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HERAUSGEGEBEN VON GÜNTER BLAMBERGER,
RÜDIGER GÖRNER UND ADRIAN ROBANUS

BIOGRAPHY – A PLAY?

Poetologische Experimente
mit einer Gattung
ohne Poetik

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MAJA PETROVIĆ-ŠTEGER

CALLING THE FUTURE INTO BEING: TIMESCRIPTING IN CONTEMPORARY SERBIA

*My effort here is not to finally ,know‘ them
– to collect them into a good enough story
of what’s going on –
but to fashion some form of address
that is adequate to their form.¹*

We typically understand a portrait as an artistic representation of a person (or group) evoking the sitters’ mood through a central attention to faces. What would it mean to propose a portrait of a society, rather than an individual? What kind of claim is being made in suggesting there are ways of talking, acting and experiencing shared across a society; and that these ways are such that they can be grasped and represented by a portrait? What would such observation and portrayal allow?

Anthropology has a long-standing interest in understanding people’s representational economies. Most particularly the discipline is marked by detailed observations and analyses of how selfhood emerges through cultural and social practices – under rubrics both of ‘self-fashioning’ and group behaviour that depends on, or effects, a differentiation of roles or persons. Various anthropological projects, both in the past and the present, attend to how people make and unmake themselves, how they represent themselves to themselves and to others. How, for example, do they enact face-saving and managing the perceived ‘damage’ done to their self- or community image? How do they practice self-distancing and

¹ Stewart 2007, 4.

self-denying; how do they project or affirm themselves? In other words: how are they self- and sense-making of the relations and the world they inhabit? In these investigations, notions of selfhood and representation are never taken for granted, never reified. Both the notion of self and the process of representation are understood as deeply implicated in relations with other subjects' and communities' histories, experiences, modes of reasoning and strategies of autopoiesis and self-representation. There can be no selfhood apart from the collaborative process of figuration.²

For the past decade, my own anthropological research has focused on modes of self-formation and self-representation in contemporary Serbia. I have a longstanding interest in the relationship between subjectivity, intimacy, the representable, the political and notions of time. This chapter will address different instances of people's self-narration and -enacting, how they compose and circulate portraits of themselves in speaking of their troubled pasts, uncertain present and their notions of the future. It will specifically look at how people in a highly politicised southern European context talk about themselves in relation to their possible futures, especially as these representations involve specific conceptual and material practices.

TIMESCAPES OF CONTEMPORARY SERBIA

In their 2019 book *The Anthropology of the Future* Rebecca Bryant and David Knight write about vernacular timescapes, periods, defined by epochal thinking, in which people individually experience culturally-defined temporal orientations appropriate to particular kinds of activity. These periods, as categories of experience, may be designated loosely in thematic terms: people go through Times of War, Times of Healing, Times of Crises or Times of Prosperity.³ How would one characterise the vernacular timescape of contemporary Serbia?

Almost 30 years have passed since the Yugoslav wars started. The energies that sustained both nationalistic and antinationalistic fervour in Serbia seem largely to have lapsed. In comparison to ten or twenty years ago, many Serbs profess a willingness to adopt a sharper mode of self-scrutiny. Looking back on what happened, some confess to frustration and shame; others claim that they were, and still are, unjustly ostracized and stigmatized for

² Battaglia 1995.

³ Bryant/Knight 2019, 64.

everything that went wrong during the wars. But the overall feeling is that people seem more willing not only to reckon with, but to move beyond the past; they feel they have been stuck in its mire for too long.

Calls for moving beyond the past, though, are not always made in a mood of high energy. A number of respondents to my ongoing Serbian fieldwork complain they are running on empty. For the last ten years, I have witnessed continual lamentations about how the collective psychic energy of people in Serbia has been leached or washed away. My respondents feel exhausted not just on account of the wars, or because of the conflicts' economic or psychological consequences, they claim, but as a result of Serbia's current 'political and mental ecology'. They describe this environment as impure, stagnant, treacherous. They feel they are continuously hectored by their political and economic leaders, whom they describe as despotic and predatory. The government is accused of fostering, not just failing to relieve, conditions that affect all of society: poverty is very deep; the budget is in deficit; criminal networks are untouched; public administration is opaque and frequently incompetent; public infrastructure is wrecked; the judiciary is corrupt, and all kinds of discrimination run riot. In the words of Dušica, a retired professional dancer and my longtime interlocutor: "Our lives have lacked balance for too long. We are neglected as a society. We live in a perpetual state of uncertainty – rudderless. People crave change, but no one believes in change anymore [...]. All the time we exaggerate emotively about our past, criticise our present and feel we have no future."

How do vernacular timescapes come into being? Political or economic constructions of hopelessness often go hand in hand with a mentality of self-defeat. But should timescapes only be measured by and explained with political and economic standards? What decides which sets of narratives will become most prominent in everyday consciousness when people try to explain themselves and their own, as well as collective experiences, of time? Especially in a country, represented by media and academia, through an accentuated relation to conflict past, discrimination, and all kinds of frustrations.⁴

⁴ The chapter is built on a project that aimed to break through a theoretical and ethnographic impasse that has baulked past scholarly portrayals of contemporary Serbia. Even when taking up Serbia as a postsocialist and postconflict society, most scholarship has found itself compelled to reinscribe the cliché of the Balkans as a tinderbox, a powder keg always about to blow (see Todorova 1997; Bjelić/Savić 2001). "Orientalising", "exoticising", "historicising" and "self-othering" representations are biased and – crucially – leave little or no theoretical space for a consideration of the region's future (Goldsworthy 1998; Đerić 2005; Hayden 2014).

If the past – a national past – is experienced as impaired, and the present as deficient and humiliating, how does one think and act about the future? What kinds of future attempt to come into being? How do people living in these times of effort deal with what does not yet exist? Looking at the material I have collected over the past 10 years, the interviews and memories consist mainly of narratives of loss, fatigue and hopelessness similar to Dušica's. They are full of people who, apparently randomly, let their contempt for the society they live in leak out as the subtext of their conversation, in almost a stream-of-consciousness way. Complaint is, of course, a popular cultural form of communication in Serbia. But did I capture all of what it means? What about the other side of Serbia's imagined vernacular timescape, its underbelly? As well as hopelessness, or despair in the absence of a future, are some people expressing hope? If so, then in what mode? What are their strategies for summoning the future – for mediating it, not in a technologically enhanced way, but through the implications of their actions and practice? How may one approach these alternative portraiture of a society and alternative conceptions of the future anthropologically?⁵

IDEATIONAL ALTERITY

This chapter, together with its broader context, builds on a significant body of ethnographic and archival research on Serbia tapping into the notion of time, dreams, precarity, hope and national psychology.⁶ But it also takes inspiration from studies that examine contemporary historical junctures in which it seems especially important to “command” the world, given a state of both crisis and, potentially, beginning.⁷ Being interested in the practices

⁵ Many still feel emotionally and politically possessed by the war. But their conception of the past as something to understand, reckon with, break from, supposes a certain orientation towards the future. I argue that even documented instances of paranoia, contradiction and group-think, when these merge, can be taken as ways of rendering a passage into the future thinkable, and of beginning to discuss their hopes from themselves and for society (see Petrović-Šteger 2013, 2016, 2018).

⁶ Čolović 2002; Bjelić/Savić 2002; Djerić 2006; Jansen 2013, 2014; Naumović 2009; Živković 2011; Greenberg 2011; Bošković 2017.

⁷ These incongruous expectations often imply, on people's part, the engagement of a so-called ‘method of hope’, as defined by Hirokazu Miyazaki (2004) as a specific mode of managing knowledge that allows the present to move into the future. In hoping, people recognise the possible reflexivity of their feelings (hope, fear, enthusiasm, trepidation) towards what happens to them. Hope is

capable of imagining alternative scenarios and envisioning the societal good, I started around 2004 not only to pay attention but to seek out the individuals, collectives and processes that gesture towards the notion that the conditions in which a life is lived are conceivably changeable.

Seeking to parlay a different, better future into being is nowadays often associated with the ethos and practices of social entrepreneurs. I chose therefore to focus on people who claim to be able to respond, actively and innovatively, to the notion that the time they live in requires an immediate, real and pragmatic restructuring of people's political, social and economic ways of living. My research was less concerned with ‘social entrepreneurship’ in its legal or economic definition, than it took that formula as a label for different sets of practices through which people project hope – not as a political project, but as a palpable set of actions through which they try to put forward an alternative to current conditions. I sought to identify practices capable of offering tools and scripts for action that escape the usual etiquettes of mainstream or countercultural thinking and acting, while being oriented towards collective wellbeing in the future.

I started, then, to work with collaborators and respondents in the fields of urbanism, public health, education, and migration. Since my concern was not just with economic reform, I also followed the work of various architects, planners, educators, cosmologists, biological archaeologists and inventors. Other interlocutors included public intellectuals, traditional musicians, sport gurus, herbalists and painters. The aim was to gauge which practices, and whose, are recognized as unusually resourceful, inspirational, oriented towards the common good, or capable of offering cognitive tools escaping the usual etiquettes of mainstream, countercultural and visionary ways of thinking and acting. This chapter passes on some of my interlocutors' ideas, giving some colour and context to what it means to think alternatively about time in present day Serbia.

DIRECTING INTO PURPOSEFUL CREATION

I first learned about Ivan, a 43-year-old industrial archaeologist, through a newspaper story on the feats of a Belgradian collective interested in

thus seen not only as an emotional state or strategic moment, but as a method through which a radical temporal orientation may be forged (Miyazaki 2004). See also Moore 1990; Bloch 1955/1995; Harvey 2000; Hage 2003, 2015; Crapanzano 2003; Zournazi 2003; Miyazaki 2004, 2006; Guyer 2007; Graeber 2007.

underground urban geography. What really got my attention was how he described their project to the journalist. I got in touch on the basis of a Google search that gleaned a few biographical details.

Ivan grew up as an only child partly in Belgrade, partly in Moscow, and is a great connoisseur of modernist architecture, Serbian intellectual circles of 19th and 20th centuries, augmented reality and the literature of what he calls “the collective subconscious”. In the last 15 years, he has encouraged and carried out a variety of ambitious short- and long-term projects exploring the industrial heritage of Belgrade and other Serbian towns. Along with four other permanent and many other occasional members of the collective, Ivan explores the material and conceptual traces of both ancient and modern settlements (including WW II factories and airports). Through a series of different engagements, workshops, lectures, research projects and sometimes TV shows, the collective seeks to educate the public regarding certain lesser-known aspects of Serbian cities, aiming to preserve cultural and historical spaces. He understands his activities as a form of activism akin to social entrepreneurship. Since we met one August morning four years ago, I have spent a long time walking in and under the city and talking with him, and other members of the collective, about generational affiliation and habits, the legacy of the Roman Empire in the Balkans, the “mindset of Serbian society” and time. “As a society”, says Ivan,

we are split into two. Cut in half by the times we live [*raspolučeni u vremenu*]. The media, the government, even some respected public intellectuals, all in their own way, keep projecting this idea to the people that we are standing at some virtual crossroads – where we have to decide whether to go back, to retrace the path of some imaginary past, or to go forward to a ‘better future’. But in reality, there is no such crossroad. We stand in one place, we’re stuck in a very strange cocoon ... Well, if I just observe what happened to most people of my generation ... I know so many people who were amazing figures twenty, even fifteen years ago. Despite the whole mess of the wars, they were extraordinarily creative individuals, full of grand ideas, with very concrete plans to realising them. Yet look at them now. Most of them seem in deep anaesthesia. They take deep dives all the time into some quiet nihilism, into self-deception, pragmatism, hangovers, anger ... Serbia is definitely not an easy place to live in. Everybody’s trying hard to survive financially ... But the problem is that people keep amputating themselves, giving up their plans ... Today, no one

would recognize my friends as top musicians or scientific geniuses, though they were once ... And do you know why? Because in the meantime they have got tired and frustrated. They adopted cynicism as their easiest, the default position for so much of the structure of their daily life and interactions ... But, cynicism is a barren attitude. A cynic spits on everything, but examines nothing ... This is why one must constantly move, act, work, create. Trust. Every day. Consciously ... This place [Belgrade and Serbia] must be protected, made clean, in a calm, loving way ... Our views and ways of seeing need to be made clear. Directed into purposeful creation.⁸

A few months and conversations later, he said:

This moral decay people talk so much about ... you know, I see it differently. It’s true that society is rotting. Politics right now and the entertainment nomenklatura mean there’s a consumer mentality and trashy aesthetics in every area of life. But I’m sure that Serbia will survive this period of savagery. You know how much savagery it has overcome over the past two millennia? Look at these wonderful buildings [he points his hand towards Makedonska and Hilendarska streets]. They are eternal. Dirty, with streaks on their facades ... but even the cracked ones are still beautiful. I always tell my friends, those who look at the buildings long enough will see the faces of the people who made them in them. Every building is a store of the imagination of their builders, their designers, of those who bequeathed them to us. Their current neglect cannot overshadow their beauty. All these genius architects and wealthy industrialists who knew which architects to trust ... they knew how to look ahead. They paid attention to how aesthetically and conceptually harmonious Belgrade could be. People used to build buildings for eternity, not on commission. Now that is an elevated way of thinking! And of understanding yourself. Buildings like those, parks like these, all these urban structures, this will outlive us ... Architecture is a very concrete connection between space and time ... Look left and right down the street now, just look and you will see time expanding, spilling over yards, streets, corridors. Exactly such fragments of time, that we call Ottoman, baroque, art

⁸ This and all the following translations from Serbian were done by the author of the article.

deco, socialist, provincial, urban ... all these together provide the dynamics of this street. They are the basis of its dignity and harmony. They remind us how the built environment can look like and how it can make us feel, especially today, when only cheap nonsense is ever built ... But, you know, I really believe that reasonable times will come again. The younger generations are fantastic. My students are amazing, intellectually agile, fast, capable. Motivated. Brave. They know how to turn to each other, to organize themselves, help each other, immediately translate ideas into concrete proposals. They trust each other ... I don't know ... maybe one can trust oneself and others with such an open heart only when one is young ... I don't know, but what I see is good. The other day, a student kept talking about how excited he was about Stanojević⁹ and Petronijević.¹⁰ Can you imagine? Do you understand who their role models are? Visionaries!" [He smiles wolfishly.] "That's why it's redundant and so silly to roll your eyes and moralize over that idea we live an awful present. No, we live in a time we share with some amazing ancestors and with future inventors and creators. New generations will come and build and think even more beautifully and harmoniously. We're just in a rough phase right now ... So what we have to do is to gently take care of our ancestors and successors. And carefully handle our time. To understand and relax into it, putting our energy into thinking clearly and understanding the different connections we have to the past and future. Time is on our side. All we have to do is to trust it. Trust in a responsible way, so that in interim we can work and create things in its favour.

Branko, a designer of educational toys for children of migrants, has other thoughts about the future:

Our society became deeply stratified over the past 25 years. Some people, of the same background and education as everyone else, have serious

⁹ Djordje Stanojević was a physicist, astronomer and rector of Belgrade University, pioneer of electrification and industrialization in Serbia, author of the first scientific works in astrophysics in Serbia. Thanks to his work Belgrade was granted the thermal power plant in 1893, only 12 years after the first such plant was built in the world.

¹⁰ Branislav Petronijević, born in 1875, was a Serbian philosopher, theoretical physicist, mathematician and astronomer known for his writings on celestial mechanics.

money, while others can barely make ends meet. But not everything here is in a state of coma. Whoever works to enrich this place, to start interesting projects ... they are bound to leave traces. What people have to understand is that it is equally important to urge ideas, as it is to push material things. To look for them, to source them, to renew them [...]. I have an aunt who likes to repeat that blockbuster phrase, "It is not what you get, it is what you become". But I do not think that applies to Serbia. Here, what you get, in terms of your own and society's legacy, really counts. But it's also what you do with it. And ... even if everyone does remain as if they're in a coma, our material culture would still have a lot to say to us. We have a rich history. A history that tells us people went through longer lasting adversity than we're going through right now.

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

There are a number of things one could point out at this juncture. I will focus on a few. The social is often expressed in economic and political terms. Politics and economics are sometimes taken to comprise a form of metalanguage in which people come ultimately to express their emotions about the times in which they live, or their loves and fears. Yet, not everything is a matter of politics and economics.

During this research I spent time with women and men of different ages, different backgrounds and vocations. Many are less articulate than the two men who have just spoken. Yet almost all were highly critical of the usual language for gauging public opinion, and of its familiar contradictions and politics. In that sense, they were invested in wanting to change how national debates are framed on questions to do with people's health, education, and wellbeing. In one way or another, they stress that through their work, they wish to recalibrate Serbia's language for discussing society and politics. They see their own projects (whether as radiologists or local herbalists) as vitally linked to processes of making others take a renewed interest in contemporary social, environmental and political issues. Moreover, they also want to catalyse people's processes of 'self-understanding'. Some have called that process a corrective rewiring or broadening of the Serbian mind. A process of building of new individual and social imaginations, as visions that may potentially create the conditions for change.¹¹

¹¹ See also Zournazi 2002.

Although I argue that the whole of social life should not be seen through the lense of politics only, I did regularly press my interlocutors on how politically active they seek to be. Some saw their work as directly linked to politics. Ivan, for example, was an active figure in the OTPOR movement, which was central to the overthrow of the Milošević regime in 2000, and had spent time in prison. Similarly, Branko was detained for a month for taking part in anti-government demonstrations only last April (2019). Yet they talk about their actions as larger than politics. Others yet oppose the idea of overt political activism, and do not identify their projects as calls for major change (arguing that these are sometimes utopian and rest on unrealistic, politicized projects). Their calls most of the time were not calls for revolution. Rather, they seem to be calling for creation of ‘parallel systems’ in both intellectual and practical space that will, at some point, acquire their own critical mass and momentum.

Besides constantly tinkering with new devices, possibilities and timescales, they are often passionately interested in traditional, local, or old knowledge – trying to recreate, refashion and set off both conceptual and material castoffs in fresh ways. Importantly, the concepts of precariousness, of a ‘bare existence’ or of lack opportunities (that are so popular with media) do not seem to occupy much of these people’s imagination and working vocabulary. It was a surprise for me to realize that I was rarely speaking about the need for the country to square up to various issues, such as historical injustices, systematic economic unfairness or failures of the political order. Rather, my interlocutors seemed interested in creating forms of material and psychological wellbeing from what they have at hand.

Moreover, the described individuals tend to refer distinctively to time. Ivan and Branko, for example, spoke enthusiastically of scholars, visionaries and rich industrialists, who “put Belgrade in their debt by supporting architects to create elaborate, artistically refined buildings belonging to all eternity”. Other respondents described how various founders endowed the poor or orphans with lasting schools and scholarships. Many draw inspiration for their activities from exemplary acts of bequeathing or endowing, and so caring for others, especially for the poor, a practice in Serbia known since the Middle Ages as *zadužbinarstvo*.¹²

¹² *Zadužbinarstvo* denotes a voluntary practice of offering practical support to the community, with connotations not unlike the term ‘charity’. It implies a dedication to good deeds in the form of establishing funds for long-term giving, sometimes entailing a transfer of inheritance and wealth ensuring long-term support for the community.

Unlike the majority of my interlocutors in other research projects, who would frame their own and society’s position with invocations of the ‘golden 70s and 80s’, or ‘terrible 90 and two-thousand-and-noughts’, these people were concerned with a longer past, making myriad references to Roman times, medieval times, and the Serbia of the 18th, 19th and 20th century. In my reading, this is not an act of random tapping into ‘imaginary pasts’ in order to confect some voluntary lineage. It is more an act of stating: if this was done in the past, we can repeat it in the present, and ennoble it. In that sense, their vision of the future is archaeological, disinterred from within the possibilities of our moment and its many pasts. Building up or moving forward seems also to mean digging down.

ON CONCEPTUAL POVERTY AND CONCEPTUAL ABUNDANCE

One of Ivan Rajković’s conclusions,¹³ in an excellent article describing the demoralization of Serbian factory workers, is that anthropologists are too ready to romanticize an idea of the ‘inner freedom’ of discarded workers, rather than engaging in an analysis of the socio-political conditions which has seen them cast aside. Of course, we should beware of praising ethnographic micro-freedoms – of studying only the micro-worlds in which systemic victims or ‘losers’ are free to express a local resistance to power. Yet my ethnographic experiences of the last four years suggest that it can be equally wilful – equally a sop to academic populism – to be nothing but ironic about people’s orientations to the future and to their expressions of hope. Many in Serbia remain possessed by the war – a typical motif of academic literature and popular culture; but equally some, as I have seen, are going to great lengths at trying to co-create people’s collective understanding of the present, their sense of a vernacular timescape.

I argue that what these people are doing can be understood as healing and empowering. This case can be made with reference to specific projects – my respondents’ work with refugee children, or educating others about the cultural and historical aspects of a network of underground tunnels, and so on. Yet their more influential work may be conceptual.

This is how Ana, a professional performer of sacred music and mover behind health system reforms, thinks of time:

¹³ Rajković 2017.

Serbia must be cleansed of its build-up of negative ideas, its residue of negative thoughts And deep cleansing is, amongst other things, effected by performing and listening to spiritual music ... People have to pay attention to how their thoughts are good and their acts beneficial. Useful. Responsible ... We may not be able to see the future. But we can examine the past, many pasts ... Anyway, the Serbian Patriarch Pavle used to say that time is only a duration, something with a past, a present and a future. Now, people can naturally get tired with all that duration [she laughs]. So the right thing to do is to step out of it once in a while. To be able to look forwards and backwards. Not just to see problems, but all kinds of resources at hand. We have some great resources and a resilient young population. What we need is a more supportive environment, in which people could grow outwards from within.

Something that might appear conceptual (performing and listening to traditional sacred music) is, in her eyes – as well as in the eyes of many of her followers – understood as a material intervention into Serbia's physical and psychic environment. Although Ivan would never subscribe to the idea that sacred music could be mentally cleansing, like Ana, he likewise understands his urban activism as a form of societal healing. His promotion of “the internal harmony, symbolism, spatial history” involves making tours of Belgrade's underground and protecting its forgotten cultural and social monuments. He keeps explaining he wants to live or nourish the “poverty of imagination” afflicting his countrymen, so that they can see buildings and streets not as debris but as the living relics of different times (baroque, Ottoman and socialist); this would grant the city and its inhabitants a special dynamic, weight and dignity. In that way, caring for the urban heritage, that is, its material body, is at the service of fighting ‘conceptual poverty’ and tends, as it were, to its spiritual body. The manifestations of this mode of care for others are both material and conceptual; they aim to change both people's circumstances and their ways of thinking.

CONCLUSION

One important feature any composite portrait would have to bring out is how people hold incoherent ideas and make contradictory demands of their past and future: such demands are often both clear and flexible, even improvisatory. My analytical attention is given to these apparent and

fruitful contradictions and aspires to frame an enquiry on how certain modes of imagining the self and time align people to a social world.

Most people I talk to in Serbia portray their society as a suspicious community, tottering on weak economic and ethical foundations. Serbs' daily concern is to survive, not to get ahead. It is oppressive to people that they have to fight so hard just to stay alive. As they say, it ties them to the past (and the past is something they often feel great unease about). A sense of perspective, though, motivates certain individuals to change and seek a better future.

Starting from that position, the whole logic of my study in its initial stages was to get away from ideas that Serbia could only be understood historically – that, for example, inescapably the most persuasive analogy for situations in contemporary Serbia were ones from its conflict-ridden past. I intentionally turned my attention to images illustrating the precariousness of the present and to those anticipating what may come next, as projected by individual and collectives marked by entrepreneurial visions. I was initially concerned with this future, not with the past.

But, of course, the future lies at one end of a trajectory. For my informants, admittedly not a large subsection of Serbs, responsible trust in the future often means a responsible attitude towards the past. They agree that a genuine restructuring of people's social, economic and political modes of life is needed. Yet they refuse to think Serbia beyond cure and irretrievably corrupt. They do not understand future-oriented thinking merely as a rational act, or a cognitive experiment based on intentions. Rather, they see it as a process that resumes notions of intergenerational care, trust, responsibility, resourcing and different ways of time-scripting. There are ways, they argue, to step out of duration that are shared, to see beyond current exhaustion and tap into longer historical perspectives, or even warp them. In that way, I argue, my interlocutors' visions, in the specific contexts I described, may be read as a form of time standing out against the cultural script of presentism, in which time is read as a precarious, threatening and unhelpful category.

The analysis wants to supplement an image of Serbia as only a depleted space, a space where everyone is exhausted, which has no alternative possible futures. Yes, the Serbia I am documenting is economically starved, spiritually wounded, and historically overwhelmed in different ways. It is also ready, to an extent, to be reshaped by alternative conceptions of what it could become. If we postulate that we can imagine the future only from a present vantage, this material shows that visionary futures are sometimes conceived from the point of view of a (selected)

past. I even had conversations about how the future may influence the past. But that is for another essay.

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