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If the recent Hamilton play is any indication, there is still a cultural appetite for revolutions. In a way, this has always been the case. But the idea of "revolutions" has received renewed attention in recent years following the political unrest that spread across Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and other nations, now known as the Arab Spring, and many wondered if the new possibilities made available through social networking have opened a new chapter to story of revolutionary protest. *Time*'s "Person of the Year" in 2011, for instance, was "The Protestor," a fill-in for the many groups who sought to overturn governments and power structures around the globe. On the one hand, there seems to be something universal about this type of unrest, both in the sense of a cultural moment that can be captured in an "Age of Revolutions" framework that emphasizes connectivity and comradeship, but also through transgenerational principles related to humanity that evade circumstance and context. Yet on the other hand, each revolution seems rooted in a particular time and place, the result of parochial decisions and actions that tether the revolt close to home.

This tension has shaped the field of revolutions for a long time and has often divided work along disciplinary lines. Sociologists emphasize the shared elements found in revolutions from before the modern era all the way to the present; they offer schemas for how people and societies operate which portend to go a long way in describing how a revolution originates, develops, and ends. Yet such an approach often overlooks contexts and distinctiveness within each revolutionary moment. Historians, conversely, have retreated from broadly integrative works, like that of R. R. Palmer decades ago, and have largely followed the contours of social history to emphasize individual revolutions and their many particular circumstances; this type of approach has better captured the lived realities for those outside elite classes. Yet these works of isolated historical examination often lack the explanatory power for tracing change over time, not to mention fail to provide meaning for revolutions today. Is there a way to bridge this chasm of revolutionary methodology?

In *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions*, Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein collect a number of essays in an attempt to provide a model for revolutionary scholarship going forward. They argue that "at least one feature of revolutions

transcends ... cultural differences—and this is the notion of a revolutionary 'script'" (p. 2). By "script," they mean a literary or dramatic framing of actions consciously invoked by participants within a revolution. That is, when individuals commence a revolutionary process, they seek to draw from examples of the past in deciding how to begin, proceed, and explain their protest. These revolutionary narratives, in turn, bring meaning and significance to actions, as they allow people to place their activities along a spectrum or tradition of revolutionary episodes. Though there were foundations for such an idea in the seventeenth century up to the American Revolution, *Scripting Revolution* identifies the French Revolution as the birth of the modern revolutionary script. This anxiety over revolutionary trajectories, then, remained in place ever since. Indeed, one of the book's central arguments is that nearly all revolutionaries self-consciously sought to square their revolutions with those of the past. By employing this concept, the volume attains remarkable breadth. Parts 1 and 2 follow the typical Atlantic geopolitical trajectory with chapters on England, America, France, and Haiti, but parts 3 and 4 quickly expand into new and exciting territories like Russia, China, Cuba, and Iran.

Due to the nature of this project, it is impossible to fully connect these disparate chapters, even when framed within a particular focus. And this collection's focus in some ways takes a while to develop, reaches a climax momentarily, before quickly diffusing into disparate strands. The "origins" of these revolutionary "scripts," covered in part 1, are found in British debates concerning politics, religion, and civil war, with chapters focused on each element. The volume then turns to part 2, which covers the typical "Age of Revolutions" category, and focuses on the rims of the Atlantic world at the close of the eighteenth century. Thus far, the "scripts" in these two parts are still in inchoate form, mostly providing the tools for later revolutionaries, which make it difficult to delineate a particularly systematic lesson. Part 3, on Germany, France, and Russia in the nineteenth century, is perhaps the strongest section in the book, as it is there where the historical actors were consciously drawing from—or, as the volume puts it, "re-scripting"—revolutionary narratives

The final, and largest, part of the book includes six chapters on locations ranging from China to Cuba to Iran. In a way, this section highlights the strength of the volume's schema—the "scripts," as a framing devise, can transfer to many different contexts—but it also proves to be remarkably slippery. If Liang Qichao's program of reforms can be related to Santiago Alvarez's documentary filmmaking, that can be a powerful transnational and transgenerational approach, but does it really capture the media and tensions in play? It is clear that this volume provides cogent ideas and provocative theories for the particular revolutions covered in each chapter, but it is less clear if the broader lessons can translate across disciplines and subfields.

Indeed, there are questions raised concerning the necessity and potency of "scripts" as an analytical tool. It is not a surprise that historians would posit historical consciousness as an integral part of revolutionary action, though it is not always apparent that such was the case for historical actors in different centuries, continents, and contexts. In a way, this understanding of history's relationship to movements is a Western staple, which is why it works the best in the chapters that focus on the British, American, French, and, to an extent, Russian contexts. It especially works well with Gareth Stedman Jones's chapter on Karl Marx, as Marx's conception of history in a way frames the entire scripts notion. But does it work with the Asian and Arab revolutions in the same way? Would it be cogent enough to frame a discussion on African revolutions, heretofore untouched? That is more of a challenge, partly because this is because this construction of "scripts" presupposes a teleology that privileges democratic conclusions. Even if the term can be repackaged in each of

these different settings, it risks becoming so elastic as to lose viability.

Yet while the usefulness of the "scripts" framing may vary by chapter, overall the argument proves quite convincing. At the very least, even if the "scripts" concept is not the master key to unlock all revolutionary interpretations—which the book never claims to do—it provides a model for how historians can invoke conceptual frameworks in sophisticated ways in order to connect divergent contexts and moments. In an age when historians are urged to become more global and trans-generational, these are tools that will become even more crucial to our craft.

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