

MediamenteFalso

Instagram's artificial "intelligence" discriminates between posts on the basis of the symbols they contain; this recently happened to a post showing a painting of mine.

The paradox is that the darkened (censored) post meant to make people reflect on the role of the media in recent history and on their capacity to manipulate the truth in favour of power.

The work depicts Toei's Super Mario wearing a Nazi cap, painted in oils on an original page of the *Corriere della Sera* of 13 April 1945.

In that historical moment Italy had surrendered to the Allies two years earlier, yet our main daily ran the headline: "Iron will to fight until victory", next to a photograph of Hitler and Mussolini intent on planning their military moves on a map.

The articles on the page recount a reality of hyperbolic fantasy, in which it is taken for granted that the fascists will shortly win the war in Italy and in the colonies, together with their German ally.

In the excellent series set in a reality parallel to ours, "The Man in the High Castle", directed by David Semel (Amazon Prime Video), the Axis has won the war and Germany and Japan have divided up the world; the Italian fascists are not mentioned in any of the 40 episodes. The *Corriere* headline of '45 finds no foothold even in a work of dystopian fiction eighty years later.

In reality, on 13 April 1945 the Germans were losing Vienna to Stalin's troops; twelve days later Italy would be liberated by the Americans, and fifteen days later Mussolini would be executed by the partisans.

The editor of the *Corriere*, Ermanno Amicucci, chose in those days to manipulate reality because power was still in the hands of the Nazis (who had occupied Milan) and of the Fascists of the Italian Social Republic.

Today, even more than in '45, the only power that moves all the others is economic power. For this reason the internet is no longer the place of freedom of expression and free circulation of information that we had helped to build at the beginning of the millennium: the economic kraken has taken possession of our toy and turned it into a money machine.

Instagram and the other social networks are no exception: they do not serve to meet one another, to share or to communicate, but to create a market.

Censorship in this context is carried out by anonymous artificial "intelligences", with the aim of favouring exchanges and the consequent creation of economic value.

The attempt is to reduce as far as possible controversial material, discrimination, alternative information, violence and so on, so as to create a space that is as inclusive as possible, in which one may sell and buy in complete trust and safety; culture and art should therefore bend to this imperative.

One sells better by entertaining, by talking of trifles, by keeping the level of the narrative comprehensible to everyone; for this reason most of the posts we see tell of tragicomic accidents, seductive women and, naturally, products purchasable with a single touch of the fingers.

Anyone born in Italy in the seventies, as the writer was, remembers among the various squalors we have witnessed the birth of private television, in which for the first time stupidity, trifles and large breasts were the dominant theme of most programmes. Advertising revenue worked so well with these themes that RAI had to bow to the evidence, so much so that today there is no difference between the two broadcasters apart from the licence fee.

One might say that Berlusconi was the first to understand it, therefore the best from the entrepreneurial point of view, consequently the richest, and later also the most voted for.

President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic, spoken of as a future President of the Republic — if only he had realised that the electorate adores trifles and large breasts, tolerates prostitutes, but does not forgive whoremongers.

In yesterday's and the day before yesterday's newspapers one finds the future as it was seen and hoped for in the past, and the past that was never realised in the future; the lie elected as a frame of reference, lying in order to convince and to incite, and above all war, the only constant of these last eighty years of peace.

History has always been written by the victors, by political and military power.

Today the past, history, the present and the idea of the future are written through the technological and media power to mystify reality, to gratify the ego of the recipients of a message, until they are brought to believe that the surrogate of reality they are observing is reality itself.

Recourse to the surrogate is ever more present in every aspect of human life, and is experienced by most people as innovative, ecological, emancipating, healthy, improving, safe.

Pets, robots, silicone dolls are used as surrogates for children, husbands, wives, lovers and grandchildren; plastic surgery is used to produce surrogate bodies and sexual identities; pornography and safe sex allow the sexual act itself to be surrogated; synthetic foods, vegan foods, nutrition bars, medicines that make it possible to obtain performance in every field — human beings themselves are surrogates of themselves.

Towards the most intimate and fundamental spaces of our existence, products, ideas and behaviours are promoted which seek to take us away from real life, towards a fictitious, virtual, synthetic life, in which inner experience is replaced by the mystified image that society has of us.

A lie repeated endlessly does not become true, but it makes mystification a socially acceptable practice; the sense of the true is lost behind the awareness that every truth might

contain, wholly or in part, a mystification.

The ablest and most generous person may appear, in this context, too good to be true; the most despicable person may appear sanctified by invented truths.

By accepting to delegate the power of defining truth to the technological and media system, we accept to live in a vortex of information produced to sustain one mystification rather than another.

The pandemonium caused by the coronavirus made the idea of a surrogate, masked life-experience all the more appreciable — one in which we seek the recognition of the group without having to meet the individuals.

The history of our days will again be written by the victors of a war made of lies, but the technological capacities we have reached will allow us to create mystifications on a scale never seen before.

We lie to ourselves, and every day it is harder to catch ourselves doing it; the surrogate life devours the real one.

There is, in my brain, an immense quantity of images stored away, more or less usefully, which leap out at the most unforeseen moments: visual notes filed in the vain attempt to sate my need to know things. Images deformed, worn out by time, revised and reconsidered in the light of later events, dissociated, isolated from their context, distorted by the inevitable amnesia that life brings, by the perpetual assault and looting of the mythical little camels of memory. Images from my life, from films and television programmes, from music videos, from exhibitions and museums, from advertisements, from the icons of the human race, from books and stories, all the way to the images of my dreams.

The dissonant elements find their visual and conceptual, chromatic and formal, comic, cosmic and surreal accord again in the painted fruit.

Characters and landscapes, interiors and spaces, of one great crossover episode, born of my "volupté de voir", of my strolling through the secret rooms of my brain, like a flâneur inside Asimov's fantastic voyage.

Through this game of searching, the collage of visual references becomes a continuous intellectual sublimation, full of speculation on the iconic value of the images and symbols that interact with one another, creating a tale that cannot do without the natural placement of the images themselves, yet cannot help tracing new

narratives and new paths of meaning. The kaleidoscope of images imagined by oneself and by others reflects, in a distorting mirror, the image of what we have seen, what we believed we saw, what we see after time has passed, in a continuous looking-experimenting-considering-reinventing-looking-again, endlessly. We create out of what we have seen and experienced, endlessly recreating the world in which we imagine we would like to live.

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