

THE GLOBAL NOW: Theorizing Temporalities of Futurity

“What is the value or future of global history [...] as understood through our epistemological/pedagogical horizons?”

Mark Jarzombek, Vikram Prakash, Question for ‘Theorizing the Global’

“Definitions of the basic historical concepts: Catastrophe — to have missed the opportunity. Critical moment — the status quo threatens to be preserved. Progress — the first revolutionary measure taken.”

Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project¹

“Since there are still no exact answers to the questions [...], where Now is manifesting and how long Now actually lasts, HOW LONG IS NOW cannot be just a question, but a question, answer and statement at the same time.”

Filoart Group, How Long Is Now²



The present challenges of climate change attributed to the epoch of the Anthropocene have initiated calls to move from 'global' to 'planetary' concepts of history. These calls not only affect the future of history as a discipline but also as an ethical practice: as a form of accusation, confession, and reflection. As a call for change, this is linked to announcements of new theoretical 'turns' and 'paradigm shifts' establishing hierarchies, and new 'frontiers' of thinking.

In the paper that follows, I will investigate 'ways out' of the dichotomies of 'global' versus 'planetary' modes of thinking, their assigned attributes of homogeneity / heterogeneity, singularity / plurality, modern / non-modern, and their claims of hegemony. Using Walter Benjamin's 'revolutionary measure' of 'now-time,' I will look for connections, evident and hidden, between their respective ways of future making, their horizons of futurity.

To trace these connections, I will explore two recent exhibitions: the 'thought exhibition' *Critical Zones: Observatories for Earthly Politics* at the Center for Art and Media (Karlsruhe; 2021) presenting Bruno Latour's and Dipesh Chakrabarty's differentiation between global and planetary 'regimes of historicity' and the 'workshop of thinking' *Pluriverse: The Poetic Power of Theory* (Essen, Vienna, Munich; 2017, 2018, 2019) featuring Alexander Kluge's historiographic entanglements of biographic, national, global, planetary and cosmic perspectives. In conclusion, I will use these exhibitions for a reading of GAHTC's futures and futurities.

'Fictional Planetarium'

*"If all this and much else about human impact on the planet suggest to Earth system scientists that the planet may have passed the threshold of the Holocene and entered a new geological epoch altogether, **we can then say that as humans we precisely live in two different kinds of "now time" (or what they call Jetztzeit in German) simultaneously: in our own awareness of ourselves, the "now" of human history has become entangled with the long "now" of geological and biological timescales, something that has never happened before in the history of humanity.**"*

Dipesh Chakrabarty, The Climate of History in a Planetary Age, 2021³

*"In relation to the history of all organic life on earth," writes a modern biologist, the "the paltry fifty-millennia history of homo sapiens equates to something like two seconds at the close of a twenty-four-hour day. On this scale, the history of civilized mankind would take up one-fifth of the last second of the last hour." **Now-time, which is a model of messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in a tremendous abbreviation, coincides exactly with the figure which the history of mankind describes in the universe.**"*

Walter Benjamin, On the Thesis of History, Thesis XVIII, 1940⁴

Curated by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, the current exhibition *Critical Zones: Observatories for Earthly Politics* at the Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe serves as a *Gedankenausstellung*, a “thought exhibition,” providing a “fictional space” to explore the “thought experiment” about “landing on earth,” about projected moves from global to planetary perspectives on life and history.⁵ Latour uses Dipesh Chakrabarty’s differentiation between ‘global regimes of historicity,’ based on anthropocentric values, and planetary or anthropocenic regimes void of such a “moral imperative,” to map out a “fictional planetarium” representing the growing plurality of often incommensurable concepts of history, of the socio-political sense of ‘living on different planets.’⁶ Latour and Chakrabarty do not agree on the constellation of the “regimes of planetarity” in every point, however they do agree on the necessity of a “new spatial turn” in historiography: A turn from a philosophy to a geography of history, to a “geohistory” which would imply shifting our perspectives on temporality, on the relations between past, present, and future.⁷

Following Chakrabarty, Latour argues that the challenges of climate change show us that “[n]either the World, nor the Globe, nor the Earth, nor the Global (...) are actually the places where humans reside.”⁸ “When we were modernizing,” he explains, “we departed from the land in the direction of the globe. But now the globe has disappeared, we fully understand that the globe has been a fiction.”⁹ “[T]he end of the global” requires us to develop “sciences and politics of landing on earth” and new cartographies for what he calls our “terra incognita.”¹⁰

This ‘end of the global’ as a product of modernization fundamentally impacts our understanding of temporality, and particularly, of the future. Moderns, he states, “*never before* looked into the future, so busy was he extricating himself from a horrible past,” theirs was the “future of someone fleeing their past looking *backward*, not *forward*,” it was “un futur” but never “un avenir.”¹¹ He urges his audience to, instead of accepting “a future of no future,” to “finally *look ahead*,” to face their *avenir* and thus the reversal from a future understood as continuous extension of past and present to one that is literally ‘*a venir*’, coming towards us.¹²

Latour inscribes this reversal into a choreography which transforms Benjamin’s ‘angel of history’ into an ‘angel of geohistory’ who never saw the destruction but only recently, due to the ecological crises, is turning around to face the catastrophe of climate change, or what Latour calls, following James Lovelock, the *Revenge of Gaia*.¹³ Here, Latour’s *Angel of Geohistory* is

“rushing backwards to get away from something she must have found frightening; as she runs, she keeps glancing back more and more anxiously, as if her flight is accumulating obstacles behind her that increasingly impede her movements, until she is forced to turn around. And there she stands, suspended, frozen, her arms hanging loosely, looking at something coming towards her, something even more terrifying than what she was first seeking to escape – until she is forced to recoil. Fleeing from one horror, she has met another, partly created by her flight.”¹⁴

This choreography followed Latour’s *Global Climate Tragi-Comedy* named *Cosmocolossus* and has set the stage for his *Gaia Global Circus*, his “experiment with theater as a heuristic tool to reflect on the consequences of Gaia’s entry on stage,” for “*performing Gaia*” to demonstrate that the stage set, the environment, has replaced the human as main actor.¹⁵

With his choreographic and scenographic versions of a “geohistory break[ing] down any claim to have a human-oriented history,” Latour argues for a new spatial turn, a “shift from a destiny based on history to an exploration of what, for want of the better term, could be called geography,” or rather “*Gaiagraphy*,” necessitating the transformation of geopolitics into a “Gaiapolitics” which addresses the question of how to “find a sustainable home on Gaia.”¹⁶ According to Latour, the concept of *Gaia*, as developed in James Lovelock’s and Lynn Margulis’ hypothesis of the same name, means a change of our “world view,” a “cultural paradigm shift” akin to the one initiated by Galileo Galilei.¹⁷ By translating this hypothesis into actor-network-theory, he demonstrates that *Gaia* cannot be assembled into one organism or system but rather constitutes a particular form of multiplicity: “There Is One Gaia but Gaia Is Not One.”¹⁸ Corresponding to her rich history as a Greek mythological figure and to Deleuze’s reading of Leibniz’ monadology, he calls her “Gaia-Thousand-Folds” comprising an infinite number of temporalities, in which “we find many vestiges of a beginning and many prospects of an end.”¹⁹

Latour’s ‘*Angel of Geohistory*’ not only faces the multiplicity of Earth’s temporalities but also points us to what Latour call’s Chakrabarty’s opening of “Pandora’s box of the definition of humanity in the Anthropocene,” raising “the question of establishing a new continuity between the domain of necessity (nature) and the domain of freedom (society).”²⁰ This box contained Chakrabarty’s theses on „The Climate of History“ in which he mapped out a ‚species history‘ which escapes our experience. This new species history arises as a ‚figure of the universal“ from a “shared sense of catastrophe,” and, echoing Benjamin, presents itself as a “new universal history of humans that *flashes up* in the moment of the danger that is climate change.” Since this history will forever escape comprehension, Chakrabarty (referencing Theodor Adorno) calls it ‚provisionally‘ „a

negative universal history.”²¹ In his recent iteration of *The Climate of History*, he implicitly refers to Benjamin to suggest that in the case of having entered the epoch of the Anthropocene, “we can [...] say that as humans we precisely live in two different kinds of “now time” (or what they call *Jetztzeit* in German) simultaneously: in our own awareness of ourselves, the “now” of human history has become entangled with the long “now” of geological and biological timescales, something that has never happened before in the history of humanity.”²²

Like Latour’s, Chakrabarty’s history assumes differences between global and planetary regimes of temporality. Akin to Benjamin’s notion of the ‘homogeneous, empty time’ of universal history, Latour’s and Chakrabarty’s ‘global’ mode of temporal thinking presupposes that past, present, and future are linked by continuous human experience. In contrast, and akin to Benjamin’s ‘now-time’ disrupting this continuity, Chakrabarty’s ‘planetary’ mode of thinking demonstrates “how the current crisis can precipitate a sense of the present that disconnects the future from the past by putting such a future beyond the grasp of historical sensibility.”²³ Following Alan Weisman’s thought experiment of *The World without Us* according to which “human extinction is a *fait accompli*,” he claims that we have to “insert ourselves into a future ‘without us’ in order to be able to visualize it.”²⁴

According to Chakrabarty, a different form of writing this history could be enabled by the integration of Earth System Science (ESS), the extrapolations of future development on the basis of current data, into historiography. ESS places humans at the “conjunction of the history of the planet, history of life on the planet, and the history of the globe made by the logics of empires, capital, and technology,” thereby giving them “a very long, multilayered, and heterotemporal past,” and potentially serving as an “(auto)biography,” a ‘confession’ about the recent forms of human self-estrangement.²⁵ With his reference to Weisman’s ‘thought experiment’ and ESS, he uses the temporality of ‘future anterior,’ the temporality of the ‘planetary’ of postcolonial studies for the history of the Anthropocene.

Latour and Chakrabarty borrowed the notion of ‘regimes of planetarity’ from Christophe Bonneuil, who coined it to describe “the historically situated ways in which human societies, thinking about their becoming, connected human agency with the agency of non-human beings, and this in the spatial and temporal scales of the planet.”²⁶ Bonneuil, however, not only criticizes conceiving of planetary and global regimes as first and second natures as “continuing the narrative of a modernity which imagined itself as separate from nature,” he also asserts that the ecological concept of planetarity is not as “new” as particularly Charkabarty claims.²⁷ Placing his concept of regimes of planetarity at the “interface” between the dynamics of “world ecologies, ecological reflexivities, and geo powers,” he criticizes narratives of a “single universal time” of sustainability, habitability,

the Anthropocene or the container of “global time” and embraces the “plurality of temporalities” inherent in every being in the processuality of its existence.²⁸

Bonneuil’s criticism of the claimed ‘newness’ of a non-human understanding of the planetary and his call for abandoning narratives of ‘single universal’ temporalities such as that of ‘global time’ raises two questions: first, what does the claim to newness say about one’s understanding of being modern or not and second, have we ever lived in single global time?

This question has already been addressed in the field of urban geography. Here, geographer Jennifer Robinson criticized the category of ‘newness’ as inscribing of a modernity claiming hegemonic “frontiers of urban thinking,” implying more advanced paradigms. Arguing against the category of the new, Robinson suggests applying Benjamin’s ‘revolutionary now-time’ to global urban analysis. According to Robinson, “[f]raming the urban through Benjamin’s idea of ‘now-time’ indicates the need for a theoretical practice which can attend to a multiplicity of temporalities, dispersed referents and circulating practices, and which can work across a diversity of urban contexts, drawing insights into a multiplicity (an infinity?) of coexisting conceptualizations.”²⁹ If we follow Robinson, Ananya Roy and many others, ‘*the global*,’ like ‘the world,’ “does not exist,” but only consists in alternative “fields of sense,” as “genres” of geo- or historiography.³⁰

Thereby, I do not suggest to subsume the planetary into the multiple genres of global studies.³¹ I rather suggest using the perspective of ‘now time’ as opening a ‘*way out*’ of the dichotomies of global and planetary, homogeneity and heterogeneity, singularity and plurality, modern and nonmodern, opening a space that already bears the differences / dialectics within it.

Using Benjamin’s ‘now-time’ also acknowledges the agency and complicity of historians in creating time, in, what Karen Barad called, “the making of temporality.” According to Barad, historians, like physicists, are involved in “making time in marking time.”³² How *future comes to matter* is described in Barad’s talk “Troubling Time/s, Undoing the Future” in which she states that the »*thick now*« includes »entire worlds inside a world of time-being«, »multiple historicities and temporalities that exist in any given moment.«³³ To explain the political agency of this “now”, she relates the temporalities of quantum physics to Benjamin’s notion of a revolutionary ‘*now-time*’ asserting that “the potential for justice exists in the *thick-now* of the present moment.”³⁴

To explore the ways in which ‘now time’ can offer ‘ways out’ of dichotomies and can illuminate the agency and complicity of historians, their role as authors, narrators and ‘producers,’ we can now follow Benjamin’s *One-Way-Street* to the ‘planetary.’³⁵

‘This Way to the Planetarium’

„Men as a species completed their evolution thousands of years ago; but mankind as a species is just beginning his. In technology a physis is being organized through which mankind's contact with the cosmos takes on new and different forms from that which it had in nations and families.”

*Walter Benjamin, This Way to the Planetarium, 1923-1926*³⁶

In writing *One-Way-Street* (1928), Benjamin, as he wrote to a friend, intended to seize “topicality as the reverse of the eternal in history and to make an impression of this, side of the medallion hidden from view.”³⁷ This impression of the eternal within the ephemeral is what he calls *Jetztzeit*, the ‘now of recognizability,’ presenting itself in the dialectical image of Leibnizian ‘monads,’ messianic ‘crystals’ or ‘splinters.’

The ‘breakthrough’ of this street announces the dialectics inherent in the “constructive principle” of materialist historiography laid out in his theses *On the Philosophy of History*.³⁸ This principle entangles the dichotomies of ephemeral and eternal, construction and destruction, movement and arrest, subject and object, redemption and revolution, perception and reproduction. The materialist historiographer, according to Benjamin, ‘breaks through’ the image of universal history by seizing “the true image of the past” as it “flashes up at the moment of its recognizability.”³⁹ This image emerges from the historian’s ability to arrest the movement of thinking in a “constellation saturated with tensions,” giving it “a chock? by which thinking is crystallized as a monad.” This monad is however not only produced by the historian but also by the “historical object” which “confronts him as a monad.” To the historian, it appears as a sign of a “messianic arrest,” of a “revolutionary chance,” of the possibility of “happiness,” of “redemption.”⁴⁰ In his effort to seize these signs of possibility, the historian “blasts a specific epoch out of the homogeneous course of history,” a “specific life out of an epoch and a specific work out of the life’s work.” The “yield of his method” consists in preserving and sublating the “life’s work *in* the work, the epoch *in* the life’s work, and the entire course of history *in* the epoch,” ‘*ad infinitum*.’⁴¹

Benjamin’s aphoristic miniature *Zum Planetarium*, “This Way to the Planetarium,” is such a monad of *now-time* revealing, in a flash, the dialectical image of the ‘true image of the past’ and the epiphanic “splinters of messianic time.”⁴² Closing the montage of

aphorisms entitled *One-Way-Street* (1928) it opens up a space for the possibilities of redemption and revolution. It refracts the dynamics of the catastrophic destruction of the First World War, of the critique of modernity based on the dichotomies of culture and civilization, community and society, soul and spirit, and of the efforts of overcoming these dichotomies by his friends of the avant-garde.⁴³

Benjamin opens up the way to the planetary by interlacing Jewish theology and Greek mythology, religious and pagan teachings. In an earlier draft, he summarized the “testament of antiquity” as mission to “tell the humans, that they are only safely based on earth, if they live from the powers of the cosmos.”⁴⁴ Subsequently, he describes this relations between humanity and cosmos as a sequence of ritualistic “ecstatic trance” in antiquity, its reduction to an “optical connection” by modernist astronomy, and a renewed ecstatic “wooing of the cosmos” during the First World War in which technology was used to betray humanity by turning “the bridal bed into a blood bath.” Lastly, Benjamin envisions the coming of a technology which will not master nature but “the relations between nature and man” thereby renewing the “contact with the cosmos.”⁴⁵

As Irving Wohlfarth has argued, *Zum Planetarium* responds to the contemporary dualisms by crossing the longing for myth, aura and ritual, as voiced in Ludwig Klages’ *Of Cosmogonic Eros* with the ideals of the enlightenment, “with Kant, Hegel and Marx—with *Aufklärung* (‘the way out of self-incurred immaturity’) and *Geist* (the ‘spirit of technics’ conceived as the Hegelian ‘spirit’ that ‘heals its own wounds’ thanks to a liberating Marxian dialectic between forces and relations of production).” As Wohlfarth states, “this is [Benjamin’s] way to the planetarium.”⁴⁶

According to Wohlfarth, this dialectical image can serve as a key-text to understand the “Messianic triad” underlying most of Benjamin’s work: “Paradise, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained.” He retraces this triad as a first stage of “Paradise/Myth,” a second one of “Fall / Demythologization” and the third stage of “Redemption on the basis of the Fall” in which a “second technology” enables a classless society as “renewed communion with the cosmos.”⁴⁷ The transition from the second to the third stage is characterized by equating the collective trauma of the First World War with the transgressive experience of revolution. The dynamic underlying both of them is a “sexual drive.” The war as the absence of a different outlet such as the revolution causes a Freudian “great collective return of the repressed,”⁴⁸ a “pent-up cosmogonic Eros [to be] channeled into Thanatos,”⁴⁹ but, as Wohlfarth states, bears the promise of a “coming humanity prefigured by the proletarian vanguard of a human species still struggling to be born.”⁵⁰

The last part of *Zum Planetarium* shows the ways in which this second technology, Wohlfarth’s technological Eros, entangles humanity and cosmos, humanity and nature by its visceral impact on education and punishment, sickness and recovery, concentration

and distraction, bliss and epilepsy, frenzy and ecstasy, destruction and procreation: Like education is not the mastery of children but of the relation between generations, Benjamin writes,

„technology is not the mastery of nature but of the relations between nature and man. Men as a species completed their development thousands of years ago; but mankind as a species is just beginning his. In technology a *physis* is being organized through which mankind's contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it had in nations and in families. One need recall only the experience of velocities by virtue of which mankind is now preparing to embark on incalculable journeys into the interior of time, to encounter there rhythms from which the sick shall draw strength as they did earlier on high mountains or on the shores of southern seas. The 'Lunaparks' are a prefiguration of sanatoria. The paroxysm of genuine cosmic experience is not tied to that tiny fragment of nature that we are accustomed to call 'Nature'. In the nights of annihilations of the last war, the frame of mankind was shaken by a feeling that resembled the bliss of the epileptic. And the revolts that followed it were the first attempt of mankind to bring the new body under its control. The power of the proletariat is the measure of its convalescence. If it is not gripped to the very marrow by the discipline of this power, no pacifist polemics will save it. Living substance conquers the frenzy of destruction only in the ecstasy of procreation.“⁵¹

The *physis* of this new mankind generated by technology, is the collective body of a classless society. As Benjamin writes in his Surrealism essay, “the collective is a body, too” the *physis* of which however can “only be produced in that image space:” “Only when in technology body and image-space [*Körper und Bildraum*] so interpenetrate that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation, and all the bodily innervations of the collective become revolutionary discharge, has reality transcended itself to the extent demanded by the Communist Manifesto.”⁵² The *physis* of this collective body is formed by organ extensions, it “has its organs in the second technology.”⁵³ This incorporated technology entangling psychophysics and psychoanalysis, redemption and revolution is media technology: photography, cinematography and their principles of montage.

After having broken through the way *To the Planetarium*, Benjamin sets out building it to open up a new worldview, his own “Copernican turn” of granting politics “primacy over history.”⁵⁴ As he notifies a friend in 1935, he is “attempting to direct my telescope through the fog of blood towards a mirage of the nineteenth century, which I am trying to paint in the strokes that it will have for a future state of the world, one freed from magic.” This telescope which he will have to construct himself, turns out to be the *Artwork* essay.⁵⁵ In the process of writing the essay however, he changed the relation between technology and

nature. Whereas he described “emancipated technology” as “second nature” in the first version, he speaks of a “different” technologically specific nature in the second iteration. Here, it is a “different” nature that “speaks” to the camera than to the eye.⁵⁶ Its difference resides in the replacement of a consciously perceived space by an unconscious one: “The [cinematic] camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.”⁵⁷

Having started writing *One-Way-Street* while being infatuated with the surrealists’ fascination for dreams, their ways of knowing thresholds, Benjamin became increasingly interested in their interpretation, in the transition from dream to waking states. A materialist history as the “not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been” oppressed presents itself in the process of “awakening,” when involuntary memories arise.⁵⁸ Thus, “[r]emembering and awaking are the most intimately related. Awakening is namely the dialectical, Copernican turn of remembrance.”⁵⁹ Benjamin developed this concept of history inspired by Marcel Proust’s novel *Remembrance of Things Past*. Here, the author describes the moment of awakening as a memory retrieval presenting itself in the form of confused, interlocking images in which waking and dream, conscious and unconscious are intermeshed in frames similar to those of cinematic montage. Following Proust’s description, Benjamin suggests understanding the dream consciousness as thesis, the waking one as antithesis and the awakening consciousness as synthesis, “identical with the ‘now of recognizability,’ in which things put on their true — surrealist — face. Thus, in Proust, the importance of staking an entire life on life’s supremely dialectical rupture: awakening.”⁶⁰ Still attracted to the disruptive quality of surrealist writing, he nonetheless left their “dream area” to find the “constellation” or “moment of awakening” as the “now of recognizability.”⁶¹

In the constellation described in *Zum Planetarium*, Benjamin saw mankind as ‘now preparing itself for incalculable journeys into the interior of time.’ He set out to find the “nucleus of time lying hidden within the knower and the known alike.”⁶² The ‘now of recognizability’ in Proust’s moment of awakening opened an “eternity which is the entangled, not the infinite time.” His counter-play of aging and remembering opened the way to “the universe of entanglement.”⁶³

For Benjamin, ‘now-time’ served as a “small gateway” to enter a future foreclosed in Jewish theology.⁶⁴ By entangling the temporalities of redemption, revolution, happiness, and the Greek concept of *kairos*, as the critical or opportune moment, it enables the historian to seize the right moment in the continuity of chronological time, the moment filled with the potential for change. It is here, that Benjamin connects historiography and narration, stories and fairy tales, the imagination of mankind, nature, and technology being liberated from danger and exploitation:

“*Now-time*, which is a model of messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in a tremendous abbreviation, coincides exactly with the figure which the history of mankind describes in the universe.”⁶⁵

To explore the ways in which ‘*now time*’ not only serves to entangle the manifold spatialities of temporality but also the categories of local, national, planetary, global, and cosmic, we can now turn to Alexander Kluge’s *planetary constellation* of critical theory tracing the way from the *Passagen-Werk* to a *Pluriverse* of historiography. According to the attorney of the Frankfurt *Institute for Social Research* turned novelist, cinematographer, and producer, Benjamin’s *now-time* offers *ways out* of historiographical predictions opening counterfactual horizons of futurity.

“*Pluriverse*”

*“A transcription of texts (like evolution tinkered with its DNA-texts) not only creates the lines to future texts. It is also a possible reconstruction in the direction of paradise. [...It is] the work instruction directed at the transcribers of the world being propelled by the earth’s center of experience: into the parallel world (heterotopia), into the primal world (history), and into the future (the world of the lust for life of our children). **For transcribers all images are now-time, Jetztzeit.**”*

*Alexander Kluge, Nachricht von ruhigen Momenten, 2013*⁶⁶

Curated on the occasion of Kluge’s 85th birthday, the exhibition series *Pluriverse: The Poetic Power of Theory* features his work as a “three-dimensional montage:” a “multi-perspectival cosmos of images, films, texts, artworks, which cross-reference one another, complement and rub up against one another, creating gaps, and meaning within them.”⁶⁷ Connections not only arise from the material but also from forms of co-operating and co-thinking. “Polyphony,” according to Kluge is “possible in music and film, but necessary in thought.” Thus, the exhibitions serve as workshops of thinking, ‘*Gedanken-*,’ and ‘*Denkwerkstätten*,’ and as ‘kitchens of happiness,’ and ‘gardens of cooperation.’⁶⁸

As “chronicler of the [20th] century,” this self-declared “poet of the Frankfurt School” adapts the German tradition of critical theory to what he calls the “disruptive times” of the 21st century.⁶⁹ According to Kluge, “the prefix ‘pluri’ [of *Pluriverse*] is deceptive, as it has to do with a single core. Specifically: How do we respond to the bomb? Our world is a time bomb, as it were. Will we be able to neutralize this bomb’s lethal potential in mid-flight (with us in the middle)? ‘There is nothing like repair experience’.”⁷⁰ The „principle of repair“ not

only forms „the basis of the entire evolution,“ of particle physics and the ensuing life, but also that of hope, “hope too can be restored.”⁷¹

Kluge’s *Pluriverse*, as Leslie Adelson states, offers „counterfactual hope under conditions of real catastrophe“ and encourages us „not just to contemplate the possibility of possibility but to convert catastrophic time into something akin to what Theodor W. Adorno once called, in *Negative Dialectics*, a ‚future without life’s miseries.‘“ In contrast to predictions of the inescapable erasure of futurity, be it capitalist compression or climate change, Kluge’s “pluriverse of convertibility” helps us develop a “long-distance sense organ of temporal perception,” a “future sense” to access “counterfactual horizons of futurity.”⁷² In this interest, his “cosmic miniatures” entangle biographic, national, global, and planetary scales of temporality.⁷³

In the tradition of critical theory, Kluge connects Adorno’s to Benjamin’s perspectives. “Among all the works of Critical Theory,” he states, Benjamin’s “approach is the one that, for contemporary reasons, calls most for continuation.” Its continuation would allow us to face the challenges of the 21st century: “we would have to look back at the experiences of the twentieth century, from the perspectives and motives (the relations of pressure and pressurizations, the disruptions) of the twenty-first century (concretely, of 2019 and the years that follow).” Following Benjamin’s quest for the eternal within the ephemeral, Kluge embraces the form of the miniature for its reversing the relation between the general and the particular. The “fragment as poetic form” does not infer from the general to the particular but “seeks the general in the particular in the first place. Not ‘I’ know but Something in me is what knows. Not ‘I’ am capable of cognition but Something is in things, other human beings, and the living world that leaps into me.”⁷⁴

Emphasizing the poetic form, Kluge intends to complement the discursive, analytical power of theory with intuitive expression. According to Kluge, the poetic is derived from ‘making’, ‘giving form.’ As “a dowry of human intelligence,” it stems “from caution, from self-defense: it is oriented towards ways out, ‘*Auswege*,’ emergency exits, and originally to flight.”⁷⁵ In the tradition of Marxist thought, the notion of ‘power’ refers to both, the labor of its making and the power achieved by its performance. In moments of emergency, poetic power becomes politically, theoretical power practically relevant. As form of human resistance, “[t]he *poetic power of theory* is an alliance—hard enough to find—out of which emancipation of any kind becomes subjectively possible.”⁷⁶

According to Kluge, the ‘disruptive times’ and tensions of the 21st century necessitate to conceive of ‘human resistance’ not in general but highly particular ways, as the “subjectively saturated experience” of narration. Narration however is not a mono- but a multilingual practice. As individual poet, Kluge speaks multiple languages. As cinematographer, he sees, films “with the eyes of others,” as narrator, a “whole chorus” of

relatives and companions speaks within him, and as novelist, he is devoted to transcribing, translating texts, the *Lebensläufe* of others.⁷⁷

In *Pluriverse*, this polyphony is multiplied by cooperation and dialogue.⁷⁸ In addition to his extended group of “companions in now-time,” Kluge works with the poet and novelist Ben Lerner.⁷⁹ Both of these writers conceive of the poet as multilingual, of poetry as a simultaneously creative and critical practice, as a “heteroglot space,” in which “all of the languages of a language collide.”⁸⁰ Lerner’s poetry, according to Kluge, has “nothing general about it. Neither in a poetic sense, nor in theory, and above all not in Critical Theory. This is instead about particular forms of human resistance.” Lerner’s following poem *Theory, like swimming in a storm* thematizes “our disruptive world,” in which “roots are being torn out. How is one supposed to be radical when the roots are being uprooted?”

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“Theory, like swimming in a storm”

Wake up, it’s time to begin
The forgetting. Direct modal statements
Wither under glass. A little book for Ari
Built to sway. I admire the use of felt
Theory, like swimming in a storm, but object
To anti-representational bias in an era of
You’re not listening. I’m sorry. I was thinking
How the beauty of your singing reinscribes
The hope whose death it announces. Wave⁸²

Kluge replies to Lerner and his own question with a story ending in yet another question:

“Swimming in a Storm

Storm birds, descendants of the dinosaurs in a
different way than we, swim opposite to the troughs
of low pressure, westward across the Atlantic. Their capacity
for theory is shown by the elegance of their wings.
They give a wide berth to the cloud of plastic particles,
which are microscopically small, but slice alveoli
like shards of iron or glass. Where is the seat of their
confident knowledge? What does the “poetic force
of theory” mean for them?”⁸³

In cutting from the storm birds to critical theory, Kluge demonstrates his practice of creating the kairotic moment of 'now-time.' He sees historiography as a collection of transcripts comprising the transcriber's Freudian slips and desires thereby, as Christian Schulte pointed out, enriching the tradition by an "invisible text of experience entangling the most diverse times."⁸⁴ Comparing historians to monks transcribing texts, Kluge sees historiography as inscriptions of the authors' forms of resistance, their forms of "obstinacy."⁸⁵ Accordingly, "a transcription of the texts (like evolution tinkered with its DNA-texts) not only creates the lines to future texts. It is also a possible reconstruction in the direction of paradise. [...It is] the work instruction directed at the transcribers of all countries being propelled by the earth's center of experience: into the parallel world (heterotopia), into the primal world (history), and into the future (the world of the lust for life of our children). For transcribers all images are now-time, *Jetztzeit*."⁸⁶

According to Kluge, "it may appear as if some of the stories concern not the present, the *Jetztzeit*, but the past. They take place in the present, the *Jetztzeit*." Following Benjamin, Kluge's now-time opens up manifold horizons of futurity. The future "both exists in the past and approaches us." It is the evolutionary and experiential intelligence of knowing *Auswege*, ways out of seemingly hopeless situations. According to Kluge, the future is "a [creative] potential we carry within ourselves" which is wiser than we are, a "guardian angel."

Kluge's angel embodies entangled grammatical forms of futurity, the forms of contingency, potentiality, and, most importantly, optativity, of a particular grammar of an 'if only,' of hope and desire existing in languages such as Ancient Greek, Albanian, Navajo, and Sanskrit. These forms of futurity are also connected to the evolutionary past. The biological and pragmatic intelligence of „need“ and „greed,“ characterizing dragon-flies and current computer programming alike, reaches back 70 million years and „might be a similar intelligence like the one we have in our skin, in our intestines and everywhere but in the head.“ Kluge maps out his diverse horizons of futurity assuming that we "live in multiple universes simultaneously without noticing it," that we, like in quantum physics, believe that "our reality is traversed by a second reality," that our "actuality" is the relation between "ten or twelve aggregate states."⁸⁷ These assumptions prompted critics to characterize Kluge's narratives as "quantum model of futurity," his historiography as "narrative quantum physics."⁸⁸

Following Benjamin, Kluge translated the filmic quality of *now-time* not only into poetic but also into cinematic montage. He uses the contrast between two consecutive scenes to induce the viewer to associate an "invisible third image" engendering the "third time" of phantasy, which grants access to the times of subjunctivity and optativity and thus to the routes of possible ways out, to *Auswege*. Akin to Benjamin's 'small gateway' to

futurity, Kluge's 'now-times' serve as "experiential portals in time," as emancipatory tools of "future-making."⁸⁹

Conclusion: "How Long Is Now"

In this paper, I suggest that Benjamin's 'now-time' can open 'ways out' of the dichotomies of global and planetary, homogeneity and heterogeneity, singularity and plurality, modern and nonmodern, to enter a third space that bears the differences / dialectics within it. For now, I suggest that the Leibnizian monadology and its subsequent transcriptions underlying the perspective of 'now-time' can connect 'global' and 'planetary ways' of future making, their horizons of futurity.

This perspective also acknowledges the agency and complicity of historians in creating time, in making futures. Thus, GAHTC, like the 'transcribers of all countries,' would be actively engaged in turning a 'Global History of Architecture' into a performative project of 'Globalizing History,' thereby problematizing the assumed completeness of what is called 'the global', actively in-completing, ontologizing the 'ad infinitum' of both its histories and futurities.

"*How Long Is Now*" is the lettering of a mural on the fire wall of the *Kunsthaus Tacheles* (Yiddish for speaking plainly), the ruin of one of the arcades of nineteenth century Berlin, the city of Benjamin's *One-Way-Street*. The graffito, designed in 1997 and realized in 2006, was meant to express the lacking certainty about the location and duration of 'the now.' Therefore, the authoring artist collective stated that "*How Long Is Now* is simultaneously a question, an answer, and an assertion."⁹⁰ In the face of its being covered up by new construction, the collective has transcribed it onto a different fire wall, where it again faces an uncertain future. The graffito was simultaneously read as a "manifesto of uncertainty and change" characterizing the increasingly gentrifying city and as a sign of the current reflections upon notions of a "deep future" entangling temporalities of eschatology and ecological narratives.⁹¹ The snapshot of "*How Long Is Now*" opening the text was taken at twilight uniting those Benjamin called "threshold proficient" in creating portals of futurity.⁹²

¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), 474 [N10,2].

² Filoart Group, "How Long Is Now," <http://filoart.org/how-long-is-now/>. All URLs accessed on 03/20/2021.

³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 7.

⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, 1938-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996), vol. 4, 396.

- ⁵ Bruno Latour, “Seven Objections Against Landing on Earth,” in: Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Critical Zones: The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth* (Karlsruhe, Germany: ZKM/Center for Art and Media; Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2020), 10-17, 12, 17,
- ⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category,” in: *Critical Inquiry* 46 (1), 2019, 1–31, 25. Bruno Latour, “We don’t seem to live on the same planet...” — a fictional planetarium,” in: *Critical Zones*, 276-281.
- ⁷ Bruno Latour and Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Conflicts of Planetary Proportions – A Conversation,” in: *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 14 (3), 2020, 419–454. The manuscript is available at: <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/article.html>. p. 3.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ “There is no Earth Corresponding to the Globe,” An Interview with Bruno Latour by Lars Gertenbach, Sven Opitz and Ute Tellmann, in: *Soziale Welt* 67 (3), 2016, 353–364, 354.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 363. See catalogue: Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Critical Zones*.
- ¹¹ Bruno Latour, “An Attempt at a ‘Compositionist Manifesto,’” in: *New Literary History* 41 (3), 2010, 471–490, 486.
- ¹² Ibid., 487.
- ¹³ James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate in Crisis and the Fate of Humanity* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).
- ¹⁴ Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* (Cambridge, UK; Medford, Mass.: Polity Press, 2017), 1. See also: Bruno Latour, “Le futur a-t-il de l’avenir ?,” 4.12.2013. The talk is available at: <https://www.sciencespo.fr/executive-education/video-bruno-latour>.
- ¹⁵ Frédérique Aït-Touati and Bruno Latour, “Performing Gaia,” in: *Theater* 4 (2), 2018, 94-101, 96, 100.
- ¹⁶ Bruno Latour and Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Conflicts of Planetary Proportions,” manuskript, p. 4. “The term “geohistory” sums up very nicely Dipesh Chakrabarty’s 2009 article ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’ (2009).” In: Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 45, fn 9. Bruno Latour, “An Attempt at a ‘Compositionist Manifesto,’” in: *New Literary History* 41 (3), 2010, 471–490, 488.
- ¹⁷ Lovelock and Margulis conceived of the earth’s biosphere as a sympoietic entity of organic and inorganic matter. See: James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, “Atmospheric Homeostasis by and for the Biosphere: The Gaia Hypothesis,” in: *Tellus* 26 (1-2), 1974, 2–10. Bruno Latour and Timothy M. Lenton, “Extending the Domain of Freedom, or Why Gaia Is So Hard to Understand,” in: *Critical Inquiry* 45 (3), 2019, 659–680, 661.
- ¹⁸ Bruno Latour and Timothy M. Lenton, “Extending the Domain of Freedom, 670.
- ¹⁹ Bruno Latour, “Why Gaia Is Not a God of Totality,” in: *Theory, Culture & Society* 34 (2-3), 2017, 61–81, 73. Bruno Latour and Timothy M. Lenton, “Extending the Domain of Freedom, 672.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 659.
- ²¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” in: *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2), 2009, 197–222, 221f.
- ²² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History*, 7.
- ²³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History,” 197.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Planet,” 1, 30
- ²⁶ Christophe Bonneuil, “Der Historiker und der Planet. Planetaritätsregimes an der Schnittstelle von Welt-Ökologien, ökologischen Reflexivitäten und Geo-Mächten,” in: Frank Adloff and Sighard Neckel, eds., *Gesellschaftstheorie im Anthropozän* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2020), 55-92. Manuscript available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346400418_Der_Historiker_und_der_Planet_Planetaritatsregimes_an_der_Schnittstelle_von_Welt-Okologien_okologischen_Reflexivitäten_und_Geo-Mächten_The_historian_and_the_planet_Regimes_of_planetarity_at_the_crossr. Manuscript, 17f.
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- ²⁸ Ibid., 6, 16 f.
- ²⁹ Jennifer Robinson, “The Urban Now: Theorising Cities beyond the New,” in: *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16 (6), 2013, 659–677, 661.
- ³⁰ Markus Gabriel, *Why the World Does not Exist* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2015). Jennifer Robinson and Ananya Roy, “Debate on Global Urbanisms and the Nature of Urban Theory,” in: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 40 (1), 2016, 181–186, 183.
- ³¹ Robinson and Ananya Roy, “Debate on Global Urbanisms,” 183.
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- ³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 21.
- ³⁵ Michael Auer, *Wege zu einer planetarischen Linientreue?* (Paderborn, Germany: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2013). Chapter: „Die Zeit des Planetarischen: Future Anterior.“
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- ³⁸ Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," Thesis XVII, in: *ibid.*, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938-1940, 396.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 390, Thesis V.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 396, Thesis XVII; *ibid.*, 389, Thesis II.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 396, Thesis XVII.
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- ⁴³ See: Frederic J. Schwartz, "The Eye of the Expert: Walter Benjamin and the Avant Garde," in: *Art History* 24 (3), 2001, 401-444.
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- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.
- ⁵¹ Benjamin, "This Way to the Planetarium," 95f.
- ⁵² Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: the Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in: *New Left Review* 108 (March-April), 1978, 47-56, 56.
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- ⁵⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed., Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), 388/389.
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- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 463f.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 486.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 463.
- ⁶³ Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II, 330.
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- ⁷⁹ Alexander Kluge, „Companions in Now-Time,“ (2007) in: Alexander Kluge and Richard Langston, *Difference and Orientation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 84-87. Letter addressed to Mr. B.
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