No Time Like the Present: Nadine Gordimer and the Burden of *Telos*

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Summary

Nadine Gordimer was widely criticised for her failure to take a stand against the injustices manifest in the post-apartheid regime (during the presidencies of Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma). *No Time Like the Present* (2012) apparently set out to rectify this neglect: it presents a catalogue of contemporary failures, injustices and abominations, touching on almost every index of state failure. At the same time, the novel sanctifies both the struggle against apartheid and the brave comrades who fought for justice. Without challenging the rectitude of the anti-apartheid cause of activists, the article questions whether – in her final novel – Gordimer did not succumb to a version of "theology" that (in attributing *telos* to South African history) stunted her understanding of the present.

Opsomming

Nadine Gordimer is deur baie gekritiseer omdat sy nagelaat het om standpunt in te neem teen die ongeregtighede wat in die postapartheidsbestel (gedurende die presidentskap van Thabo Mbeki en Jacob Zuma onderskeidelik) voorgekom het. *No Time Like the Present* (2012) het skynbaar ten doel gehad om hierdie versuim reg te stel: dit is 'n opsomming van hedendaagse mislukkings, ongeregtighede en gruwels, terwyl byna elke indeks van regeringsversuim aangeroer word. Terselfdertyd regverdig dit die stryd teen apartheid sowel as die dapper stryders wat hulle vir geregtigheid beywer het. Sonder om die opregtheid van aktiviste se anti-apartheidsaak in twyfel te trek, vra hierdie artikel of Gordimer nie in haar laaste roman geswig het voor 'n weergawe van "teologie" wat (deur *telos* toe te skryf aan Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis) haar begrip van die hede belemmer het nie.

Of Nadine Gordimer's five post-apartheid novels, only her last, *No Time Like the Present* (2012) presents an explicit critique of South Africa's current regime. *None to Accompany Me* (1994) is a transitional text: a poignant portrait of Vera Stark, a land-rights lawyer, who recognises the personal and political importance of stepping aside to make way for the new order. In their various ways, *The House Gun* (1998), *The Pickup* (2001) and *Get a Life* (2005) map white (upper) middle-class melancholia induced by the prevalence of violent crime, xenophobia and governmental corruption, but

JLS/TLW 32(2), June 2016
ISSN 0256-4718/Online 1753-5387

DOI:10.1080/02564718.2016.12062

their reflection on these matters is metonymic or litotic. This reticence led critics to accuse Gordimer, who is widely regarded as the chronicler of the anti-apartheid struggle (particularly of the place of white South Africans in the history of resistance), of evasion; that she had "ceased to be a public interrogator of core national issues" (Dimitriu 2009: 118). Certain scholars have been unforgiving (see Vital 89-118). Others, generally those continuing the tradition of symptomatic Marxist interpretations of her work – the historicism of Stephen Clingman's 1986 study has been the most influential – have leapt to her defence. They argue that her post-apartheid novels continue to reflect on the "morbid symptoms of the interregnum", (Heffernan 2010: 88-118), that they claim a literary space for the realities of white middle-class life (Dimitriu 2009: 134) or have shifted to a postmodern engagement (Lewis 1999: 64-76) with "survival systems" that implicate a range of contemporary local and global political concerns (Tenenbaum 2011: 43-54).

It came as something of a surprise that the last of her fifteen novels, published two years before her death in 2014, presents such an unremitting indictment of President Jacob Zuma's government, while also ridiculing former president Thabo Mbeki's AIDS denialism (on which Gordimer failed to take a public stand at the time), as well as his patrician distance from common South Africans. *No Time Like the Present* places in explicit counterpoint the righteousness of those comrades-in-arms who fought for liberation and a dystopian present rendered, towards the end of the novel, as apocalyptic.

How do we conceive of Gordimer's post-apartheid pessimism, her sense of a fundamental betrayal of ideals? This article explores three related aspects of what has become the widespread, even orthodox, version of South Africa's failed promise. It considers, first, Gordimer's nostalgia for the moral clarity of an idealised version of "the Struggle" (the capitalisation is hers). It proceeds to contextualise and consider the limitations of the teleological understanding of history this implies, specifically its embedding in a linear temporality. Finally, the argument suggests a contrary "temporal ethics", which is derived from placing in counterpoint two classics of intellectual historiography, Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History* (1949) and Raymond Aron's *The Opium of the Intellectuals* ([1955]2001) and a contemporary psychosocial study, Derek Hook's *(Post)Apartheid Condi-tions: Psychoanalysis and Social Formation* (2014). My core argument is that, in her nostalgic and unwavering commitment to *telos* (in the form of Marxist eschatology), Gordimer reproduces in *No Time Like the Present* the political sentimentality and reactionary ideology that is pervasive in post-apartheid dystopian fiction. This argument is not intended to be polemical; it does not blame Gordimer for her attachment to a particular (rather anachronistic) version of progressive politics. The schema of the political analysis in her novel is typical of contemporary local and global representations of South

Africa as an increasingly criminal state on the brink of collapse. My critique is orientated towards this general tendency that, in my view, is not only analytically (and ethically) stunted but also inherently conservative.

No Time Like the Present concerns a mixed-race couple, Jabulile and Steve Reed, who met in Swaziland when both were active in "the Struggle". Before fleeing the country, Steve worked in a paint factory because it afforded him the opportunity to supply the ingredients of explosives to African National Congress operatives "to blow up pylons" (Gordimer 2012: 22) – an anachronistic reference to one of the first acts of sabotage perpe-trated in 1961 by its armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. While studying in Swaziland, Jabu was "deployed on a mission back to the home country, arrested and detained for three months" (31). Their relationship is based on their shared political commitments; "What brought us together, the Struggle" (p. 190). Now, living "a normal life" in "the new South Africa" (4), they are at last liberated from the apartheid prohibitions that plagued every aspect of their lives and relationship. On the advice of a friend and former comrade-in-arms, Peter Mkize, they move to a Johannesburg suburb in which there is a community of ex-cadres who, in addition to constituting a network of shared memory and mutual support, extend hospitality to members of a gay commune living in a deconsecrated Dutch Reform church in the area. Steve secures a job at a university as an "Assistant Professor" (an odd usage since this is American, not South African nomenclature) and becomes involved in matters relating to institutional and pedagogic transformation, particularly academic support and bridging courses to assist black students who have been inadequately served by a foundering school system. While working as a school teacher, Jabu completes a law degree and joins the "Legal Centre" (based on the Legal Resources Centre), which serves underprivileged clients still struggling in the aftermath of apartheid. While also raising a son and daughter, Steve and Jabu thus continue as political activists in an ameliorated manner appropriate to the post-apartheid dispensation.

The enclave created by the "Suburb comrades" (363), which David Medalie describes as a "model of meaningful human community and connectedness" (Medalie 2012: 7), stands in stark contrast to the nation. Gordimer presents one index of governmental and social collapse after another, while being acerbic about the rhetoric of transformation, which she dismisses as hollow; as "official report language stuff" (Gordimer 2012: 39). Her pastiche of the ways in which the state is failing the promise and anticipations of the liberation movement is predictable; she lists all the markers that are typical of contemporary bourgeois (generally white) pessimism. She discusses the former Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang's assertion (inspired by Mbeki's "African Renaissance" and the naïve promotion of "indigenous knowledge systems") that beetroot, garlic, lemons and the African potato would be more effective in the treatment of AIDS than anti-retrovirals; the notorious Arms Deal, in which unscrupulous politicians colluded with a range

of "disreputable" arms dealers (as if there is another kind); Zuma's "generally corrupt" relationship with his supposed "advisor", the businessman Shabir Shaik; the charge of rape brought against the President; the costs of the Nkandla refurbishments (the so-called "security upgrades" to Zuma's palatial Kwazulu-Natal homestead); the rise of the fiery populist, Julius Malema, and the Economic Freedom Fighters he leads; the dramatic deterioration of the government health and education systems; endemic nepotism in the government and public services; esca-lating crime and inadequate policing; the collusion of state and corporations; the chasm between the rich and poor (among all the nations of the world, South Africa has the worst Gini Coefficient); and, the rising tide of xeno-phobia, directed particularly at other black Africans, many of whose countries of origin – notably the Frontline States – actively assisted in the fight against apartheid. Towards its conclusion, *No Time Like the Present* takes a distinctly apocalyptic turn when Steve and a friend, Lesego Moloi, venture into an informal settlement reduced to an ashen wasteland in the wake of xenophobic attacks (401-403). The "Suburb comrades" "adopt" a Zimbabwean who, discovered amidst the debris, fears for his life. We can assume that Gordimer foresees a South Africa reduced to such smouldering ruins if present trends continue. There is, as I have suggested, nothing pro-found about Gordimer's Cassandran jeremiad: she could not have chosen more predictable targets nor described them in less politically sophisticated terms.

Earlier in the novel, Jabu discovers that Steve has been investigating surreptitiously the possibility of the family's emigration to Australia. The ensuing debate between them, also characteristic of the South African middle-class, hinges on whether one should abandon a sinking ship of state (for an anodyne antipodean utopia) or remain in the country to continue some version of struggle against post-apartheid iniquities and injustices. (Gordimer was applauded for staying; J.M. Coetzee generally mocked when he moved to Adelaide, Australia.) The decision is represented as more complex for Jabu, who has a profound if complicated relationship with her father, Elias Siphiwe Gumede (known to her as "Baba", father), a school principal and Methodist elder in a Kwazulu-Natal town not far from Nkandla. This is the only relationship in the novel that is at all nuanced. Baba guided the education of Jabu in black cultural and intellectual history, encouraged her departure from South Africa to study in Swaziland and supported her during her detention. He had also, in the years of mass mobilization, intervened to protect his protesting "learners" (a word Gordimer ridicules more than once) from attack by the apartheid riot police. Yet, he is now an ardent supporter of Jacob Zuma, largely because of their shared cultural heritage and historical affiliation. Jabu is bewildered by his loyalty, which persists despite mounting evidence of the President's turpitude and criminality, yet she continues to respect her father and dispatches her son, Gary, to stay in his homestead when he begins to misbehave in school. Emigration, Jabu knows, would remove them from the

filigree of ideologies and heritage that comprise South Africans' "multiple identities" (238) and would inevitably seem a betrayal of the nation they fought to create. To decide that life is elsewhere is to repress the somewhat inscrutable patterns of belonging that link us – citizens of South Africa, but also of any nation – to "home." The novel ends, in spite of Gordimer's inventory of ills, with a muted affirmation. When all of their domestic paraphernalia is packed for the journey to Australia, Jake, one of the "Suburb comrades" says to Steve, "You lucky bastard – *you're out of it*." The last two lines of the novel are, "The moment holding a life. – I'm not going. –" (421)

Gordimer's dystopian vision of the present is inextricable from her utopian version of one aspect of the past. Obviously, her nostalgia is not the "reactionary response to change" (Medalie 2010: 36) that generally characterises the English and Afrikaans conservative dystopian fiction which flourished after 1990 (see Barendse 2013 and Titlestad 2015). These novels conform to Svetlana Boym's category of "restorative nostalgia": a melancholic longing for an idealized past that is expressed in "antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories" (Boym 2001: 41). On the contrary, in *No Time Like the Present*, Gordimer glorifies "the Struggle" against apartheid, in a particular hyperbolic register. Hers is a version of nostalgia that seeks to recover a "more hopeful past in the face of [a] disappointing present" (Worby & Ally 2013: 458).

In her account, "the Struggle" transformed individuals, in some foundational ontological sense, into "comrades" and their intentions and actions manifested and promoted an absolute moral clarity. Her representation is so ennobling that the reader expects at least a measure of irony, which never materializes. Guided by the "bibles of revolution", (Gordimer 2012: 235), "Marx, Lenin, Fanon, Guevara" (40), "comrade ex-combatants" (254) were fashioned by the "immediacy of uncompromising back-and-forth in the bush, guns and cell walls" (65) to the point that one could never be an "ex-cadre" (204). Their anointed and purified selfhood – one is "born of Struggle" (381) – is "not left in the bush camp or the desert or the prison, it's the purpose of being alive; still a comrade" (56). Occasionally Gordimer is at pains to qualify her ecclesial rhetoric; for instance, when she refers to the Constitution as an "undenominational bible", she adds parenthetically, "(for want of a better title for secular faith)" (64) and she contradicts the stereotypical description of the end of apartheid as "a miracle", adding that it "was made by human struggle" (4). Yet her reiteration of the "bush camp or the desert" as a site of rebirth evokes, not only the deliverance of the Jews from their Egyptian exile, but the corresponding temptation of Christ referred to in the Gospels of Mark and Luke and described fully in Matthew 4: 1-11. Gordimer understands "the Struggle" in the terms of a "political theology" (Schmitt 1985). Suppressing her knowledge of all the rivalries, compromises, complicities and betrayals that we know from various accounts characterised the war against the

apartheid regime she renders it as a thoroughly transcendent, transfiguring experience. Her authorial voice emerges as that of an evangelist for a mythologised past, rendering it in terms of salvation, redemption and deliverance.

From whence does Gordimer, an avowed atheist, derive this teleology? The South African liberation struggle, typical of anti-colonial mobilisation during the Cold War, was conceived in broadly Marxist terms. A long history of black trade unionism, significant communist presence in the ANC leadership, collaboration with Cuban forces and direct support from the Soviet Union combined to constitute what Gordimer describes as a "Manichean" alternative (Gordimer "Living in the Interregnum" 2011: 374-396) to both Afrikaner Nationalism and the diluted South African liberalism she so despised. (She described herself as a "radical", a "dissident writer" and occasionally as a "social revolutionary.") While Gordimer identified her literary influences as Balzac, the Russians (particularly Turgenev and Dostoyevsky) and European Modernists (Proust, Forster, Woolf and Joyce), and affiliated herself with those African writers she termed "black inter-preters" (Gordimer 1973), she consistently listed her intellectual-political progenitors as Hegel, Marx, Gramsci and Lukács. She fixed particularly on the Gramscian notion of "the interregnum", which she first cited in the epigraph of *July's People* (1981), but discussed comprehensively (if not altogether cogently) in her most important essay, originally a public address delivered in 1981, titled "Living in the Interregnum." Defining the interregnum, she paraphrases Gramsci: it is the time of a transition "between two social orders … between two identities" and it is marked by "morbid symptoms" (381). In her view, a revolution is necessary to propel a society through the interregnum and thus to cure its morbidity. We have to, she argues, discard the known for the "unknown and undetermined" (381); leave those structures (and superstructures) that accommodated the old and enter, as evolved post-revolutionary beings, a new unpredictable order of existence and experience that is (or, depending on your perspective, *was*) "struggling to be born" (390). As a political concept, the "interregnum" is reductive (although consonant with the teleology of classical Marxism). It implies that, rather than the muddled reality of incremental transformation, a new order of consciousness will eventually emerge that is consonant with a utopian social formation. This is a mawkish version of linear progress, which assumes not only a simplistic distinction between the old (which is moribund) and the new (that is forthcoming), but also the idealistic possibility of the evolution of apprehension; a fundamental re-making of human nature.

Gordimer did not always hold these revolutionary views. According to Stephen Clingman, her reverence for history and her commitment to the organization of the quotidian into a narrative of historical materialist progress, developed in the course of her career as a novelist (1986: 203). She moved from an inchoate liberalism in *The Lying Days* (1953), through a gradual

acknowledgement of the need for armed resistance, to *July's People* (1981), which concludes with Maureen "running from the old structures and relationships … towards her revolutionary destiny" even though she "does not know what that destiny may be" (Gordimer "The Essential Gesture" 414). This, in Gordimer's terms, is the "essential gesture" demanded of (white) South Africans: "to offer *one's self*" to "the Struggle" ("Inter-regnum" 376). The most insightful comments on the limitations of this version of political commitment are by Dagmar Barnouw. Acknowledging that the dark times of the 1980s demanded unambiguous affiliations and declarations, Barnouw is nonetheless sceptical of reducing all ethical considerations and political complexities to one grand decision: "how to offer one's self" (Barnouw 1994: 258). She argues that Gordimer not only shows "little concern for the concrete problems" of a transition to majority rule (258), but also – in her veneration of the redemptive power of blackness – fails to exhibit an "openness to multiple viewings and meanings of difference" (278). There is something poetic, ecclesial and distinctly Modernist in her conception of renewal and self-sacrifice, but also in her simplistic understanding of difference. Barnouw concludes that Gordimer's work can be read as a "case history of the writer's powerful, indeed religious belief" in redemption in and through high-literary discourse (278). Her only strictly *political* suggestion (rather than ideological pronouncement) in the "Interregnum" essay, which is taken from the poetry of Mongane Serote, is the patronising, banal and belated notion that "Blacks must learn to talk; whites must learn to listen" ("Interregnum" 379). It is this limited concep-tion of South African history and politics which compromises Gordimer's engagement with post-apartheid complexity and left her yearning for the "Manichean Struggle" of the past.

Karl Löwith's *The Meaning of History* (1949) is a foundational contri-bution in the philosophical engagement with teleological historiography and the detrimental intellectual consequences of blurring ecclesial and political temporalities. He takes issue with the very idea of a "philosophy of history" when that phrase is "used to mean a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward an ultimate meaning" (1). He traces the "secularization" over the ages of the Christian understanding of the "ultimate end, both *finis* and *telos*, of history" (18). To speak in any other register of progress leading to redemption is to mimic Christian eschatology; to revise "prophetic and messianic monotheism" (19). The Enlightenment, for example, deified reason; it embraced optimistic human-ism that substituted progress towards "absolute knowledge" for the Christian *eschaton* (69). Marx, about whose version of history Löwith is particu-larly vituperative, was in this respect one of the last truly Enlightenment thinkers. (Freud, whose work Löwith doesn't engage, was the other.) Suggesting that "all history is absorbed into an economic process moving towards a final world revolution and world renovation" masks Christian eschatology as secular and scientific

prognostication (33). The apoc-alyptic (revelatory and revolutionary) emergence of the utopian dictatorship of the proletariat is, he argues, an expression of a residual Judeo-Christian prophetism. Marxism, in Löwith's description, has all the "features of a messianic faith"; it amounts to little more than a "secular form of the quest for salvation" (49). Paradise is transposed from a transcendent to a worldly realm and that which presents itself so militantly as irreligion is religion in a different guise.

Hans Blumenberg famously challenges Löwith's secularisation thesis, suggesting that it confuses "metaphorology" and epistemology (Blumenberg 1983). New Testament eschatology, he argues, is untranslatable: "there is no concept of history that can claim identity of 'substance' with immediate expectation" (43). Christian eschatology imagines an event breaking into history and it is therefore heterogeneous to it. To identify a secular *eschaton* or *telos* – to translate notions such as the apocalypse, revelation or salvation into other paradigms – indulges analogy and, in doing so, we sacrifice both philosophical and historical precision and prudence. Malcolm Bull, in his introduction to a collection of essays concerning the apocalyptic in rhetoric, ideology and contemporary philosophy, suggests, however, that Löwith and Blumenberg's positions are contradictory only in points of detail (Bull 1995: 8-10). Their signal difference is that Blumenberg "depicts eschatology as being narrowly and nervously concerned with the imminence of the Last Judgement" (11) while Löwith is concerned with a more general sense of the intellectual "expropriation of ecclesial property" (8). Both describe the ways in which ecclesial and secular temporalities are related as well as the intellectual, political and ideological consequences of asserting their correspondence.

What are the consequences of Gordimer's ecclesial version of "the Struggle" in *No Time Like the Present* and in what ways does it implicate the notion of Marxist revolution? Raymond Aron, who Tony Judt describes as "the only prominent French thinker of his generation who had taken a consistent liberal stand against all the totalitarian temptations of the age", (1998: 37) challenges what he calls the "myth of revolution." He accuses the left of being seduced by the idea that "mankind will never realize its vocation, will never control its own destiny, except by a promethean gesture, which becomes a valid end in itself" (36). Not only does this resonate uncannily with Gordimer's understanding of "the essential gesture", ("The Essential Gesture" in *Telling Times* 409-424) it also facilitates a reflection on the significance of her incontinent use of the term "revolution" in the novel. Again and again, Gordimer speaks of the end of apartheid as a revolution and describes the "Suburban comrades" as revolutionaries. First, the transformation to a democracy was a socially costly neo-liberal com-promise. It signally entailed the forging of alliances between international capital and indigenous elites (Saul 2014). The "proletariat" (a term Aron treats with suspicion) is now less skilled and more impoverished than it was during apartheid. In no sense, then,

has "transformation" amounted to "revolution" in the Marxist sense in which Gordimer uses the term. In addition to its inaccurate use, the term "revolution" is anachronistic in the South African context. Conjuring up "a unilinear history in which St George [succeeds in] slaying the dragon" (Aron 2001: 31) it evokes the rhetoric of the struggle, which is entirely at odds with the prosaic quotidian realities of South Africa's political transformation after 1994. "Revolution" carries only a poetic charge: "reform is boring and revolution exciting" (43). Gordi-mer, typical of Marxists, was left "looking back at the lost, lyrical illusion" that she cannot bring herself to forego (43).

The revolutionary charge of the struggle against apartheid was essential in bringing pressure to bear on a regime guilty of a crime against humanity. No one would deny that. Yet Gordimer's cathexis onto the idea of a "revolution" dividing the past from the present inscribes an eschatology which inhibits nuanced thinking about post-apartheid social and political realities. Her sense of the glory of a progressive past means the present can only be understood as failure. In order to evade such political ennui, we need a more nuanced sense of temporality. As long as we consider apartheid to be *in the past* – and sanctify the struggle leading up to its nominal conclusion – we neglect the ways in which the history of this country cannot be conceived as teleological. In a recent psychosocial work, *(Post)Apartheid Conditions: Psychoanalysis and Social Formation*, Derek Hook suggests that we need a new repertoire of "time signatures" to comprehend and contend with the contemporary South African social formation. He describes "everyday South African experience [as] characterised by historical dissonance, by the continuous juxtaposition of forward- and backward-looking temporalities" (5). Hook takes from the clinical application of psychoanalysis his sense of the "non-linear vicissitudes of time" (195); the understanding that we need – in approaching people's experience of South African history – to take account of the continual, revisiting, revising and reorganising of the past. In his conclusion, Hook proposes an "ethics of temporality" (204). This would entail abandoning our assumptions of linearity in favour of a "folding of times, whereby the past can be radicalized and the future re-envisaged, altered from its recapitulation of what was" (204). Since it is unethical to think of apartheid as "in the past", Hook places "post" in "(post)apartheid" in parenthesis. It is a time that can (and should) never be considered concluded.

We might apply this version of the dynamic simultaneity of past and present in a defence of Gordimer's nostalgia. Perhaps we could argue that she re-imagines the past (embedding it in theological tropes) in order to present a contrary to a present she views as a morally bereft morass. In this reading, her version of the anti-apartheid struggle is a fictionalised (mythologised) counterpoint to her representation of a collapsing state that is intended to draw us, as a society, back to the founding principles of our hard-won democracy. This is an instrumental interpretation of the novel based in the assumption that it juxtaposes utopian ideals and a "critical dystopia" in the hope of renewal

(see Jameson 2007: 198). Nostalgia and fatalism, though, are not discrete dispositions; rather than a productive binary, they coalesce (perhaps, more accurately, coagulate) in conservatism. Conceiving of South Africa as turning back at the Jerusalem gates and meandering into the Cities of the Plain implicates the mode of historiography of which both Löwith and Aron are deeply sceptical. Catastrophism and apocalypticism are spectacular tropes that blind us to continuities and singularities. Gordimer conceives of post-apartheid "collapse" as – to recall Blumenberg – analogous to Advent: it is an unexpected arrival that has interrupted history. This sense of things not being as they ought to have been – this prescriptive historiography – reduces individuals to bewildered, pessimistic onlookers deprived of agency.

Derek Hook's response to a teleological (and, in Löwith and Aron's sense "ecclesial") version of history can be understood as a contemporary call to secularisation; to the abandonment of a grand narrative in favour of analysis that emphasises the ways in which meanings arise from the dynamic intersection of temporalities. In place of seeing the South African present as failed, he calls us to register the anxieties, repressions, transferences, selective recollection and screen memories that manifest in contemporary events and perceptions. His prudential approach may seem less obviously progressive than revolutionary rhetoric, yet, liberated from theology, it avoids the complacent belief that apartheid has been eliminated and opens up the possibility of constant and ongoing redress. Hook demonstrates the value and versatility of psychoanalytic understanding in conceiving of a secular historiography. His monograph, though, resonates with Löwith's admiration – expressed in a different academic idiom – of the writing of the nineteenth-century historian, Jacob Burckhardt. Burckhardt argued that historiography is a process of "remembering"; "each generation, by a new effort of appropriation and interpretation, has to remember time and again its own past unless it wants to forget it and lose the historical sense and substance of its own existence" (Löwith 1949: 20-32). It is a necessary condition of such remembering and the refashioning of history that we do not accept settled versions of the past based in any particular ideological eschatology. We cannot meaningfully engage the present weighed down by a longing for a *telos* that was, from the time of its conception, no more than a utopian myth.

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