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# Introduction

AS GRAVITY BENDS LIGHT, so power bends time. This book is about what happens when temporal awareness is lensed through a structure of power. It is interested in the forms of historicity appropriated and articulated by those who wield political power. By 'historicity' I do not mean a doctrine or theory about the meaning of history, nor a mode of historiographical practice. Rather, I use the term in the sense elaborated by François Hartog to denote a set of assumptions about how the past, the present, and the future are connected.[1] These assumptions may find explicit rhetorical expression or may articulate themselves through cultural choices, public rituals, or the deployment of arguments or of metaphors and other figurative language that imply a 'temporally structured form of perception', without overtly employing temporal categories.[2] They may be implicit in the forms of argument deployed to justify political action, or to argue against it.[3] Whatever forms they take, the historicities characteristic of cultures or regimes are marked by 'specific interpretations of what is temporally relevant'.[4] From this it follows that the configuration of this relationship in turn gives rise to a sense of time that possesses

an intuited shape or timescape, depending upon which parts of the past are felt to be near and related intimately with the present and which are perceived as alien and remote.[5]

The book focuses on four moments. It opens with the struggle between Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Prussia (1620–88), known as the Great Elector, and his provincial estates after the end of the Thirty Years' War, examining how these disputes invoked starkly opposed temporalities and tracing their impact on the emergent historiography of Brandenburg-Prussia. The Elector's reign was marked, I argue, by an awareness of the present as a precarious threshold between a catastrophic past and an uncertain future, in which one of the chief concerns of the sovereign was to free the state from the entanglements of tradition in order to choose freely between different possible futures.

The second chapter focuses on the historical writings of Frederick II, the only Prussian monarch ever to have written a history of his own lands. It argues that this king consciously retreated from the conflictual view of the state expounded at the court of his great-grandfather, the Great Elector, and that this departure reflected both the changed constellation of social power sustaining the Prussian throne and Frederick's idiosyncratic understanding of his own place in history. In place of the forwards-leaning historicity of the Great Elector, I suggest, Frederick imagined a post-Westphalian condition of stasis, embracing a neoclassical, steady-state temporality in which motifs of timelessness and cyclical repetition predominated and the state was no longer an engine of historical change but a historically nonspecific fact and a logical necessity.

Chapter 3 is a study of Bismarck's historicity, as articulated in his political arguments, rhetoric, and techniques. For Bismarck, the statesman was a decision maker, carried forwards on the torrent of history, whose task was to manage

the interplay between the forces unleashed by the revolutions of 1848 while at the same time upholding and protecting the privileged structures and prerogatives of the monarchical state, without which history threatened to degenerate into mere tumult. It argues that Bismarck's historicity was riven by a tension between his commitment to the timeless permanence of the state and the churn and change of politics and public life. The collapse in 1918 of the system Bismarck created brought in its wake a crisis in historical awareness, since it destroyed a form of state power that had become the focal point and guarantor of historical thinking and awareness.

Among the inheritors of this crisis, the fourth chapter argues, were the National Socialists, who initiated a radical break with the very idea of history as a ceaseless 'iteration of the new'. Whereas Bismarck's historicity had been founded on the assumption that history was a complexly structured, forwards-rushing sequence of ever new and non-foreordained situations, the Nazis plinthed the most radical aspirations of their regime on a deep identity between the present, a remote past, and a remote future. The result was a form of regime historicity that was unprecedented in Prussia-Germany, but also quite distinct from the totalitarian temporal experiments of the Italian fascist and Soviet communist systems.

The objective of this book is thus to invert the project pursued in Francois Hartog's *Regimes of Historicity* and explore instead the historicity of (a small selection of) regimes. One could do this by examining the ways in which formal state structures—ministries, military commands, electoral and royal courts, and bureaucracies—managed time, situated themselves in history, and imagined the future, though this would beg questions about whether the term 'state' can be taken to denote something that was continually present in the same sense over the period covered by this book. I have

chosen a different approach. I am interested in how those who wielded power justified their comportment with arguments and behaviours that bore a specific temporal signature. How these shapers of power related to the formal structures of government varied from case to case. The Great Elector wielded power from within an executive structure that he gradually and in a largely improvised way assembled around himself during his long reign. Frederick II's reign was marked by a drastic personalisation of power and by the semi-detachment of the monarch from many of the structures in which state authority formally resided. Bismarck situated himself in the turbulent space between the Prusso-German monarchical executive and the unpredictable forces at work in a post-revolutionary public sphere. And the National Socialist leadership cohort was the nemesis of the bureaucratic state structure—a vehement disavowal of the state as the vehicle and goal of history's striving was at the heart of Nazi historicity.

## *History's Temporal Turn*

Time—or more precisely the variety of orders of time—is not a new theme in historical studies. Today it is a commonplace that time is not a neutral, universal substance in whose emptiness something called 'history' unfolds, but a contingent cultural construction whose shape, structure, and texture have varied. This insight has given rise over the last fifteen years to such a lively and diverse field of research that we can speak of a 'temporal turn' in historical studies, a shift in sensibilities comparable with the linguistic and cultural turns of the 1980s and 1990s, one of those re-patternings of attention by which the discipline of history periodically refreshes itself.[6]

The temporal turn in present-day historical studies can cite distinguished philosophical and theoretical antecedents. In his

1889 doctoral dissertation, the French philosopher Henri Bergson argued that time as a dimension of human consciousness was non-homogeneous and 'qualitatively multiple'; Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912) laid the foundations of a sociology of time as something collectively experienced and socially constructed; in *The Social Framework of Memory* (1925), Maurice Halbwachs applied Durkheim's insights to the social production of memory; two years later, Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* proposed that the 'existential and ontological constitution of the totality of human consciousness [*Dasein*]' was 'grounded in temporality'; and since the Second World War, literary theorists and especially narratologists have subjected the temporal structures of texts to intensive study.[7]

Among the first historians to reflect on the implications of these theoretical currents for historical writing was Marc Bloch, who dedicated a short sub-chapter of his wartime classic *The Historian's Craft* to the problem of 'historical time'. By contrast with the 'artificially homogeneous' and abstract time of the natural sciences, Bloch wrote, 'the time of history is a concrete and living reality with an irreversible onward rush. It is the very plasma in which events are immersed, and the field that renders them intelligible'. At its heart is an unresolvable tension between continuity and 'perpetual change'.[8] Bloch's reflections on the temporality of history remained fragmentary, but the work of Braudel, Jacques Le Goff, and other historians in the *Annales* tradition deepened and expanded these intuitions, developing a sharp awareness of the diversity of temporal scales and textures. For Braudel, the relationship between the short-term disruptions known as 'events' and the longer-term continuities that define epochs became a central problem of the historian's practice. Le Goff explored the diverse temporal textures of occupational, liturgical, and devotional practices.[9]

As these reflections make clear, historicity and temporality are connected but not identical categories. In this book, I use the latter term to denote a political actor's intuitive sense of the texture of experienced time. If historicity is rooted in a set of assumptions about the relationships between past, present, and future, temporality captures something less reflected and more immediate: a feeling for the motion of time. Is the future moving towards the present or receding away from it? Does the past threaten to encroach on the present, or does it fall away towards the edges of awareness? How accommodating is the temporal frame for political action, and how does the imagined flow of time relate to the propensity of decision makers to perceive it as portioned out in 'moments'? Is the present experienced as movement or as stasis? What is permanent and what is not in the minds of those who wield power?

## *The Modernisation of Time*

If the *Annales* school temporalised history, it was a German historian, Reinhart Koselleck, who historicised temporality. In *Futures Past*, a collection of sparkling essays on the 'semantics of historical time', Koselleck explored the history of time awareness, creating a subtle array of analytical tools. At the heart of his project was the transition from premodern to modern ways of experiencing and apprehending time. He discussed changes in time awareness from the Renaissance onwards, especially processes of cultural secularisation that had undermined the hold of biblical prophecy on Christian visions of the future. But his central claim was that the period he called the 'transitional era' (*Sattelzeit*)—spanning the years from around 1750 to around 1850—witnessed a profound alteration in Western European temporal awareness. This transformation was composed of many strands: as the flow of time,

manifested in events, appeared to accelerate, the felt distance from the past increased; universal principles gave way to contingency; the authority of the past as a storehouse of wisdom and instruction for the present waned; key concepts—'revolution', 'class', 'progress', 'state'—were saturated with the momentum of historical change; stories, chronicles, and anecdotes about the past merged into something processual, singular, and all-encompassing, a single totality, the 'History' theorised by Hegel and taught in the humanities departments of modern universities. The consequence was a profound shift in the felt texture and shape of time: the recursive timescapes of premodern societies made way for something called History, now understood as a sequence of transformative and irreversible events that came to be experienced as 'the relentless iteration of the new'. The disruption, violence, and discontinuity of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras generated dissonances between the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectation' that were to be emblematic for the modern era.[10]

In the opening essay of *Futures Past*, Koselleck interrogated Albrecht Altdorfer's *The Battle of Issus*, an image painted in 1529 depicting the victory of Alexander the Great over the Persians at the Battle of Issus in 333 BCE.[11] Why was it, Koselleck asked, that Altdorfer depicted the Greeks as present-day Germans and the Persians as present-day Turks? Why did the image show crowds of men and horses swarming across a Germanic, alpine landscape decorated with recognisably European buildings, even though the original encounter had taken place in Asia Minor? Why did the details in his painting so closely resemble contemporary representations of the Ottoman siege of Vienna, still under way in 1529 when Altdorfer painted his image? The answer, Koselleck proposed, was that for Altdorfer the relationship between the Battle of Issus and the Ottoman siege was prophetic and allegorical. The first battle had

ushered in the end of the Persian Empire, as foreseen in the prophetic dream recorded in the Book of Daniel. The second seemed to herald the end of the Roman Empire (i.e., the Holy Roman Empire), seen as the next step in the timetable adumbrated by Daniel's prophecy. Both events existed within the same envelope of prophetic time. Only this made it possible to pleat time as Altdorfer did, superimposing sixteenth-century Turks onto ancient Persians.

To sharpen the contrast with modern temporal awareness, Koselleck brought in as witness the German poet, critic, and scholar Friedrich Schlegel, who, it so happens, viewed the Battle of Issus in the 1820s and wrote an enthusiastic essay on it. Schlegel praised Altdorfer's painting as 'the greatest feat of the age of chivalry'. Koselleck zeroed in on this observation—for Schlegel, it seemed, there was a distancing expanse of time between himself and the painting. More than that, Schlegel felt that the painting belonged to a different age—*Zeitalter*—from his own. So it was a question not just of the quantity of time elapsed, but of a break in the fabric of time, a tectonic fault between this time and a previous one. Something, Koselleck reasoned, had intervened between the time of Altdorfer and the time of Schlegel, with the paradoxical result that a greater expanse of time seemed to separate Schlegel from Altdorfer than appeared to separate Altdorfer from the deeds of Alexander. The Battle of Issus, in other words, exemplified a premodern, *untemporalised* sense of time and with it the lack of what we would call historical consciousness. Schlegel, by contrast, stood proxy for a modern temporal awareness that apprehended the past as distant, superseded, and ontologically separate.[12]

It would be difficult to overstate the influence of Koselleck's work on the historical study of temporality. He asked bold and original questions, unfolding their implications with

impressive subtlety, lucidity, and depth of reasoning. His use of semantic change to track epochal mutations of awareness was foundational. He borrowed analytical categories from philosophy and literary theory and developed them as tools for calibrating processes of change—the 'horizon of expectation' (*Erwartungshorizont*) came from the reception theory of Gadamer and Jauss; *Zeitlichkeit*, a term denoting both the quality of time (its ceaseless motion, its texture) and the condition of existing in time, was drawn from Heidegger; 'temporalisation' (*Verzeitlichung*), meaning the historicisation of past and present time in the modern era, derived from Arthur O. Lovejoy's *Great Chain of Being*; the concept of acceleration as a hallmark of modern sensibility was already associated with Nietzsche. But if Koselleck did not invent these categories, he 'occupied, filled and popularised them', assembling them as tools for charting the mutation of temporal orders over time. All of them have entered the repertoire of the temporal turn.[13]

Even more influential was Koselleck's preoccupation with the transition from premodern to modern temporal orders.[14] The literature of the temporal turn has been predominantly concerned with mapping this threshold. There have been studies of the acceleration of travel in the railway era; the rising salience of punctuality and lateness; the scandal of 'wasted' time as a symptom of modern time regimes; the commodification of ever smaller amounts of time in the era of telegraphy; the shrinking of space through the advent of high-speed mass transit; the rise of nostalgia as a signature malady of modernity.[15] In studies of this kind, the advent of modernity and the attendant modernisation of temporal awareness have been the focus of attention.

Yet uncertainties remain about the qualitative nature of the transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' temporality. Rather than producing a stable toolkit of widely used hermeneutical

categories, recent writing on modern temporalities has generated a thicket of heterogeneous metaphors. The transition from traditional to modern temporalities is variously conceptualised as a process of acceleration, expansion, narrowing, regeneration, compression, distanciation, splitting, fracturing, emptying, annihilation, intensification, and liquefaction.[16] And the category 'temporality' has itself been used in a variety of senses. In some studies, the term denotes an experiential domain, a tendency on the part of individuals or communities to orient themselves towards cyclical markers such as the seasons or liturgical celebrations, the perceived texture of time as it unfolds, fluctuations in the experienced duration of specific events, the relationship between experience and expectation, a divergence in the rhythms of private and public life, or patterns of time-management practices associated with certain occupational cultures.[17] Other studies focus on 'chronosophical' questions, or philosophical reflections on time and its relationship with history or with human existence more generally.[18]

## *Power and Time*

Agentless processes of change, whose narratives have often been anchored in the systemic and processual arguments of modernisation theory, have tended to dominate the temporality literature.[19] But there have also been excellent studies of how regimes of power intervened in the temporal order. These have explored the use of calendars, for example, as an instrument of political power. The transition from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in Western Europe, a process that took over three centuries, was always intertwined with power struggles.[20] In Habsburg Austria, the accession to the throne of the enlightened Jansenist reformer Joseph II broke the traditional dominance of the liturgical cycle at court, while the

drastic reduction of feast days alienated elements of the population attached to their traditional devotions and the sociable rhythms of the old Catholic year.[21] On 24 October 1793, the Jacobin-controlled National Convention adopted a new 'republican calendar' intended to mark a radical break with the past and the inauguration of a new era. Had it succeeded in establishing itself over the longer term, the ten-day week (*décade*) would have transformed the living and work cycles of the French, alienating them from the cycles of the Christian liturgical year and setting them apart from the rest of the European continent.[22]

Historians of empire, too, have examined the 'intimate connection' between time and imperial power—especially as manifested in the imposition of standardised regimes of clock discipline on labour and production processes.[23] Here, the emphasis has been on the partially coerced transition from pre- or nonmodern (aboriginal) to modern (imperial or Western) temporalities, though many studies have also drawn attention to the survival of indigenous temporalities in the face of pressure from colonial authorities.[24] Vanessa Ogle's magisterial study of the global standardisation of clock time revealed an 'additive and unintended process' in which the uncoordinated efforts of numerous actors converged with global disruption (the Second World War) and the requirements imposed by new infrastructure (military and commercial aviation) to bring about the introduction of uniform time zones.[25] Sebastian Conrad has illuminated how the extension and intensification of imperial power interacted with nineteenth-century semantic and cultural shifts to produce 'global transformations of the time regime'.[26]

The disruption of systems of power from below can also generate shifts in time sense, as studies of late Qing China have shown.[27] The period of violent upheaval comprising the

Taiping, Nian, Gelao, and Hui rebellions of the 1850s to 1870s and the incursions by the Western powers that followed gave rise to such profound ruptures with the remembered past, Luke S. K. Kwong has argued, that they transformed historical awareness, at least within the cultural elite. In traditional China, history was upheld as a treasury of good examples reflecting a state of cosmic interconnectedness and the harmonious management of human affairs. Events in the present were interpreted in the light of analogies drawn from the past. This did not mean that Chinese scholars and administrators were incapable of constructing 'specific kinds of linear progression', but these, Kwong argued, were embedded in a cyclical, strongly recursive, and nonlinear timescape.

The hold of this traditional temporality was broken only when immense waves of social turbulence and political violence undermined the authority of the imperial government, severing the thread of continuity with the past, placing the survival of the country in question and with it the authority of a history that had been counted out in imperial reigns. The time-honoured practice of seeking instruction from the historical record broke down, just as, for Koselleck, the topos of history as the teacher of life had waned in Western Europe. The notion that the current era of destruction would make way, as in the past, for an age of restoration and redemption no longer seemed trustworthy. Faced with what they saw as the radical unprecedentedness of contemporary conditions, late Qing Chinese intellectuals reached for more linear and developmental, Western- and Meiji-inspired narratives in order to capture a sense of the accumulation and acceleration of events that were 'gathering momentum in a forward thrust towards the future'.[28]

Among the most ambitious modern interventions in the temporal order were those of the totalitarian regimes of

twentieth-century Europe. In January 1918, the Soviet Union abandoned the Julian calendar adopted by Peter the Great in 1699 and replaced it with the Gregorian calendar commonly in use in the West, pulling the country thirteen days forward. The rise of Stalin to unchallenged dominance brought further initiatives. In 1930, Stalin proclaimed a new five-day week. There was to be no Saturday or Sunday, just a sequence of five days identified by numbers and colours—yellow, orange, red, purple, and green.[29] This particular project was eventually abandoned as impracticable, but the Soviet Union launched a revolutionary experiment in reordering the human relationship with time; it aspired to inaugurate a temporality in which the vanguard party overcame the constraints of conventional 'bourgeois' linear time through the infinite intensification of work.[30]

Recent studies of Italian fascism have focused on the efforts of fascist intellectuals and propaganda to establish a new temporality centred around the party itself as the ultimate historical agent.[31] And the historian of transnational fascism Roger Griffin has characterised the advent of National Socialist government in Germany as a 'temporal revolution'.[32] Eric Michaud's exploration of the 'Nazi myth' focused on the paradoxical relationship between 'motion' and 'motionlessness' in Nazi visual imagery and related this to the logic of Christian eschatology, in which the subject is suspended between the memory of a past redemption (in the form of Christ's incarnation) and the anticipation of a future collective salvation.[33] Emilio Gentile has spoken of a fascist 'sacralisation of politics' through which the rites and usages of the Christian tradition were adapted to the purposes of the Mussolini regime, creating an 'internal symbolic universe' in which timeless universality of liturgical performance was transferred to the collective experience of politics.[34] All three totalitarian dictatorships, Charles Maier and Martin Sabrow have suggested,

represented far-reaching interventions, not only in the social and political, but also in the temporal order.[35]

Framing temporality as an effect or epiphenomenon of power shifts the focus of attention from diffused processes of change towards 'chronopolitics', the study of how 'certain views toward time and toward the nature of change' become implicated in processes of decision making.[36] And this in turn means enquiring after 'the imagination of time and history' that has, in various countries and epochs, given 'meaning and legitimacy' to the actions and arguments of the sovereign authority.[37] It means, to borrow the words of Charles Maier, addressing the 'question of how politics is about time' and of what kind of time is 'presupposed by politics'.[38]

None of the regimes discussed in this book attempted formally to restructure the collective experience of time in the manner of the French National Convention, through the imposition of a new calendar. But all of them captured and selectively intensified ambient temporalities, weaving them into the arguments and representations with which they justified themselves and their actions. One of the distinctive features of this book is that it offers a longitudinal survey, following the same ancestral territorial entity (Brandenburg-Prussia) through successive political incarnations. An advantage of this approach is that it allows us to pick up the reflexive, self-historicising dimension of chronopolitical change. States have deep memories, and there is a cumulative logic to their self-awareness, even when one regime abjures the claims or practices of its predecessor. Joining the dots diachronically might thus enable us to plot the outlines of a 'time-history', at least within one rather narrow domain of human activity.[39] The German (Prussian) focus of this study arises above all from a pragmatic decision to focus on what I know best. But Germany is an especially interesting case study for an enquiry

into the relationship between temporality, historicity, and power. The frequency and depth of political rupture in German Europe over the last four centuries allows us to observe again and again the impact of political change on temporal and historical awareness. I return in the conclusion to the question of whether there was anything specifically Prussian or German in the trajectory that emerges from this exercise.

A further advantage of the longitudinal approach is that it allows us to probe the relationship between 'modernisation' and temporality. Several recent studies have suggested that the transformations associated by Koselleck with the *Sattelzeit* can in fact be discerned in earlier regimes—the city-state courts of Renaissance Italy and early modern Germany, for example, or even medieval Europe and the Middle East.[40] Merely moving the threshold backwards leaves the teleology of the paradigm intact, of course, if this is achieved simply by retrofitting the analytical categories of modernisation to an earlier era. But it is also worth asking whether we need to read Koselleck's typology of temporalities in chronological sequence; an alternative view would understand him as a theorist of multiple parallel temporalities.[41]

In this book, I have tried to attend closely to the specific temporal textures of each regime. The sequence that results is more oscillating, recursive, and nonlinear than a strongly sequential and modernisation-based theory would allow. This need not mean that modernisation was not taking place; it might simply reflect the obliqueness and contingent quality of the relationships between the wielders of power and the kinds of processes that have tended to interest modernisation theorists. The Great Elector aligned himself with an activist understanding of history that pitted him against the contemporary defenders of privilege and tradition. Frederick II attempted to counter the processes of social change that were transforming

his kingdom from within, articulating a highly aestheticised political vision marked by stasis and equilibrium. Otto von Bismarck adapted his politics to the political and social forces driving the turbulent movement of history, but also remained committed to an idea of the monarchical state as unchanging and transcendent that he believed he had inherited from the age of Frederick. And the National Socialist regime broke with all of these precedents, rejecting the very idea of a history composed of disruptions and contingency and embedding its political vision in a millennial timescape, in which the distant future was merely the fulfilled promise of the past.

In none of the four eras this book examines did the temporalities of power explored here crowd out other forms of time awareness, even if they were sometimes directed against them. Throughout the period under review in this book, political life was structured by a plurality of coexistent temporal orders.[42] Yet the temporality of political power as wielded by its most influential agents retained and retains a special importance. It was the place where the political rationalisations of power expressed themselves as claims about the past and expectations of the future.

The salience of regime chronopolitics has not waned, and the appeal to imagined timescapes remains one of the key tools of political communication. This book was written during the crescendo and triumph of the Brexit campaign in Britain, a campaign driven by the aspiration to 'take back control'. The Brexiteer Boris Johnson was the chief propagator of this slogan, but he was also the author of a biography of Winston Churchill (subtitle: *How One Man Made History*) in which the iconic statesman bore an uncanny resemblance to Johnson himself. And the Brexit campaign was animated by the appeal to an idealised past in which the 'English-speaking peoples' had effortlessly dominated the world. The prominence of such

motifs among Brexiteer arguments was evidence, Duncan Bell suggested, 'of the mesmeric grip that the Empire retains over swathes of the British governing class'.[43]

The impact of the Brexit referendum was still reverberating in the United Kingdom when Donald Trump won the US presidential elections. Trump, whose trademarked campaign slogan was 'Make America Great Again®', brought to the most powerful elected office in the world a political vision founded on a trenchant disavowal both of the neoliberal future of globalisation and of the scientific anticipation of climate change, which he described as a hoax perpetrated upon the rest of humankind by the Chinese.[44] The most influential ideologue on his staff, Stephen Bannon, later dismissed from his post, subscribed to the esoteric historical theory expounded by William Strauss and Neil Howe in a book called *The Fourth Turning: What Cycles of History Tell Us about America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny* (New York, 1997), in which it was argued that the histories of nations unfold in eighty- to hundred-year cycles, divided by violent periods of 'turning' that can last a generation. Whether President Trump himself ever immersed himself in these ideas is unknown, but he too has mounted a challenge at least to conventional American historicity by becoming the first president of modern times overtly to reject the notion that America occupies an exceptional and paradigmatic place at the vanguard of history's forwards movement. On the contrary, he has suggested, today's America is a backwards country with a broken society and infrastructure, whose task is to reach back into a past where American values were still uncontaminated and American society was intact.[45] 'When we win', Trump told the working-class voters of Moon Township Pennsylvania in 2016, 'we are bringing steel back, we are going to bring steel back to Pennsylvania, like it used to be. We are putting our steel workers and our miners back to work.

We are. We will be bringing back our once-great steel companies'.[46] At the same time, his febrile communicative style has opened up a rift between the hyper-accelerated present of Twitter and the slow deliberative processes that are the daily fare of traditional democracies and administrations attuned to constitutional norms.

In the United States, Poland, Hungary, and other countries experiencing a populist revival, new pasts are being fabricated to displace old futures. Celebrating the success of Donald Trump, the French National Front leader Marine Le Pen observed that in the United States 'people [were] taking their future back'; the French, she predicted, would soon do the same.[47] Reflecting on how the wielders and shapers of political power temporalised their politics in one small province of the past will do little to diminish the contemporary allure of such manipulations, but it may at least help us to read them more attentively.

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