



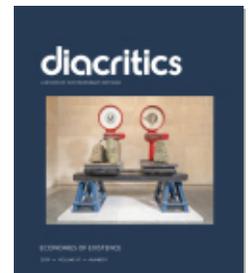
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Temporal Economies and the Prison of the Present: From the
Crisis of the Now to Liberation Time

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**TEMPORAL
ECONOMIES AND
THE PRISON OF
THE PRESENT**

FROM THE CRISIS
OF THE NOW TO
LIBERATION TIME

GABRIEL ROCKHILL

Consumer culture, a culture of disconnectedness, trains us to believe things just happen (*las cosas ocurren porque sí*). Incapable of recalling its origins, the present paints the future as a repetition of itself; tomorrow is just another name for today. The unequal organization of the world, which beggars the human condition, is part of eternity, and injustice is a fact of life we have no choice but to accept (*estamos obligados a aceptar o aceptar*).

—Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down*

Time, as a shared social construct, is political. It serves to materially regulate social agents by situating them in relationship to the past, conditioning their activities in the present and managing their future expectations.

The politics of time has, however, often been dissimulated through processes of naturalization. As Norbert Elias has powerfully argued regarding the latter, there have generally been two extremes.¹ On the one hand, there are those who assume that time is an objective phenomenon of the so-called natural world, and that it therefore forms a stable, universal backdrop for experience. On the other hand, there are those who, following in the Kantian tradition (which extends into phenomenology), presume that time is instead a constitutive feature of human subjectivity or *Dasein*. In both cases, what is missed is the deep historicity of “time” itself, and how it has quite literally changed “over time,” as well as all of the social forces operative in the collective construction of different “temporal” economies.²

Although it is arguable that Elias himself did not go far enough in his historicization of time, and he certainly did not sufficiently foreground its important political stakes, there are aspects of his argument that can be mobilized for developing a radically historicist account of temporality. Rather than presuming that it is a natural phenomenon or a fixed category of experience, radical historicism recognizes that time is a sociohistorical assemblage that varies “across time,” as well as across space and social stratification. As difficult as it might be to express this in language, which constantly resorts to terms that sound stable and unchanging, there is thus no such thing as *time itself*. On the contrary, there are variably constituted temporal orders and chronological configurations with far-reaching political implications.³

Instead of proposing a systematic analysis of time *in general*, which would presuppose an external vantage point that could delimit such a phenomenon, let us begin the other way around, then, by investigating temporal economies, without assuming the existence of metaphysical specters such as *time itself*. More specifically, I would like to examine, in what follows, the construction of a specific temporal configuration: the one that tends to dominate the reigning historical and political imaginary of our conjuncture. I will explain, first of all, what I mean by *imaginary*, while emphasizing in particular the close ties between temporality and politics. I will then focus on the unique assemblage that constructs a political prison out of the present by simultaneously obliterating the past and transforming the future into an endless repetition of what exists *here* and *now*. The purpose of this analysis will not be to propose a simple diagnosis, however. By

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examining the historical construction of the prison of the present, with *crisis discourse* as its faithful guardian, my primary objective will be to contribute to the development of the tools necessary for orchestrating a collective prison break.

>> HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL IMAGINARIES

An imaginary is not to be confused with a product of the imagination. It is not simply something that has been made up, and it is thus recalcitrant to the simple binaries of fact and fiction, reality and imagination. Instead, it is a collectively produced practical mode of intelligibility that assembles self-evident givens, being at one and the same time a way of thinking, feeling, being, perceiving, and acting. Far from remaining purely conceptual, it is affective, practical, perceptual, and axiological. An imaginary is thus the anchored *modus operandi* of social agents, which is flexible and varies across the social field depending on the agencies involved in its precise configuration. This does not mean, however, that it operates like what Pierre Macherey has described as the “infra-ideology” that saturates the social world in an inescapable ether.⁴ There are rival imaginaries, and none of them is absolutely hegemonic or completely impervious to critique. Situated in and maintained by social force fields, imaginaries remain potential sites of struggle.

In *Counter-History of the Present: Untimely Interrogations into Globalization, Technology, Democracy*, I propose a detailed analysis of the prevailing historical imaginary of our conjuncture, which presents the current world order as being one in which progressive technico-economic unification purportedly goes hand-in-hand with an unprecedented democratic consensus. Our age, according to the dominant historical imaginary—which is differentially distributed across space and society—is one in which the world has become truly global, thanks to technological and economic development, and democracy has finally come to be recognized around the world as the necessary condition for political life. I am summarizing in broad strokes, of course, and there are many nuances that would need to be added, but this historical imaginary produces a general image of the contemporary world as developed, advanced, and democratic.

By dismantling piece by piece the self-evident givens of this historical imaginary, counter-history does not only contest the reliability of its claims, by recalling for instance that one-sixth of the world’s population lives in shanty towns, wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of an infinitesimal minority of elites (“half of the world’s wealth . . . [is] now owned by only eight men”), less than half of the world’s population (43.4 percent) has regular access to internet, and self-declared democratic governments like the United States have waged an open war on democracy (the US alone has sought to overthrow more than fifty foreign governments since WWII, the majority of which had been democratically elected).⁵ It also reveals how this historical imaginary is at one and the same time a political imaginary, which is perhaps most visible in the ways in which it contributes to the perpetuation of a *techno-democratic mission* that strives to do for neocolonial capital-

ism what the *civilizing mission* did for colonial capitalism: provide the beatifying narrative that magically transmogrifies imperial butchery and global repression into beneficent worldly assistance. The collective organization of time in the dominant historical imaginary is thus simultaneously the constitution and coordination of a political imaginary.

>> THE TIME OF THE NOW

The reigning historico-political imaginary, in our conjuncture, is inhabited by a very specific temporal economy, in which the present functions as *the time of the now*, the past as *the ancient*, and the future as *what is to come*.

The time of the now is composed of fragmented epiphenomena that imposingly dominate a given instant by saturating all of its available space. If it be through the spell-binding spectacles of screen culture, the vociferous barking of marketing campaigns, or the pressurized urgency of mass consumerism, the now produces a seemingly endless sequence of disconnected but charged moments, each replacing the next with the frenzied rush of immediate necessity. The time of the now is made up of disjointed interruptions that are as demanding as they are ephemeral. It resembles in many ways the string of surprises that terrify young children on amusement park rides, in which a tunnel of darkness is punctuated by ghastly figures that pop out of nowhere and then immediately disappear.

For heuristic purposes, let us call *the present*, in counter distinction, the undergirding framework that creates the now as a captivating arabesque of epiphenomena. In the example just evoked of the amusement park ride, the present would be the system of tunnels and props that creates the awe-inspiring impression of unexpected surprises (when, in fact, all of these shocks and wonders were carefully calculated and planned, and the mechanisms that produced them constantly go through the same repetitive motions). The present is rooted in the past and stretches into the future as a temporal system that holistically encompasses the frenetic time of the now. However, just as the present serves as the structural framework producing the now, the latter seeks to erase the former by dissimulating it behind the appearance of hyperactive alterations.

In consumer society, the now is exemplified by the constant turnover of fads, gadgets, and innovations. It is the time of one-day sales, limited-time offers, one-time-only sweepstakes, and once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. What is truly novel is actually the fact that these auspicious occasions endlessly repeat themselves for the feverish joy of consumers, and especially for the benefit of those who profit from them. Moreover, what is packaged as new simply replaces what was new yesterday and is doomed to disappear tomorrow (like its stillborn predecessors). *The present* constitutes the grounding framework that organizes this constant renewal of consumer paraphernalia as well as

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the urgency of its consumption. It is structured by the repetitive pressure to purchase, as well as the planned obsolescence of what is bought (hence the need to buy again, and yet again). In the best case, what you buy is already obsolete. And this is often the case.

When we are in the throes of fads, trends, or flash sales, we are mesmerized by the kaleidoscopic alterations of the now. We lose sight of the fact that there is really nothing new under the bright lights of consumer society: the structures of the cult of novelty remain a constant. The only thing that changes is their specific content, and even these are regularly recycled through retro fads as reliable recipes for consumer marketing. Paradoxically, the now excludes anything that is truly new in favor of novelties, that is to say, curios that are presented and packaged as brand new according to a repetitive logic that is as old as capitalism.

The intellectual world is by no means immune to this logic. A preoccupation with the latest trends drives the global theory industry, which packages and sells what it proclaims to be cutting-edge contributions to thinking. Knowledge that is scientifically anchored in deep, collective traditions—such as the materialist heritage of Marxism and anarchism—is often considered to be vulgar and passé, unless it is spiced up with modish vocabulary, references to the established brands of the star system, and deferential homage to the totems of trendiness. Although these structures and tendencies are more difficult for some to see in the products of high culture than in their low culture equivalents, it is important to recognize that this is due to the very social logic of “high” culture, which brands itself as free from vulgar determinants like class and consumerism. However, aside from this marketing exception—or, rather, this marketing of exceptionalism—the patterns are largely the same.

This pressing and frenetic temporality of consumerism—which in the case of intellectual production consistently peddles “the latest” rather than “the truest”—complements the capitalist urgency of short-term gains. Long-term consequences, like ecocide or the destruction of human life, are of no importance to the imperative of making as much as possible, as quickly as possible. “In every stock-jobbing swindle,” Karl Marx presciently wrote,

everyone knows that some time or other the crash must come, but everyone hopes that it may fall on the head of his neighbor, after he himself has caught the shower of gold and placed it in secure hands. *Après moi le déluge!* is the watchword of every capitalist and of every capitalist nation. Capital therefore takes no account of the health and the length of life of the worker, unless society forces it to do so.⁶

The temporal economy of the incessant now is by no means confined to consumer society in the limited sense of the term. The logic of the short term, the cult of novelties, and the frenetic urgency of the immediate dominate the governmental world, the mass media, and other sectors of social life. Here again, we find the same opposition between the constant alterations of the now and the stability of the present. The more things change, the more they stay the same: the *nunc stans* of capitalism is unwaveringly present, and is the unwavering present beneath the ever-changing now.

Let us consider a few examples in order to illustrate the relevancy of this distinction. In the realm of politics, the time of the now is exemplified by the incessant banter that is part of the orchestrated rivalry between professional parties in what is euphemistically referred to as representative democracy. These parties regularly repeat the standard moves in a well-rehearsed playbook of public relations campaigns. They quarrel over accepted points of disagreement, they act outraged at social or financial scandals, they partake in ad hominem attacks that avoid systemic discord. In brief, they market their political brand in the exact same way as their competitors (and with the same financial backers). The present, by contrast, is characterized by an overall complicity between the dominant professional parties of the ruling class, whose pseudo-debates obfuscate a fundamental consensus regarding the reign of capital. The bureaucratized party system thereby creates the illusion of change—as well as the delusion of free choice in the minds of its political consumers—so that business as usual can continue unabated. In short, the now of political disagreements and rivalries dissimulates the present of politico-economic consensus.

The cult of novelty in the mass media also perfectly illustrates the predominance of an over-excited time of the now. Whatever is on the front page disappears almost immediately to be replaced by another shock event, especially today when there is no longer even a front page, but rather a storm of news flashes and online updates. This Twitterification of reality serves precisely to hide the fact that there is almost always *nihil sub sole novum*. It is not only that social interest stories and the latest popular scandals cast a long shadow over sustained political and social analysis of the present. It is that the temporality of the mass media, and particularly the corporate media, is dominated by the frenetic urgency of the immediate at the expense of historical analysis, systematic examination, and prolonged investigation. This temporal economy produces a fetishization of the now in which an obsession with the ephemeral status of “the latest” disconnects it from the larger, undergirding framework of the present.

Consider, for instance, the ways in which the mass media are irresistibly drawn to the spectacle of severe weather and its catastrophic consequences. They avoid any contextualization that would situate the immediacy of extreme heat waves, torrential storms, record snowfalls, and unprecedented droughts in relationship to the history of capitalist-driven climate change. They sever consequences from structural determinants, which include both the forces behind climate chaos as well as all of the powers that actively seek to obfuscate these powers in the name of profit. The time of the now in mass media coverage of extreme weather thereby favors the illusion that climate catastrophes emerge out of nowhere, just like the macabre figures that jump out to terrify young children on amusement park rides. It

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throws a shroud of urgency over the deep-seated reality of the environmental present, encouraging fearful reactions to immediate calamities rather than a profound reconsideration and reconfiguration of the present socioeconomic system that produces them.

This is one of the reasons why, to take another example, false statements are so often peddled through the mass media. Given the fragmented and ahistorical nature of the time of the now, such statements tend to stick. This is not only because they produce spectacular headlines that are disconnected from history. It is also because initial statements, made when news coverage is at its highest, tend to reverberate with such strength that they resist subsequent corrections. Consider, for instance, the targeted assassination of Osama bin Laden. US governmental officials, including Leon Panetta (CIA director at the time) and John Brennan (top counterterrorism adviser), promptly asserted that bin Laden had been living in a million dollar mansion and that he was killed after he engaged in a gunfight in which he attempted to use his wife as a human shield.⁷ In spite of the fact that

these assertions and many more turned out to be patent lies, they served their purpose: they sealed the headline news story as one of a violent, evil sultan who did not deserve due process. The same basic strategy, Glenn Greenwald has argued, was used to obfuscate the true nature of the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya in the fall of 2012.⁸ In spite of the fact that it occurred on the portentous anniversary of September 11, 2001 and was in fact a premeditated attack, administration officials insisted that the central cause of the assault was spur-of-the-moment rage at an anti-Muhammad film produced in the United States. This initial spin created a sound bite regarding “primitive religious violence” and “irrational anger,” thereby obscuring the obvious link between the planned attack and the brutal violence of American foreign policy. By being stamped with the emblazoned seal of the time of the now, initial false statements in the media produce flashy headlines that tend to quash any subsequent corrections or nuances.

The time of the now in the contemporary world creates, moreover, a very specific temporal consciousness. Individual moments are uprooted, fragmented, and disconnected. The fixation on the now, or what we might call *urgentism*, obfuscates our historical conjuncture, meaning the ways in which the present is rooted in the past and structurally intertwined with a very specific future. Such an obsession with the immediate functions as a form of temporal hypnosis that favors both amnesia and quietism: the past is allowed to disappear into oblivion and the future to rapidly pop into the present without critical interrogation. Indeed, the time of the hypnotic now tends to engulf the deep past and the long-term future in the vertiginous abyss of what is “right here, right now!”

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The past thereby becomes *the ancient*, meaning what is behind us, old-fashioned, outmoded, obsolete, or uninteresting (or, in another variant, what is only a preparatory step leading to the contemporary moment or to what is to come). One is thus deprived of the

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capacity to take back the past by elucidating the various ways in which what exists *now* is to a very large extent the result of what has happened before. The past qua *ancient* is simply the dustbin of history, where the waste of time now passed piles up like disregarded remnants of what is no longer actual. And just as the time of the now transforms our past into a temporal sepulcher, so does it deliver us over to a time to come that imposes itself as if out of nowhere. *The future*, instead of being linked to the past in a long-term and holistic process of historical becoming, is unleashed on us as *what is to come*. It arrives as if out of nowhere, and with no obvious connection to the past and its preparation. According to the presentist dictates of the now, it uses the shroud of novelty to relentlessly smuggle in *more of the same*.

Among those who have made important contributions to analyzing the prominence of presentism in contemporary culture, there is a revealing tendency to diagnose its consequences without delving into its root causes. This is itself very indicative of the power of the dominant historico-political imaginary. François Hartog, for instance, has drawn on the work of figures like Hannah Arendt and Reinhart Koselleck to develop an account of three regimes of historicity: the past-oriented ancient regime, the future-oriented modern regime, and the presentist contemporary regime.⁹ Although the second is clearly linked, as Koselleck has shown, to the emergence of modern social revolutions and a radical break with circular and naturalized conceptions of society and temporality, Hartog does not clearly connect the emergence of presentism to the temporal horizons of contemporary capitalism and the revisionist assault on the revolutionary time of radical social transformation.¹⁰ In short, he provides a description of symptoms without diagnosing the disease that produced them.

Similarly, Hartmut Rosa has undertaken an important—though extremely limited—analysis of modern social acceleration in *Alienation and Acceleration*. Although he recognizes that industrial capitalism is a driving force behind a new temporal regime, he does not historicize temporality all the way down, and he ultimately establishes a highly problematic schematization of global history, which is itself propelled by a questionable obsession with a periodization of “the new” (*this* is indeed one of the dominant features of much of the work on presentism, which is itself beholden to the reigning historical imaginary). Social acceleration is identified by him as the core process of modernization, and although it purportedly once promised to serve as a liberating force, insofar as it would allow human beings to shape their lives independently of external pressures or limitations, it now “turns against the promise of autonomy” that drove modernity’s project.¹¹ Combining Habermasian Eurocentric myths regarding modernity’s supposed promise of autonomy—for whom? slaves? indigenous populations? the working class? women?—with the defanging of critical theory by reducing it to a conformist liberal diagnosis of social pathologies à la Axel Honneth, Rosa abandons the radical critique of capitalism in favor of abstract speculations regarding how individual experiences of “resonance” might magically counter alienation. For him, “there can be little doubt that any attempt for a political and cultural elimination of alienation leads to totalitarian forms of philosophy, culture and politics, and to authoritarian forms of personality.”¹² *Sauve qui peut!*

>> CRISIS DISCOURSE

The time of the now serves to construct a political urgency whose purpose is to distract from the larger historical framework, and crisis discourse is one of the primary rhetorical strategies that facilitates this abandonment of history, systemic analysis, and circum-spect investigation. Regardless of the nature of the crisis, the basic message is always the same: do not look back and search for historical determinants, institutional factors, or responsible agents. It is imperative to immediately react to the unfolding emergency with the urgency it deserves. Look no further!

This is how the most recent major economic crisis in the United States was presented to the general population. After incessantly repeating that the foundations of the economy were solid, President George W. Bush suddenly asserted that we were facing an unexpected economic hurricane that required immediate and decisive action if apocalypse was to be avoided: the former chairman and chief executive officer of Goldman Sachs, Henry Paulson, needed to distribute 350 billion dollars of taxpayer money to save firms that were “too big to fail.” This immediate measure of socialism for the super rich was so important to implement that there was no time to inquire into the ancient history of who was responsible for the current crisis. In fact, it is precisely by obfuscating this history that crisis discourse served to repurpose those guilty of instigating the collapse by putting them in charge of solving the very problem they had created in the first place (which became very clear when President Obama selected financial rogues like Larry Summers and Timothy Geithner to head up his economic team). Crisis discourse is a conversion mechanism by which ruling class criminals can become the administrators of justice.

The same discourse, which eradicates the past and collapses the future into the urgent needs of the current moment, orchestrated the crisis of September 11, 2001. In much the same way, it was *as if* a catastrophe had arisen out of nowhere, with nefarious forces popping up like the ghoulish characters on amusement park rides, intent on destroying the peaceful American way of life for no good reason. The urgency of reacting in the immediate time of the now served to dissimulate the entire history of US foreign policy and the deep reasons behind the attack, which was organized by the American administration’s former ally, Osama bin Laden, as retaliation against US military interventions abroad. Authors like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Ward Churchill, Noam Chomsky, and Michael Parenti, who had been studying the history of US imperialism for decades, understood this straightaway and wrote poignantly on it.¹³ However, their voices were by far in the minority, and the dominant crisis discourse served to obliterate history and impose *what is to come* as an absolute necessity of the now, thereby shocking history into jarring short-circuits that facilitate illogical—but cunningly calculated—reactions, like the invasion of countries that had nothing to do with the attacks but had ample natural resources, as well as an increase in precisely the forms of rampant imperial militarism that caused the attacks in the first place. Instead of backing the criminals of the US war machine into the corner of a *mea culpa*, 9/11 was a perfect opportunity to mobilize

crisis discourse in order to rebrand war criminals as the purveyors of global justice. It is a crucial rhetorical device in what Eduardo Galeano has astutely analyzed as the “upside-down world.”¹⁴

It is not, in fact, by chance that these crises broke on the scene as volatile, uncontrollable, and unforeseen catastrophes. If we resituate crisis discourse in the broader framework of the present, it becomes clear that it plays a very important strategic role in consolidating or intensifying the status quo. It accomplishes this in at least three ways. To begin with, it promotes passive reactivity: we can only respond to powerful forces that seem to come out of nowhere.

Secondly, it removes all responsibility: no one can be held accountable for natural phenomena like economic hurricanes or evil deeds such as unprovoked terrorist attacks (except for the evildoers themselves, who should be immediately annihilated). Thirdly, it favors historical myopia: the situation is so critical that it is necessary to react straightaway without debating over distant causes. Such backward-

looking historical analysis, we are told, would be unproductive, conspiratorial, or simply un-American. The urgency of the now prohibits any serious analysis of the present and its deep inscription in history. In short, the message was (and continues to be in the structurally consistent repetitions of crisis discourse): there is no time! Indeed, this is precisely what crisis discourse seeks to destroy: a time in which the immediacy of the now would be situated within the persistent framework of the present and connected to structural patterns from the past and programmed repetitions in the future.

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>> FROM THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF THE NOW TO LIBERATION TIME

The practice of looking through a kaleidoscope consists in closing one eye in order to follow the constantly shifting images with the other. This experience can help us illustrate the distinction between the two rival temporal registers that I have been discussing. The mesmerizing imagery of the kaleidoscope corresponds to the time of the now, in which immediate changes succeed one another in a fragmented and chaotic fashion. Everything is constantly changing and the picturesque forms that present themselves are immediately forgotten, being instantaneously replaced by others, which seem to appear as if out of nowhere. There is no recording or memory of images, but rather a visual bombardment that persistently makes one forget past images by replacing them with new ones, which are actually only intricate reconfigurations of the very same fragments that had *already been seen*. And it is impossible to anticipate exactly what is coming, since the mirrors of the kaleidoscope produce seemingly infinite combinations of fragments. One only has to look at them, wait-

ing for something to happen, indulging in the frenetic temporality of constant change that drives us into hypnotic spectatorship. Trapped in the immediacy of what we see in the viewfinder, we lose sight of the very system that produces and structures our experience.

The kaleidoscope itself, as an apparatus, functions like what I have been calling *the present*, meaning the system that produces the frantic changes characteristic of the now. When we are fascinated by what we see through the eyepiece, we are stuck in the immediate time of change-qua-stasis and lose sight of the mechanism that creates and structures the temporal economy of our existence. However, as soon as we step back and look at the device that generates these fluctuating images, they tend to lose their captivating quality. They are recognized as products, and more precisely sociohistorical constructs, anchored in the past and oriented towards a very specific future.

To exit the current prison of the present, it is necessary to lower the kaleidoscope of the time of the now and analyze it for what it is: a social device produced in order to impose and maintain a temporal economy of existence that facilitates the perpetuation of the dominant historico-political imaginary. One of the tasks of a counter-history of the present is precisely to free ourselves from it by cultivating an alternative temporal economy and historico-political imaginary, thereby liberating us from the ways in which a particular temporal configuration imposes itself as the natural order of life. Such liberation is not, however, as easy as lowering a captivating gadget from one's eye, for it requires a diligent, collective constitution of a rival imaginary, which denaturalizes the time of the now by demonstrating its eternal recurrence as a programmed feature of the present of consumer capitalism, while simultaneously revealing the ways in which the obliteration of the past and the demolition of the future go hand in hand with the political goal of enforcing the frenetic imposition of capitalism. By developing a temporal economy that reveals the systemic armature of the present undergirding—while simultaneously being hidden by—the time of the now, counter-history anchors the present in the full depth of the past in order to release the promise of a future different from the one imposed upon us *right now*.

Notes

1 See Elias, *Time*.

2 To avoid the cumbersome repetition of scare quotes, I have eliminated them in what follows, but it should be understood that terms such as *time*, *temporality*, or *temporal* are used purely as analytic place holders and non-essentialist reference points.

3 This claim, like the rest of the argument, is drawing on an expansive body of literature that cuts across a number of different domains. For the sake of concision, I will only reference a few of the more prominent works: Loren Eiseley, *Darwin's Century*; Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*; Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*; Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*; Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past*; François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity*; Paolo Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time*; Immanuel Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science*.

4 See Macherey, *Le sujet des normes*.

5 Peter Phillips, *Giants*, 21. Regarding American imperialism, see William Blum, *America's Deadliest Export*, and "Overthrowing Other People's Governments: The Master List" on his website: <https://williamblum.org/essays/read/overthrowing-other-peoples-governments-the-master-list>.

6 Marx, *Capital*, 381.

7 Seymour Hersh has provided a detailed and intriguing account of the levels of deception operative in the targeted assassination of bin Laden. Summarizing his findings, he writes: "This spring I contacted Durrani [a retired general] and told him in detail what I had learned about the bin Laden assault from American sources: that bin Laden had been a prisoner of the ISI [Pakistan's army and Inter-Services Intelligence agency] at the Abbottabad compound since 2006; that Kayani and Pasha knew of the raid in advance and had made sure that the two helicopters delivering the Seals to Abbottabad could cross

Pakistani airspace without triggering any alarms; that the CIA did not learn of bin Laden's whereabouts by tracking his couriers, as the White House has claimed since May 2011, but from a former senior Pakistani intelligence officer who betrayed the secret in return for much of the \$25 million reward offered by the US, and that, while Obama did order the raid and the Seal team did carry it out, many other aspects of the administration's account were false" ("The Killing of Osama bin Laden").

8 Greenwald, "Obama Officials' Spin on Benghazi Attack Mirrors Bin Laden Raid Untruths."

9 See Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity*. For a brief summary, see Hartog, "Régimes d'historicité."

10 In the few passages in *Regimes of Historicity* where Hartog appears to provide a broader social analysis of the emergence of presentism, his position is perfectly in line with the dominant historico-political imaginary. For instance, in a telling statement prior to convoking the revisionist ideologue François Furet as his witness, he writes: "The very course of recent history, marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the elimination of the communist idea propped up by the future of the Revolution (*l'effacement de l'idée communiste portée par l'avenir de la Révolution*), as well as the simultaneous rise of multiple fundamentalisms, suddenly and lastingly shook up and confounded our relations to time" (Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity*, 3; translation modified).

11 Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration*, 80.

12 Rosa, 98–99.

13 See, for instance, Churchill, "Some People Push Back"; Abu-Jamal, *Writing on the Wall*, 115–17; Chomsky, 9–11; Parenti, *The Terrorism Trap*.

14 See Galeano, *Upside Down*.

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Mike Nelson
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