



**SHE
IS
HOPE**

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HOPE/ELPIS/TIKVAH: A FALSE FRIEND OR THE DEFENCE FROM HISTORY AGAINST OUR CURRENT ENEMIES?

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Can *artworking* perform for us an analysis of consciousness that can balance imaginative, aesthetically-fashioned fiction with a historical urgency that reframes the past - remembered in art's forms and transformed - to incite political action on behalf of the realization of a not-yet-imaginable future?

I am invited to consider *hope*. First, I consult a play, *The Disputation* (1986) by British scholar Hyam Maccoby (1924-2004), based on the historic debate in Barcelona in 1263 at the court of King James of Aragon between a Christian convert from Judaism, the Dominican Pablo Christiani, and the pre-eminent Jewish rabbi, scholar, physician, philosopher and mystic of the time, Moses ben Nachman (Nachmanides) of Girona. With death as a probable result of either failure or success in defending the Talmud from being blasphemous, Nachmanides was forced to defend Jewish refusal to accept that the Messiah had come. Nachmanides was unconvinced by Pablo's argument. "But, is this indeed the messianic era? When we read from the Bible in the prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah about the coming of the Messiah, what is the obvious thing that strikes us? It is that the coming of the Messiah will make the world a different place. Instead of a world of strife and bloodshed, of ceaseless agony, and famine, and warfare, there will be a world of peace and goodwill, a time of sabbath, when swords are beaten into ploughshares, and the Wolf will lie down with the Lamb, and the Peace of God will reach into the four corners of the earth. This is the time of the Messiah *to which we Jews look forward ...* But what has happened? ... Is this a world of peace? Have the swords been beaten into ploughshares? No."¹

He who is without hope is also without fear: this is the meaning of the expression 'desperate'. For it is natural to a man to believe true what he desires to be true, and to believe it because he desires it; if this salutary and soothing quality in his nature is obliterated by repeated ill-fortune, and he is even brought to the point of believing that what he does not desire to happen must happen and what he desires to happen can never happen simply because he desires it, then this is the condition called despair.

Arthur Schopenhauer, *On Psychology*, 1851

Alexander van der Haven

THE END AS THE PAST

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In his book *The Time That Remains*, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben argues that despite being credited with the founding of Christianity, the apostle Paul, tentmaker and former persecutor of Jesus of Nazareth's followers, never intended to build a new religion. Based on his analysis of the language in Paul's letters, Agamben argues instead that Paul's message was one of nullification, of dismantling existing structures, laws, and selfhoods. The "messianic time" that Paul believed to be living in was, according to Agamben, one of fulfilment through the disruption of it all, of eradicating karma rather than constructing nirvana.

This notion of messianic time, which Agamben believes is fundamental to the Western messianic tradition, directly contradicts the common idea that messianic time is oriented toward the future. Disagreeing with philosophers such as Blumenberg and Löwith - and why not add here also: with most of Western tradition - that messianism and eschatology (literally "knowledge of the end") are the same thing, Agamben distinguishes between on the one

hand messianic time, "time of the end," and on the other apocalyptic time, "the end of time." While the latter is conceived as chronological, placed in the future from us, messianic time constitutes a non-chronological dimension that Agamben calls "time within time," and "a remnant" of time that recapitulates the past in order to complete it. Messianic time, Agamben asserts, is "a contraction of past and present, that we have to settle our debts, at the decisive moment, first and foremost with the past".

But where does this leave apocalyptic time, namely those fantasies of future collective redemption that are part and parcel of any Western dream of collective re-

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Then I recall the shocking moment in 1991 when *The Messiah* spoke to us in London from high above the elegant neoclassical buildings of Piccadilly Circus, the center of the most expensive shopping district in this once imperial capital city. A ten-minute computer animation was projected on Spectacolor board, flashing out a message for our times:

This Is Your Messiah Speaking/ This Is Your Messiah Speaking/ Instructing You To Shop/ Don't Worry/ No One Will Force You To Do Anything/ You Don't Want To Do ... Shop, That's Right / Shop Around/ Shop, I Tell You/ Shop, He Said, Or Someone Will Shop For You!

This Is Your Messiah Speaking is an artwork by Toronto-based video and media artist Vera Frenkel, a child survivor and forced migrant born Jewish in Bratislava in 1938.² This work elaborates a long-standing theme in her work: our deluded search for bliss pursued through owning, collecting, possessing *things*. A long-standing anthropological fascination with Cargo Cults, a despairing gaze at the rise of mass consumerism in the West during the 1980s-1990s, and her own childhood experience of dispossession subsequently led Vera Frenkel in 1994 to create the first political-aesthetic inquiry into Hitler's mass looting of Jewishly-owned and European museums' art treasures. This project, *Body Missing*, was realized in her initially site-specific video installation in the Austrian city of Linz, the projected site for Hitler's Führer Museum. *Body Missing* was, after many incarnations, installed in 2017 in the newly opened memory site, the 700 metres underground Altaussee Salt Mines, in which Hitler's loot had been stored and from which many "rescued" artworks silently disappeared during their recovery. Capturing the deluded *hope* invested in contemporary consumerism, Vera Frenkel's 1991 message in Piccadilly was more monitory:

You Can See From This, of Course/ (He Continued)/ How Crucial It Is / To Choose The Messiah/ With The Right Credentials./ I Know (for example) That People Must Shop.

For The Right Messiah At The Right Price./ Where Redeemers Are Concerned/ Compare Guarantees./ Ask Yourself: Is This Really The Messiah Speaking?/ The Real Messiah Speaking?

'Let me ask you this, Mr. Ai: do you know, by your own experience, what patriotism is?' [...] 'I don't mean love, when I say patriotism. I mean fear. The fear of the other. And its expressions are political, not poetical: hate, rivalry, aggression. It grows in us, that fear. It grows in us year by year. We've followed our road too far. And you, who come from a world that outgrew nations centuries ago, who hardly know what I'm talking about, who shows us the new road-' He broke off.

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, 1969

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demption? Agamben's sole interest in "messianic time" reflects his engagement with the language philosopher Gustave Guillaume's notion of "operational time," the immediate experience of time and therefore "the only real time" before we mentally construct an image of time. He therefore ends translating Paul's Letter to the Romans in his book's appendix exactly where Paul shifts to apocalyptic time by promising that "salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand". (Romans 13:11-12)

But can apocalyptic time, despite being neatly positioned as a point on the chronological timeline in our mental image of time, truly be separated from the immediate experience of time, which includes remembering as a creative mental action in the present rather than a mere reproduction of the past? In other words, should we not also look at apocalyptic time, at eschatology, in a similar way that Agamben looks at messianic time, namely in terms of immediacy as well as engagement with the past, rather than with the future that has no experiential presence in our minds?

The best of random examples to explore this question is to look at apocalyptic time in the seventeenth-century messianic movement of the Turkish Jew Sabbatai Zevi, who easily competes with Paul's savior as Jewish history's most successful Messiah, and who notoriously ended up converting to Islam while imprisoned by the Turkish sultan. While Sabbatai Zevi's erratic behavior, upsetting social norms, and transgressive ritual behavior (and later, let's not forget, his apostasy) very much fit Agamben's characterization of messianic time as one of annulment, no less central to his movement were its heightened eschatological expectations of collective redemption. When Sabbatai Zevi declared himself Messiah in 1665, the reports of the ascent of the Messiah, fueled by propaganda from his followers, joined earlier rumors about the conquest of remote Muslim and Christian cities by Jewish armies and eschatological interpretations of comet sightings. A central document of the movement is a letter written by the prophet who convinced Sabbatai to declare himself Messiah, Nathan of Gaza, and which was read to Jewish

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עוד לא אבדה תקותנו,
התקווה בת שנות אלפים,
להיות עם תפשי בארצנו,
ארץ ציון וירושלים.

Hatikva (Hope), Israel's national anthem

*This is all wrong.
I shouldn't be up here.
I should be back in school
on the other side of the
ocean. Yet you all come to
us young people for hope.
How dare you!*

Greta Thunberg, speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, 23 September 2019

No, there is something wrong with our optimism. There are those odd optimists among us who, having made a lot of optimistic speeches, go home and turn on the gas or make use of a skyscraper in quite an unexpected way.

Hannah Arendt, *We Refugees*, 1943

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“Looking back”, Vera Frenkel explains, “I see that this work – rooted in an interrogation of the abuses of power and its impact – formed the basis for the subsequent work on the forms of identity shifts and fear-induced collusion that characterize the immigrant experience, concerns that are, of course, central to a feminist practice. *The Messiah* tapes and installation made during a residency ... included images of a newly opened shopping mall ... In the main Atrium, I saw the Salvation Army band playing next to a World War I fighter airplane that people lined up to tour. The convergence of war, religion, and profiteering, and deliberately programmed delusion was the way they were leeching the energies of a previously thriving inner city.” Echoes of Nachmanides, modernized?

While thus exploring the vagaries and delusions of hope, I turned art historian and iconologist. How has European mythology and art figured hope? In Greek antiquity, *Elpis* (ἔλπις), *Hope* is personified as a young woman with flowers, carrying a cornucopia. (Vera Frenkel was right: hope promises everything you could desire.) Youth and perishable nature build a chain of associations to the feminine and futurity while we also slide down associative ladders to time, decay, age and death. Is hope human, therefore deluded defiance before mortality?

In another Greek myth, Pandora [Πανδώρα], the first human woman, was created by the gods who endowed her with all their gifts. These they placed in a box she must never open for “all gifts” meant “all the ills that could afflict the world”. Feminine curiosity – or, as feminists have argued, a longing for knowledge – won out.³ Once opened, Pandora’s box released all its evils on the world save *Elpis/Hope* which she managed to trap inside before it, too, escaped. Why did the Greek mythmakers imagine hope as an affliction which had to remain hidden inside the feminized box? Was hope saved for the future or was it imprisoned so that the world is saved from hope’s toxicity? Does hope inspire us to act for change, or is it an intoxicating delusion that distracts us from attending to and working for our burdened present with fantasies of the future?

Hope is paradoxical. It is neither passive waiting nor is it unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur. It is like the crouched tiger, which will jump only when the moment for jumping has come. Neither tired reformism nor pseudo-radical adventurism is an expression of hope. To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is no birth in our lifetime. There is no sense in hoping for that which already exists or for that which cannot be. Those whose hope is weak settle down for comfort or for violence; those whose hope is strong see and cherish all signs of new life and are ready every moment to help the birth of that which is ready to be born.

Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope. Toward a Humanized Technology*, 1968

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; and though he tarry, I will wait daily for his coming.

Maimonides (1135–1138),
Principle 12 of the
13 Principles of Faith

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communities throughout the entire Jewish world. In the letter, Nathan of Gaza laid out a detailed scenario of imminent events: “A year and some months from now, [Sabbatai Zevi] will take dominion from the Turkish sultan without any warfare. Through the hymns and praises he will utter all the nations will be brought in submission. All the kings will become his tributaries, the Turkish sultan alone will be his personal slave. There will be no bloodshed among the Christians, other than in the German lands.” After this period, which will last four or five years, Sabbatai travels across the legendary river the Sambatyon. Consequently, the sultan rebels against him, and the Messiah returns again, accompanied by a new bride and seated on a mythical beast sufficiently terrifying that “all the nations and rulers will certainly throw themselves to the ground before him”.

This is followed by the ingathering of the Jewish diaspora, the descent of the Temple from heavens, and the resurrection of the dead. The End.

Although Nathan’s letter has some of the annulling elements that, like Sabbatai’s messianic acts, exemplify Agamben’s notion of messianic time (Nathan claims for instance that Sabbatai can justify sinners and condemn the pious), it would make little sense to argue that these constitute the core of Sabbatian messianism while the future predictions, which make up the bulk of Nathan’s message, are irrelevant. Rather, it is interesting to ask to which extent this future time, which after all is hoped for in the present,

is truly invested in the future? To be more precise, while Agamben’s messianic time gazes at the past and operates to complete it in the present, what is the energy that motors the Sabbatian and other fantasies of future collective redemption? Much ink has flowed to explain the perseverance to believe after failed prophecy, often by sorting various strategies of denial. But what if the drive of the belief in apocalyptic time is not hope in the future, but the opposite, namely failure and pain of the past?

While hopes can be shattered, the memory of past infliction remains, and this seems to be exactly what is

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In a symbolist-classicist painting by the British nineteenth-century artist George Frederic Watts (1817–1904) titled *Hope* (1886), a slight, young female figure wrapped in ethereally blue and clinging drapery sits dejectedly on a golden globe half submerged in the “sea of hope”. (Might we drown in hope?) With bandaged eyes, she holds a broken lyre, tenderly strumming its sole surviving string. Watts explained: “*Hope* need not mean expectancy. It suggests here the music which can come from the remaining chord,” adding, “she is trying to get all the music possible, listening with all her might to the little sound.” Is hope then music to our ears in a world of blinded delusion? Watts paired *Hope* with his dark vision of Mammon, unexpectedly anticipating Vera Frenkel’s observation of the collision of money, consumption, religion and war.

I also turned to etymology. The Hebrew for hope is תִּקְוָה (*Tikvah*) whose roots give us a curious collection of ideas: to trust in, wait for, look for, or desire something or someone; or to expect something beneficial in the future; also to wait patiently and endure expectantly.

“O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord there is mercy/ And with Him is abundant redemption.” (Psalm 130:7). In the Greek of the Christian New Testament we find the verb hope, *elpizo* (ἐλπίζω), defined as to anticipate, usually with pleasure. In noun form, *elpizo* (ἔλπιζω) means, “favorable and confident expectation, a forward look with assurance” but also the unseen: “For we were saved in this hope, but *hope that is seen is not hope*; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.” (Romans 8:24–25) Beyond and invisible, hope postpones the present and diverts us from the now.

So now, I must consider my present. The now of writing, 2020, is a world convulsed, transformed, deranged, suffering and bereaved by the unseen that was unexpected. No one hoped for a virus that has changed our sense of expectancy and threatened all sociality since no one can foresee our futures while this creeping infection still moves invisibly on our breath and through our touch. Singing is the second most potent

Alice sighed wearily, ‘I think you might do something better with the time,’ she said, ‘than waste it asking riddles with no answers.’ ‘If you knew Time as well as I do,’ said the Hatter, ‘you wouldn’t talk about wasting it. It’s Him.’ ‘I don’t know what you mean,’ said Alice. ‘Of course you don’t!’ the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously, ‘I dare say you never even spoke to Time!’

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865

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going on with apocalyptic time. The promises of future victory and revenge in apocalyptic time are nothing more than reverse mirrors of the memories of past injustice, defeat, and catastrophe. As historians and scholars of religion have already noted, some of the religious hopes that are called revolutionary or utopian are oriented backwards rather than forwards. They are hopes of renovation and restoration of old customs and privileges. The Jewish eschatological tradition in which Nathan made his prophecies is an example, with its hope for a return to the golden age of the biblical Jewish kingdoms in which the Jews dominated their land’s Gentile inhabitants rather than the other way around. As Nathan wrote, Jews will “enjoy high status in their present localities” while their King, instead of being subject to Gentile rulers, will rule over them.

Nathan’s prophecy contains also a personal kind of restoration. He regarded himself as the Messiah’s main prophet and, as scholars suspect, cherished erotic feelings towards the chubby rose-scented redeemer. He however had to vie for the Messiah’s attention with Sabbatai’s charismatic wife Sarah, so his prophecy that Sarah would be replaced by another makes one suspect that Sabbatai’s future bride is a projection of the prophet himself.

Nathan’s letter shows that also deeper wounds than the loss of personal or collective status nurture the messianic hopes and makes them survive prophetic failure. While the messianic upheaval predicted

by Nathan is mostly bloodless, mirroring the inferior but protected social status of most of the Jewish world, the fate of the Christians from the German lands is violent. In a later version of the letter, as historian Ada Rapoport-Albert has pointed out, Nathan identified these Christians as those who had perpetrated the massacre of entire Ashkenazi Jewish communities during and following the Ukrainian Khmelnytsky uprising in 1648. A number of Jewish thinkers saw these horrific events, chronicled by Jewish writers such as Nathan of Hannover, as birth pangs of the Messiah, and we know that also Sabbatai was aware of this claim (he, in fact, had also declared himself Messiah in 1648, but failed to generate a movement).

Surrealism, tightrope of our hope.

Suzanne Césaire
1943: *Surrealism and Us*, 1943



T.J., *The world turn'd upside down: or, A brief description of the ridiculous fashions of these distracted times*, 1646/47

There can be no preparation for the Messiah. He comes suddenly, unannounced, and precisely when he is least expected or when hope has long been abandoned.

Gershom Scholem, *Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 1960

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mode for spreading the deadly disease! Unseen, hope is not a tiny sound but is now silenced.

Years hence, or even as I write, sociologists, philosophers, ethnographers, economists, writers and artists will study this historic episode that united the world in anxiety. What new ways of living will be forced upon us by our universal fear of being infected, infecting others and dying? What will it do to our sense of who we are together and what does life mean if we are kept apart? How will the evil unleashed by Sars-CoV-2 compare to the historical and political ills of our traumatically antimessianic history of colonialism, enslavement, industrial capitalism, genocidal totalitarianism, recurrent fascisms, institutional racisms and systemic violence against women, queer and trans people? When Hannah Arendt wrote in 1963: "Evil is not radical but banal. It has neither demonic dimensions nor depth ... it can overgrow and lay waste the whole world because it spreads like a fungus on the surface", did we imagine her contested political fungal metaphor could become a radical and deadly viral reality that would force us to isolate and distance and wonder how any of the gatherings that nourish us would come back into fearless lives? ⁴ My epigraph is from my essay on Yael Bartana's earlier work. It suggests that I still have hope. Have I put my faith in art, if not to deliver the future but to sustain, via fiction and dream, a rejection of the present by rewriting the past we have inherited? The verso of this deluding optimism is not

pessimism. It is activating rage at the state of our present, the only time we really know and live. I shuttle between the intoxicating compulsion to seek change (feminism) and the despairing desolation of our powerlessness before the changes in life-worlds that occur with terrifying speed and suddenness that, for the most part, we did not anticipate and do not desire. It is not that things are just getting worse, while some imaginary golden age recedes and the future remains shapeless as nothing but more of these unwelcome presents. It is the shocking novelty of "ills" released from the boxes of power and capital that we are called upon to digest in the wake of the traumatic horrors of the war-torn, genocidal nuclear twentieth century we have slowly come to know too well. Some of the so-called natural disasters are, in fact, our doing. Who, after all, are most fragile in the face of climate change-caused floods, tsunamis, typhoons, tornadoes, and even earthquakes, if not also those our societies render the poorest, most oppressed, and the most powerless? The pandemic that began in 2019 defies human reason. A protein and its sustaining blob of surrounding fat moves relentlessly through our breathing and touching; with rapidity and ferocity it cuts down our bodies, specifically those made fragile by not only generic politico-economic inequality but also age, immune deficiency, local variations in genetic coding, lack of healthcare, fullness of body and even over-responsive youthful immune systems.

Invited to reflect on hope, in the Talmudic tradition of storytelling and wordplay, I was overrun by its numerous antonyms: despair, desperation, delusion, false friends, nostalgia, optimism, pessimism, amnesia, blind faith, betrayal, depression, and possible allies - defiance, redemption, and compassion. The messianic vision already fixes our imaginations in a temporal logic of a perfect before and a perfect to come between which intervenes the imperfect and at times radically disastrous present that can only be escaped by imagining not a perfected world but a heaven elsewhere. Psychoanalytically, I read this as symptomatic of the structural condition of human life which idealizes once-thoughtless infancy while above all fearing knowledge of mortality and death. We then dream

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The distinction Nathan makes between these Christians and other Gentiles shows how deeply apocalyptic time, like messianic time, is embedded in collective memory, with the difference perhaps that while messianic time completes it, apocalyptic time is an upside-down recurrence of the past. The horrific pain that the massacres had caused among Europe's Ashkenazi Jewish communities, many of whom had absorbed refugees, could only return in the form of shedding the blood of those responsible for them. The deep wound also provided the energy to overcome messianic failure: When Sabbatai Zevi converted to Islam and the great majority of Sephardic Jews abandoned the movement, the movement lived on among Ashkenazi Jews for almost a century and a half. Prophecy had failed, but not the cause that makes prophesy: the End, in fact, is an inversion of the past, thought in the present.

Quotations from Agamben are from: Agamben, Giorgio. *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Translated by Patricia Daley. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Quotations from Nathan of Gaza's letter are from: Pawel Maciejko, ed. *Sabbatian Heresy: Writings on Mysticism, Messianism, and the Origins of Jewish Modernity*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017.

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George Frederic Watts and assistants, *Hope*, 1897

Tell 'em about the dream, Martin!

Mahalia Jackson to Martin Luther King during his speech at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C., 28 August 1963



Claude Cahun (Lucy Schwob) and Marcel Moore (Suzanne Malherbe), *Untitled (The Mystery of Adam)*, 1929

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our futures. We become "mad for bliss". Sometimes we plan for another future for humanity. It is called politics. Does this deep entrapment in time and fear of time engender, however, the affect we call hope, that is, nonetheless, doomed by the tyranny of bio-time - death - to be lived as its opposite, if not despair, but disappointment?

They say that feminism has passed. In US-American English this is a coded word for: is dead. I want to intervene and to remain faithful to its anger. Action is, in Hannah Arendt's terms, the core of the political, which is, in turn, the core of "the human condition". Hannah Arendt completed her massive historical and political analysis of Totalitarianism and Imperialism in 1951, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* - a title that purposely associated itself with Walter Benjamin's *The Origins of Tragic Drama* (1925) - in which she identified the specific process of dehumanization at the core of the totalitarian experiment, which had erased singularity and eviscerated the capacity of its victims to act. Her subsequent text, *The Human Condition* is the counter-text to her dismal study. She produced a definition of the human condition we must rebuild and defend based on three elements: *natality* (each of us is a unique beginning for all humanity), *spontaneity* (this gives us the possibility of initiating action) and *plurality* (the inevitable result of the other two so that we are a world who speak and act and recognize each other).⁵ Action marks my participating in a world composed of *our actions with others*, our speech and mutual hearing, our intention towards each other in plurality. Action is not driven by hope; nor is it a defence against hopelessness. It is responsibility, accepting time, sharing space, making a future for others to come in the present. Feminism is not a past that has been lost or even, for some, *become* partially realized, or for others too cosily accommodated to consumer capitalism and thus grossly distorted. An endless virtuality, it is what it will become through creative fidelity to it as an "event", through poiesis: remaking. This introduces unpredictability and uncertainty but also the possibility of the unforeseen, what we do not yet know and hence cannot hope for. Arendt built her sense of the endless future on the fact of human *natality*. Every birth is not a messianic hope, but a concrete promise of the new for all humanity because it creates the possibility to act with spontaneity and to invent. The human condition is to differ unpredictably from the past because natality promises plurality, which is not mere diversity.

What does this have to do with hope and what might be cast as a feminist messianism? I see art offering solace in the face of a realistic assessment of what we were all naming, in honour of Hannah Arendt again, "dark times" that have become "strange times". Am I proposing solace instead of hope? Borrowing (as was inevitable however much I tried to resist) from Walter Benjamin's final legacy to the world on the eve of the fascist cataclysm he did not survive, I read: "To articulate the past historically ... means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger." He also remarks: "The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of Antichrist. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the *spark of hope in the past* who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious."⁶ So reviewing the past, studying, even rewriting history *differently*, and from the vantage point of the present even in critical despair, might allow us to glimpse the *spark of hope in the past* - hope that the past proposed and hope that the past may contain something to ignite hope - is our defence against the enemies we constantly confront. I came of age in a moment of immense and deluded hope that we, my generation of circa 1968 could make the world better. Feminism, decolonization, anti-racism, celebration of diverse sexualities and desires, western socialism were positive movements denouncing hideous forms of dehumanizing injustice and inequality. Dissatisfied with mobilizing rhetoric and youthful energy, we became scholars and artists, thinkers and creators and our research uncovered the depth, longevity and entangled potency of the very evils we were combatting. Paradoxically, our commitment to thoughtfulness - call it theory - delineated the brutal cruelty of colonialism and its persistence offspring neocolonialism, ever-morphing capitalism, resilient patriarchy, proliferating racism, stubborn heterocracy in crystalline clarity. Yet we gloried, as artists and thinkers, in our historic entry into the city of thought and art - please hear ironically my reference to the Christianocentric image of the Messiah's entry into the capital city, the city of power, capital as power. I am also remembering the dream of medieval European feminist Christine de Pisan who brilliantly imagined building a city of women, *La Cité des dames* (1405) where each brick of the structure was the name and memory of a famous woman. I then recall Caribbean-American lesbian poet Audre Lorde who famously warned us, artists, and thinkers seeking entry to the city, that it was also the master's house, the house of the slave master and his racism, on whose viciously extracted wealth capitalism built our world. If *Hope* rides into town today, we should, as Vera Frenkel warned, be wary and listen carefully to whom she is speaking, what she is promising, and above all remember where she has been and what she always failed to deliver. Then we will dream of being together to act.

1 Hyam Maccoby, *The Disputation*, London: Calder, 2001.

2 See Sigrid Schade (ed.), *Vera Frenkel*, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013.

3 Laura Mulvey offered a feminist reading of Pandora as a counter-image feminine desire for knowledge and self-knowledge. "Pandora's Box: Topographies of Curiosity", *Fetishism and Curiosity*, London: BFI, 1996, 54-64.

4 Hannah Arendt, "Letter to Gershom [Gerhard] Scholem", 24 July 1963, in: Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, edited by Jerone Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, New York: Schocken Books, 2007, 471.

5 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

6 Walter Benjamin, "Thesis VI" from "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in: *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt and translated by Harry Zohn [1968], London: Fontana, 1977, 255-267: 257.



Claude-Louis Masquelier (After Jean-Baptiste Wicar) *Pandora* (probably Eriphyle), 1802

[...] under the cover of our 'optimism' you can easily detect the hopeless sadness of assimilationists.

Hannah Arendt, *We Refugees*, 1943

How does one hate a country, or love one? Tibe talks about it; I lack the trick of it. I know people, I know towns, farms, hills and rivers and rocks, I know how the sun at sunset in autumn falls on the side of a certain plowland in the hills; but what is the sense of giving a boundary to all that, of giving it a name and ceasing to love where the name ceases to apply? What is love of one's country; is it hate of one's uncountr? Then it's not a good thing. Is it simply self-love? That's a good thing, but one mustn't make a virtue of it, or a profession ... Insofar as I love life, I love the hills of the Domain of Estre, but that sort of love does not have a boundary-line of hate. And beyond that, I am ignorant, I hope.

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, 1969

