ORPHEUS

INSTITUTE

SERIES

Futures of the Contemporary

Contemporaneity, Untimeliness,
and Artistic Research

Edited by Paulo de Assis
and Michael Schwab

FUTURES OF THE CONTEMPORARY

CONTEMPORANEITY, UNTIMELINESS,
AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Edited by Paulo de Assis and Michael Schwab

Leuven University Press

Editors

Paulo de Assis
Michael Schwab

Authors

Paulo de Assis
Babette Babich
Zsuzsa Baross
Pol Capdevila
Geoff Cox
Heiner Goebbels
Jacob Lund
Ryan Nolan
Peter Osborne
Andrew Prior
Michael Schwab

Production manager

Heike Vermeire

Managing editor

Edward Crooks

Series editor

William Brooks

Lay-out

Studio Luc Derycke

Cover design

Lucia D'Errico

Cover image

© Carlo Scarpa, detail of
the restoration of
Museo di Castelvecchio
Courtesy of Museo di Castelvecchio,
Verona
Photo by Lucia D'Errico

Typesetting

Friedemann bvba

Printing

Wilco, Amersfoort
(The Netherlands)

© 2019 by Leuven University Press /
Universitaire Pers Leuven /
Presses Universitaires de Louvain.
Minderbroedersstraat 4
B-3000 Leuven (Belgium)

ISBN 978 94 6270 183 0
eISBN 978 94 6166 286 6
<https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461662866>

D/2019/1869/23
NUR: 664

All rights reserved. Except in those cases expressly determined by law, no part of this publication may be multiplied, saved in automated data files or made public in any way whatsoever without the express prior written consent of the publishers.

This book is published in the Orpheus Institute Series.

Table of Contents

7	INTRODUCTION Paulo de Assis and Michael Schwab
Part 1: The Contemporary and the Untimely	
17	THE CONTEMPORARY: IN THE MIDST OF MULTIPLE HURRICANES OF TIME Paulo de Assis
31	ON THE QUESTION OF CONTEMPORANEITY TODAY Zsuzsa Baross
49	THE QUESTION OF THE CONTEMPORARY IN AGAMBEN, NANCY, DANTO: BETWEEN NIETZSCHE'S ARTIST AND NIETZSCHE'S SPECTATOR Babette Babich
Part 2: Contemporary Practices	
85	ON AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AS ANACHRONIC EXPERIENCE Heiner Goebbels
97	THE CRACKLE OF CONTEMPORANEITY Geoff Cox, Andrew Prior, and Ryan Nolan
115	APORETIC TEMPORALISATIONS AND POSTCONCEPTUAL REALISM Pol Capdevila
Part 3: Problematising the Contemporary	
135	WORKING THE CONTEMPORARY: HISTORY AS A PROJECT OF CRISIS, TODAY Peter Osborne
147	UNTIMELINESS IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES Jacob Lund
159	EXPERIMENTAL SYSTEMS: CONTEMPORANEITY, UNTIMELINESS, AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH Michael Schwab
179	NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS
183	INDEX

Untimeliness in Contemporary Times

Jacob Lund

Aarhus University

No contretemps . . . without the promise of a now in common, . . .
the desired sharing of a living present.

—Jacques Derrida (1992, 421)

“Today, we are stuck in the present as it reproduces itself without leading to any future,” philosopher and cultural critic Boris Groys remarks (2011, 90). Sharing the concern of Groys and a number of other thinkers that we have lost the future as a political object, this chapter discusses the temporal complexity of our current situation—to which extent it even makes sense to speak of *our* situation. The loss of a futural moment and thus of another temporal horizon than the present one is connected to a sense of an ever-expanding present, a present defined by a capacity only for a short-term perspective. The present is no longer a hinge between the past and the future but has rather—in the felicitous phrasing of historian François Hartog (2015)—become omnipresent. Such presentism, the sense that only the present exists, is a crisis of time.

The loss of the future as a political object has been theorised by—among many others—cultural critic Fredric Jameson who famously sees the postmodern as a weakness in our imagination, as it is easier for us today (Jameson lectured on this in 1991) to imagine the deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of capitalism (Jameson 1994, xi–xii). More recently it has been analysed by philosopher Peter Osborne. Rather than investigating when the present—the omnipresent present, which in fact, when the present is all there is, is a lack of a present—began, Osborne (2015, 186) calls for the present to begin again, the present as the time of action and the time of the production of a qualitatively different future.

Against this background, the aim of this chapter is to provide a critical reading of the notion of *untimeliness*, particularly in Giorgio Agamben’s influential text “What Is the Contemporary?” (2009), as a decisive aspect of being contemporary. In an often-quoted passage, Agamben makes the Nietzschean claim that:

Those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands. They are thus in this sense irrelevant. But precisely because of this condition, precisely through this disconnection and this anachronism, they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping their own time. . . .

Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it. More precisely, it is *that relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism*. Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it. (Agamben 2009, 40–41)

Untimeliness is about temporal disjunction and anachronism. Agamben writes of “their time,” “their own time,” “the epoch,” but what is *our* own time and *our* epoch? Who in the post- or decolonial situation actually does take part in the possessive determiner “our”? I will argue that it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify a hegemonic “cultural” time in relation to which one can be untimely; that the current contemporaneity—understood with Peter Osborne as a technical term designating the coming together of different times in the same historical present (see Osborne 2013, 17)—makes it practically impossible to be untimely and thus avant-garde in the traditional sense. Claiming that under contemporary conditions of an intensified global interconnection of different times and social narratives it is no longer useful to employ Agamben's conception of *untimeliness* when trying to engage with the present in order to reinstall a futural moment—or to install other temporal horizons than the one in which we live—this chapter will try to indicate how a contemporary kind of untimeliness, characterised by operating in relation to several times at once and thus differentiating the presentist present, may be seen to appear in the poetics and artistic practice of Kader Attia.

1

Today it seems redundant to criticise the linearly progressive and teleological understanding of history that is often associated with Western modernity. As indicated above, however, the farewell to this idea of history also has consequences for the ways we may conceive critical relationships with the times in which we now live and thus for what it might mean to be untimely when (the idea of) linear unified homogeneous history has become obsolete. These consequences seem less clarified and therefore worth pursuing.

To get a sense of what we have left behind let us nonetheless begin by returning to the concept of untimeliness—or what Jacques Derrida (1992) might call *contretemps* or counter-time—and what it can be seen to criticise. As indicated above, Agamben takes his cue from Friedrich Nietzsche and reads the latter's second *Untimely Meditation*, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” (Nietzsche 1997), as a claim for contemporary relevance based on a disconnection from his own time, on an out-of-jointness (Agamben 2009, 40). One might say that Nietzsche's contemporariness is due not only to his thinking simply being independent and out-of-joint with the dominant thinking of his time but also to the content of his thinking, which was an explicit critique of the then dominating historicist understanding of time and history. Without wanting to go into a detailed reading of Nietzsche's untimely revaluation of history (*Historie*) as life's teacher (*historia magistra vitae*) in favour of an

Untimeliness in Contemporary Times

understanding of history in the service of life (*historia ancilla vitae*), I think it is important to note that this revaluation includes a rejection of some of the philosophical-historical axioms that at the time had appeared to ground the modern concept of history. Most prominent in this context is his denial of any historical teleology able to grant meaning to history and of any historical necessity capable of injecting a meaning into history that would ultimately exclude human agency (see Koselleck 2018, 189–96).¹

Agamben furthermore introduces a supplementary definition of contemporariness, which can be seen as an elaboration of the end section of the first part about being able to see one's own epoch: "The contemporary is he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness" (Agamben 2009, 44). Through an analogy to our perception of the dark sky at night, where remote galaxies move away from us at a speed that is faster than the speed of the light that emanates from them, he defines the quality of being contemporary as "being able not only to firmly fix your gaze on the darkness of the epoch, but also to perceive in this darkness a light that, while directed toward us, infinitely distances itself from us. In other words, it is like being on time for an appointment that one cannot but miss" (ibid., 46). Thus, the present that the contemporary perceives cannot reach him or her: "The appointment that is in question in contemporariness does not simply take place in chronological time: it is something that, working within chronological time, urges, presses, and transforms it. And this urgency is the untimeliness, the anachronism that permits us to grasp our time in the form of a 'too soon' that is also a 'too late'; of an 'already' that is also a 'not yet'" (ibid., 47). The untimeliness of contemporariness is an urgency that takes place within chronological time while at the same transforming chronological time. In this way Agamben's analysis shares some structural similarities with Derridean deconstruction and the insight that there is no outside (no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*), but it also operates with *one* more or less unified epoch, with one identifiable hegemonic temporality and shared chronological time in which contemporariness takes place and which contemporariness transforms. This concept of time in the singular is a very Western—and male—one: its history includes Nietzsche, Barthes, Pericles, Robespierre, Sade, Mandelstam, Paul, the Messiah, Foucault, and Benjamin, and takes place in Paris, Athens, New York, and so on. It is therefore in a certain sense an undivided or undifferentiated time, which perhaps should be historicised in the light of the present state of globality to which cultures all over the planet have arrived via different historical trajectories.

Interestingly Agamben makes a last qualification of his conception of the contemporary: it is not only the one who perceives a light that cannot reach its destination; the contemporary "is also the one who, dividing and interpolating time, is capable of transforming it and putting it in relation with other

1 The Nietzschean critique of modern historicism of course also inspired Michel Foucault in his development of a genealogical approach in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (Foucault 1977). Foucault's rejection of "the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies" (140), however, necessarily still operates within a "pre-global era" and thus within a very Western tradition and cultural sphere. It is therefore—for good historical reasons—unable to take the current condition of contemporaneity into consideration.

times" (ibid., 53). I would claim, however, that today these other times should relate not only to the past—and perhaps the future—on the axis of Western chronological time but also to other cultural times formed along other trajectories.² Today chronological recomposition and Hartog's notion of "regimes of historicity" (2015) as changing articulations of the structure of past, present, and future are too reductive to allow us to understand temporal complexity. As I will try to show later, such a complex inclusion or entanglement of different cultural times in the constitution of the present may be said to take place in the work of Kader Attia.

2

As indicated above, Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation* should not be read as a critique and rejection of historicism in itself—defined by "the basic thesis that every aspect and expression of human life is unavoidably conditioned by history" (Breazeale 2018, xv)—but rather of the teleology and necessity with which it is often associated. Walter Benjamin's reflections on the concept of history (*Geschichte*), written in 1940 and posthumously published in 1942, provide an elaborated critique of this notion of historicism (Benjamin 1992). As Peter Osborne explains, the use and notion of historicism that Benjamin criticises is the version associated with the Historical School in Germany, developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century in direct opposition to Hegel's philosophy of history (see Osborne 1995, 138–44)—in Hegel, time is self-motivated and unfolds in the form of the workings of the spirit as it moves towards itself through the ages of history (Hegel 1975). The version of historicism that Benjamin addresses is thus a form of historical time-consciousness, which is characterised not only by an objectivism about knowledge of the past "the way it really was (Ranke)" but also by the idea of history as progress (Benjamin 1992, 391). According to Benjamin, the historicist conception of history as progressing through "a homogeneous, empty time" (ibid., 395) involves a naturalisation of chronological, continuous history and an oblivion of the constitutive role of the present in any time-consciousness, as the point from where history is given direction. For Benjamin, history, in Osborne's (1995, 141) formulation, "is an economy of violence dissembling as progress"; needless to say, he regards the idea of progress with contempt. Benjamin is looking for a "different, *qualitative* experience of the 'now' as an *historical* present" (ibid., 143). The instantaneity of the now is thus a historical rather than a merely natural or a priori given form of temporality.

Such a kairotic moment, such untimeliness, may find a part of its conceptual prehistory in Kant. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, time—alongside space—forms part of Kant's transcendental aesthetics where these two entities are regarded as necessary for cognition: they are required in order for anything to appear before us, thereby being sensed, perceived, and known (1.1.2.4, Kant

² The art historiographical consequences of what I prefer to call the condition of contemporaneity are explored in a recent anthology, *Time in the History of Art: Temporality, Chronology and Anachrony*, edited by art historians Dan Karlholm and Keith Moxey (2018). See also my *Anachrony, Contemporaneity and Historical Imagination* (Lund 2019).

Untimeliness in Contemporary Times

1855, 28–29). Time is a basic condition for the realisation of any phenomenon, but whereas those phenomena may well disappear again, time itself cannot. Kant famously claims that time “is not an empirical conception,” but necessarily “exist[s] as a foundation *a priori*,” which makes possible axioms of time in general, such as “time has only one dimension” and “different times are not co-existent but successive” (ibid., 28). In Kant’s first critique, time is thus an *a priori* given, independent of our sensory perception.

The concept of contemporaneity of course challenges such a transcendental notion of time and the idea that it is exclusively one-dimensional and that different times cannot co-exist. But Kant’s own analysis of the sublime nine years later in the *Critique of Judgement* (Kant 2007) constitutes a challenge to the transcendental notion of time too. Here, the sublime is not only an ungraspable magnitude that exceeds any individual subjective experience or perception but also a moment where simultaneity or coexistence is made intuitable. The intuition of coexistence involves a negation of temporality, a movement beyond the capacities of sensation and conceptual determination to the realm of reason, whereby successive apprehension is replaced by an instantaneous grasping (see Wayne 2014, 121). Thus, “the unstable form of the sublime is,” as Michael Wayne remarks in his book *Red Kant*, “inextricably linked with a new and potentially radical conception of temporality and history” (ibid.).

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the imagination is linked to time as the form of inner sense. Relative to the understanding, its function is to synthesise the progressive sequence of representations in time. In the sublime, by contrast, the imagination is related to reason and in a reversal of its normal operation institutes what Kant calls a “regression” (*ein Regressus*) that annihilates the condition of time and makes possible the intuition of coexistence (see Makkreel 1984, 303):

Measurement of a space (as apprehension) is at the same time a description of it, and so an objective movement in the imagination and a progression. On the other hand the comprehension of the manifold in the unity, not of thought, but of intuition, and consequently the comprehension of the successively apprehended parts at one glance [*in einen Augenblick*], is a retrogression that removes the time-condition in the progression of the imagination, and renders *co-existence* intuitable [*und das Zugleichsein anschaulich macht*]. Therefore, since the time-series [*die Zeitfolge*] is a condition of the internal sense and of an intuition, it is a subjective movement of the imagination by which it does violence to inner sense—a violence which must be proportionately more striking the greater the quantum which the imagination comprehends in one intuition. (Kant 2007, 89)

The sublime violates the model of linear temporal progression in the ordering of the manifold that Kant mapped out in the *Critique of Pure Reason* where he emphasised the successive apprehension of percepts in a temporal sequence. The sublime radically shifts to an instantaneous grasping of what is coexisting. Thus “comprehending in one instant what is apprehended successively, is a regression that in turn cancels the condition of time in the imagination’s progression” (Kant, *Critique of Judgement* §27, as translated in Wayne 2014, 121).

The sublime involves a radical cancelling of ordinary temporal unfolding and a disruption of our habitual ways of perceiving and experiencing the world; but, rather than annihilating time as such, the regress of the imagination—the comprehension in an instant of what was successively apprehended—suggests a possible negation of the mathematical or linear form of time (see Makkreel 1984, 308).

In this way, Kant's analysis of the sublime might be seen as a tacit model for Benjamin's concept of *Jetztzeit* (translated as "now-time" or the "presence of the now") that describes time at a standstill where the past, in a flash, enters into a constellation with the present, objectively interrupting the mechanical temporal process of historicism (Benjamin 1992; 2002, 262). Just as the sublime interrupts the successive apprehension described in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, dialectics at a standstill interrupt and open the linear continuum of history.

In Benjamin, the dialectical convergence of past and present therefore holds a political potential. His ambition is to explode "the continuum of history" (Benjamin 1992, 395) in order to make it possible to recompose it (see Cox and Lund, forthcoming). His now-time is a constructive form of temporality in which "the slivers of history," as emphasised by political theorist Isabell Lorey in her recent reading of Benjamin's reflections on the concept of history, "are newly composed, in which history persistently emerges. The now-time is the creative midpoint, not a transition of the past into the future" (Lorey 2014). Unlike the presentism described by Hartog, Groys, and others, Benjaminian now-time becomes time filled with emancipatory possibilities (rather than mere probabilities): "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]," as Benjamin (1992, 395) remarks in the famous passage that I already quoted in part above. Time is not an empty, homogeneous duration unaffected by the events that fill it. Time itself has a history and politics. It is mediated, constructed, and multiple, not a blank a priori, and there are many different co-existing ways of being in time and belonging to it. The experience of contemporaneity is perhaps sublime in the sense that it is an interruption of unified linearly ordered time, but the contemporary condition does not allow us any distance to that which otherwise would elicit an experience of the sublime—today there is no temporal outside to the sublime spectacle, so to speak.

The difficulty, I argue, of experiencing the Kantian sublime today not only concerns the cancellation of our distance to that which triggers the sublime experience, the loss of a secure position from where to experience something as a sublime spectacle. There is also an important *temporal* aspect in that we no longer enjoy the comfort of a secure position in relation to a one-dimensional time, from where to grasp time or to establish a disjunctive relationship with time, thereby becoming untimely as in Giorgio Agamben's definition of the contemporary. Contemporaneity may, of course, be seen as synchronisation and standardisation of all the world's cultures and time-experiences, in line with a conception of the sublime as "a symptom of the supersensible totality of global capitalism" (Wayne 2014, 118); but, it can also—as an, in principle, shared present, a globally shared experience of co-presence—be seen to hold a

Untimeliness in Contemporary Times

potential to interrupt the mechanical progression or rather accumulation and repetition of what is without alternatives.

To be untimely *then*—that is, under the modern regime of historicity—was to not coincide with the present time in the singular; to be untimely *now* is to act on present times in the plural and to counter the time of global capital, which is about standardisation, synchronisation, and accumulation with no other temporal horizon, with no different future, even if imagined. In Peter Osborne's analysis, a large part of what we call "contemporary art" works in the service of such synchronising and standardising global capital. I do not, however, think that we should only deplore that the institutions of contemporary art have created a new kind of cultural space, "dedicated," in the words of Osborne (2013, 27), "to the exploration through art of similarities and differences between geopolitically diverse forms of social experience that have only recently begun to be represented within the parameters of a common world." Osborne (2010, 9) sees the new international biennials as "emblems of capital's capacity to cross borders, and to accommodate and appropriate cultural differences. Art labour," he claims, "is variable cultural capital." The idea of contemporaneity, understood as the "projection of the temporal unity of the present across the planet" (ibid., 7), is no doubt grounded in the interpenetration of social forms and cultural clusters by capital and their consequent interconnection and dependency; but the experience and cultural significance of contemporaneity cannot merely be reduced to the workings of global capital.³ Some of the most interesting contemporary art explores the possibilities for installing a social imagination beyond capitalism on the conditions of contemporaneity, which largely is the consequence of the development of that very capitalism without being reducible to it. Perhaps it is therefore time to pay attention to and allow for cultural difference in the—at a certain level at least—globally shared present, as the access to this present is still highly unevenly distributed. Anthropologist Marc Augé describes a new condition of radical contemporaneity between peoples and cultures:

It is only now, in the rather blinding light of a generalized situation of cultural circulation, that we can become aware of what the eruption of the outside world into their societies has meant for certain peoples. Likewise, it is only today that the conditions of a contemporaneous anthropology are emerging, in the sense that the dialogue between observer and observed is inscribed in a universe where both recognize each other, even though they continue to occupy different and unequal positions. Contemporaneity cannot be decreed; the transformation of the world imposes it. (Augé 1999, 50)

The speed of cultural, economic, and migratory circulation has inaugurated a *generalised sharing of time*. "The world's inhabitants have at last become truly contemporaneous," Augé states (ibid., 89). Due to this circulation, there is now an undeniable co-existence of different temporalities.

³ Roughly put, Osborne mainly focuses on the damaging dimension of contemporaneity (i.e., on synchronisation and presentism), whereas for instance Terry Smith in his analysis emphasises a co-existence of different temporalities and the possibility of "planetary thinking."

The time in relation to which one should be untimely today is the complex temporality of global capital subjecting all social forms to its standardising logic. Untimeliness today may consist of differentiating the presentist present, opposing colonising synchronisation by marking or articulating a contemporaneity of difference that permits another kind of what art historian Terry Smith calls “world-making” and “coeval composition” (Smith 2015, 2016).

3

Kader Attia is a contemporary artist in the sense that he—unlike modernist artists who produce new work and carry the progressive history of art forward (see Danto 1997, 4–5)—is occupied with establishing relationships, or what he calls restitutions and reparations, with the past and allow it to take part in the present. The pasts that he actualises are, however, pasts that come from places and cultures that do not share the Western point of view on history. The different—and from a modern Western progressivist perspective hitherto “other” and perhaps even developmentally “delayed” or non-coeval (Fabian 1983)—cultural temporalities that are being brought to the fore and become visible and audible in Attia’s reconfiguration of “the distribution of the sensible” (Rancière 2004) are not necessarily reduced in their difference. They are not being made to comply with a neocolonial standard set by a Western-dominated notion of art and cultural signification; rather, they enter into relationships while retaining their prehistories and particularities. In Attia’s work they often in a certain sense incorporate the otherness of the colonising cultures—which of course also have been the primary motors in the globalisation of capitalism—but leave this incorporation or appropriation visible without covering it up and without wanting to return to an original, “non-contaminated” state of self-identity, to a time and history that is exclusively their own.

Attia’s work thus engages in a global dialogue, intervening in and seeking to replace the Western monologue. It addresses cultural questions and global issues concerning the coming together of Occidental and Oriental (or extra-Occidental) cultures with a focus on politics, on living together—including in very concrete ways in works that deal with social housing projects. For instance, in the piece *Oil and Sugar #2* (2007), he worked with the “colonial” materials of oil and sugar. In *Holy Land* (2006) he installed almost a hundred mirrors on a beach on the Canary Islands to help African migrants at sea navigate, but also to complexly signal that this is not any holy land as the mirrors were shaped to look like tombstones—as well as surfboards and the windows of Gothic cathedrals. His work thus aims not only to criticise colonial history but also, and more so, to criticise the coloniality of now—as part of this endeavour he opened the cultural space with the telling name *la colonie* in Paris in 2016. Central to this is the relationship between injury and repair, concretely as well as psychologically and metaphorically. *Ghardaïa* (2009), for instance, is a fragile model of the “functionalist” eleventh-century Algerian city—which inspired modernist architects like Le Corbusier—made from couscous and thus

Untimeliness in Contemporary Times

constituting a kind of repair of the relationship between Western modernity and the ancient Mزاب culture and reinstalling time and a historical trace:

Lack of quotation is lack of acknowledgement. Even today, when Le Corbusier's work is the focus of a retrospective, Mزاب architecture is mentioned succinctly, in the best case. During a huge exhibition of his work in London, you could only see two postcards from Ghardaïa. We should try to imagine this conversation in another context, in Algeria or Congo for instance, so you can see how much Algerian or Congolese people could learn about the extent of their own heritage upon the world. Even though colonization is now over, it is still a fact that entire intellectual territories and areas have not been freed yet, or at least "reappropriated" by the traditional cultures representing the very origins of European "sources of inspiration" (Attia 2014, 180).

Attia's documentary film *Reflecting Memory* (2016), to add another example that deals with establishing relationships with "unacknowledged" pasts in the present, explores the phenomenon of phantom limbs as a way of addressing the phantom limbs of cultural complexes and the hauntings that remain within our consciousness:

It was by extending to the human psyche the body of my political research on the concept of reparation that I fathomed the importance of the immaterial character of wounds, and the silent cry that they emit between official History and the one lived endlessly in the secret of family and community stories. Mass traumas and injustices or those of simple individuals last far longer than the initial act; they are maintained by the dominant power's stories while the mind imposes, troubles, and hides the necessity of their denunciation. This absolute, quasi-religious conception of science as a factor of modernity dominates the human psyche by the universalism of its conception of progress. This hegemony has led inevitably to the production of opposed reactions. (Attia 2018b)

Repair has thus become a central concept and concern in Attia's poetics and artistic practice (Attia 2014)—a recent piece, *Le grand miroir du monde* (The grand mirror of the world, 2017), simply consists of a large rectangle of broken mirrors covering the whole floor of the gallery space.⁴ Attia—who was trained in philosophy—talks of the ambiguity of the concept of repair or reparation and opposes the way in which it is understood in so-called traditional non-Western civilisations to the way it is understood in modern civilisations. The modern repair tries to erase the traces of the injury and bring the object back to its original shape, which according to Attia involves a denial of time as the removing of the injury is actually a removing of time, of the history of the object. The non-Western repair, in contrast, keeps the trace of the injury and acknowledges what has happened to the object. It therefore adds to the history of the object (Attia 2018a).

⁴ The dimensions of the piece vary according to the specific exhibition site.

Historian, philosopher, and political theorist Achille Mbembe writes of the postcolonial present where a multiplicity of co-existing times and traditions (see Chakrabarty 2000, 109) are interconnected and are being brought to bear on the same present as “the *time of entanglement*”: “This time of African existence is neither a linear time nor a simple sequence in which each moment effaces, annuls, and replaces those that preceded it, to the point where a single age exists within society. This time is not a series but an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones” (Mbembe 2001, 16, his italics).⁵ Nietzsche’s and Agamben’s contemporary person were a Western person, or man, who is able to establish a disjunctive relationship with his, or her, *own* time, that is, with a singular, unified Western progressivist time and history. Attia’s work of repair complicates this modern untimeliness by introducing other times, other pasts, and by allowing hitherto unheard pre-histories to the present to become audible in a shared, entangled contemporary present. The reparative relationships with different pasts that Attia’s artistic practice brings into being somehow interfere with and differentiate an otherwise synchronised present—and thereby imply at least a potential for imagining another, decolonised future where several cultural traditions take part in the constitution of the present.

REFERENCES

- Agamben Giorgio. 2009. “What Is the Contemporary?” In *What Is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, 39–54. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. First published 2008 as *Che cos’è il contemporaneo?* (Rome: Nottetempo).
- Attia, Kader. 2014. *Repair*. Edited by Léa Gauthier. Paris: Blackjack éditions.
- . 2018a. “Kader Attia Speaks about the Idea of Repair” (interview with Judith Benhamou-Huet). YouTube video, 2:38, posted by “Judith Benhamou-Huet Reports,” 22 May. Accessed 14 March 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBYoL6z4V7Q>.
- . 2018b. “The Field of Emotion.” Kader Attia homepage. Accessed 14 March 2019. <http://kaderattia.de/the-field-of-emotion/>.
- Augé, Marc. 1999. *An Anthropology for Contemporaneous Worlds*. Translated by Amy Jacobs. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. First published 1994 as *Pour une anthropologie des mondes contemporains* (Paris: Aubier).
- Benjamin, Walter. 1992. “On the Concept of History.” In *Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938–1940*, translated by Edmund Jephcott and others, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, 389–400. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Essay first published 1942 as “Geschichtsphilosophische Reflexionen,” in *Walter Benjamin zum Gedächtnis*, edited by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (Los Angeles, CA: Institut für Sozialforschung).
- . 2002. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Written 1927–40, first published 1982 as *Das Passagen-Werk*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).

5 On the register of the postcolony as, initially, a reference to a chronological moment that ambiguously signals an end of colonisation and a beginning of the establishment of a new nation-form, see Harootunian (2015, 197–234).

- Breazeale, Daniel. 1997. Introduction to Nietzsche 1997, vii–xxxiii.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cox, Geoff, and Jacob Lund. Forthcoming. “Time.now.”
- Danto, Arthur C. 1997. *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1992. “Aphorism Countertime.” Translated by Nicholas Royle. In *Acts of Literature*, edited by Derek Attridge, 414–33. New York: Routledge. First published 1986 as “L’aphorisme à contretemps,” in *Roméo et Juliette: Le livre* by Gervais Robin after William Shakespeare (Paris: Papiers).
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, 139–64. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. First published 1971 as “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire,” in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, 145–72 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France).
- Groys, Boris. 2011. “Comrades of Time.” In *Going Public*, 84–101. Berlin: Sternberg Press.
- Harootunian, Harry. 2015. *Marx after Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hartog, François. 2015. *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*. Translated by Saskia Brown. New York: Columbia University Press. First published 2003 as *Régimes d’historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps* (Paris: Seuil).
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1975. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Translated by T. M. Knox. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press. First delivered as lectures 1818–29.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1994. *The Seeds of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1855. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by J. M. D. Meiklejohn. London: H. G. Bohn. First published 1781 as *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga: J. F. Hartknoch).
- . 2007. *Critique of Judgement*. Translated by James Creed Meredith, revised and edited by Nicholas Walker. Oxford: Oxford University Press. First published in 1790 as *Kritik der Urteilkraft* (Berlin: Lagarde und Friederich).
- Karlholm, Dan, and Keith Moxey, eds. 2018. *Time in the History of Art: Temporality, Chronology and Anachrony*. New York: Routledge.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. 2018. “On the Meaning and Absurdity of History.” In *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*, translated and edited by Sean Franzel and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 177–96. First published 1997 as “Vom Sinn und Unsinn der Geschichte” (*Merkur* 51: 319–34).
- Lorey, Isabell. 2014. “Presentist Democracy: Exodus and Tiger’s Leap.” Translated by Aileen Derieg. *Transversal Texts*, June. Accessed 14 March 2019. <http://transversal.at/blog/Presentist-Democracy>.
- Lund, Jacob. 2019. *Anachrony, Contemporaneity and Historical Imagination*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.
- Makkreel, Rudolf. 1984. “Imagination and Temporality in Kant’s Theory of the Sublime.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (3): 303–16.
- Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. Translated by A. M. Berrett, Janet Roitman, Murray Last, and Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press. First published in 2000 as *De la postcolonie: Essai sur l’imagination politique dans l’Afrique contemporaine* (Paris: Karthala).
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1997. “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life.” In *Untimely Meditations*, edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, 60–123. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Essay first published 1874 as “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben,” 2nd part of *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (Leipzig: Fritzsche, 1873–76).
- Osborne, Peter. 1995. *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*. London: Verso.

- . 2010. "Contemporary Art is Post-conceptual Art." Lecture given at Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Villa Sucota, Como, 9 July 2010. Accessed 14 March 2019. http://www.fondazioneratti.org/mostre/103/contemporary_art_is_post-conceptual_art. Page numbers refer to the PDF transcript.
- . 2013. *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. London: Verso.
- . 2015. "Existential Urgency: Contemporaneity, Biennials and Social Form." *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 24 (49–50): 175–88.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2004. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Edited and translated by Gabriel Rockhill. London: Continuum. First published 2000 as *Le partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique* (Paris: La Fabrique).
- Smith, Terry. 2015. "Defining Contemporaneity: Imagining Planetaryity." *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 24 (49–50): 156–74.
- . 2016. *The Contemporary Composition. The Contemporary Condition 2*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.
- Wayne, Michael. 2014. *Red Kant: Aesthetics, Marxism and the Third Critique*. London: Bloomsbury.