is a difference between being in the midst of an action and describing it phase by phase and giving an account of an action that has already come to pass. The latter is the quintessential ironic position of the historian. The former is the quintessential position of the fiction writer. Any historical record (document or monument) is missing the temporality of "still-unfolding". A recorded action no longer aims anywhere; it documents past aiming. A record only becomes an action when it is read to or by others in reference a new reality. In such occasions the text once again is unfolding in the present while gravitating to a specific yet unknown future. We might record, document and make this new reactivation of text into an new academic or fictional texts but once again historical documentation is Benjamin's Angel of History: "his face is turned toward the past" propelled into the into the future "to which his back is turned".[180] A fiction writer however, plans for a specific future of the plot but is always to a certain extent uncertain how and if she will get there. We are bracketing the writers of tragedies in Ancient Greece reenacting myths the end of which is already known. We are speaking of the modern sense of authorship that is a synergy of planning and re-planning against a certain aim one starts with. The fiction writer is hanged in the midst with her characters. Weaving events as she is generating them she is advancing forward. The difference we are pointing to is equivalent to the difference between telling one's own lived-narrative as oppose to narrating the life of a person that has already passed away. The temporality around trigger-narratives operates more

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[180] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" *Iluminations*. (NY: Shockem, 1968), 256-7

like fiction writing. A certain event, a short[181] bundle of temporality containing a meaning, that already has come to pass, is released into the public arena like a text calling for action. In this sense it might seem that we have a historical glance since we are narrating something that has come to pass. But the initial story operates as an invitation to more phases that are still to come. It is calling for more of the narrative. We, the bystanders, are looking at it as potential participants and as authors as well. What story will it be? Is this the beginning of the democratic revolution of Tunisia? Is this the beginning of what will be known as the great police massacre of Tunisia? As we join, refuse to join, or contemplate joining we narrate in the dark without the privilege of the ironic historical glance. Hindsight is not only the ability to truly judge the past from a point in the future. It is also the ability to project to the future what we hope and aim that our present action would be.

> We live out our lives, both individually and in our relationships with each other,
> in the light of certain conceptions of a possible shared future, a future in which
> certain possibilities beckon us forward and others repel us.[182]

For example, when I was part of the political movement V15 trying to change the government in Israel in 2015, we imagined the end of our campaign many times over. We imagined all our hard work would pay off, that this would be a change in the Israeli left at long last. The ironic storyteller narrating the story from an actual hindsight point of view in the future knows now that all of this was doomed to fail. However, from a participatory point in the present, the future and the story our present payed in this future was an essential part of the whole endeavor. It seems fair to suggest all persons participating in a political movement (triggered or not by a trigger-

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[181] Carr points out that the structure of a narrative is harder to detect in longer sequences or lived narratives. "when we move to the scale of 'life' or 'life-story' we should not expect the kind of internal unity and interconnections that we find in the elements which make such a life – events, experiences, action", Rather a life story is an ongoing attempt with its wholeness. This concern is manifested in the telling and retelling of our life story to ourselves and others. *Time, Narrative and History*, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 80-96
[182] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981),215

narrative) experience something similar. As one chooses to join those opposing segregation the hope is the possible future. In fact, it is most likely fair to suggest that failure and success synergistically play in the activist consciousness. The narrator of potentiality is more acute in the case of action since "the very essence of action is to strive to overcome [the unforeseen] by foreseeing as much as possible".[183] Fear of a story in which our political actions are futile urges us to look for more members, more support, more headlines etc. In other words, it urges us to solicit wider, more variant and deeper action. The possibility of success helps us maintain courage and energy in the arduous and many times dangerous process. We narrate what our actions would be remembered as. We act against the possible narration of our opponents. The perspective that gravitated towards the "no yet" is crucial in our description because what we are trying to follow is the manner in which trigger-narratives enlist action. It is not the only perspective one can assume when looking at these events though.

When Carr refers to short term events like the Israeli-Arab '67 war that lasted six days he attributes their importance to the meaning they are later given by the community as turning-point events.[184] Ricoeur treats such events in a similar way:

> those events that a historical community holds to be significant because it sees in them an origin, a return to its beginnings, these events which are said to be 'epoch-making' *draw their specific meaning from their capacity to found or reinforce the community's consciousness of its identity, its narrative identity, as well as the identity of its members*. These events generate feelings of considerable ethical intensity, whether this be fervent commemoration or some manifestation of loathing or indignation, or of regret or compassion, or even the call for forgiveness[185]

We entertain both perspectives in the description of trigger-narratives. These are narratives that feel like a founding event as they unfold. Something possibly very big it taking place and the

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[183] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),60
[184] Ibid., 167
[185] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 187

participants are aware of that. But these are still founding events in a "not-yet" status. They are founding events to be.

There is another step we must attend to before we proceed. The temporality of action like written and read texts is encompassed in bundles.[186] How are these bundles similar to narratives? Surely simply the structure of beginning, middle and end is not enough. A stone falling or thrown has such a temporality. It is not necessarily a story. Not even the fact that action are organized and aligned with a futural aim is enough to make a narrative. If we concede with Hardy that narrative is "a primary act of mind transferred to art from life"[187] since fiction is a form of analyzing "the narrative forms of ordinary life"[188] where or when is it that experience is finally figured into a narrative? This question stokes the debate about the status of narrative vis-à-vis experience. Carr, attributing narrative a constitutive status within action mentions five temporal structures of action that are closely aligned to narrative structures: (1) means-end, (2) suspense-resolution, (3) problem solving, (4) departure-arrival and (5) departure-return. Events he claims are organized in similarity around such process that also make most narratives. We might break out of a narrative or lose it but our balanced and more normal comprehension of ourselves and others goes through narrative structure that is deeply inscribed in action itself. MacIntyre, as we already noted, demonstrated the manner in which intelligibility is dependent on setting which he equates with narrative. Mink, on the other hand, suggests that narrative is one of three systems of comprehension: theoretical, categorieal and configurational. All three

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[186] Mink points out that this wholeness of action is one of the conditions of understanding and is part of mathematics and logical inference as well, "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension". *New Literary History* - History and Fiction 1.3, (Spring, 1970), 548

[187] Barbara Hardy, "Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach through Narrative". *Novel: A Forum on Fiction.* 2. 1 (Autumn, 1968), 5-7. Hardy actually sees narrative as imposed on a chaotic flow of unrelated events as well. She simply does not claim like Mink that this imposition is something that is outside of experience. "is in life imposed on the uncertain, attenuated, interrupted, and unpredictable or *meaningless flow of happenings*. Real life may have the disjointedness of a series of short stories", 6-7. My emphasis.

[188] Barbara Hardy. *Tellers and Listeners: The Narrative Imagination.* Bloomsbury Academic Series: Bloomsbury Academic Collections: English Literary Criticism. (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1968), 4

systems of comprehension organize experience in meaningful bundles. "Comprehension is an individual act of seeing-things-together".[189] Configuration arranges it in narrative form which he describes as a "single and concrete complex of relationships".[190] Unlike Hardy's suggestion that stories take their structure from life, Mink insists that "stories are not lived but told" and that we do not dream or think in narrative but "tell stories which weave together the separate images of recollection".[191] All of this is to outline very generally a debate around the extent to which narrative is dependent on words and necessary for a coherent and intelligible experience.[192] It seems futile to me to attempt to solve this debate or even insist on its nuances and niceties. The temporality of action is closely linked to narrative and all thinkers agree that we could break in and out of narrative coherence. Of course we experience at least part of love, pain and hate without narrative structures. We find ourselves speechless in life. We can be in ineffable awe. We find words do not capture the experiences we have been through. Poetry, for example, is a configurational way in which we organize words in non-narrative structures so that they capture all the experiences or aspects of experience that narrative fails to capture. The ineffable in our life points to an accessible possibility of experiencing before, after and beyond words. But our lives would be complete chaos if these moments were the major part of our experience. These

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[189] Louis O Mink. "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension". *New Literary History* - History and Fiction 1.3, (Spring, 1970), 552

[190] Ibid., 549-555

[191] Ibid., 557

[192] This debate is transpiring against Danto's claim that attends to action in a manner that is more fragmented. His description centers on actions' performative aspect in an attempt to distill the meaning of volition.

> We do not turn, as it were, an inner wheel in order, through some elaborate transmission of impulse, to cause an external rudder to shift and, by so doing, get our boat to turn. We act directly. But then neither am I in my mind the way a pilot is in a ship. Or rather, I sometimes cause things to happen with my body and with my mind, and I sometimes just act with them directly, as when I perform basic actions. It is best, however, to avoid similes." Danto "Basic Actions", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 2.2 (April, 1965), 148b

Since our discussion is not ethical but rather follows the dynamics of a certain kind of narrative in the political arena, the discussion between views such as Danto and the narrative epistemologists is not crucial. We are not concerned with the most basic parts of experience and the extent to which they do or not belong to a narrative. We are concerned with more complex experiences where narrative is already obviously involved.

are moment when we grasp for narratives, loose ourselves, sink or soar in ecstasy or agony. What comes after these moments, are words. And words are human and in time. Their structures, even if not always, much of the time aligns with narrative. And so narrative is an organic and crucial part of acting and understanding. It is an inherent and central part of experiencing. Describing action and experience outside of narrative might be possible but it will take substantial effort which in itself proves the point of the centrality of narrative. That in itself is evidence enough for narrative's status and weight.

If we agree that actions even more than general experiences are organized in a temporality that aligns with narrative, we must now ask ourselves what about communal action. We will not want to engage in the question concerning the phases of this transition. Meaning question such as 'how does experience advance from the first person perspective to the plurality of a community?' are left out of this discussion. The reason for this bracketing is that such a question entails a long discussion of the primary status of the *cogito*. This, if done seriously, would divert us a great deal from the subject of inquiry. Additionally, the outcome of such an inquiry is not necessarily consequential for our work. Our concern is with the already given community not the "caged" *cogito* attempting to retrieve others and the world. In this sense this work consults phenomenology for the purposes of description but it is not a work of phenomenology. We seek to understand a particular process that occurs in the public arena in which it is a given that individuals already act together and experience themselves as part of several communities.[193]

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[193] This is the reason that Schutz is not part of this work although it is clear that an application of his perspective on trigger narrative would make a very interesting perspective. Bottici puts the Cartesian problem in the context of the social imaginary beautifully:

> If we start from the idea that imagination is *in primis* an individual faculty, the problem emerges of determining the way in which it can be shaped by the social context. If we begin from the concept of social imaginary understood as context, the problem is how to account for the free

The communal actions we are addressing here are rapid and intense. Their eruption is quick, enlists deep involvement and spreads wide across the community changing traditional power balances. "A community exists wherever a narrative account exists of a *we,* which has a continuous existence through its experiences and activities".[194] Community members are born into stories. They tell and receive stories from one another. They are all the authors and the readers as they are of course the protagonists being born into some of the communal narratives. Comparing a community to an individual Carr claims that groups, like individuals, deal with death when they entertain the possibility of their disintegration and fragmentation.

> The prospective death of a community, like the death of the individual, is usually an open eventuality of uncertain date.[195]

This observation juxtaposing the narrative temporality of individual life to the temporality of communal action might be a good way to outline the latter. Being-toward-death, as we said in the last chapter, throws one into her ownmost in a manner that is almost completely isolating. One's demise is somehow very unlike the demise of others and when it is similar it is a matter of deep and intimate love. The rhythm of lived-narrative answers to the ticking clock of our *impending* radical ending. It seems problematic at least to a certain extent to compare it to the death of a community if only for the fact that it is possible and even probable that one's community would predate one's birth and proceed after her death. A community moves to a specific but different rhythm than an individual life. Carr is correct in saying that a group is moving, among other things, in accordance with the danger and possibility of its disintegration. However, unlike death this disintegration is usually transformative rather than a random and radical sense of ending. Communities divide. Communities change and become other than one

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imagination of individuals. There are no easy ways out of this problem. "The Politics of Imagination and the Public Role of Religion". *Philosophy & Social Criticism*. 35.8 (2009), 989

[194] David Carr "Narrative Explanation and its Malcontent". *History and Theory* 47 (February 2008), 163

[195] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),163

anticipated, wanted or dreamed. Communities disappear but their members continue to carry the experience of belonging to them and at lease have the possibility of joining or forming new Communities. Even if we take the horrid case of the genocide in Ruanda, we can see a transformation in a community from one thing to another. Post-Apartheid South-Africa is another dramatic example. Communities transform. They don't die and if they do completely disappear, their members don't necessarily disappear with them. Additionally, unlike an individual life the fight against disintegration in the case of a community is not futile. Member of communities can and many times do believe that they will *never* disintegrate although it is likely that they do not entertain the possibility of not dying. All of this is not insistence on niceties. The absolute certainty of death is what dictates the existential rhythm of an individual life. Life would look different if we could seriously self-maintain against death or conceive of possibly living many generations if we just tried harder or were lucky or both. All of these options are exactly what death does not offer. Death is the impossibility of continuity. It is not the end of one phase. It is not an end of a stronger or weaker communal gathering. It is an end of *someone*. The rhythm it dictates, as a result, is not similar to the rhythm communities move to. Communities self-maintain through stories, institutions, sometimes even through change. They do so towards the horizon of the possibility of survival. Individuals self-maintain through stories, routine and even through change. But they do so against the impossibility of surviving. The story of my life could only be so long, so wide and so varied. The story of a community could always become, and many times is believed to be the story of the empire that will last forever.

Communities, then, are not *angst*-ridden like authentic individuals could become. What about communal action? Formally, as we said the temporality of action aims to the future that it is acting to achieve. Namely, in the final account a communal action (as individual action) is

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aiming for its end and additionally is bringing it about. The end is exactly not an external, random event which time of transpiring is unknown. It is the aim posited by the group (or the individual) and all temporality is aimed at achieving it. Like an individual action a communal action, in principle, is final; it is aiming at an end. It also similarly answers the narrative structures enumerated in the previous section (means-end, suspense release, problem solving, and departure-arrival/return). This should not be a surprise communal action is part of human temporality even if it is not parallel to individual temporality. Unlike most individual actions, however, communal action many times announces the end of a community with its achievement. The suffragist movement ended when it achieved its end. The civil right movement ended when it achieved its end. Anti-war movements end when they achieve their ends. Communal ends entail many times the end of a communal structure because communities, unlike individuals, are many times constructed and revolve around such aims. This is not true always of course. Many communities center on identity and thus, just like an individual, do not end but rather produce a series of communal actions that contribute to their identities. Additionally, individual actions that come to an end could mean the end of a life. One could imagine an author feeling her life ended when she finished her long desired book. One could even imagine her actual biological ending because of a lost purpose. However, the end of an individual life in such circumstances is dramatic as it is rare. The end of a goal oriented community reaching its end is very different. Most times – it is perceived as a success. Of course even communities that revolve around deeply layered identities rather than a specific goal are never *angst*-ridden like individuals. Their actions transpire in an arena that can outlast its members and definitely can reasonably hope to do that. If they fail, they can try again and not think about time in the same way that an

individuals would. If they succeed, their ability to translate this success to further achievements is likewise not limited by death in a similar way an individual life is.

Communal actions, like individual actions, then are narrative-like kernels. Can such kernels that are unwritten, short lived and abrupt travel like written texts via space and time call for action? After Bouazizi's self-immolation and subsequent death several other such cases happened in neighboring countries. In Algeria, four men self-immolated in the span of two months. This was irregular and reached the news immediately. Many others attempted and failed.[196] In Israel on the one year anniversary to the Social Justice Movement Moshe Silman self-immolated where the first tent of Leef was erected the year before.[197] He dies six days later. A month after Bouazizi's self-immolation an Egyptian man self-immolated and five additional attempts famously transpired in Tahrir square in Cairo.[198] The name Arab Spring that was the first name popularly used in reference to the Arab Uprisings is telling enough. A certain season, a sharing of an atmosphere, declared itself in the Middle East and North Africa and later on, in different shapes and forms, globally. Bouazizi's act was a short term action. He protested publicly about his humiliation knowing most probably that his act of protest is unlikely to end well for him. In such cases, the narrative structure is easily detected. Means-end and tension-resolution synergistically play on the temporal phases aiming to reach the goal of radical political protest. Was the action/narrative of Bouazizi travelling like a text to other places and political contexts?

On the one hand, we have a bundle of action-phases organized in narrative form, containing a hero, a tension, and beginning and a tragic/heroic end. This is a breathtaking

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[196] Pierre-François Naudé. "Quatrième Décès par Immolation en Algérie, à la Veille de la Marche du 12 Février". *June Afrique* (12 February 2011)
[197] Ben Piven. "Israeli Ignites Protests With Self-Immolation Moshe Silman Sets Himself Alight in Tel Aviv, Reviving Social Justice Rallies on Anniversary of Movement's Founding". *Aljazeera* (16 Jul 2012)
[198] Dina Zayed. "Egyptians Set themselves Ablaze after Tunisia Unrest". *Reuters* (16 January 2011)

narrative without any connection to what ensued after the self-immolation. Additionally, the narrative/event "traveled" globally via many media channels formal and informal. Facebook, Tweeter, the news, phones and YouTube all played a role in narrating the drama repeatedly. On the other hand, this event is different from a text refiguring reality because although it is a closed bundle of action it is not just that. The fact that the narrative is revolving around an action that has *just transpired* and the fact that the wrong was not corrected – calls on the listener not only to start action anew, it calls her for *more* action – it calls her *to join*. The story, the "text" is not only an illumination of reality from a new perspective although doubtless it is also that. The initial event stands as a story in itself. In its travelling and calling for action it is offering itself as a first phase in a bigger story, a story of participation and massive change.

The structure of the travelling kernel of trigger-narratives has specific features that are the outcome of the rapid, non-academic, process through which it is disseminated. We will use research of oral traditions as a conceptual backdrop for the sake of our description. The oral traditions managed to maintain a corpus of narrative work by using "mnemonic patterns shaped for readymade oral recurrence".[199] Primary oral tradition in which narratives were transmitted over generations in societies where writing was not present suggests these mnemonic patterns were necessary both for the purpose of memory and for the purpose of facilitating a performance. It allowed for a delay that a performer can use by repeating available structures and upon which she could more easily invent the story anew and improvise. This is true not only of narration but orality in general.

> Oral habits of thought and expression are essentially interweaving with each other, deeply repetitive, built on formulaic expression, commonplaces, and epithets[200]

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[199] Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: 30th Anniversary Edition*. (NY: Routledge, 1982), 34
[200] Ong, "Before Textuality: Orality and Interpretation". *Oral Tradition*. 3.3 (1988), 265

New creations are building on traditional, familiar images as well as stylistic and formal structures.[201] Later research suggests further nuanced explanation with the concept superimposed narrative "grammar" that operated on the grammar of the spoken language.[202] Both versions, however, describe a synergy between repetitiveness and novelty: structures of style, content and form acting as frames and paths that allow for both novelty and transmission of known "pieces" of tradition. The cultures and events we are addressing here are not primary oral in any sense of the word. However, these events do exhibit a tendency toward an information flow that is not archived, formally researched or deeply edited because these are rapid events that unfold without the time span that would allow one to create a corpus of work behind them. The Social Justice Movement and the Arab Uprisings were both called Facebook revolutions because, among other things, they used social media to communicate their messages. The texts of social media are of course written but to reach a substantial amount of people and communicate the same narrative they must be short, clear and repetitive. One has to convey a succinct and appealing call for action which, if successful, is shared and discussed by millions. This could be seen as either a process of figuration, since an event in life is made into a story. It could also be interpreted as a process of re-figuration in which an event which already became a story calls for action. Configuration and re-figuration happen at the same time condensing Ricouer's cycle of mimesis and turning it rapidly again and again. The rapid processes of mimesis are configuring and

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[201] The mnemonic tools that Ong refers to are all facilitators off stability and many are forms of repetition. The idea is that the conservative quality of writing "frees the mind of conservative tasks, that is of its memory work, and this enables the mind to turn itself to new peculations" (41). This analysis could give the sense that oral traditions lack novelty which both Ong and current research suggest is not true. However, it is against this possible interpretation that Robert Scholes, James Phelan, Robert Kellogg claim for a super-grammar as an explanation for the art of oral narrative: A system that offers strict rules but allows for a vast field of innovation and exploration. Ong's mnemonic features are: (1) additive style rather than subordinative, (2) aggregative rather than analytic, (3) characterized in redundancy, (4) conservative, (5) agonistic rather than detached, (6) participatory in the sense that it emerges from several accounts to enhance credibility, (7) homeostatic rather than elaborate and (8) situational rather than abstract.
[202] Robert Scholes,James Phelan,Robert Kellogg. *The Nature of Narrative: Revised and Expanded*, (Oxford: Oxford UP: 2006), 25

refiguring, guessing and validating over and over again over the span of a day. Slowly the story is honed down to its most effective form.

The condensation of the mimetic cycle is not only temporal (in the sense that it is rapid and repetitive) and formal (in the sense that in it cycle of mimesis is condensed), it is also a matter of size. The content of the story itself is condensed. There is no time or interest in accuracy of the initial event. What is saved is the enraging element calling for action repeated again and again until it is made into a kernel of information flowing in conversations, the newspapers, the news and the social media. Like oral tradition, the needs of the moment edit, condense and redistribute the narrative. Rosa Parks' case is similar although the technology of the time was of course very different. At the night of her arrest December 1, 1955 the Women's Political Council (WPC) which was led at the time by Jo Robinson produced over 35,000 handbills on mimeograph machine and distributed them by volunteers over the weekend. The flayer was 215 words. Too long for Tweeter, not to long for Facebook but definitely not long enough to go into historical details.[203] Much like Facebook the texts are used in a manner that assists a quick and clear transmission. Why, for example, would a leaflet calling for action on December 1, 1955 read

> Another woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of
> her seat on the bus for a white person to sit down[204]

and not

"a political activist with an impressive past in organizing and with many connections in the was arrested tonight. Her action is known to the strongest leaders of the segregated community and they are planning to use it to start their already planned political protest by boycott?"

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[203] "Leaflet, "Don't Ride the Bus", Come to a Mass Meeting on 5 December". *Kingencyclopedia.*
[204] Ibid.

What version is more enraging? A simple woman was treated unjustly or a well-connected political activist decided to rebel? Parks is commonly described as a seamstress that wanted a seat because she was tired after a long day at work. In fact she is commonly described as old as well. This description is so prevalent that in her autobiography Parks finds the need to correct it:

> People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in. [205]

Parks' story is usually told without her background as the elected secretary of the local chapter of and secretary of the local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P who organized the Committee for Equal Justice for Mrs. Recy Taylor. The leaflet at the night of her arrest read "another woman" although the person standing behind the production of the leaflet was Jo Robinson, the head of the Woman's Political Council who most probably knew Parks' political background. This is not to suggest that she lied. Parks was indeed another woman who was arrested of course. It is to point out that the narrative of this sort is honed into a narrative formula the heart of which is that an enraging injustice has been done.

"In Tunisia, Act of One Fruit Vendor Sparks Wave of Revolution Through Arab World" goes the headline in the *Washington Post*.[206] "Mohamed Bouazizi: A Fruit Seller's Legacy to the Arab People" pronounces *CNN*.[207] In *The Guardian* Mohammed Bouazizi is "The Dutiful Son Whose Death Changed Tunisia's Fate".[208] And finally in *Al-Jazeera* we read about the "The Tragic Life of a Street Vendor".[209] Who is Mouhammed Bouazizi? He is just a guy. He is the

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[205] Rosa Parks. *Rosa Parks: My Story*. (NY: Dial Books, 1992), 116.
[206] Marc Fisher. (March 26, 2011)
[207] Salman Shaikh. *CNN International Edition*. (Atlanta: CNN International News. December 17, 2011)
[208] Peter Beaumont. (20 January 2011).
[209] Yasmine Ryan. *Aljazeera*. (20 January 2011)

fruit seller, the street vendor, the dutiful son. He is someone we could meet, know and be. This kind of vocabulary dominates the narratives of Leef as well. Leef for example is portrayed by supportive media as a film student living in a rented apartment in Tel-Aviv. Negative media portrayed her as the rich girl.[210] Her power came from being like everybody else. Opposition to her tried (unsuccessfully) to brand her as raised from the common woman and man.

The sociologist William Gamson, who describes social movements from the point of view of the participant,[211] calls such an enraging kernel a "hot cognition". Hot cognitions are one part of the injustice component is social movements. The second part is an "adversarial we".[212] The honing into an enraging kernel of a call for action describes an ordinary person, just like you and me, who has come across an outrageous injustice. As in the oral tradition a certain condensation by and for the sake of repetition comes into play as the short texts are being distributed. The elements that are quintessential for the call for action stay. It is quintessential to these stories that their protagonists are regular people.

Let us engage in a thought experiment: Does the fact that Parks was actually an experienced activist with some experienced and powerful people around her changes the way we feel about the narrative? On the one hand, looking some sixty years back, it might not. Parks was successful. But it seems like story's allure as an enraging kernel is affected by such information. It is reasonable to assume there is a reason some details are less commonly known. We are more likely to be outraged by the story of the simple seamstress that just suddenly had enough. We

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[210] "Watch the Villa in Kfar-Shmaryahu that Dafpne Leef Grew Up In". *Globes: Israel's Business Arena.* Real Estate. My translation. 8 September 2011

["צפו בווידיאו: זו הווילה בכפר שמריהו בה גדלה דפני ליף" גלובס. ליף "אמנם לא מצויד בבריכת שחייה, אך שווה, לפי הערכות, 2.5-2 מיליון דולר".]

"Leef: It Is Easy For Others To Say That I Am A Daughter Of A Tycoon. Money From My Taxes Funds Talkbacks About Me", *TheMarker Online,* (Tel-Aviv: Amos Schocken. 29 June 2012). My Translation.

[ליף: קל לאחרים להגיד עלי 'היא בת של טייקון'; מהמסים שלי נכתבים נגדי טוקבקים בתשלום]

[211] Hank Johnston, John A. Noakes. *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective,* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers , 2005), 6

[212] Gamson. *Talking Politics,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 177

are enraged by the injustice of the system to the weak. We are also in awe with the spontaneity of the action. We would hate to learn this was preplanned meticulously months ahead. (This is not to suggest that it was. It is very reasonable to believe that it was not planned). The awe that the spontaneity inspires us with belongs to a greater discussion that is developed in chapter five. We are moved by the story of Leef the poor film-student over the rich-girl narrative. We feel we might be or know people like her. Her injustice is ours as well. Joining her would be considered joining one of our own, or the just and weak. It would be a disappointment to find out, for example and this is just an example which aims to be purely demonstrative, that Buazizi's was having an aggressive unfortunate hallucination that ended with self-immolation. We prefer the story of the simple man who consciously is doing a deed of immense courage in the face of brutal systematic injustice. We prefer it not only because it is true; we prefer it because somehow the simplicity, accessibility and everydayness of these protagonists and of the spontaneous unplanned aspect of their action is essential and crucial to the force of their narratives. David must be a simple man succeeding against all odds and without the help of planning or great powers. He cannot be the experienced well-armed and calculated warrior if we want the story to work.

Returning to our initial question, we can now start discerning the difference between a historical figure and a protagonist of trigger-narrative. To begin with the creation of a "hot cognition" via personal story of the character plays a smaller role if at all in historical figures. It is not of crucial importance to us that the great historical figure had experiences injustice. It is important to us that she recognized it exists and acts to change it on behalf of us. In fact we might be happy to know Ghandi went to law school. If he was rich, even better that he decided to dedicate his life to his less fortunate fellow women and men. The political figure need not be

every wo/man and she need not be unskilled or spontaneous. The more skilled she is, the happier we are as followers. She can be spontaneous from time to time but mostly we would like her to be able to break new ground in a manner that is calculated, skilled, thought through and successful. Historical figures can have a past history as weak persons, but they are not weak when they come into power or when they try to elicit our support. If Parks would run for elections and someone would describe her as an old seamstress, it is unlikely to help her solicit a constituency.

It is possible, of course, that protagonists of trigger-narratives will become fully fledged politicians or leaders. If they survive their act, there is no reason why the protagonist of a given trigger-narrative would not become a formal, semi-formal or informal leader for years to come. The point of this analysis is not to claim that the two are mutually exclusive but that symbolically they entertain two different sets of tacit demands and expectation from their audiences. The protagonists of trigger-narratives are the spontaneous, unskilled, simple rebels that *symbolize in their very bodies and experience* an enraging injustice. The historical figure gravitates towards the skilled, calculated person. If they portray themselves as simple, it is rare that this simplicity reveals them as weak in the face of the system. Historical leaders' experiences with past injustice are most commonly portrayed as a part of a story that made them who they are today. Ghandi's incident in the train is South Africa was a founding *personal* moment that made him into a leader. It is a moment in the past from which a moral and a public *who* is distilled. It is not a moment in which carnal sacrifice against all odds and without any planning takes place.

II.   *History and Fiction : Modes of Engagement*

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That history and fiction are different in the entities they describe, their aims, procedures and kinds of objectivity they answer to was already discussed. Historians validate and answer the rules of evidence, their work as a consequence can be judged according to a set of procedures which usually has much to do with documentation. Fiction, as we said communicates a universal through world, and of course can use documents but that is not a necessary condition or a prevalent practice. Most importantly its sense of truth does not depend on documentation and verification. Nonetheless, the ontological and epistemological structures of history and fiction render them inseparable in a relationship that is not always happy and/or harmonious. The inherent absence of history's object: the past, entails the presence of the imaginary. The striving of the science of history to describe the past as it really was is challenged by this necessary presence. Paradoxically, if one is to describe the past as it really was, one must use imaginative narratives. In fact the ability to describe the past rests on the ability of every fiction writer to describe another point of view than her own. "Historical intelligence", says Ricoeur,

> is rooted in the capacity of the subject to transport itself onto an alien psychic life […]
> The past is what I would have seen, what I would have witnessed, if I had been there, just
> as the other side of things is what I would see if I were looking at them from the side
> from which you are looking at them[213]

Accuracy of historical description passes through imagination and thus fiction is an inherent part of history whether we ascribe narrative the status of imposed distortion leading us to historical skepticism[214] or claim that narrative is a complex window from which any human comprehension, historical included, may or even must arise.

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[213] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 185
[214] Skepticism is not the only danger in narrative history. Kearney enumerates seven pitfalls that narrative must attempt to avoid. Five of them are connected to using narrative in historical descriptions: (1) becoming a master narrative missing nuances and forcing events into a preconceived and inflexible frame; (2) relativity; (3) banalizing through the pornography of the spectacle; (4) reducing an event to the sublime by removing its narrative from time via – for example – refusing to compare it to anything; (5) self-referential explanation without any truth claims on the world. *On Stories,* (London: Routledge, 2002)*,* 67-8

Much of the discussion distinguishing history from fiction does not concern the present chapter and work because we are dealing with accounts that are not yet systematically analyzed but rather disseminated in short version that are exactly not academic history. What we will emphasize in this final and short part of the chapter is rather the different mind sets history and fiction entail and demand. Our aim is to show that the mindset entertained by the participants and bystanders of trigger-narrative events leans substantially towards the fictional. This understanding also paves the way to the last chapter dealing with mythology.

Sometimes the way to understand an era goes through a story of an individual fiction or testimonial. "Fiction gives eyes to the horrified narrator"[215] it allows general feelings of horror or admiration to crystalize around a single story that echoes the cry of triumph or defeat. Much in the same way the awful meaning of genocide and the astonished awe at slaves liberated are sometimes best reached when a single emblematic story is being told. "Either one counts the cadavers or one tells the story of the victims. Between these options lies a historical explanation."[216] Either we give a documented account or we tell a story of several personal accounts from which a world emerges. Some events, says Kearney "cannot be met […] without the aid of testimonial narrative".[217] Their horror or goodness is too great. Individual stories do not facilitate understanding alone. Testimonies, religious biblical sources, myths all "provide *phronesis* with exemplary paradigms by which to measure, judge, and act".[218] Narration of individual stories in history, fiction and their combination in epic myths facilitates a certain openness that makes the text not only accessible but normative.

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[215] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)*,* 188
[216] Ibid.
[217] Richard Kearney, *On Stories,* (London: Routledge, 2002), 67
[218] Kearney "What Is Diacritical Hermeneutics?" *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, 2011: 2

A history book could be read as a novel but is does necessitate a change in mode of reading. Such a reading would entail a different reader-narrative-voice pact. Historians, like philosophers, "address themselves to distrustful readers."[219] However,

> Before a literary work […] we are humble, open, active yet porous. Before philosophical work, […] we are active, controlling aiming to leave no flank undefended and no mystery dispelled[220]

How do we read the narratives inscribes in the initial event of trigger-narratives and how do we read what follows? Are we distrustful readers or is it a moment of mistrust suspension? The odds against the protagonist in trigger-narratives are great. In fact the gap between her resources and experience and the system she is opposing is made wider by the honing process of the initial event. The protagonist everydayness and lack of resources is an essential part of the story that is being emphasized and at times exaggerated. The gap between her and the oppressing system is part of what makes this story a "hot cognition". What is breath taking and inspiring about the trigger-narrative event is exactly the irrationality of its protagonist. Why not just get up on the segregated bus at the end of a long day? Why not just go home from the market at the end of quarrel with a policewoman? Why sleep in the cockroach ridden streets of Tel-Aviv and not move to a smaller apartment with more roommates? The actions taken by the protagonists of trigger-narratives do not make sense. They rebel against the order of the existing world against all odds and at a great personal price. We do not follow them because it makes sense. We do not watch them because like history readers we read all the facts and agreed their position is valid. We join them because we are inspired to rebel against all odds. We join because we want to stand by and with them. We refuse to live in a world where the weak are unheard. We join because their courage awakens ours and with the courage a great feeling of potency,

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[219] Paul Ricoeur *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)*,* 176
[220] Martha Nussbaum. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990)*,* 283

relentlessness and solidarity. The energy that a trigger-narrative releases is a creative energy. It puts on the agenda the incredible unwavering demand to create of a new order, nothing smaller. This is the reason, we claim, that trigger-narrative are made of the matter of myths. Their essence is a new world creating.

Chapter Four: Scope

In the last three chapters we defined trigger-narratives against the possibility of other narratives that are not strictly political. Lived-narratives, fiction and academic history all touch on political issues and can function as political material but this is not their main or declared function. We now turn to examine the concept of trigger-narrative against narratives that operate strictly in the socio-political arena. The sociologist William Gamson trifurcated political narrative into meta, issue and personal narratives[221] all of which operate in the political. This of course not the only way to approach a mapping of narrative in the political arena but it extremely pertinent to our discussion because one of the main features of trigger-narratives is that there is a substantial gap between the apparent "size" of the story and the "size" of the effect that it creates. As the introduction to this work points out, the vocabulary around such events is fascinated with their relatively small beginning: a spark, a virus, *one* fruit vendor, *one simple old* seamstress. The smallness comes both in the form of the fact that the commencements of the events is attributed to one action done by one person and in addition by the description of this person as relatively lacking in social connections and power. On the other hand, the change that these events come to aim for and at times achieve is monumental. The changing of a regime and the end of a segregating culture are nothing short of a creation of new orders. The amazement that is reflected in the non-academic texts describing these events as they unfold refers to this gap in "size" between what started as an event that could have been nonconsequential and ended as a beginning of a new world or a frustrated wish for one. The amalgamation of how close the beginning of a world creation is to the action of one simple person and the magnitude of such a creation is one aspect of what is so breathtaking in trigger-narratives.

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[221]William Gamson. "Political Discourse and Collective Action", *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation across Cultures*. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press,1988), 219-44.

In what follows I examine this gap in size and follow its nuances. This chapter demonstrates how trigger-narratives align, echo and overlap with each of the three kinds of political narratives (i.e. meta-, issue and personal), on the one hand, but cannot be subsumed under either fully, on the other.

I.   *Metanarrative*

Meta-narratives, which are known also as master and grad-narratives[222], are accounts which embed

> the events [they make] sense of within some understanding of the general drift of history. This in turn is intimately linked with a certain view of the gamut of human motivations.[223]

These narratives guide the way a community might decipher, interpret and understand events that occur to its members personally or communally. I might understand my secularity not only as a personal deep feeling of the heart but as a part of a shift in the metanarrative from the 1500's to the 20th century in which I was born. Metanarratives are responsible for interpretation of historical events and situations as well. I could interpret Palestinian national longing as a threat to my existence or as a process similar to the process Zionists were going through in the 18th century in Europe, namely as part of nationalism and Enlightenment. I could, of course, interpret the situation as both a threat and recognize the similarity and the two processes. The two views are not mutually exclusive. They point to the multilayered arena of meaning in which human lives unfold. Such layers can and do influence each other in many ways. I can come to feel less threatened if I recognize the similarity and I can become argumentative against the similarity because I feel extremely threatened. The point is that metanarratives circumscribe political

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[222] For the sake of cohesion I will use the term metanarratives throughout the chapter. In quoted lines I will quote verbatim.

[223] Charles Taylor. *A Secular Age*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 818. Footnote #27

arenas, eras and localities providing contexts, pointing to goals, possibilities, obstacles, dangers, opportunities, and desirable/undesirable values and behaviors.

Metanarratives, for the most part, work tacitly. They are an undercurrent that could be articulated but typically works as a given background to understanding, actions and events. This is part of their effectiveness and force. Metanarratives operate like the element in which we live. Like air, they are as essential as they are taken for granted. They are as invisible as they are ubiquitous. We see the world through metanarratives as if there is no mediating structure. As a consequence, for the most part, they do not appear as narratives at all and they remain uncontested. Metanarratives seem natural. The norms of one's society seem obvious and necessary. "Of course women should not vote"; "of course without slavery the economy would collapse" etc. Only through the perspective of time and successful struggles do we come to see how artificial and unnecessary some of our long held beliefs are. Vegans might claim today that eating meat and dairy will look just as outdated, wrong, and artificial as slavery and non-universal suffrage. An action that the great majority takes part in daily almost thoughtlessly and might seem absolutely incredible through the prism of time, makes complete sense within a metanarrative that supports it. Metanarratives feel so natural that any opposition to them is bound to look a little strange at first. This ubiquitous status and the unquestionable naturalness it entails allows metanarratives to be both very wide and deeply rooted culturally which is the reason that "meta", "master" and "grand" are appropriate adjectives. Metanarratives "crops up everywhere".[224] One can find them dictating the content of educational books, the creation of academic faculties, the size and funding of such faculties, national holidays, names of streets, kindergarten songs, national hymns, movies, television shows, the distribution of social rights

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[224] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age,* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 588

etc. Their work is slow, continuous and steady and when they shift they bring with them a new perspective on existence and with it a new order.

Implicit by nature, metanarratives are not always presented in the articulated form of regular stories. They can come in the form of a shared and upheld value. For example, Enlightenment stories of progress are not a well-organized story like Hamlet. We do not have in metanarratives one protagonist going through a personal process. Yet Enlightenment's story of progress has a narrative structure that we (in the West) could most probably recite with interchanging nonhuman protagonists if we were asked. Enlightenment story (some would say "myth"[225]) is that of a step forward from darkness to light, from illusion to truth from childhood to maturity. The word "progress" stands as a reference point to a story that takes on different contents in Western culture. This, for example, can be the story of scientific advance: "Once we believed childishly in spirits but today after a lot of hard work we all know the truth is with science". Or "once we used to believe in God but Freud showed the idea of God is in truth an inner projection of the idea of the father within every one of us". Without much regard for chronology Plato's antipathy towards poets may find itself embodying this very narrative anachronistically: "Plato preferred bright sharp reason to dark emotional art. Socrates preferred the truth of rational dialogue to the manipulation of rhetoric". And so forth. All these stories and we can point to many more have a common underlying metanarrative. When we say "progress" we tacitly refer to all these stories the best part of which we know not because we decided to do a PhD in the humanities. We are exposed to the metanarrative of progress long before we go on to higher education. We learn about science in preschool education and about other different and darker times. We see this implied narrative in films, TV series and books. We finally put

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[225] Charles Taylor, "Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism?", *The Power of Religion In The Public Sphere.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 53

theoretical argument to match this pretheoretical climate if we go to college or university, but this is an affirmation of what has already been tacitly recited many times over. What the word "progress" does is bring to life, echo and accentuate the many of stories we are all imbued and entangled in all of which answer to the same narrative "mothership". Progress is a code for a specific metanarrative of a certain historical thrust. "Once upon a time, long ago, it was dark and irrational but then along came Newton, Descartes and friends and there was light."[226]

Why would it matter that a world view such as we described above will be in a form of a story and not in the form of an argument, an explanation or a fully-fledged theory? One reason is that as we already said we approach stories in a different manner. Their inner coherence captures us and we are unguarded when we are part of a story or readers of a story. We might look for its truthfulness, but this will not be in the form of argumentative search. A story awakens a perspective that seeks coherence in the structure of plot, the development of the characters and the way in which the unfolding events are tied together. Granted, metanarratives are not fiction. First, in the most literal sense they are exactly not written by an acknowledged author but rather circumscribe arenas silently and anonymously. If metanarratives are to be "natural", one of the things they must avoid having is an author that "makes" them. This would render them an artifice. Second, unlike fiction metanarrative must have referential claims which can be weakened by the application of the rules of evidence. The fact that they are known pre-theoretically does not mean that metanarratives are impervious to theoretical refutation. It only means that their ubiquitous existence is not an outcome of argumentation.[227] The Marxist

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[226] I am paraphrasing Alexander Pope"s famous poem:
  Nature and Nature"s Laws lay hid in Night:
  God said, "Let Newton be!" and all was light
[227] To go even further Charles Taylor suggest that sometimes theories change the metanarrative of a community. Comparing the American Revolution to the French Taylor points out that the former was much less traumatic because it was connected to "existing practice of popular election of assemblies; whereas in the other case, the inability to "translate" the same principle into a stable and agreed set of practices was an immense source of conflict

metanarrative, for example, is a critical analysis of an existing capitalist metanarrative. This last fact is where metanarratives resemble fiction: we are born into metanarratives and in that sense we accept them in an agreement similar to the one we assume when a story is being told. We are open to believe and accept what is given. Metanarratives are given to us as the sky, the air, our family and the language we are born into. We accept them uncritically as we would nature itself. In addition, metanarrative disseminate and multiply into countless stories. This is the way that they become known to us pre-theoretically. Their abstract form is materialized over and over again as stories that are inscribed in the actions, interpretations and decisions that make up our world, inculcated in the structures of our comprehension.

Recent experimental data demonstrated that narratives deliver a point via the experience of absorption

> audiences suspend their proclivity to counter argue, to raise doubts about the veracity or relevance of the information they are hearing. They truly suspend disbelief, and they do so in a way that has lasting effects. The attitudinal change brought about by stories tends to persist or even increase over time[228]

We are, in other words less likely to argue against a story because we are in a different mode of reception. Narratives, which both evoke emotional activity and represent it, deliver a point bypassing, at least in part, our critical perspective. The kind of rationality that they encompass operates via the principle of identification rather than of deliberation. Rather than oppose value to fact, imagination to intellect emotions to reason "and so on. Stories are the enactment of the

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and uncertainty for more than a century. But in both these great events, there was some awareness of the historical primacy of theory, which is central to the modern idea of a "revolution", whereby we set out to remake our political life according to agreed principles. This "constructivism" has become a central feature of modern political culture". Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age,*(Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007)*,* 176

[228] Francesca Polletta and Pang Ching Bobby Che. "Narrative and Social Movements", *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 491

whole mind in concert with itself".[229] This tendency to prefer cohesion and flow is at the same stroke a tendency to move away from analysis. Nussbaum goes as far as saying that stories go so deep in this capacity to catch us unguarded that they structure the way in which we experience and come to know our own emotions. The intellectual and more specifically the philosophical western tradition, Nussbaum suggests, propounds that self-knowledge could be attained by a scientific analytical method. But the knowledge of emotions is of a different epistemological order which is both pre-theoretical and deeply rooted in the singularity. On the one hand,

> the full story of love – its intermittences, its rhythms of pain and avoidance – can be comprehended only by a reflection that observes the specifically human temporality of desire and habit, which proceeds by its own laws of felt duration[230]

Yet in the final account, Nussbaum points out, emotions are only fully comprehended through the structures of stories. Even if we all have similar basic emotions their structure and resonance in our cultures is different. Anger, for example, might be tolerated in Israel in ways it will not in the UK. Love is expressed in different ways in different cultures. What is shameful differs. What is expected differs. Look at the different ways the French people and persons living in the US react to the infidelities of their presidents. Adopting the French narrative we might the US reaction is almost hysterical in its graveness and intensity. Looking at it the other way around from the US narrative perspective, the French reaction might seem indifferent and irresponsible at best if not promiscuous. And so as we learn the many stories that reflect the metanarrative of our society we learn how to direct and structure our feelings.

> A child does not learn it's society's conception of love or of anger from sitting in an ethics class. It learns them long before any classes […] one of the child's most pervasive

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[229] Walter Fisher, "Narration a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument". *Communication Monographs*. 51.1. (1984), 9-10
[230] Martha Nussbaum. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 277

and powerful ways of learning its society's values and structures is through stories it hears and learns to tell[231]

A consequence of the characterization of metanarratives as deeply rooted and widely spread unchallenged structures that materialize in the form of myriad stories with a similar message, is that a shift in this structure can bring with it a substantial change in the order of things. In his *A Secular Age* Charles Taylor suggests, for example, that a shift in a metanarrative is what made non-belief a thinkable option and even a default option.[232] Rather than explain away the change as an effect caused by scientific advance, or democratic ideas, Taylor suggests the metanarrative changed bringing with it a host of new possibilities and practices part of which changed the form of belief and some of which made it possible to live fully without religion. This is an excellent example of how deep and wide changes in metanarratives resonate culturally. A change in a metanarrative brings within a monumental change that goes as deep as faith and the conception of what would make the best life. The "social imaginary" of modernity, Taylor points out, suggests that the best life is no longer dependent necessarily on a transcendent existence. Life could be experienced fully and meaningfully immanently delegating the transcendent to a position of one option among many others.

Metanarratives, then, are productive. They turn into the source of theoretical developments. The new metanarrative that Taylor describes completely changed, for example, the way we think about the self. The "immanent frame", namely the metanarrative suggesting the fullness of life could be experienced without a resort to a transcendent, replaced the

> porous self by the buffered self, for whom it comes to seem axiomatic that all thought, feeling and purpose, all the features we normally can ascribe to agents, must be in minds,

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[231] Martha Nussbaum. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990)*,* 293
[232] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age,*(Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 539

which are distinct from the "outer" world. The buffered self begins to find the idea of spirits, moral forces, causal powers with a purposive bent, close to incomprehensible.[233]

The buffered self for example saw the emergence of the science of psychology as well as the elaboration of ego phenomenology. New vocabularies emerge. "This is not me", "you have to find the real you", "it is all in your head" are all examples of a turn inward where everything could be found. Further emphasis on practices of self-control, self-love and self-enhancement start to emerge as new kinds of therapies answering a certain conception of a good life. Schools teach children about figures that found their vocations and maximized their potentiality. People who "made it" are those who in addition to other things "listened to their hearts" and "followed their dream". A shift in a metanarrative is a climate change that touches on many existing aspects of life as well as creating new aspects, needs and practices.

The epistemological debate around metanarratives parallels the same debate around other kinds of narrative. On one end we can find the claims that metanarratives are an artificial manipulation imposed on reality. And on the other hand there is the view according to which metanarratives are deeply embedded in the human ability to understand herself, others and to act in the world. The former view is famously defended by Lyotard who sees the difference between the postmodern and the modern conditions as resting on tension between universality and multiplicity and thus between the metanarratives of the past and the multiplicity of narratives with no grandness in the present. When Enlightenments' metanarratives aiming at universal truth and cosmopolitan justice lose their credibility, what one is left with, according to Lyotard, is a proliferation of games. Deconstructing the metanarratives of totality and closure, Lyotard references Wittgenstein's famous conception of language-games in which new forms of linguistic dynamics are always created and always will be created. Each game with its own

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[233] Ibid.

intrinsic set of rules is a new story that slowly emerges to find its place in relation to other stories. The narrative of emancipation dethrones science from its elevated status and opens the way into a perspective in which all endeavors are a certain kind of game. There is a multiplicity of systems that overlap, become tangent and communicate with each other in many ways. New languages are always added to old ones answering family resemblance definitions and their fuzzy dynamic borders. "[M]achine games, matrics game theory, new systems of musical notation systems of non-denotative logic"[234] are all new games in which people creatively play with each other. Because metanarratives fail to recognize their own relativity and vulnerability to the local circumstances and discourses, the arguments goes, they soon become obsolete.

This is of course quite true. Metanarratives strength may come from the fact that they are "simply there" unquestioned. However, their weakness comes from the very same place. Once articulated, they can be argued against. According to Lyotard a recognition of their relativity would mean that metanarratives lose their "meta-ness" to become simply narratives. What emerges in turn would be a political arena that is characterized by novelty and multiplicity and a dismantling of the aspirations and claims for diachronic and universal understanding of our meta-context. Yet how much is the fact that we have a perspective on metanarratives as changeable and context dependent really mean that they are obsolete? As we saw in previous chapters our ability to understand ourselves, our actions, others and the world around us is meaningless without context. MacIntyre claims this context goes very far. I quote him in length because his explanation is extraordinarily fitting:

> We cannot […] characterize behavior independently of intentions, and we cannot characterize intentions independently of the settings which make those intentions intelligible both to agents themselves and to others. I use the word 'setting' here as a relatively inclusive term. A social setting may be an institution, it may be what I have

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[234] Jean-Francoise Lyotard. *A Postmodern Condition*. (Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 1984), 40-41

called a practice, or it may be a milieu of some other human kind [..] a setting has a history, a history within which the histories of individual agents not only are, but have to be, situated, just because without the setting and its changes through time the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible.[235]

When I decide to use or not use the word "husband" in relation to my better half I rely and echo an the institution of marriage and with it a metanarrative in which romantic relations, gender issues, financial agreements and oppression play a role as a background. We can oppose these narratives as oppressive and manipulative, but our opposing action could only be understood and is only intelligible in reference to them. Actions as well and decision making is "ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, character".[236] Much in the same Taylor suggests that

far from being passé, […]master narratives are essential to our thinking. We all wield them, including those who claim to repudiate them. We need to be lucid about what we are doing, and ready to debate the ones we're relying on. Attempting to repudiate them just obfuscates matters.[237]

But it is not only for the sake of prescription and debating that metanarratives are crucial. Some practices are remnants of other times. Some practices and meanings are novel. Even before we act and debate to simply understand where we are we must understand our current socio-political arena in relations to other socio-political arenas.

understanding our society requires that we take a cut through time –as one takes a cut through a rock to find that some strata are older than others. Views coexist with those which arose after in reaction to them.[238]

In order simply decipher one's position within the socio-political arena metanarratives are crucial. How can I be a progressive or a conservative? How can a person or a movement be a head of their time or outdated? If the strata of the political arena in which they and others define

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[235] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1981), 206-7
[236] Walter Fisher, "Narration a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument".
Communication Monographs. 51.1. (1984), 8
[237] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age,*(Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007)*,* 573
[238] Charles Taylor. *Sources of the Self,* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 495

them is not referring to the new and the old metanarratives of this arena. Moreover a community, like an individual, entails a certain identity which is an object or an event extended over time. "The unity of experience […] must be produced by projective and retrospective grasp".[239] Even if our metanarrative is simply an aggregate of several sociopolitical games, as Lyotard would have it, there would be a certain stability to this aggregate that would define the given community and in effect operate as its metanarrative. Finally, the conceptual attack against metanarrative has the same structure of a shift in a metanarrative. One metanarrative is replaced with another. The postmodern condition changed practices, invented a vocabulary and started, just like a metanarrative, to define and "read" events through a certain perceptive conceives as neutral, necessary and even natural. In other words, this erosion of the status unifying narratives is itself a unifying metanarrative.

It is clear from the above description that the changes that followed Parks', Leef's and Bouazizi's deeds were of the "meta" kind. They were similar to the effects of metanarratives in two ways: first, as we said in the introduction to this work there is a gap of content between the deed and the effect. The rebellions against bus segregation, police brutality and housing prices became movements about civil rights, democracy and social justice. I will elaborate more on the nature of this gap in content in the final chapter. Here suffice is to say that the goals of these movement soon become the creation of a new and better order. A change in the bus regulation in Montgomery, Alabama would not have been enough. An apology from a policewoman or even the chief of the local police at Sidi Bouzid would not have satisfied the freedom seeking citizens of Tunisia. The actual change in the sociopolitical agenda that took place did not satisfy the people in the streets of Israel many of which consider the Social Justice Movement a failure. A whole new world needed to be created in which *such practices* not only the triggering practice

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[239] David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History,* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986),147

cannot take place. The triggering-practice operates as a symbol of a wrong political order. It is

serving as an example, an emblem, an inspiration. Second, the effect is simply very wide and

deep reaching. It is an effect that ends up defining an arena and changing it tacitly and explicitly

in many if not all aspects of human socio-political lives. It seems almost redundant to flesh out

the wideness and depths of democratic revolutions. Obviously such events define the peoples and

provide a sense of identity, moral campus and solidarity. What the civil rights movement did to

the US also does not need a deep analysis as to its wideness and depth. The Social Justice

Movement in Israel is an interesting and complex case in this respect. To put it briefly, local

discourse in Israel changed radically since 2011 but the Israeli Social Justice Movement is

widely articulated as a failure.[240] It is revered as a wonderful beginning, almost at times a

glorious past that people are dreaming of reawakening. This reaction is interesting because, as

we said, the summer of 2011 changed the political discourse in Israel drastically.[241] It had effects

on the Israeli public arena which could be observed in the Knesset, the press, in the flourishing

of new and vibrant social-justice oriented organizations and in the financial corporate Israeli

discourse as well.[242] Israel was dominated by security debates that left all economic and social

concerns marginalized. The summer of 2011 changed the debate in a fundamental way that

facilitated a new focus on financial gaps, social services and political corruption and which,

against all odds, continues to take the center of the arena four years later. But the Israeli Social

Justice movement did not manage to change the world in a final and fundamental way like the

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[240] Yona, Yossi. *Cracks in the Wall; The Israeli Social Protest of 2011*. (Israel: Keter, 2015) ,24, 171; Ori Ram and Dani Filk. "The 14th of July:The Rise and the Fall of the Israeli Social Justice Movement". *Theory and Criticism*. 41 Summer, 2013: 38

[241] Misgav, Chen. "A Spotlight On Israel's Back Yard: The Tent Protest From Urban Periphery Perspective. Theory and Criticism. 41(2013) Summer,116] ; Ori Ram and Dani Filk. "The 14th of July:The Rise and the Fall of the Israeli Social Justice Movement". *Theory and Criticism*. 41 Summer, 2013: 17

[242] Shenhav, Yehouda. "Carnival: Protest in an Opposition-less Society". *Theory and Criticism*. 41Summer.2013: 122; Yona, Yossi. *Cracks in the Wall; The Israeli Social Protest of 2011*. (Israel: Keter, 2015), 12; Ori Ram and Dani Filk. "The 14th of July: The Rise and the Fall of the Israeli Social Justice Movement". *Theory and Criticism*. 41 Summer, 2013: 19

US civil rights movement of the democratic revolution of Tunisia and that makes it a failed attempt in the eyes of many of its participants and supports as well as amongst its opponents. This is very telling and extremely helpful in understanding the nature of this event. The hope and the implicit goal was nothing less than a new order. It wasn't a struggle aiming at a nuanced change, expressing general rage and frustration. It was aiming at creating a new world and anything less, is a disappointment. One of the very hyperbolic activists in the Israeli Social Justice Movement describes the hope during the summer of 2011. It can serve as an example to the sense of a new beginning that captures the hearts of the protesters:

> [What is happening in Rothschild Boulevard (Tel-Aviv s.l.) is unprecedented not only nationally but even planet-wise. A new society. A new language. New politics. A being that achieves self-understanding. From time to time I still hear people speaking in the old clichés of the Left. It enters in one ear and exists on the other. They have not heard the news: a new civilization has begun] [243]

Indeed in that sense the Social Justice Movement gloriously failed. Of course not all participants in the streets were as hyperbolic in their expectations, but the hope was a radical and substantial change of a different order.

Although trigger-narratives have an expected effect of metanarratives, they are obviously not metanarrative in any other way. They are anything but an implicit narrative form that emerges in many aspects of life. Trigger-narratives offer an articulated narrative about an action that was done by a very specific protagonist. In fact the protagonist is central to the narrative and becomes the very symbol of the change. Trigger-narratives are only similar to metanarratives in the effect they aim at and sometimes succeed in making.

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[243] In Shenhav, Yehouda. "Carnival: Protest in an Oppositionless Society". Theory and Criticism. 41(2013) Summer: 126

"מה שקורה בשדרות רוטשילד הוא חסר תקדים לא רק ברמה הלאומית, אלא אפילו ברמה הפלנטארית. חברה חדשה. שפה חדשה. פוליטיקה חדשה. ישות שמגיעה לתודעה עצמית.מדי פעם אני שומע וקורא אנשים מסוימים שעדיין מדברים בסיסמאות מסורתיות של שמאל. זה נכנס לי מאוזן אחת ויוצא מהאוזן השנייה. הם לא שמעו את הבשורה הטובה: הציוויליזציה התחילה מחדש"

II. **Issue Narratives**

Since we took diacritical hermeneutics advice and "extended horizontally across disciplines"[244] we should pause shortly at this point and say a word about the context of the trifurcation of political narratives that we borrowed from the field of sociology so that it is clear how we are using Gamson's sociological format and how exactly it is located vis-à-vis the background material of our argument. Gamson's trifurcation is a part of a theoretical perspective called frame-analysis which emerged in reaction to both structural sociological theories of participation and later Anglo-American theories generally referred to as resource-mobilization. We will briefly outline the conceptual developments leading to frame-analysis and point to the position of issue narratives within this context. The reason that I am doing this here, and not at the beginning of the chapter, is that metanarratives are well accounted for in the field of philosophy. This extensive treatment in both fields is additionally quite similar and it makes for a smooth and almost obvious interdisciplinary discussion. Issue narratives, perhaps because they are case-oriented and deeply depend of qualitative and quantitative research,[245] are less a subject matter of philosophical debates and thus they require both an elaboration and a contextualization.

Systematically inquiring into the moment of joining and deciding to politically participate in a social movement, sociology came across several conundrums that dictated shifts in its analytical perspectives over the decades. Sidney Tarrow points to four schools in recent studies of collective action and social movements: (a) the position that focuses on grievances which stems from social structures as responsible for mobilization; (b) resource mobilization theorists

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[244] Richard Kearney. *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*. (London, UK: Routledgem 2003), 19
[245] "We do not know enough" says Polletta
    about why activists choose the frames they do, what aspects of the environment shape frames' effectiveness, and what impacts frames have on institutions outside the movement. Several factors are probably to blame. The single case orientation of much of the work on framing has made it difficult to generalize about causes and effects. Polletta, Francesca and M. Kai Ho. "Frames and Their Consequences". *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 3

which concentrated on cost-benefit analysis, leadership and formal organization; (c) framing and collective identity theories that focused on the sources of consensus in a movement; and finally (d) political process theories that focus on the political opportunities and constraints that structure contentious politics. Our interest lies with the third school which focuses on the power of framing an issue or a situation within a compelling narrative.[246] In what follows we will outline its conceptual emergence. This outline is not intended as a comprehensive and in depth analysis of recent developments in the social sciences. This is not a work in sociology. Its aim is to create a conceptually accurate narrative, accessible to philosophers and other non-social scientists that will explain why and how the concepts of frame-analysis that I am using in this chapter are appropriate to this work of philosophy.

Structural grievance as a source of mobilization is of course echoing Marx's position that assumed a revolution would take place when grievance reaches a certain point. We can see similar philosophical views in Plato's *Republic* where regimes are said to change as a result of an inherent flaw in the political order. A certain upbringing of the younger generation (Timocracy, Oligarchy, Democracy, Tyranny etc.) *necessarily* creates a grievance which leads finally to unrest and a change of regime.[247] Kant, much in the same, way saw unrest as an inherent possibility of government and political behavior generally. In his case this inherent behavior was harnessed to the idea of progress.

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[246] In the next three paragraphs I rely on Tarrow's excellent analysis that compares the evolution of Marxist ideas to the evolution in 20th century sociological understanding of social movements. I add to Tarrow"s analysis the philosophical dimension in order to make the connection between the two disciplines at this point of the discussion fuller, deeper and clearer. Sidney Tarrow. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

[247] Plato. *The Republic,* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 544-563

> The means that nature uses to bring about the development of all of man's capacities is the *antagonism* among them in society, as far as in the end this antagonism is the cause of law-governed order society.[248]

The hope is, and we should stress that Kant's essay speaks of history that "may be possible"[249] rather than attempts a proof, that a universal perfect civil society is the necessary and inherent outcome of the senselessly violent struggles of humans. So crisis and perfect resolution is inscribed in the order of things. Aristotle and Locke, on the other hand, are examples for another perspective of structural grievance. They saw uprisings as a sign of social malfunction. Political rigidness of a regime is likely to stir up an uprising and unrest according to Aristotle.[250] For Locke, similarly, every just society in which a legitimate power turns on its people, breaks an original contract and is thus no longer owed obedience. In fact such a breach of trust means they government entered into a state of war with the people.[251] The point of the matter is that these thinkers, sociologists and philosophers alike, describe participation as a reaction to a grievance, inherent in the flawed structure of society or alternatively pointing to a malfunction in an otherwise potentially perfect political structure.

Yet, history shows that serious grievances many times go without any uprising. Americans did not rebel after the economic collapse that saw the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. Theoretical attempts to find a corollary relation between grievances such as unemployment, bread prices and uprisings fail to provide any clear correlation. Especially glaring is the fact that much scholarly effort before the Arab Uprising aimed at inquiring into and explaining how authoritarian regimes in the Maghreb and around it seem so stable.[252] None

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[248] Immanuel Kant. *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays: on Politics, History, and Morals*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 31
[249] Ibid., 30
[250] Aristotle. *Politics*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998) 134-174
[251] Locke. *Second Treatise of Government* , (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 111-2
[252] Gelvin, James L. *The Arab Uprisings: What Everybody Needs to Know*. (New York: Oxford

predicted the uprisings. It takes more than grievance to spark participation and even more than that to inspire sustained participation. After all the proletariat movement did not just erupt. It was organized. Developments in the field of sociology, inspired by economics, the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement,[253] took a pragmatic turn emphasizing the perspective of organization and professional deliberation. This theoretical development which was named resource-mobilization by MaCarthy and Zald became "a dominant background paradigm for sociologists studying social movements in the early 1980's".[254] Its philosophical counterparts would be utilitarianism.[255] Resource mobilization depicted participation as dependent on formal organization and cost-benefit analysis. However, it left out emotional components, grievances and informal organization.

Participation in social movements is many times very costly to the participants and it is not at all clear that they advocate for benefits they would directly enjoy.[256] It is sometimes incredibly costly to sleep outdoors and miss many days of work while advocating for a cause such as cheaper housing. It was flat out dangerous to protest in Egypt. In addition many times social movements are joined by members that do not belong to the grieved group. Think about the opposition to the Vietnam War and the meaning the My Lai Massacre had on it, for example, or the effect of the picture of Phan Thi Kim Phuc on the US public. Protest and social movement mobilization cannot be attributed solely to the infringements on the rights belonging to the members of the protesting groups. They are more complex and many times the rage and mobilizing anger relates to an injustice that is not suffered by the protesters or even their

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University Press, 2012), 25-6

[253] Sidney Tarrow,. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 23

[254] Ibid.

[255] Gamson and Fireman. Michigan: University of Michigan, Center for Research on d Social Organization, 1977. Working Paper #I53 (Revised Version)1-21

[256] Alimi Eithan. "Calling the Child by Its Name: On the similarities and differences between Social Movements and Interest Groups". (Haifa: Pardes Publishing House, 2008), 34

supporters. We could of course claim that there are moral benefits for those participating. The participants benefit in the sense that they feel and act morally. However, since some of these protesters stand in the face of violent police and sometimes army, such a claim would stretch the word "benefit" to a point in which it becomes hollow. People are willing to pay substantial prices to stand together for aims that are not always strictly or directly their own. They also might consider "the offer of an exciting, risky, and possibly beneficial campaign of collective action"[257] a benefit and not a cost simply because it offers an escape or a change in their desperation. Indeed both the structural sociological analysis and the resource mobilization approach play down the complexity entailed by the question of movement participation. Frame-analysis centers on the different *meanings* people attach to their decision to join a social movement. It is, I would like to claim, a sort of sociological hermeneutical turn which is the reason that I found it pertinent and fitting as a framework for this chapter and generally this work. According to frame-analysis it takes more than the existence of structural grievance, cost-benefit calculation and leadership organization to bring about participation in a social movement. It takes embedding or framing the issue in a compelling story.

Frame-analysis entered the field of sociology in the 1980's in response to resource mobilization neglect of the "psychological processes" involved in the decision to participate.[258] It focused on the dynamic of "ideational elements"[259] of Social Movements which are responsible, among other things, for their meaning production as a mobilizing function. Work on narrative has challenged the belief that money, interest and power are the only or even main resources in

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[257] Sidney Tarrow. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29

[258] Polletta, Francesca and M. Kai Ho. "Frames and Their Consequences". *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 4

[259] David E. Snow and Robert Benford. "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization"
From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research across Cultures. International Social Movement Research, Vol.1. (Greenwich, Conn: JAI Press, 1988), 199

the success of mobilization efforts. It further suggests that the success of certain narratives over others might be related to their relation to their wider context. Namely that certain narratives fit and/or tap into long held beliefs and thus might resonate more effectively with certain audiences.[260] This echoes hermeneutics understanding of the contextual nature of action and knowledge. The two frameworks are also similar in their understanding of such contexts as interwoven and overlapping. The framing process depends for its success on several internal and external factors: Narrative probability that was mentioned in Chapter One, and pertains to the inner coherence of the narrative's elements. Narrative fidelity,[261] borrowed by frame analysis from Fisher,[262] pertains to the resonance of the suggested frame with existing cultural narrations such as stories, myths and folk tales. It means that a story "rings true with the stories [persons] know to be true in their lives".[263] And this ringing-true runs the gamut of resonating with personal stories and everyday life experiences as well as aligning with metanarratives we all live in, familiar fiction plotlines and the political issues circulating the arena at the time. Failure to resonate, align, mirror and/or rearrange these structures is likely to render a story unbelievable, strange and even unintelligible. Read in this way it was not just the potential participant listening to the stories about Leef were calculating if joining or opposing was more profitable for them nor where they suddenly just fed up in a linear process of grievance with an inevitable revolutionary end. Both views are somewhat mechanistic. Leef's story, from the frame-analysis' perspective,

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[260] Gamson, William. "Political Discourse and Collective Action", *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation across Cultures*. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press,1988), 219-44.; Snow David E. and Robert Benford. "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization" *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation Across Cultures*. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988), 197-217

[261] Apart from narrative fidelity, empirical credibility and experimental commensurability also play a crucial part in the possibility of resonance. Snow David E. and Robert Benford. "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization" *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation Across Cultures*. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988), 199-208

[262] Walter Fisher, "Narration a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument". *Communication Monographs*. 51.1. (1984), 8

[263] Ibid., 9

rang-true and resonated with other narratives that were circulating in the arena. It framed several grievances together through an appealing point of view. The description of Leef as a spoiled rich girl was at attempt to frame the Social Justice movement as marginal, spoilt, unrealistic and unjust. The frame advanced by supporters of the movement stressed the social and economic neglect in Israel and it resonated better.

Issue narratives, as their name suggest, center on an issue. Public housing, nuclear power and the misconduct of local police are famous examples of such narratives. They are the center of frame-analysis' work on mobilization and participation. These are the narratives around which collective action is likely to congeal. Issue narratives are a clear form of criticism of the state of things and if effective contain a suggested course of action. They operate within the arena of metanarratives, many times draw from them and function as "battleground[s] for converting potential into action".[264] If metanarratives guide our general understanding and interpretational trajectory tacitly, issue narratives or frames are explicit and they interpret a series of events as part of an ongoing occurrence of the same problem. So, for example, if a homeless woman dies in the street during a snowstorm and the issue of public-housing is on the agenda, her death might be interpreted as another part of the public-housing narrative. "Here is why we need available public housing" a newspaper headline or a politician driving the issue might say. This would make sense in a political arena that sees the state as responsible to its weak and poor. The same event might echo completely different in a political arena that pushes for less government intervention. "Here is why we should cut welfare and make our poor work" is another possible framing. The death of a homeless woman could be framed to challenge long held beliefs but this

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[264] William Gamson. "Political Discourse and Collective Action", *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation across Cultures*. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press,1988), 241

is not an easy task. Not echoing the general "ideational climate" might render a story marginal, strange, unbelievable and even nonsensical.

Issue frames do not have to come as a clear cut story. There are other ways to frame an issue such as arguments and exhortations. Once again this distinction pushes to the fore the question concerning the status of narrative in human discourse. Is every form of human discourse in the final account narrative? Or is narrative one form of human discourse among others? Possibly,

> even frames rendered in […] other discursive forms […] make sense in terms of familiar narratives. Such narratives may constitute a backdrop of understanding against which logical arguments have meaning.[265]

We, once again, need not decide between the status of narrative as necessary to human understanding and epistemology on the one hand, and narrative as simply a very pervasive form of human communication, on the other. The fact that it is necessary most of the time and present almost everywhere is enough for the purposes of this discussion. Issue frames work within an arena of a larger metanarrative and in relation to other issue narratives. They are more likely to work as mobilizers if they manage to resonate creatively the already existing frames and are unlikely to gather momentum if they are completely detached from the existing socio-political stories.

Thinking about our three protagonists we can clearly see that they have centered on a mobilizing issues. Housing, police brutality and bus segregation are all specific issues that indeed were contextualized and echoed concerns circulating in the arena. Rosa Parks' refusal to get up was not the first in the preceding twelve months or even decade. As we pointed out in the introduction, Claudette Colvin, a member of the N.A.A.C.P youth Council where Parks worked

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[265] Francesca Polletta and Pang Ching Bobby Che. "Narrative and Social Movements", *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 483

as a secretary, refused the very same demand at the beginning of March that year. Cleary there was a conscious effort to use the issue of the bus policy to raise awareness of wider issues of segregation and the uneven distribution of civil rights in the US. Using Claudette's story was considered as an option, but passed over because she seemed less composed in character.[266] The point of the matter is that Parks' action happened in a framed context. It would have looked differently in an arena where no preparation on the topic was present before. The case illuminated and materialized the issue into a course of possible collective action. Leef was acting in a context sensitive to her issue even if it wasn't farmed as consciously as the bus boycott of Montgomery, Alabama was. Generally the financial burden on the middle class in Israel intensified and the gaps between the rich and the poor widen substantially in the decades before.[267] As we said before worse grievances came and went in the world with no protest at all and Israel itself was under this burden for decades characterized by tacit consent or at least indifferent and lack of belief in the possibility of change. More specifically several months before July 2011 popular opposition was raised in regards to prices of certain food products in Israel. Of course Leef was also acting within the context created by Bouazizi, the Arab Uprisings and European popular protests.[268] But even when prior framing is not clearly available, like in the case of Tunisia what is clear and relevant to our context is that trigger-narratives like issue-narratives are case-oriented and that their mobilizing force is related to an issue that resonates in their arenas. At least they are so at the beginning.

Unlike issue narratives, trigger-narratives have a protagonist the story of which is crucial and deeply connected to the movement itself. The protagonists of trigger-narratives are not

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[266] Brooks Barnes. *International New York Times.* "From Footnote to Fame in Civil Rights History: No Longer a Footnote, Claudette Colvin". November, 25, 2009.
[267] Yona, Yossi. *Cracks in the Wall; The Israeli Social Protest of 2011.* (Israel: Keter, 2015) 64-67
[268] Ibid., 40-1

persons to whom something terrible happened. Namely, they are not just that. These persons are person to whom something terrible had happened and *they stood up against it in radical and costly public protest*. The protagonists of trigger-narrative have a heroic air about them. This is why it is crucial to portray them as lacking in connections and planning. They protest radically and without the safety-net almost every self-preserving human being would demand for herself. Let us recall the case of Phan Thi Kim Phuc once again. Her picture shocked the US public and people around the globe. It is clear that a mobilizing narrative regarding the state of things crystalized around the image of her running in terror. Is she a trigger-narrative protagonist? Phan Thi Kim Phuc is the ultimate victim in the picture. She is very young, horrified, physically exposed and severely hurt. This is not to say that she is a victim in her life as a whole. She is a recognized heroic activist and a founder of Kim Phúc Foundation for child war victims around the world. This only to point out that *the specific picture* with this horrifying event depicts her as the ultimate victim just like the drowned Syrian three year old boy, Aylan, on the shores of Greece 2015 exposed him. Their position in the narrative of these specific images is defined by the fact that they had nothing to do with their predicament. They are children. They are innocent and irresponsible for their fate by definition. The adults around them are and the adults around them, including the ones looking at the picture at the time, failed horribly. Something horrifying happened to these children. They are shockingly innocent, vulnerable, hurt and they demanded our protection. The protagonists of trigger-narratives, on the other hand, activated a choice in the face of their predicament and their choice rebelled against the world they live in. It rebelled against an order. Their personal agency is at the heart of the story. The lack of personal choice is at the heart of the Vietnamese and the Syrian stories. Imagine for example that Time Magazine would name Aylan as Person of the Year. This is likely to arouse surprise or even anger. Aylan

and Kim Phuc are not conceived in this particular instance as agents who did something but as someone that something was done to. The word "conceived" is crucial here. Let's imagine that Bouazizi feels that he was coerced into self-immolation. We still conceive of him as an initiator of a radical act of protest and *in the name of this initiation* we name him Person of the Year. Had Bouazizi been nine years old his act would have been interpreted as a disaster not a protest of a hero insisting on a different world. It might be that Bouazizi did not mean to protest the world he lived in. We do not know. What is important in this context are not his intensions so much but that popular news interpreted his action as such a rebellion and declared him the symbol of the democratic revolution in Tunisia. We usually do not act like the protagonists of trigger-narrative when we encounter a great power that is abusive. We move aside. We pay the rent. We buy a new scale. We get up and let the white woman sit. They chose to step up and face the great power that was impinging on their space. In their insistence they awaken the possibility of resistance in other hearts, and the rage towards the system in continuation to this very possibility. Issues, no doubt, are at the center of trigger narratives as well but a certain awe is reserved to their protagonists that goes beyond the issue and possibly serves as part of the fuel of the much larger response that trigger-narratives bring about.

Recall the gap in content we pointed to at the beginning of this work. True, this chapter elaborates on the gap in size which is also mentioned in the first pages of this work, but it is appropriate that we say a word about the gap in content as well here before we tend to the fuller analysis of this topic in the next chapter. Trigger-narratives begin with an issue but their claim transforms ambitiously into the demand and resolve to change the order of things. The issue in trigger-narratives is deeply connected to an act done by a protagonist in response to an injustice. Trigger-narrative can be a part of an issue framed. Rosa Parks and Daphne Leef were no doubt

also that. Namely, their action was done in an arena that already started to circle around the issues that finally erupted in protest. The fact that they are a part of such a process should not diminish them as trigger-narratives. Trigger-narratives begin from an issue and sometimes a well-framed or a semi-framed issue, but very soon their issue becomes another topic among other topics. These are not the stories of scales, police abuse and rent. In that sense they are not really issue narratives. These are the stories of democracy, civil rights and social justice. The leap in content is extraordinary. It is amalgamated with the fact that the protagonist of trigger-narratives remains the symbol the movement although her act was centered on another and smaller issue.

Let us use the development of the similarities and differences between issue-narratives and trigger-narratives to go a step further and push the definition of trigger-narratives against similar competing narratives. Every big event could be said to have started with a relatively smaller event. If we go back in time enough wouldn't every political occurrence have a moment of triggering? The beginning of World War I, for example, was triggered by an assassination. The fall of Constantinople could be chalked down to the inventor of the fire canon, or better yet the invention of gunpowder centuries earlier in China. Without Guttenberg introduction of movable type the protestant reformation might not have happened[269] etc. All big events start somewhere smaller. However, trigger-narratives as we defined them so far have particular characteristics. They are centered on a protagonist that is not powerful. It is essential to the action of the protagonist that it is conceived as spontaneous. They grow from their issue to become movements that demand a new order of things. Their protagonist remains their symbol despite their shift in topic. Who remembers the names of the assassins of the prince of Hungary

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[269] Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius. "1455 Guttenberg's Print Revolution". *Turning Points in Modern History*. University of Tennessee, 2013

in 1914? Who can forget who Bouazizi, Leef and Parks are? These protests tend to operate in a manner that *draws inspiration* from the protagonist and her act, rather than traces it back as its final cause. Additionally, the act that these protagonists perform is clearly a longshot. It is almost a poetic protest in front of immense, obtuse and many times cruel powers. A tent. Self-immolation in front of the city hall. Refusing to get up on the bus. These are not stories of persons storming the police station, targeting a powerful person so that they can change the course of history. These are symbolic acts in the sense that they are rebelling against the state of things in ways that are far from practical. To summarize briefly our entanglement in stories means that trigger-narratives are not island which indeed they are not. Trigger-narratives operate within metanarrative circumscribed arenas and they are many times part of a framing process that has been going on before their appearance and the beginning of the political transformation. Unlike any beginning these beginnings come at the form of a story with an unlikely and courageous protagonist to which people then join. These narratives quickly become a call for a new order of things. Yet although events far exceed the content and size of the event that triggered them, the protagonists of trigger-narrative nonetheless remains the undying symbol of the political transformation that erupted in their wake.

III.   *Personal Narrative / Political Testimonies*

"There is a crucial difference", Kearney says,

> between the 'little narratives' of the vanquished and the 'Grand Narratives' of the victors[270]

We remember the latter through rituals and commemoration ceremonies and take them as a given proved and established fact. While the former, personal stories of experiences that do not have the status of a given, stand at a more vulnerable position epistemologically. We wonder if they

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[270] Richard Kearney, *On Stories,* (London: Routledge, 2002), 61

are true in a manner we are less likely to do with more familiar and established narratives. We might want to inquire into the reliability of the speaker and check if the stories they tell match other things we know about the time in question. Before probing into this difference in status we should clarify in what ways narratives are "little". Kearney's account implies two senses in which we might describe a narrative as "little". First, there are simply the stories that do not gain the political support and institutionalization that competing narratives did achieve. For example, the Nakba, the story of the Palestinian disaster of 1948 stood for many years, and still stands, in a disadvantage position in comparison to the metanarrative of Israeli independence and to Zionism. The Nakba is not officially commemorated on a national level. It is contested regularly and it is not part of the history taught in classes. This means that although the "size" of the stories is similar, namely they are both founding narratives of nations, their position is very different. One of them has a wider and "bigger" presence in the relevant political arenas and the other has a narrower and "smaller" presence in these arenas. Among other things, this means it is more vulnerable to forgetfulness. A second meaning of "little narratives" is simply stories of singular persons, written or spoken eye-witness testimonies. These are available at least in two forms that are relevant here. On the one hand, we could read or hear such accounts as lived-narratives. I could hear my grandfather telling me about his experience as Jewish man in 1940 Romania. It is unlikely that I will, in such a context, feel the need to validate the facts. When at some point after I heard the story I will come across a picture of him walking the streets of Bucharest wearing a yellow star, I am unlikely to think of the picture as validation of his story. It would be but another medium through which the story I already know becomes thicker and more tangible. The question of validity, in other words, does not take the center of the stage with lived narratives since the epistemological status of "little narratives" told as lived-narratives centers on

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the experience of the protagonist. Verification is not irrelevant of course but it becomes necessary only in extreme situations. Kearney's discussion points to a second sense of "little stories": Personal stories that aim to portray the story of the vanquished. If the question concerning the "little narratives" is "how do personal stories operate in the socio-political arena?" the question of reliability, validity and soundness becomes much more pressing. The stories of the vanquished, since they are not as institutionalized and could be widely marginalized and regularly contested, rely more heavily on testimonies. Of course every historical narrative, in the final account, relies on testimony. As Ricoeur points out testimony is "the irreducible category of our relation to the past".[271] At the end of the day testimony is at the basis of grand and little narratives. Yet, two things make testimony more crucial to "little narratives". First, we tend to forget or play-down testimony as a basis in the case of accepted metanarratives and on the other hand, we tend to emphasize e importance of testimonies with less familiar alternative metanarratives. So we might wonder if we should believe the testimonies of Palestinians describing their dispossession but become less severe epistemologically with the testimonies that describe the same event from an Israeli standpoint. Or we might do the opposite if we come from a different metanarrative. We awaken our critical faculties with the "little narrative" that are unsupported by an accepted metanarrative and we are at the risk of not waking those faculties up with established metanarratives and the testimonies that ground them. We already spoke of the "climate" like effect of grand narratives. This is an unfriendly climate to the stories of the vanquished. Second, as was already noted, metanarratives tend to have monuments, commemoration sites archives etc. metanarratives, in other words, rely on an established system that keeps the narrative present. This system could have been based on testimonies but it does not rely on them anymore. The system exists regardless and without need to resort to testimony

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[271] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative I,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)*,* 255

for affirmation. In this way, for example, the testimonies of holocaust survivors in Israel are not recounted in order to stress the validity of the fact that the holocaust happened. One is unlikely to meet someone in Israel that thinks differently. The holocaust and its horrendous historical facts are well inculcated in the cultural and political institutions. Such testimonies are told as a form of a ritual of paying respects to survivors and victims. Their status as they are being told in this context in which they are a part of a grand narrative is not constitutive. It has become over the years ceremonial. Testimonies supporting narratives that do not enjoy this "meta" status and the system that sustains it function differently. They appear in the arena without a support of a system and may seem strange, unintelligible and simply unbelievable. If they are contesting an existing narrative then the system of the metanarrative is likely to resist them. If as an Israeli I want to learn about the Nakba, testimonies are crucial and they are not crucial in a ceremonial manner. As a reader I am likely to ask myself if they are true and if indeed I am convinced, my current metanarrative might be severely complicated.

How does this dynamic of challenging a metanarrative via personal narratives work? Namely,

> How do we move from micro-narratives of multiple singular testimonies to certain quasi-universal narratives [272]

The answer is already contained in the question. Only *multiple* singular testimonies can make a metanarrative or an issue narrative realign, break or transform. This multiplicity is one way among others to reach validity of course. Validity which as Kearney suggests could be achieved through an examination of consistency, coherence, credibility of witnesses, validation of facts and other relevant and pertinent aspects, is also supported by multiplicity. In the most direct manner, if many people tell the story of dispossession it is harder to claim this was an invention.

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[272] Richard Kearney, *On Stories,* (London: Routledge, 2002), 68

Faking such a big event would take a substantial coordination and organization on the side of the persons giving testimony. But validity is not the only factor that counts when little narrative are to contest issue or metanarratives. Soundness and validity are as relevant to testimonies given in contexts which are neither strictly historical nor chiefly political. A police officer looking into a testimony about a parking ticket would check for the similar aspects of reliability and coherence in her quest for validity and soundness. The way to counter a metanarrative is not always about the validity of the fact really taking place. Many times the battle between the systemized metanarrative and the marginalized little stories are about the *meaning* we attach to occurrences we all agree took place. As we pointed out in the first part of this chapter metanarratives are the perspectives through which we interpret events. Little narratives might be testimonies offering a new interpretation of events. In that case having many of them empowers them not because they cannot be contradicted but simply because they are shared by many. Numbers count in the political arena as Arendt points out. Power

> belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say about someone that he is 'in power' we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name[273]

Little narratives gain power when they are shared by a group of people. Multiplicity in this case is an insistence of a group in society about a certain meaning of the state of things. Let us look at the suffragist movement for example. There was no argument about the state of things but only about the meaning of it. If enough women insisted that being banned from the right to vote is experienced as a grave injustice, they can challenge the more prevalent metanarrative that claimed that it was not. This meaning giving function of multiplicity is true also when we speak of "little narratives" that refer to a contested reality. For example, if enough people share their

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[273] Hannah Arendt. *On Violence*. (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Company. 1969), 44

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testimonies about the Nakbah, it is not only validity that we hear from their repeated "little stories". We also hear their power as a group, demanding and insisting that looking into the Nakbah is crucial. That letting the subject of the Palestinian dispossession go without a consideration and respect is an injustice.

The trifurcation we are basing this chapter on emphasized the mobilizing role of narratives. The presence of a personal story, a testimony, as a mobilizer in the political arena revolves not only on its validity as the ultimate window to what was. It also relies on its ability to be shared, echoed and to resonate with multiple persons that together can gather and hold the power to describe and challenge the state of things. Personal stories can become a part of or a challenge to a wider concern, either a metanarrative, or an issue narrative. Such affirmation and status are achieved through repetition. The same story told over and over again by different people having the same experience in the political arena can and does many times result in a political outcome. Many stories of police brutality against minorities make us look at singular incidents through a socio-political perspective and recognize the origin and context in which these incidents occur. Repetition can make one testimony into a political issue because it touches both on the topic of validity and soundness and makes visible a concern of a segment of society facilitating a powerful critique.

The power of testimony does come from its singularity. We hear *this* person's story and we come to see a world through it. However, its power is the power of similarity and reference. When one sets to give her *political* testimony she is tacitly saying: I was part of many more. Testimony draws its power from singularity within plurality. Let us go back to the news item we discussed in chapter two concerning Rachel Dolezal. Would her testimony be stronger or weaker if she had said "I am not alone. There are many like me. I am the first to speak out but I

represent a wider phenomenon". Surely, she would have been treated differently. We would care less if there was only one slave to free, one battered woman to save, one Palestinian to liberate from Israeli occupation. The size of the aggrieved group is crucial in the same way that the size of a demonstration is crucial. Viewed in this way testimony is an attempt to empower the weak by making them into community and inviting others, supporters or those who share similar experiences to be part of the community so that its impact, its power will grow to be more substantial. A testimony that does not succeed in pointing out to a socio-political concern might end up as marginal if not simply odd. This is what happened to Prof. Rachel Dolezal. She obviously had an interesting and aggravating experience with racial identity but to her misfortune not enough others share her grievance and so her power is not great. If 30,000 persons identifying as other than the race they were born into would have stepped forward we and the institutions around are almost certain to have looked on the matter quite differently. We might have eventually pushed for a law forbidding employers to ask employees what their biological race was and definitely forbids them to hold any prejudice against people who contested their biological racial orientation. Racial orientation, we might say in such a scenario is a private matter and should not be part of a professional arena.

This description of the power of repetition should be qualified. One could also fail to see the political context in her personal account because of meta and issue narratives she dwells in. For example, if we are in a capitalist socio-political context that sees the state as not responsible for its poor, than one's personal story of poverty even if told with other similar stories repeating similar circumstances might fail to congeal into a wider socio-political understanding.[274] Gathering groups together to challenge what we described earlier in this chapter as invisible as

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[274] Francesca Polletta and Pang Ching Bobby Che. "Narrative and Social Movements", *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 495

the air we breathe is not easy. People might not see what the point is. The state of things seems natural to the dwellers even if they are hurt by it and attempts that suggest otherwise many times seem completely outlandish before (and of course if) they become a reality. The power of repetition is central to the effectivity of "little narratives". It is by no means sufficient. [275]

If we succeeded in establishing the crucial status of repetition in the function of personal stories as mobilizers in the political arena we could now ask what kind of repetition we can see in trigger-narratives. Strangely enough trigger-narratives on the one hand look very much like a personal story of a testimony. The protagonists are rebelling in their actions against something that happened to them personally. However, it is clear that their power is not emanating from repetition as one might expect. These are not the stories of many people who had their scales taken. While it might be the case that all protesters in the civil right movement suffered from segregated buses, the movement was not fueled from repeated stories of similar experience but actually *ignored* such previous stories. Nor was rent the main experience cited in the social justice movement. What was repeated and shared was something else: first the trigger-narrative is repeated over and over again. The same story of the same person is repeated in the political arena, rather than many stories on the same grievance. Second, there is a repetition of a certain frustration with many aspects of the state of things that erupts. People repeat the many grievances of monarchies and dictatorships, the lack of civil rights and the lack of social justice. The repetition takes place on a more general and far wider level than the story at its conception.

IV.   Conclusion

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[275] Francesca Polletta and Pang Ching Bobby Che. "Narrative and Social Movements", *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 489. Polletta's point in this article is fascinating and it is the outcome of the elaborated sociological research into the mobilizing aspect of narratives. She locates repetitiveness in a more complex and nuanced position. What is repeated is not a plot but the way plots concerned and related to well-known polarities. This level of nuance does not change the point we make here because what we are concerned with in this section on personal stories is the fact that trigger-narratives do not offer either kinds of repetition. See p.199

Trigger Narratives, as is already clear from the above analysis align with different aspects of each of the three forms of narratives that we describe above. Like metanarratives they circumscribe a whole socio-political arena affecting many issues and aiming to create a certain "world" in the image of their idea. Like issue-narratives trigger-narratives clearly open with a specific and articulated socio-political grievance. They mobilize around an issue. And finally like personal narratives, trigger-narratives are grounded in personal occurrences. Already the fact that they take part in all three kinds of narratives makes clear they are none of the three. A metanarrative is never a personal narrative. It could materialize in personal narratives and issue narratives, but it cannot be a part the very same story. Metanarratives by nature are somewhat abstract and relate to values or larger historical occurrences. Issue-narratives can and do align with other issues at times. They circulate the socio-political arena mobilizing action which sometimes groups together several concerns. Yet such narratives do not have one protagonist initiating them in a manner that makes this protagonist a symbol. Nor do they normally exceed the content of their issue by such a margin to call for a new order. Finally, personal-stories rely on repetition to gather momentum and credibility. Trigger-narratives gather their momentum from being small and singular. While personal stories of battered women will repeat similar patterns, trigger-narratives stand at the center of a great occurrence pretty much alone. Additionally, trigger-narratives touch on the personal in a lionizing, demonizing and glorifying ways. The protagonists of trigger-narratives are admired, named "person of the year", and idolized. They become a small story about the deed of one person attempting to create a new world. They become, in other words, a sort of political fairytale.

The last four chapters pointed out in several perspectives what trigger-narratives are not. It is time to advance from this position into a discussion that outlines what they might be: incredible political fairytales with arduous path and a sometimes a fabulously good ending.

Chapter Five: Mythical Eruption

If I did my argumentative work well we should know at this stage what trigger-narratives are not. Trigger-narratives are not lived-narratives since they tend to miss the real *who*-ness of their protagonists. They do not revolve around a historical protagonist since they limit their protagonists to one event and portray them as specifically not calculated and/or power seeking. They are not fiction in the ordinary sense of the word because they do not have a writer or fourth wall. They are not metanarratives. Trigger-narratives are explicit and spring from an articulated singular accounts rather than form an all-encompassing general sub-current narrative. They cannot be categorized as issue-narratives: trigger-narratives sometimes elicit a response on various issues and generally instill a bigger and more comprehensive expectation for change than issue-narrative. They aim at a new order. What are trigger-narratives then? It seems fair to suggest that sharing partially in each of these forms of narratives is in itself a definition that carries substantial amount of content. If it is true that trigger-narratives are not metanarratives, it is also true that trigger-narratives have the effect of metanarratives. They circumscribe a new sociopolitical arena. Trigger-narratives are not lived-narratives. However, they are a part of a lived-narrative. We know that they do have an issue at their core. We could say, at this point of the argument, that trigger-narratives share in several existing concepts yet fail to be fully and meaningfully subsumed under any of them. This kind of definition would label them as a hybrid concept that exists in the margins and overlapping spaces of other concepts of narratives. It could be enough to justify our new coining. It is not enough, however, in order to understand the phenomena at hand in a manner that allows it to be more than the sum, or the eclectic collection, of parts of other concepts.

Indeed this concluding chapter, unlike the four before it, is not about justification. This is a chapter aiming to outline a new positive direction through which we could attend to our newly defined narratives. Our argument in this chapter will not rely on elimination but rather on a framework that will help us understand these events as conceptual wholes. As the title of this chapter suggests this framework is mythology. Understanding trigger-narrative through the concept of mythology sheds a unifying light on the many different characteristics we enumerated so far. It is most probably true that mythology is not the only framework possible for a unifying explanation of trigger-narratives. The last four chapters and this concluding chapter are all an invitation for further nuanced and attentive elaborations on these and other similar events. Mythology is, however, a perspective that attends to what I think is at the heart of these occurrences. It touched both on their awe-inspiring content and on their 'big-bang' structure. In this chapter we attach this sense of awe mingled with radical surprise to an ancient tradition of fantastic stories of beginnings.

The working hypothesis of this chapter is that there are mythical elements in the events that circle trigger-narratives. Trigger-narratives elicit a reaction that ignites a cosmogenic passion, a sense of sociopolitical creative omnipotence. These are events that are fueled by three specific features that are central to mythological narratives: (a) a great battle with monstrous forces; (b) world creation and finally (c) an air of the fantastic. We begin with a discussion of the definition of myth, the status of myth in contemporary times and cosmogony. We then proceed with a philosophical discussion of monstrosity, ritual and awe. Our understanding of trigger-narratives, I claim, could be deepened and widen if they are viewed as mythical eruptions.

I. Defining Myth

Philosophy has been trying to reassess and rectify its relationship with mythology in contemporary times. The juxtaposition of reason to sacred logos on the one hand, and Enlightenment's scientific logos on the other, made way for a fecund and nuanced approaches and depictions of myths that treat them as one form of communication and comprehension among others.

> Myth is now seen […] as a legitimate dimension of human expression instead of that
> first step in evolution from mythos to logos[276]

This is not to say that the traditional Western caution and disdain with mythology is obsolete. The word "myth" is still used academically and colloquially in a pejorative sense alongside other more balanced uses. *The Oxford Dictionary* gives four meanings to the word "myth" only one of them refers to traditional stories. The other three revolve around the words "fictive", "exaggerated" and "false".[277] Taylor is quoted in this work calling Enlightenment metanarrative of progress a myth.[278] We are unlikely to call a biblical holy-story a myth because a myth might be received as a judgement about the soundness of the bible, and thus perceived as an insult. Bottici's claim, for example, is that treatment of political myth philosophically fails to offer a fully-fledged framework for myths as a fundamental form of comprehension, communication and action but rather subsume it under unprecise concepts such as narratives and symbolism. Her suggestion is that this caution, this "terminological demythologizing",[279] is the product of an association of totalitarian regimes with the political devastating power of a-rational elements.[280] Ricoeur agrees that we cannot be naïve anymore when approaching myth. "Myth willalways be

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[276] David Rasmussen. *Symbol and Interpretation*. (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff,: 1974), 52
[277] "Myth". Oxforddictionaries.com Oxford Dictionaries. *Language Matters*.
[278] See p.127
[279] Honko, Lauri. "The Problem in Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 35
[280] Bottici "The Politics Of Imagination and the Public Role of Religion". *Philosophy & Social Criticism*. 35.8 (2009): 994-8

with us", Ricoeur says, "but we must always approach it critically."[281] Finally, almost every academic account of myth opens with an acknowledgement of this pejorative sense and phobic-ridden history that surrounds discussions of myths. It is clear though that there is an academic development that moves away from the patronizing and fearful stance into a more analytical viewpoint which depicts myth as a legitimate, valuable and relevant participant in the sociopolitical arena today.

If we were asked to impromptu come up with a mythological narrative, it is reasonable to assume that several possible and quite diverse accounts would come to mind. Anything from Genesis to Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* might present itself to those imbued in the Western tradition. It is clear that even within one general cultural context the accounts we might give of myths are likely to be different from one another and perhaps come from various periods as well as several linguistic and cultural sources and forms. How do we organize the conceptual plethora that accompanies the word mythology? The sociologist Percy S. Cohen identifies seven research theories of myth that he thinks are valuable. These theories treat myth as (1) a form of explanation which occurs at a certain development stage of human society and culture; (2) a form of symbolic statement which reflects a particular type of thought, the mythopoeic, at a certain development stage of human society and culture; (3) an expression of the unconscious; (4) a function in creating and maintaining social cohesion; (5) a form of legitimating social institutions and social practices; (6) a form of symbolic statement about social structure, possibly linked with ritual; (7) and, finally structuralist theory which treats myth as a common structure of mind and society. Honko, the Finnish folklorist, adds to this classification four more theories that are concerned with understanding myth as (1) a result of a historical situation; (2) a form of

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[281] Ricoeur in Kearney's "Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds". *Debates in Continental Philosophy*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 120

religious communication and finally (3) as a form of religious genre.[282] These are not lists that claim to be exhaustive, but they do help us map a tremendously varied field and outline in it the path of our argument.

Several relevant things stand out in these classifications: First, the ubiquity of the sociopolitical setting. Myths are stories that are deeply intertwined in the fabric of social life incorporating and integrating a coherent view of the specific sociopolitical world they operate in. Even the psychological research method which decodes myth in relation to the unconscious refers mainly to Jung and neo-Jungian concepts of collective unconscious.[283] Second, the multiplicity of research methods is telling as to the functions of myths. It is possible to produce meaningful research of myth from so many diverse perspectives because "all myth performs a number of functions simultaneously".[284]

> Myths are multidimensional: a myth can be approached from, shall we say, ten different
> angles, some of which may have greater relevance than others depending on the nature
> of the material being studies and the question posed[285]

Much in the same way attempting to pinpoint a universal, essential definition of myth misses the mark of the subject matter. Such a vast and varied topic requires that the analysis applied to it is "both flexible and multiform".[286] This is not to claim every interpretation is possible or that

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[282] Honko, Lauri. "The Problem in Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 46-48. Honko offers twelve research methods. To my understanding nine of them are subsumed under the calcification of Cohen. The twelve research methods that Honko offers are: 1. a source of cognitive categories; 2. a form of symbolic expression. 3. a projection of the subconscious; 4. Integrating/adapting humans to problems of society, culture and nature; 5. Indicator of accepted patterns of behavior; 6. Legitimating social institutions; 7. Marker of social relevance; 8. A mirror of culture; 9. A result of a historical situation; 10. Religious communication; 11. Religious genre; 12. Structuralism.

[283] Cohen, Percy S. "Theories of Myth". *Man. New Series*, 4.3 (September 1969), 340; Honko, Lauri. "The Problem in Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 47

[284] Cohen, Percy S. "Theories of Myth". *Man. New Series*, 4.3 (September, 1969), 351

[285] Honko, Lauri. "The Problem in Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 46-7

[286] Kirk, G.S. "On Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press: 1984), 60

every story could be called a myth, but that the quest for one all-encompassing definition is not the best way to achieve clarity and to widen analytical possibilities.

Let us define the working concept of myth of our argument against some exiting definitions. Ricoeur points out that one of the oldest meanings of the word *mythos* is simply "saying". Myths are first and foremost a form of discourse. To this Ricoeur adds the fact that myth is a fable, a work of fantasy and finally, that it has the structure of a plot.[287] In a later work Ricoeur comments on the temporal cosmogenic aspects of myths. Every calendar, Ricoeur points out, has a 'zero point' which is determined by a founding event.[288] Myth recalls the idea of a 'great time' that envelopes all of reality. The primary function of this 'great time' is to order the times of societies and human beings who live in society in relation to cosmic time.

> [M]ythic time […] initiates a unique, overall scansion of time, by ordering in terms of one another, cycles of different durations, the great celestial cycle, biological recurrences and the rhythms of social life […] In this way myth representations contributed to the institution of calendar time[289]

Cohen concurs with Ricoeur that myths are necessarily fantastic narratives of cosmogonies. He adds that the events that they depict have a sacred quality, involves supernatural beings and depict the origin or a transformation in a dramatic form.[290] Mircea Eliade, similarly to Cohen's additions, defines myth as narration of

> a sacred history [which] relates to an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings'. In other words myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence [291]

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[287] Paul Ricoeur. "Can fictional narratives be true?" *Analecta Husserliana*.. XIV. (Netherlands: Reidel Publishing Company, 1983), 6
[288] Paul Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative I*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), 104-9
[289] Paul Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative III*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 105
[290] Percy S. Cohen. "Theories of Myth". *Man. New Series*, 4.3 September 1969: 337
[291] Mircea Eliade. *Myths, Dreams, Mysteries the Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities*. (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1957), 3

The centrality of supernatural beings in the definition of myth is a contested matter. While most definitions agree cosmogony is a fundamental form of myth the part of other-worldly creature does not enjoy the same status. Honko's definition is quite wide and contains four criteria: form, content, function and context. His aim is to allow for a delimited yet flexible definition that can encompass the different research approached to the study of myth. Narrative, Honko suggests, is the main form of myth but not the only form. Icons, religious behavior and dance could and should also be considered as mythical expressions. The content of myth "in general [contains] information about decisive creative events in the beginning of time".[292] But myths can also be stories that recount

> how our era started, how the goals that we strive to attain are determined and our most
> sacred values codified.[293]

Mythology, through this perspective, is always cosmogenic because even non-cosmogenic stories still point to an origin of a community's identity and thus to the beginning and the creation of its world. It is not, however, fantastic necessarily. The supernatural component, as we can see, is no longer present under this reading. The fantastic and sacred, is turned into "decisive".

> Seen from this point of view the 96th sura of the Koran, the birth of Christ, the life of
> Lenin, Che Gevera's death and Mao's speeches are all material which, under certain
> conditions, can be structured in a way which resembles ancient cosmogenic myths [294]

The 'great time' need not be supernatural but rather could be a documented historical era. Bottici makes a similar point about the sacred and the supernatural when she says that

> myths rely on figurative tools such as figures and images, but they do not necessarily do
> so at the service of any particular heroic content. To put it rather crudely, we do not need

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[292] Honko, Lauri. "The Problem in Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 50
[293] Ibid. 51
[294] Ibid. 51

primitive blood rituals in order to have a myth. Everything can be an object of myth, just as everything can be an object of poetry.[295]

Bottici's definition is much wider than the others' of course. She situates myth between the explanation form of science and the absolute answers that religion seeks to provide. Unlike religions, myths need not give purpose to the question of the meaning of life. They simply let us know how it all began. Unlike science myths do not just name things in the world around us. They ground them in a manner that makes the world, closer to us. They make the world a place that we can call our own. This 'bringing closer' of myth is something Plato uses explicitly in the *Republic* when he offers the Noble Lie. Socrates' myth makes the earth a mother and the inhabitants of Athens siblings, family. It does not offer the reason for the existence of mother earth. Like family, it asks that we accept this world as ours in care, responsibility, commitment and obedience. This form of grounding Bottici names, echoing Hans Blumenberg, significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*)

> Significance […] situates itself precisely between two extremes: meanings on the one hand (the *Sinnfrage*: 'What is this?') and the sense of 'Being' on the other (the *Seinsfrage*: 'What is the sense of being?'). Significance is not (just) meaning, because there is meaning every time that there is language. But significance is not necessarily the question about the sense of the being either, because some myths do not aim to provide explanations of the ultimate meaning of being.[296]

Myths, then, according to Bottici's reading are cosmogenic to a degree and definitely do not necessitate the supernatural. In fact "everything, even the most banal event, can be the object of a mythical narrative."[297] We will not define myth this widely but it is important to note how varied and dynamic the definitions of myths could be.

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[295] Chiara Bottici. *A Philosophy of Political Myth*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007),112
[296] Ibid., 125
[297] Ibid., 126

This overview aims at describing the conceptual possibilities in the arena in which we are to argue for understanding trigger-narratives as a form of myth. What is needed for this analysis is not so much a comprehensive definition of myth but rather a delineation of the aspects of myth that are relevant to trigger-narratives. Our working definition of myths here is that myths are narratives that can be expressed in other forms as well (images, videos, dance, prayer, action etc.) and which convey a creative moment of a beginning of a community. These narratives, supernatural or not, have a fantastic and awe-inspiring air about them. Note that in our definition we distinguish between the sense of awe and the supernatural. A sense of awe and a sense of the fantastic could emerge in circumstances in which there is no claim for supernatural revelation or intervention. One could have her breathtaking reaction to an unexpected political event that aims to change the world. Our introduction to this work points to this sense of awe as a crucial aspect of trigger-narratives.

Our interest, however, does not lie with all myths that can be subsumed under our definition. We are interested in a particular form of myths. Myths emerge most often in oral traditions and they tend to have some mnemonic aids that are expressed among other ways in the form of recognizable formulas and themes.

> Formulas help implement rhythmic discourse and also act as mnemonic aids in their
> own right, as set expressions circulating through the mouths and ears of all[298]

We are interested in myths that answer our definition and in addition portray the formula of a battle of a heroine or a hero with a monster.

II.   Monsters and Monsters$_2$

A hero's great struggle with a monster is not usually a constitutive part the definition of myth. Even definitions that require the existence on supernatural beings might not depict

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[298] Walter J. Ong. *Orality and Literacy: 30th Anniversary Edition*. (NY: Routledge, 1982), 34

struggles between them and heroines. Two things are crucial though in this regard if we are to

understand the status heroic struggles with monsters: first, myths work in and through narrative

networks and they often have several versions. "There are no single myths, which are given once

and for all."[299] Myths are repeated in several accounts and styles, sometimes adapting overtime

to new circumstance and sometimes existing concurrently. This complex layered branching was,

for example, a cause for concern to Lévi-Strauss and others who sought to interpret myth.

> [A] point which has worried the specialists until now, namely, that in the earlier
> (Homeric) versions of the Oedipus myth, some basic elements are lacking, such as
> Jocasta killing herself and Oedipus piercing his own eyes.[300]

Lévi-Strauss' solution was to collapse all versions into one form. These events, he says, "can

easily be integrated". In fact this integration is propounded as a solution to a problem

> which has, so far, been one of the main obstacles to the progress of mythological studies,
> namely, the quest for the true version, or the earlier one. On the contrary, we define the
> myth as consisting of all its versions; or to put it otherwise, a myth remains the same as
> long as it is felt as such.[301]

One could reduce the many versions of the same myth into one main story structure.

Alternatively, one could object[302] and argue that Lévi-Strauss' attempt "to catch the invariants of

myth"[303] leaves him entrapped scientific logos which does not facilitate or truly accounts for the

multidimensional and web-like character of myth as a subject matter. What is important for our

argument is to recognize that myth is a story that echoes and overlaps with versions of itself in

which certain events, persons and monsters, may appear and disappear. Second, myths are

mostly located within a greater storyline. Oedipus and the Sphinx are the very tangible

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[299] Chiara Bottici. *A Philosophy of Political Myth*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7
[300] Claude Lévi-Strauss. *Structural Anthropology*. (New York: Basic Books. 1963), 216
[301] Ibid., 216-7. Emphasis in the source
[302] E.g. Kirk, G.S. "On Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press: 1984) , 61 53 ; Honko, Lauri. "The Problem in Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984)
[303] Chiara Bottici. *A Philosophy of Political Myth*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007),104

background of Sophocles' *Antigone* as well as Euripides' lost play with the same title and *The Phoenician Women*. Through family connections, the timeline, the setting and the interacting and overlapping topics myth is never a single storyline. Thus, if we are to get back to our monsters and heroines, the heroine of one storyline and her battle with a monster can echo in another version or serve as a background story. Even if such battles do not figure in every myth as the act of creation does, the presence of such struggles of heroes and heroines with mythical monsters is extensive and substantial in this interconnected, productive and repetitive arena.

The functions of monsters and heroes, like the many overlapping functions of myth we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, stretch from the representation of psychological unconscious to the sociopolitical legitimacy of behavior and institutions. As part of mythology monsters can be said to be the projection of our repressed fears or to symbolize the chaos that was fought off in the creation of a community in order to uphold the existing order as necessary and lifesaving. Ong suggests that monsters and heroes, which he characterizes as "heavy" and "bizarre" respectively, figure much in the mythological narrative network because they serve as mnemonic tools.

> Oral memory works effectively with 'heavy' characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and commonly public. Thus the noetic economy of its nature generates outsize figures, that is, heroic figures, not for romantic reasons or reflectively didactic reasons but for much more basic reasons: to organize experience in some sort of permanently memorable form. Colorless personalities cannot survive oral mnemonics […]it is easier to remember the Cyclops than a two-eyed monster, or Cerberus than an ordinary one-headed dog.[304]

If we accept this interpretation, monsters have a paradoxical role. On the one hand, they serve as the exact opposite of chaos and the subconscious since they uphold the ability to remember and communicate the epic oral tradition. On the other, the content of the story will depict them as

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[304] Walter J. Ong. *Orality and Literacy: 30th Anniversary Edition*. (NY: Routledge, 1982), 68

endangering the existing order. Of course heroes and monsters survived the transition into writing extremely well. Witches, Wizards, dragons, monsters, dark lords of rings and aliens figure much in modern and contemporary storylines. Some cosmogonies tie the creation of the world or a sociopolitical arena with the sacrifice of a primordial monster.[305] In fact, this theme is so prevalent that in the past some monarchs whose historical existence is not questioned have taken on a mythical persona of the hero defying a monster.[306] Eliade gives several examples for such processes: The Serbian king Marko Kraljevic (1371-1395) in Yguslavia was fully incorporated into Yugoslavian heroic poetry for killing a three-headed dragon. Dieudonné de Gozon the grand master of the Knights of Rhodes (1346-1353) was named "Dragon Slayer" because it was believed that he killed the dragon of Malpasso. In short monsters and the heroes that rise to defeat them are one of the most familiar and repeated mythical paradigms.[307]

We already discussed in length the characteristics of our heroines and heroes. We pointed out that they are depicted as spontaneous, lacking in powerful connections and overall their description emphasized them as vulnerable and unlikely mythical protagonists. Let us now examine the concept of monstrosity. In what follows I will use Kant's description of the sublime in order to delineate the concept of the monstrous that I am intending here. The most fundamental and important difference between the sublime and the beautiful Kant point out, is that the latter is a revelation of nature's purposiveness and the former a revelation of its counter-purposiveness. The beautiful object appears as if it is adapted to our powers of judgement; the sublime

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[305] Ibid. 20
[306] Mirca Eliade. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Harper Torchrooks, 1954), 38-40
[307] Mirca Eliade. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Harper Torchrooks, 1954), 37

Contravene the ends of our power of judgement, to be ill-adapted to our faculty of presentation, and to do violence, as it were, to the imagination, and yet it is judged all the more sublime on that account[308]

The sublime in fact is not a representation at all. "[I]t is the attunement of the spirit *evoked* by a particular representation."[309] What stands as the essence of the experience of the sublime is the realization of the power of our sense-transcending faculty in the face of a representation that resists our sense-dependent faculties. This comes about through the mere estimation of magnitude. Magnitude estimation in the final account is based on intuition. Measurements are a systematization of a primary intuition which means that "all estimation of the magnitude of objects of nature is in the last resort aesthetic (i.e. subjectively and not objectively determined)."[310] However, while the possibility of the mathematical representation of this primary intuition is infinite, the intuitive ground of measurements is finite. There are infinite numbers of possible sizes but we could only grasp objects intuitively to a certain degree and amount. Comprehension, the ability to grasp "the many in one intuition, [has] a greatest point beyond which it cannot go."[311] Apprehension, on the other hand, is limitless. The point of divergent between the finite nature of intuition and the potential infinity of the faculty of reason is where Kant's concept of the sublime (*erhaben*) transpires. Coming across an intuition that one cannot estimate or grasp, awakens, emphasizes and makes clear the function and power of the faculty of reason that could account for the infinite regardless of the shortcomings of imagination.

Kant does not speak a lot about the monstrous (*das Ungeheure*). The word is mentioned in the *Critique of Judgement* but three times all in the same excerpt and in connection to the

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[308] Kant, I. *The Critique of Pure Judgement*. (1790) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 76
[309] Ibid., 81 my emphasis.
[310] Ibid., 82
[311] Ibid., 85

sublime. "An object is monstrous if by its magnitude it annihilates the end which its concept constitutes."[312] The monstrous has a grounding concept but it cannot be intuitively comprehended. Because it is too big to grasp in one intuition, we fail to conceptualize it. We reach the limit of our ability to comprehend (apprehension, as we said, could go on endlessly regardless of the lacking intuition). Elaborating on this border between comprehension and incomprehension, Kant offers another degree of object comprehension: the colossal.

> The colossal is the mere presentation of a concept which is almost too great for presentation, i.e. borders on the relatively monstrous[313]

The colossal almost defies comprehension but in the final account succeeds in the process of comprehension. The experience of the sublime, however, does not have a grounding concept since it is an aesthetic judgment. The sublime, Kant points out, cannot be works of art where the form and size are determined by humans. It can also not be a familiar object of nature because such objects (e.g. animals) have a concept and a determinate ends. The sublime must be raw nature involving magnitude that is not inspiring fear. "Nature[…] is sublime in such of its phenomena as in their intuition convey the idea of their infinity,"[314] which could only happen through failure of our imagination to aesthetically estimate a certain magnitude. It is a moment in which we abandon ourselves in front of an excessive intuition of magnitude alone and find our imagination inadequate in comparison to the immense power of our reason. It is pleasurable and moving, Kant suggests, for us to find how independent and strong our supersensible faculty is and how "its idea of noumenon"[315] could serve as a comprehending tool to sensually non-comprehendible phenomena. It is a proof of our superiority over the senses and Kant even goes as far as to suggest over nature itself.

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[312] Ibid., 86
[313] Ibid., 83
[314] Ibid.,85
[315] Ibid., 85

Now Kant admits two things that dictate much of the relation between the monstrous and the sublime. First, the experience of the sublime necessitates a certain elevation of "the forces of the soul"[316] over the usual sensually informed epistemological perspective. Second, although the experience of the sublime is grounded in what Kant refers to as universal human nature it is a product of culture.[317] Lacking a certain cultural orientation might make a potential experience of the sublime into the simpler and more accessible experience of the monstrous. Abandoning the grounding concept of an intuition and the physical fear is an acquired skill and that means that moving from an experience of the monstrous to the experience of the sublime is not a given. Kant goes to certain length in order to protect his sublime from "the monstrous potential inherent in it."[318] This attempt to limit the sublime by associating it with a certain mood, a certain abandoning of every-day perspective, makes for a fragile border between the two experiences.

Kearney voices a concern about this fragile border and the contemporary amalgamations, postmodern and new age, of the sublime with the monstrous.[319] The concern is that such mixtures equating that which exceeds all form in terms of end and ground allows for little words, the possibility of discerning and almost no action in the face of evil.

> In [these versions] of the sublime, the upwardly transcendent finds its mirror image in the downwardly monstrous. Both extremes are so marked by the experience of radical alterity that they transgress the limits of representation […], the two sometimes become virtually indistinguishable. By this account, horror is just as 'ineffable' as the vertical transcendence of God […]. There is, in short, an apophasis of the monstrous analogous to an apophasis of the divine.[320]

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[316] Ibid., 91
[317] Ibid., 95
[318] Barbara Freeman "'Frankenstein' with Kant: A Theory of Monstrosity, or the Monstrosity of Theory." *SubStance*, 16.1.52 (1987), 22
[319] Richard Kearney. "Evil, Monstrosity and The Sublime". *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. 57.3 (Jul.- Sep., 2001), 485-502
[320] Richard Kearney. *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*. (London: Routledge, 2003), 88

Kearney's concern is three-fold: first, the mixture of exuberance and horror that is entailed by this combination of the radically good and the radically evil, makes the monstrously sublime attractive. Second, if we are to approach the zone of neither boundaries nor definitions, we might lose the concept of subjectivity and with it the option of agency. And finally, this form of the monstrous-sublime refers to "an archaic and unnameable non-object that defies language"[321] which leaves us literally aimless in front of great atrocities. Indeed what is it, if anything, that differentiates the monstrous from the sublime, but a certain kind of culturally acquired mood? Our concept of the monstrous in this work emerges against the fragile border that stretches between the monstrous and the sublime. It transpires in a form of a decision, the activist's decision. I will name it monstrous$_2$ in this section in order to avoid confusion in terminology.

In the face of imagination's failure, the sublime is a movement of retreat inwards. Bracketing fear for our lives and our finite perspective we turn into the most abstract faculty and there find infinity and conceptual strength. But is this retreat away from intuition, away from finitude, and toward reason really a sign of power? The experience of the sublime is a sharp decision in favor of reason and recoiling away from intuition. Monstours$_2$, I would like to suggest, involves a choice in the other direction. And this choice, the choice to proceed in the attempt to comprehend intuitively, diverts one from the silent position that an ineffable monstrosity or sublimity demand. The monstrous$_2$ emerges when we insist on the movement toward the imagination comprehension of the manifold in one against all odds and in the face of difficulty and repeated failures. What the monstrous$_2$ entails, and the sublime moves away from, is the possibility of action.

The imagery associated with the sublime and the monstrous is our point of departure. The two occupy different realms of metaphors, descriptions and images. Kant recognizes the

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[321] Ibid., 89

closeness of his concept of the sublime to the concept of God. He even comments on the Jewish Law prohibition of God-like images in connection to his concept of the sublime.[322] The sublime can "never be anything more than a negative presentation."[323] It is a feeling emanating from thrusting the sensuous aside. Kant, however, does differentiate between the experience of the sublime where the resistance of our reason to the lack of intuition feels us with omnipotence and the experience of God in front of which we do not exercise such resistance and do not enjoy a feeling of omnipotence but rather retreat into obedience. The explanation for Kant lies in the fact that our hearts are rarely pure and so we are in a state of fear in front of God. Fear, as we already said, does not allow for the distance required by the aesthetic judgement of the sublime.

> The individual that is actually in a state of fear, finding in himself good reason to be so, because he is conscious of offending with his evil disposition against a might directed by a will at once irresistible and just, is far from being in the frame of mind for admiring divine greatness, for which a mood of calm reflection and a quite free judgement are required.[324]

One corollary of this remark is that if it was possible that we were to stand in front of God with completely pure hearts then, according to Kant, the monotheistic God is an experience of a sublime. The sublime than answers the formless, ubiquity normally attributed to the monotheistic God. Additionally, we can observe that both positions, in front of God and the concept of the sublime, could be interpreted as recoiling rather than resisting. A retreat into abstract conceptualization or a position of fear in front an omnipotent God, are closer to reverence, withdrawal and acceptance than to resistance and power. It is not clear that the ability to apply the concept of infinity on a resisting intuition is truly a sign of greatness or of resistance. It is fair

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[322] "Perhaps there is no more sublime passage in the Jewish Law than the commandment: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven or on earth, or under the earth, etc." *Critique of Pure Judgement*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 104
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid., 93-4

to assume that whatever this conceptualization-based resistance is, it is not easily or obviously associated with action-based resistance. And so we end up with an imagery gamut on which one end is a non-comprehendible frustrating chaotic intuition and on the other end an abstractly conceptualized concept of infinity.

The imagery of the monstrous is complex and elaborate. It is not usually chaotic although it does inspire fear. Monsters occupy a completely different mode of description than the monotheistic God. To begin with, they usually have a form. It is heavy and bizarre as Ong says, but it is a form. Their form might be hard to comprehend or understand but monsters$_2$[325] as we usually encounter then in stories are not completely foreign to human intuitive comprehension process. Monsters$_2$ unlike the sublime, are not completely other worldly. They are also not beyond comprehension once and for all. Comprehension, as Kant himself points out when he offers the concepts of the colossal, the monstrous and the sublime, comes in degrees. The monstrous$_2$ is neither a possible adjective of the sublime, nor its evil content. The monsters$_2$ requires a completely different mood. It does not abandon the sensible when it fails and it does not retreat to reason alone because the intuition is excessive. The monstrous$_2$ is a position in which the imagination stands on the border of comprehension insisting to intuitively comprehend against repeated failures. The sublime is associated formally with the monotheistic God. Namely, it defies *in principle* conceptual thinking. In front of it we are either in awe or trembling. By the monstrous$_2$, on the other hand, I mean a response to intuition that is not fully graspable in one intuitive moment yet does not abandon this frustrating experience in favor of completely abstract conceptualization of the infinite which relives the frustration and replaces it with a feeling of omnipotence. Think of the Sphinx, for example. The Sphinx has a human head and a lion's body. It asks riddles and administers cruel punishments. The Sphinx is clearly not

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[325] I.e. the concept of monstrosity I am propounding in this work.

sublime. It is a monster though. Its strangeness might mean that we would fail to grasp its nature and concept fully in one intuition, but it would not make sense to say that it is beyond grasp. We slowly come to understand the ways it works, that parallel concepts we know, and ways that are new. We might never understand it fully. It might be frustrating to find out that we cannot fathom it as one whole, but we insist on the parts we do understand just the same. We stay with intuition and its frustrating complexity. The monstrous$_2$, which answers to popular imagery of monsters, is not the evil twin or another name for the Sublime or God. Monstrosity$_2$ is more like the Greek gods. The gods and the monsters have an image. The gods are mighty and other but they have anthropomorphic characteristics too: Although they can be immortal they can be born. They can be jealous. They can act stupidly. They can be deceived. They can be punished. They sometimes depend on humans' admiration and sacrifice. In short, they have flaws and feelings. Monsters$_2$ are many times in forms of recognizable animals mingled into a hybrid, extinct animals or deformed versions of existing animals: a dog with three heads, a crocodile with wings etc. What they are absolutely not is beyond concepts and comprehension. Rather than comparing the monstrous$_2$ to God, we could compare it to the concept of an angel, for example. One does not usually go into a heroic battle with the monotheistic Supreme Being. Heroic mythical struggles happen between a heroine and a monster or an angel. Jacob didn't fight God. He struggled with an angel. David didn't struggle with Lyotard's *Hamakom*,[326] he fought with a giant. In the face of great evil Job laments but does not pull-out his sword to fight the forces that torture him. There is nothing to fight. The completely omnipotent Other is not a fair or possible struggle. Like the sublime, the creatures that can be called monsters$_2$ (or angels$_2$) are others.

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[326] Jean-Francoise Lyotard. "The Sublime and the Avant Guard". *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. (California: Stanford University Press, 1988)

However, they are of an order that could be, at great danger, opposed and won over. Monotheistic Gods are not of this order. They do not invite struggles.

Now, obviously, the concept of monstrosity$_2$ that we propounded in the last excerpt is different from the concept of monstrosity that could be used in a natural amalgamation with the sublime. We cannot easily amalgamate the ineffable monotheistic God with a three-headed dragon or a Sphinx. "Creatures which hang around borders, and disrespect their integrity", says Kearney "are traditionally known as monsters".[327] Indeed monsters hang around borders. The sublime, according to the distinction we wish to maintain, hangs far away from these borders, in the land where the borders or concepts for that matter, mean nothing at all. The "uncontainable excess"[328] that is signaled my monsters, has degrees. Some things are uncontainable in one comprehending intuition. Still, with effort and more than the simple one comprehending intuition they could be fathomed, resisted and made *more containable*. The oscillation between the monstrous and the sublime, between the retreat to reason and the insistence on a confrontation with the complex excessive existence offers exactly what Kant suggests: an acquired skill. Insisting to comprehend the excessive is as culturally acquired as comprehending it through the rational concept of infinity. It's a choice. And it is a choice that has corollaries in the field of action. "Evil is basically *alienation* – something predetermined by forces beyond us".[329] The extent of these evil forces, their meaning and the way we wish to go about comprehending them dictates the gamut of our possible action and reaction.

Kearney indeed suggests three ways of grasping, making sense and resisting these forces: (a) Practical understanding, which attempts to discern between good and evil with a view to providing a ground for action against evil; (b) working through, which through testimonies of

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[327] Richard Kearney. *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*. (London: Routledge, 2003), 119
[328] Ibid., 3
[329] Ibid.,, 84. Emphasis in the source.

victims and mourning purges and turns "a position of mute helplessness to acts of revolt and self-renewal"[330] and finally (c) pardon, possibly a miracle, that is beyond reason but not irrational, and which can break of cycles of evil.[331] To these we could add Ricoeur's point about testimony and remembrance. He suggests in the context of incredible evil: "Horror isolates events by making them incomparable, incomparably unique and uniquely unique."[332] However, this isolation, says Ricoeur, cannot be posed as mutually antithetical to historical explanation. Ricoeur's suggestion is that fiction can help us remember in a manner that does not forget the victims and is not drives solely by scientific curiosity which sometimes leans to the exotic.[333] In the same way the epic remembered the ancient heroes and gave them eternal fame, fiction can remember the contemporary victims and give their "mundane" sufferings a stable and central status in the hall of remembrance. Our distinction between the monstrous$_2$ and the sublime adds a fifth approach. When faced with a great evil we are many times presented with a choice. We can respond to the experience of the excessive as if it is in the form of the evil sublime: concept-less, without words and many times removed from anything humans could possibly comprehend or fight. This is likely to elicit silent and reverence on our part, maybe a lament. This is the amalgamation Kearny and Ricoeur are arguing against. We could, on the other hand, respond to this evil as if it was a monster$_2$ and not a monstrous-sublime: not quite comprehendible in one intuition but hanging on the borders of what is knowable despite its strangeness and otherness. This is likely to elicit a completely other response. Kearney speaks of this response when he explains that

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[330] Ibid., 104
[331] Ibid., 100
[332] Paul Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative III.* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 188
[333] Ibid., 189

> Working-through the experience of evil - narratively, practically, cathartically - enables us to take the allure out of evil so that we can begin to distinguish between possible and impossible modes of protest and resistance.[334]

We can resist, struggle, and maybe even change the monstrous$_2$ because we insist not look at it with awe and reverence. And it is a matter of choice as it is a matter of discerning that we go about adopting this perspective. The monstrous and the sublime are a matter of a certain mood we abandon ourselves too or refuse to abandon ourselves to. Think about the *Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy insists to treat the ineffable wizard as a monster$_2$ that one could rise up to. She meets creatures that fail to engender the same interpretation and thus live in fear and trembling, heart-less and brain-less. They cannot resist the almighty and as a consequence live as powerless in their world. Dorothy summons her human qualities of resistance and insists to face the monster$_2$ only to find out it's a man in a room. If we treat evil as a form of the sublime we are right to be silent in its presence. Who in her right senses would start that struggle? If we treat evil as a monster$_2$, we might like Oedipus and others defeat it, or we might like Dorothy and others discover it was only very badly behaving human being. Choosing the interpretation of evil as a monster$_2$ is better for those committed and interested in action.

Resisting a monstrous$_2$ is not always a clear cut issue. In fact it rarely is. We do not really have dragons. Our dogs have but one head. We have political orders, norms, institutions, wars, political leaders and we must decide how we treat the evil that comes our way. Kafka's K. abides by the rules of his world as if it was the monstrously-sublime. He silently remains lost in the evil system. We could claim that he could have rebelled against a monster$_2$ tearing it down insisting it was made simply by women and men. But it is hard to tell if he would have triumphed. Monsters$_2$ could be quite deadly. Oedipus, for example, answers the Sphinx's question. He wins

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[334] Richard Kearney. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* "Evil, Monstrosity and The Sublime". 57.3 (Jul. - Sep., 2001), 501-2

against the visible monster$_2$ with wit and reason. Yet, others before him who attempted it died. Furthermore another monster, less obvious, less rational, crueler, is taking hold of Oedipus life at the same moment that he succeeds in defying the Sphinx. Oedipus moves from the hands of monster$_2$ to the hands of something closer to the monstrous-sublime, fate. Trying to resist it, as Oedipus did after the Oracle, is unsuccessful and futile. Neo fights the Matrix. Like a rebellious version of Kafka's K. he finds the weakness of the ubiquitous system and resists. He soon becomes a part of the system. He soon after defies it. But did he really defy it, the question looms? Is he ever outside the Matrix? Was the winning but a sublimely monstrous trick? Arendt makes a similar point when she describes Ghandi's struggle against the British occupation of India.

> If Gandhi's enormously powerful and successful strategy of nonviolent resistance had met with a different enemy – Stalin's Russia, Hitler's Germany even prewar Japan, instead of England - the outcome would not have been decolonization but massacre and submission[335]

Now of course Arendt (and this work with her) is not claiming Hitler, Stalin or prewar Japan were monstrous-sublime. They were all men in rooms. The point Arendt is making demonstrates her distinction between power as the human ability to act in concert, on the one hand, and violence as the instrumental means to an end. Still this is an excellent historical example for a moment in which one must evaluate a course of action. Incidentally what was standing in front of Gandhi turned out to be a conquerable monster$_2$. But of course he did not know that at the time. This is what makes his act so breathtakingly courageous. *He simply insisted to read the situation in that way.* This interpretation dictated a possible course of resistance. What would have stood in front of him had he been in Germany, Russia and prewar Japan could have also been interpreted as either a monstrous-sublime that will never yield or a monster$_2$ that might.

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[335] Hannah Arendt. *On Violence*. (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1969), 53

Arendt is most probably right that the nonviolent resistance would not have lasted long in these arenas. This would have been a lost battle. History, of course, proved that Stalin's Russia, Hitler's Germany and prewar Japan were all monsters$_2$ that could be defeated. The decision to act or retreat is many times a question of life and death. History, fiction and myth show that being the one who challenges the beast is not a guarantee for longevity especially if one happened to win. Ghandi and Luther King did not die of natural causes. If we return to the concern brought up by Kearney and Ricoeur about the amalgamation and identification of the monstrous and the sublime, the inability to discern in real time could and maybe even should deter one from acting in rebellion at specific moments in the present. It need not deter one from referring to such events as monster$_2$ in the present and in their aftermath. Every event that has an aftermath is not sublime. It is monstrous$_2$ which can be evil enough. We should in other words speak, conceptualize and seek to comprehend even of these historical evils that at the time were very similar to the monstrous-sublime. In the final account, we should not forget, they turned out to be a conquerable monster$_2$ made up from the deeds and thoughts of men. Kant insisted artifacts could never be monstrously-sublime. Nothing made by humans should ever be titled ineffable. Anything we made which is evil we should be able to summon our powers and struggle to undo. Treating the monstrous$_2$ as sublime in real time, could be a wise decision. One should attempt to discern what course of action is best at each situation rather than react automatically. Treating the monstrous$_2$ as sublime when all danger is gone is unnecessary and irresponsible at best.

Trigger-narratives, we wish to suggest, are exactly the making of this decision. They are a reminder and a proof that we have a choice. Our trigger-narrative heroines and heroes insist on challenging a great force: they are rebelling individuals facing a great monster$_2$. Against the great

force of an unjust practice, Parks, Bouazizi and Leef stood in their vulnerability and insisted to voice their protest. In fact, they demanded from the great force what the gods usually create and guard: they demanded nothing less than a different world. Their voice, human and godly at the same time, refused to be silenced. Their act inspires awe because it is exactly the act that does not yield in the face of great danger as if it is standing in front a sublime. It is an act that says "this evil is not in the form of a sublime - this is a human made monster$_2$". Against a mighty monstrous force that oppressed them and the people around them they turned their suffering into action in one awe inspiring stroke.

Our heroes resemble a mythical formula of a hero fighting a great monster, defying and starting a new world, or political era thereafter. But myths are paradigmatically a matter of the past. Indeed most regularly they are a matter of the far and ancient past. How could we possibly discuss the dynamics of trigger-narratives as they unfold and relate them to myths? What is the connection between this familiar and moving form and the world changing eruption that follows it?

III.   Myths of the Present: Ritual and Awe

Rituals are a return to the moment of awe. They are communal commemorations of a great past. They echo and act-out myth's most basic characteristic as a sociopolitical narrative that refers to a beginning of a community. Although rituals are not a necessary condition for a narrative to be considered a myth,[336] they are a common context. Ritual repetition, central in Eliade's definition of the function of myth, is endowed with the power of the great past.

> [T]he time of any ritual coincides with the mythical time of the 'beginning'. Through
> repetition of the cosmogonic act, concrete time, in which the construction takes place, is

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[336] In the enumeration of research methods at the beginning of this chapter, only one method (#6) which designates myth as a statement about the social structure includes the possibility of ritual.

projected into mythical time, *in illo tempore* when the foundation of the world occurred.[337]

Such rituals are believed to reinstate the powers of the gods, the ancestors, or the heroes that stand at the heart of the making of this great past.

> Ritualistic recounting of myths of origin were thought to repair the fractures of the present by invoking some primordial event which occurred at the birth of time – inilo tempora - and so revive a feeling of primordial oneness and belonging[338]

In ritual we create the world *again*. We witness together, in a communal event, the great creative powers that remind us of the time during which our world didn't exist and came in to being. The multidimensional dynamic aspect of myth is complemented by the practice of timeless stability which could be interpreted as a form of longing to the eternal and immortal.

> A rock reveals itself to be sacred because its very existence is a hierophany: incompressible, invulnerable, it is that which man is not. It resists time; its reality is coupled with perenniality.[339]

What I would like to do in this section is delve into the characteristics of myth and ritual that are connected to creativity, action and radical new beginnings rather than a sense of a-historical eternal return that encourages irrational submission. Rituals are not only an affirmation of our accepted social conduct, the legitimacy of our institution, our preference of sociopolitical topics and concerns and finally, our values and identities, they are also a reminder of the vulnerability of the present, of the possibility of creation and change.

There are ritualistic processes in modern times. We might not think about them as ritual but nonetheless they exhibit many parallels

> [R]ituals such as elections are social routines through which [the models that a society or social group constructs of itself and for itself are reproduced within society. Indeed,

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[337] Mirca Eliade. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Harper Torchbooks, 1954), 19
[338] Kearney *On Stories*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 87
[339] Mirca Eliade. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Harper Torchrooks, 1954), 4

by virtue merely of their repetition, rituals powerfully contribute to reinforcing the circularity of political processes[340]

Procedures hold the institutions of the sociopolitical arena firm through repetition. A feeling that a certain procedure was not fully performed causes unease. President Obama taking his oath for the second time in the inauguration of 2008 because he rearranged "a couple of words in the oath after being incorrectly prompted by the chief justice"[341] is a good example. Any mistake in the ritual carries meaning as to the validly of the power it actually has and the legitimacy and stability of the institutions involved. The power of ritual is not only deep, it is also wide. The sense of a community that ritual reinstates can run through the ages and across continents. English-speakers hearing the words "earth-to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" in a funeral ceremony, for example, get a "ghostly intimation, a simultaneity across homogenous, empty time [coming] from an as-it-were ancestral 'Englishness."[342]

Of course this immutability of ritual is not absolute. Rituals can and do change theirs meanings, audiences and the actions performed during ceremonies. But such changes are dramatic since they touch of the most essential function of ritual: preserving and upholding what was, as a living reality in the present. Think for example of the issue of ordaining women as Rabbi's, or the issue of the possibility and status of gay marriages. Both of these examples revolve around a ritual. A change evokes deep feeling of fear and anger in some, and a deep feeling of regeneration in others. These reactions demonstrate that ritual still holds the power of defining the community as a return *and* as a creator.

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[340] Bottici, Chiara. *A Philosophy of Political Myth*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 257
[341] Jeff Zeleny, "I Really Do Swear, Faithfully: Obama and Roberts Try Again" *The New York Times – Politics*. January 21, 2009
[342] Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin And Spread Of Nationalism.* (London: Verso, 1983), 149

The description so far can give us a sense of the weight and power that ritual, the reenactment of certain myths, has. Now let us look into the ways in which myth and ritual, so deeply intertwined with our lives, are connected to the world of action. On the one hand, ritual, the acting out of a mythical story is a defense of the world order against chaos,[343] the anchoring of the "present in the past", or offering an absolute point of reference for legitimizing existing institutions.[344] On the other hand, following Ricœur's point in his concept of mimesis$_3$ narratives can do the exact opposite. In fact, according to mimesis$_3$, narratives are said to come to express their full meaning when they challenge reality with an alternative. Fiction and history can challenge the present with possible futures. They can be catalysts of change. Indeed, at the stage of mimesis$_3$, Ricoeur assigns myths a similar status to other forms of texts that he examines. Like every narrative myth too can challenge the existing order.

> Poetry and myth are not just nostalgia for some forgotten world. They constitute a *disclosure* of unprecedented world an opening into other *possible* worlds which transcend the established limits of our *actual* world[345]

Myth offers itself as a horizon for creative contemporary interpretation. Yet, Ricoeur recognizes that myth operates differently in the present than other narratives. First, in his description of mimesis$_2$ Ricoeur differentiates between traditional stories such as folklore and myth and more contemporary stories which are the subject matter of *Time and Narrative,* history and fiction. Tradition, says Ricoeur, is founded on a relationship between sedimentation and innovation. The former is history or previous innovative works that was covered over by time. Narrative traditions (such as the Hebrew and the Christian, the Celtic, Germanic, Icelandic and Slavic and

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[343] Honko, Lauri. "The Problem in Defining Myth". *Sacred Narrative, Readings in the Theory of Myth*. (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 49
[344] Cohen, Percy S. "Theories of Myth". *Man. New Series*, 4.3 September 1969: 349-50
[345] *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*. Richard Kearney, ed. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. (London, Sage Publications, 1996), 124

individual works such as the *Iliad,* and Oedipus) inform our narrative understanding and configuration as paradigms. These narratives

> furnish the rules for subsequent experimentation within the narrative field. These rules change under the pressure of new inventions but they change slowly and even resist change[346]

It is within this set of relatively stable forms that innovation of mimesis$_2$ acts. Myth, says Ricoeur, is closest to the stable pole of sedimentation. Only to the extent that we distance ourselves from forms of traditional narratives does deviation and innovation become the more prevalent phenomena.[347] To summarize, myths are different from history and fiction in the stage of configuration where they are relatively slow to respond to circumstances and thus serve as infrastructure and inspiration. In the stage of mimesis$_3$, as we saw Ricoeur suggest, they act like every other narrative in their ability to challenge reality and offer new possible worlds. I would like to ask if it is possible that myths are evocative in a different way in the stage of mimesis$_3$ as well. In fact I would like to offer a perspective that describes them as possibly more mobilizing than other forms of narratives. We know from experience that evoking foundation events of a community resonates strongly in the political arena. The Republican Tea-Party Movement probably chose its name because it wanted to resonate with the story of a beginning. This is not a rare political strategy and manifests itself within progressive and conservative contexts. President Obama evoked the immigrant status of the first Europeans that came to America when speaking of the way we should treat immigrants today.

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[346] Paul Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative I.* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984),69
[347] This should be qualified. While it is true that Ricoeur addresses myth as a hidden nucleus and a ground, he also makes very clear that

> Only those myths are genuine which can be reinterpreted in terms of *liberation*[…] we should perhaps sharpen this critical criterion to include only those myths which have as their horizon the liberation of humanity *as a whole.* Liberation cannot be exclusive." Ricoeur in Kearney's "Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds". *Debates in Continental Philosophy*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 120

Just about every nation in the world, to some extent, admits immigrants. But there's something unique about America. We don't simply welcome new immigrants, we don't simply welcome new arrivals - we are born of immigrants. That is who we are. Immigration is our origin story. And for more than two centuries, it's remained at the core of our national character; it's our oldest tradition. It's who we are. It's part of what makes us exceptional. After all, unless your family is Native American, one of the first Americans, our families -- all of our families - come from someplace else[348]

Evoking a founding event or a great time resonates with deeply held beliefs about values, identity and calls upon us to respond in a certain way. This response could be one upholding the past and calling for conserving age-old habits but it could also be a call for a change in policy and political behavior.

It is true, however, that ritual, the reenacting of these narratives in the present, what we could assume is equivalent to re-figuration, $mimesis_3$ of these narrative, brings into the present a strict sense of immutable formulas. It is not usually a call for action. Ritual allows for a temporal rhythm that is wider than ordinary action and each brief human life. It brings the wide horizons opened by the fantastic world of mythical narratives into the steady bit of periodical commemoration within real lives.[349] Ritual takes us to another time or, better yet, makes our time other. But this "making-other" has a steady bit and it is faithful to events of the past in the sense of commemoration. How do we connect this conservative function of ritual with a call for action? Myths resonate deeply, they uphold social structures, legitimize social institutions and practices, they are said to reflect and present the subconscious of the community and its story of origin and sense of identity. Surely all this unique and extremely intense force manifesting itself in ritual plays a part in their process of re-figuration of reality. Myths have a greater weight than other stories; rituals are the reenactment of this weight. Myths and their rituals are not only the

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[348] Melanie Garunay. "President Obama: Immigrants and Refugees Revitalize and Renew America". Naturalization ceremony in Washington, D.C. December 16, 2015.
[349] Paul Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative III*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 105

stories of our values and identities; they are the stories of the *dramatic* beginning of our values and identities. They are the stories of *radical* change and transformation, of great courage, of a demand for a different order in great risk. Rituals, on the face of it, should be a form of *enhanced* call for action. Indeed I wish to claim that they can be.

In sociopolitical societies where the past is no longer a source for legitimation because of a change in the value system or any other "weakening of traditional, multiplex structures of relationship" the longing for legitimation and stability can change its direction on the temporal axis and become a focus on the possible future instead of the past. Prophecy understood this way is "a sort of myth in reverse."[350] It had the *symbolic content* of myth but its horizon is in the opposite direction; it anchors the present in the future.[351] The Great Past can also act as a Great Future. The question to be asked in connection to this suggestion made by Cohen is what would be the structure, characteristics and functions of a Great Present. I would like to propose that trigger-narratives are neither myths anchoring the present in the past world-creation, nor prophecies anchoring it in a future world-creation. They anchor the present in the fantastic option of being completely transformed *right now.* They are fantastic scenes of a "Great Present" world-creation via a glorious battle with a great force.

Trigger-narratives, like myths and prophecies, have the similar symbolic content. Specifically trigger-narratives exhibit a familiar form of a narrative that figures prominently in mythology: they are cosmogonies emerging from a struggle of an apparently weak but surprisingly determined heroine or hero against a monster (specifically not the monstrous-

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[350] Cohen, Percy S. "Theories of Myth". *Man. New Series*, 4.3 (September, 1969), 351
[351] Kearney recognizes this temporal possibility of reversal as well when he discusses myth as a carrier of a utopian reference. This reference is describes as

> A surplus that exists not behind myth but in front of it [which] refers not just to 'things hidden since the foundation of the world' but to things which call for the transformation of the world" "Myth and Sacrificial Scapegoats: On Rene Girard". *Theory, Culture and Society*. (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 146

sublime) in the form of an oppressive power-relation. Like myth and prophecies they contain an air of the fantastic. The unbelievable courageous world-creating effect of an act by one simple person in the face of a great power takes our breath away. Trigger-narrative, as we demonstrated in length over the last four chapters, demand and many time provide, a new order of things. They function just like myths by creating legitimate institutions, demanding a change in the topics on the sociopolitical agenda, mirroring to society its structure, values and identity. Since these stories emerge in the present they additionally, as they create the new order, attempt to substantially change the existing order; they challenge the monster.[352] Trigger-narratives can challenge the legitimacy of existing institutions, the mainstream agenda, the accepted values and behaviors. When being in an arena in which a trigger-narrative started to operate we are in the middle of a world-creating scene.

Of course there are two crucial differences. First, unlike the spectators of mythology or the listeners of a given prophecy, we do not know how the story ends. The struggle with the monster and the creation of the world are happening in the here and now. Second, and as a consequence, trigger-narratives put forward what no myth or prophecy could ever offer: the option of joining. In the events that circle trigger-narrative we oscillate between the position of a spectator and a participant/heroine/author. As spectators of trigger-narratives we are in awe that emerges from the three components: (a) the great and uneven battle, (b) the possibility of world creation and finally, (c) and the option of that hovers in the air awaiting an answer: will or will you not you take part? In November 2015 I was part of a demonstration in Tel Aviv against the government agreement over gas distribution in Israel and abroad. We walked, some 7,000 of us, down from the National Theater Square, Habima, to Dizingof Street, chanting our slogans,

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[352] There is no need at this stage of the chapter to differentiate between the monstrous and monstrous-sublime. It is clear the action in front of political forces is considered in this work to always be of the form of monster$_2$

raising our voices. As I was walking down Ben Zion Avenue, feeling a need for a relief from the intensity I looked up, and my gaze caught the image of four or five young women and men standing at a porch, looking at us, maybe they were even taking pictures. They look like spectators in a theater up there from their safe and detached Bauhaus porch, and yet it was clear that they were somehow a part of us. Their interest in us already made them part. It took but a few minutes and people around me started calling them to come down. It was friendly enough, and so quite a few of us looked up and called them to join. We chanted a slogan from the summer of 2011: "Get out of the porch, the country is collapsing" which rhymes well in Hebrew.[353] The young people on the balcony moved at unease, spoke to each other, giggled and disappeared in the apartment behind them. This was a presentation of the space that hovers around all demonstration but is greatly intensified in trigger-narratives: one is always presented with the option of moving from the position of the spectator or the disinterested by-stander to the position of the person taking part. But in trigger-narrative, since the sense of awe emanating from the challenging of the existing order in such a surprising act is dominant, the transition between the position of the spectator and the position of the participant is more dramatic and more tempting. It means one is becoming a part of this great story of creation. One is joining the heroine, becomes like her, and tries, like an author would, to "write" and be a part of the possibly good ending of this battle. When a trigger-narrative erupts, it is occupying the arena in a dramatic way. Something much bigger than usual is possibly about to happen and it makes the decision to jump in or not less mundane. A small inconsequential heroine dares the system and one is in a position to help and dare the system with her. This is a terrifying and empowering position. Going back full circle to our conclusion in Chapter One, being captivated by an awe-

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[353] "צאו מהמרפסת המדינה קורסת"

inspiring story *and* being able to join to make it reach its desired end is nothing less than a shocking and exhilarating experience.

Ritual is a repetition of a glorious past. If we agree that trigger-narrative present the symbolic content of specific myths ("there was a great battle with a monster and this is how our community was created") and prophecies ("there is going to be a great battle with a monster and this is how our community will be finally free") but with the slight difference that they transpire in the present, than we agree that their rituals of reenactment is simply - participation. Trigger-narratives' participation *are* the battle with the great monster in which our community *is* created. They are the primordial moment that years after will be reenacted, mentioned and turned into a myth of cosmogony. Rituals stripped from their temporal past component are tremendously explosive.

We should, of course, qualify this. First, not all myths are necessarily ritual-based. We can think of myths that have the same content as trigger-narratives and didn't give rise to a ritual. The story of David and Goliath comes to mind. Myths can be sociopolitical in many ways, not all are ritualistic or involving ceremonies. They can be taught in schools, echoed in songs, be part of other stories, figures of speech etc. we are starting from the phenomenon of participation in this work rather than from the nature of myth and so trigger-narratives are defined by their ability to inspire mass participation. Second, participation in trigger-narratives comes in many forms and need not always be manifested in streets full of demonstrating people. In Parks' case, for example, the boycott was less a bursting spectacle in which the president had to flee the country like in the Tunisian case, or the streets filled with 6% of the citizens like in the Israeli case, and more a mythical narrative about the one who dared the monster that circled in an ever growing number of joint acting communities. Both ways are ritualistic as they reenact, support

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and join the moment of creation. Finally, since myths, prophecies and trigger-narratives are all stories told by humans to humans, they all have all three temporal horizons. They operate in the present, they are made coherent by the past and the present, and they all project to the future. They answer to the structure of human temporality. The point that I am making is that trigger-narratives bring about events that are more intensely grounded in the present. Prophecies and myths are more intensely oriented towards the future and the past respectively.

To summarize trigger-narratives are a form of present emerging mythology that aims to create a new order by challenging a monster, an oppressive existing power-relation. These narratives, like myths, echo deeply as they offer us to take part in creating a world in which we should live and challenge the world or a substantial part of the world in which we do live. Like myths they define the nature of our community, its values, aims and red-lines. This mythical charge of the events that we have been examining attracts people to join and gives the (many times very true) feeling that they are part of a cosmogony brought about by a great mythic battle. Indeed they soon become myths if they succeed, touchstones events in reference to which we explain who we are and how we got here. This is why their protagonists stay their symbol and heroes: they are at the heart of the story of the beginning of our world. This is why the excitement of participants and spectators is so sharp: at stake is being a part of a great battle and the creation of a new and better world. And of course, because we speak of politics and because we speak of myth, many more explanations are most probably possible. Accepting this reading entails many possible paths for elaboration. If trigger-narratives are myths of the present we could apply many of the philosophical, sociological and anthropological research methods we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter to them. What happens to the institutions they legitimize? How are they sacred if at all? Do trigger-narratives change with time? Do most

trigger-narratives bring about rituals? And can we say more about their forms? My hope is that these five chapters are indeed a call for further discussions and elaborations and that they provided an account that sheds new helpful light on these spectacular events of creation.

Conclusion

This work set out to coin a term. It does so in two ways: first, in opposition to other existing concepts that the phenomenon might be subsumed under and second, by offering an interpretational unifying horizon. The fact that this work has two end-points is intended as a double-edged invitation for interpretation. First, it invites interpretations that could support or challenge the need for coining itself. Second, it invites additional possible unifying horizons. The first four chapters, which for the most part present a formal conception of trigger-narrative (e.g. size, truth claims, authorship, plot cohesion, status of protagonist, outcomes expectations etc.), are an answer to the first impetus to write this work which was to point to a unique phenomenon that has not been exclusively named. This need for coining gives rise to a second level of inquiry that could be summarized in one question: what is at the heart of this phenomenon? What makes it into *one* phenomenon and not an aggregate of peculiar and random characteristics? In answer to this question we do not need to argue for an essential definition or a complete conceptual cohesion. Unification is intended here as a certain perspective through which we can explain, discern and interpret the phenomenon at hand not as a patchwork of other concepts. It gives a horizon against which we can outline forms and dynamics and it is meant as guiding perspective that the phenomenon aligns with and departs from at times. Myth, offered as such a frame in the last chapter, is one possibility of such unification, but it is fair to assume that is not the only one possible. My aim in this work was to draw attention to a certain mobilizing form in the political arena. Assuming the first four chapters are successful in arguing that a coining is required, it would be extremely beneficial to have the unifying frame suggested further elaborated and in addition to have more than one interpretive and/or unifying concept applied to this form.

The mythical frame applied to trigger-narrative opens the door to a series of possible investigations concerning their operation. Trigger-narratives if successful create a world and in it they presumably operate as a founding event, or even a cosmogony. To what extent do these stories operate like myths in the arenas that they create? Do they produce rituals? Are these rituals as rigid and sacred as the Sabbath for example or marriage? It seems that trigger-narratives definitely tend to ossify into an unyielding form and some ritualistic behavior. The bus of Rosa Parks is in a museum. If we tell her story with a historical setting that makes it look even a little bit contrived or simply contextualized, we must publicly apologize and correct the mistake.[354] The original narrative is not to be touched. The bus is to be observed. There is a certain defense against time and history. A certain sense of sacredness, does take place. Still in comparison to fully-fledged rituals like observing the Sabbath and marriage we would stop short of saying the rigidness or sacredness are similar. I imagine that if someone was interviewed saying that before God chose the Sabbath as a rest day it was really Tuesday that was preferred more than a ten-line correction would be demanded. Trigger-narratives are myth-*like* narratives that create ritual-*like* structures. They create lasting structures and rituals in our sociopolitical lives but these differ somehow form religious and/or legal structures in rigidness, attachment and effect. It is at this moment of proximity that I think this work leaves trigger-narratives as a possible subject for further elaboration. To what degrees are trigger-narratives like myths and in what ways are they completely different? Does this likeness produce subcategories? Does it change with the passing of time? Does it become more rigid or less so? The questions applied to the process that trigger-narrative go through after the implementations of their aspired changes could be applied to the institutions that these narratives produce. What happens to the institutions they legitimize? Do they maintain an ideational connection to their story of origins or do they

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[354] See p.5 in this work

move away from it? Do they "practice" the ritual of their inception more than other institution in the sociopolitical arena? Do they have particular ritual-like structures that are connected to the way in which they came about? Do they change their relation to this moment with time?

It is clear from the questions that I am raising that this work points to the possibility of further interdisciplinary effort. More specifically one of the clear directions that I think this work points to is the possible interdisciplinary cooperation between political philosophy of narrative and the sociological methodology for the interpretation of social movements, frame-analysis. As I explain in Chapter Four the complementarity between Frame-Analysis and narrative philosophy is great since both outlooks focus on meaning-giving contexts and frames in order to understand human endeavors. What this sociological outlook offers is a gate into the world of researched and conceptualized data. This is a direction that I think is very much worth following to any philosopher interested in political action and narrative. Frame-analysis is teeming with concepts and data regarding the inception of social movements and the mechanisms that might encourage and hinder their successful continuous operation. Especially around the concept of issue-narratives there is a clear cluster of fascinating work that is pertinent. Philosophy elaborated much on metanarratives and quite a lot on the structure and role of testimony. Issue-narratives, as I explain in Chapter Four, operate in connection with both but they crystalize around a burning and enraging issues such as a specific nuclear leak, a certain law, a certain accident etc. They are not tacit like metanarratives nor are they dependent necessarily on personal testimonies or repetition. These events serve as the grain around which a mobilizing narrative assumes shape and form creating a battleground around a specific issue or a cluster of issues. Trigger-narratives are greatly informed by this concept but much of the insights that take center stage in sociological accounts took a more peripheral position in this work although it is

clear to me that there is much to be explored in this overlap between trigger and issue narrative. This relative content marginalization occurred not because issue-narrative seemed unimportant to me, but because, as the work progressed, it became obvious that issue-narratives could be approached philosophically only after a coining took place.

Here are three examples of sociological fame-analysis concepts that seem relevant to me, and that could be applied in an illuminating ways to trigger-narratives or other narrative oriented political descriptions. These are three among many. (a) The concept of resonance. Resonance refers to the degree in which the content of a mobilizing effort refers "the current life situation and experience of the potential constituents".[355] The story told in other words should refer in a compelling and believable way to challenges and grievances in the lives of the individuals it is attempting to mobilize. The extent to which a certain issue-narrative fits or taps into long held beliefs and thus might resonate more with certain audiences,[356] touches on the efficacy of political narratives. Detached and unspecific stories are less likely to elicit a response. How does self-immolation resonate in a country like Israel in contrast to Tunisia? Does it resonate differently? Given that trigger-narrative create an atmosphere of radical change and a shift in the metanarrative, when looking at the tragic self-immolation of Silman in Tel-Aviv[357] were we oscillating between two possible perspectives? Were we interpreting the event according to the old metanarrative and according to the new one on our horizon? We can ask this question about the trigger-narrative itself. Are interpretations of trigger-narratives change as events progress? If

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[355] David E. Snow and Robert Benford. "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization" *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation Across Cultures*. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988), 477

[356] William A. Gamson. "Political Discourse and Collective Action" *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation Across Cultures*. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988)

[357] On July 14 2012 Moshe Silman self-immolated in the Tel Aviv square where the Israeli Social Justice Movement started a year before. He was in debt. The state took most of his belongings and still wanted more. He self-immolated like Bouazizi and like Leef he protested in the same square. He died six days later. See also p.111 in this work

so can these change be attributed to resonance? Is it resonance with the old metanarrative or the transforming metanarrative?

(b) Another fascinating frame-analysis analysis points to the fact that resonance is not only a relation of a certain narrative to issues circulating the arena and/or a certain metanarratives. It is also a matter of being assigned the better or worse end of prevalent and uncritically accepted binary oppositions. According to this research what political challengers are up against are not

> a single, canonical story, or even a genre of stories [but] many stories that similarly navigate the poles of familiar oppositions[358]

It is the *accepted way of navigating* between opposing poles rather than the content of the metanarratives themselves (or in addition to the content of the metanarratives themselves) that hinders certain stories from being considered and helps others be taken for granted. Polletta knowingly echoes Levi-Strauss' analysis of myth when she is analyzing personal contemporary stories of women in search for work opportunity equality. Like him she examines the efficacy of stories in the sociopolitical arena in relation to familiar cultural oppositions. She gives fives popular examples for such binary oppositions: concrete/abstract, emotional/rational, female/male, personal/public, informal/formal, and folkloric/scientific.[359] Some stories are assigned the worse end and must overcome extreme challenges while others are not even seen as stories but simply as descriptions of reality. These stories are not accepted only because they repeat a similar form or are familiar to us but rather because they repeat a way of navigating

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[358] Polletta, Francesca and Pang Ching Bobby Che. "Narrative and Social Movements" *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Jacobs, and Philip Smith. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 493

[359] Francesca Polletta, and John Lee. "Is Telling Stories Good for Democracy? Rhetoric in Public Deliberation after 9/II". *American Sociological Review*. (London: Sage, 2006)

"similarly between the poles of well-known oppositions."[360] We addressed this point in Chapter Four when speaking of testimonies that support or challenge metanarratives. This is an additional structural point and it raises a question: How do trigger-narratives figure on these oppositional binaries? Do they all tend to figure and manipulate this binary similarly? Or do they have different ways to navigate these oppositions to their favor? Better yet, does their incredible force have something to do with challenging or echoing these binaries in a completely new way? The binaries are deeply felt in all of our three case studies. The moments in which they transition are breathtaking. Think, for example, of the moment in which the Tunisian and even the Egyptian armies refused to act against their civilians. I am bracketing obvious self-interest here in favor of outlining the narrative that was publicly created. The formal/informal binary was challenged at that very moment. It became unclear who was the informal and thus illegitimate sociopolitical structure and who was the formal representative of these states.

(c) Finally the concept of repertoire of contention is extremely relevant. Contention does not spring from nowhere and one way to explain spontaneity and contagion in social movements is through familiar forms of collective action in different eras and locations. When a particular form of resistance, say sit-ins, suddenly spreads it is because a certain action from a given repertoire was selected in response to an event.[361] Contention is a form of language with its familiar bank of sociopolitical forms.

> No less than in the case of religious rituals or civic celebrations, contentious politics is
> not born out of organizers' heads but is culturally inscribed and socially communicated

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[360] Polletta, Francesca and Pang Ching Bobby Che. "Narrative and Social Movements" *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Jacobs, and Philip Smith. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 495
[361] Charles Tilly. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978) 151-9

> [...] Leaders invent, adapt, and combine various forms of contention to gain support from people who might otherwise stay at home [362]

This introduces interesting information concerning mass participation. It is centering mainly on the behavior of contention and less on the mobilizing content but we might widen the question to ask if such a repertoire exists in terms of content as well. To what extent do trigger-narratives use a known repertoire of myths and local legends? Are there other forms of contention repertoire that are more popularly prevalent during those events? Can we point more specifically to the ways that they are used in trigger-narrative events?

As I said in the beginning of the discussion of interdisciplinary options, I find this specific connection to be a fascinating and fecund new ground for enlarging our understanding of political contention. I would be as bold as to suggest that considering the vibrant departments of Sociology and Philosophy at Boston College and its frame-analysis and narrative world renowned experts it would be extremely beneficial if there was a co-departmental graduate course focusing on political philosophical thinking of narrative, frame-analysis and their possible overlaps.

One more word about my concept of the monstrous: I use the term monster in opposition to the term sublime in Chapter Five in order to denote evils that could be made into *less* petrifying reality. I use the word petrifying here intentionally and in reference to its Greek source: *petra*, stone. The sublime makes us into a stone; it freezes us, makes us unable to act, non-human in the sense of passive to whatever befalls us. Unlike the sublime which is unalterable and leaves us with a combination of horror and awe, most stories about monsters end with the monster misunderstood, reformed or dead. Jack and the Giant, David and Goliath, the Wizard of Oz, Monsters Inc., Harry Potter and the Basilisks, the Alien and many children's

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[362] Sidney Tarrow. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29

stories such as Hensel and Gretel and Little Red Riding Hood.[363] Stories that have monsters in them tend to end well for the weak that rise against them in the final account. They are a symbolized way to denote a power-relation from the perspective of the oppressed. We either become friends with the monsters because we understand that we misjudged them, reveal them for the sham that they are, or do away with them.

The protagonists of trigger-narratives stand up to a certain power-relation because they find it oppressive. It could be a law, a cultural habit, or a certain regime. It need not necessarily be a governmental related injustice. As they reveal the form of this oppressive political reality *they make it into a challengeable form of oppression.* Understanding or suddenly seeing a power structure as monstrous is meant as a way of diminishing its level of horror. What I mean by the monstrous is that the specific oppressive power structure could reveal itself as flexible and capable of change. The US Civil Rights Movement is one of the best examples for that. The monstrous power-relation was called out and resisted. The state recognized the injustice within its system and urged by the oppressed and their supporters used its own mechanisms to correct it. An oppressive existence called out to be monstrous is a moment in which oppression receives a form and can become a fair target.

Any system that has gone bad in the sense that it is discriminative and oppressive towards the people subjected to its power, is *always* human-made evil. The point of this obvious observation is that every human-made evil is always vulnerable to human-made action of resistance. It is part of the power of the protagonists of trigger-narratives that they remind us that systems gone bad are not a law of nature. They are made of humans in rooms and many times, not always, but many times, humans in rooms can be resisted and transformed by humans in the streets and in the courts. In that sense, the way that one chooses to interpret the evil before her

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[363] Many thanks to Sahar Dabach for her help in compiling this monster list.

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defines the option of action she has or does not have. Parks, Bouazizi and Leef remind us we have a choice to make. They empower their followers by widening their possible gamut of action.

<p align="center">*</p>

A woman gets back from work and on the way home, as a private person, she refuses to obey an unjust law. She is not armed. She is not the first. For all she knows she might be harmed and nothing will become of it. The world is the world and it is likely to stay as it is. Nonetheless she is tired of sitting in a bus in this world, a world that assigns seats according to race. She is more tired of this fact than tired from a long day of work. So she continues to sit when the bus driver asks her to get up. She continues to sit when he threatens to call the police. She will not be home early today. She continues to sit in protest against the world in which she must get up in the futile hope that the world would recoil. And for some reason and against most odds and expectations the world takes a year to hover around the problem and then concedes and changes.

This work began with curiosity. My hope is that I deepened and elaborated the possibility for more curiosity around the subject of trigger-narratives.

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