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WHEN THE FUTURE WAS INFINITELY OPEN: ON ABSENCE AND PRESENCE OF NOSTALGIA IN HANNAH BLACK'S *TUESDAY OR SEPTEMBER OR THE END*

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ABSTRACT:

This article engages with the question of nostalgia through analyzing Hannah Black's speculative novella *Tuesday or September or The End* (2021). In her book, Black describes how subjects living amid temporal stagnation and crises of future-making seek relief through participation in an uprising that aims to bring down a neoliberal government and turn the city of New York into a commune. Thinking with Mark Fisher's (2012) work on hauntology and Bernard Stiegler's (1998 [1996]) writing on protentional temporalities, I set out to develop ways to attend to Black's interest to underpin specific forms of nostalgia, or the lack thereof, that intensify projections into the imminent future. I show how Black operationalizes her own nostalgic attitude towards an unsuccessful revolt to construct a working model of future-hauntology and shift away from the looping nostalgia for cultural and social forms of the past that impede future-making.

KEYWORDS: Nostalgia; Future-hauntology; Temporality of Déjà Vu; Protentions; Utopia

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1. Introduction

> "Nostalgia for the context in which the old types of praxis operated is plainly useless"
> – M. Fisher (2009, 26)

> "But then there is this other rain tilting in to soak vast acres of eurodollars and we call this west melancholy. West melancholy is related to but not the same as the misanthropocene"
> – J. Clover and J. Spahr (2014, 4)

This article sets out to critically approach the omnipresence of nostalgia that proliferates contemporary Western culture and is prompted by a curiosity to reflect on the instances when nostalgia is made absent or is deliberately denied. It takes as its object of analysis Hannah Black's speculative novella *Tuesday or September or The End* (2021), one of the examples of contemporary cultural production that, while being a form of nostalgic reflection itself, relentlessly rejects nostalgia as an operative model of sense-making and denies falling into unresolvable and nostalgic melancholic grief. Mark Fisher (2009) – who viewed nostalgia as a pernicious modus operandi of neoliberal society – assumed that a number of new impulses might come from the generation of those born into limitless capitalism and already-established cyberspace, thus free of the harmful paralyzing forms of nostalgic attachment based on the hope for a return of the liberating era of the 1960s he ascribed to his own generation.

I argue that the sparks of those new impulses Fisher hoped to witness can be traced in Black's short novella. *Tuesday or September or the End* was written in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the *Black Lives Matter* riots that took place in the USA in 2020. When the riots did not yield drastic change, Black started wondering if history could have unwrapped otherwise. The novel's plot unfolds throughout the year 2020, which brings a number of unprecedented events, partly real, such as the global pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests, and partly fictional, such as aliens landing on Long Island and interfering with American politics. Following Fisher's strain and without negotiating for the remaining possibly positive effects of nostalgic cultural roaming, I analyze Black's recent novella as an indication of the possibility to sideline the unproductive nostalgia in

favor of a speculative investigation of future-oriented thinking that maintains a bond to the past as a crucial source of what Stiegler (1998 [1996]) described as *protentions* or expectations of a future.

2. Thickening of time

Black's fast-paced narrative develops around the relationship between two Black protagonists, Bird and Dog, both based in New York. While Bird, a left-wing communist, does not believe that life could be rendered better through official politics, Dog, a social democrat, actively volunteers for the presidential campaign of Moley Salamanders (based on Bernie Sanders), and knocks on strangers' doors trying to convince them to vote. Political aspirations aside, the couple doesn't agree on their attitude regarding a sudden alien visitation spotted near the city in early January 2020 either. While Bird tries to avoid speculations on the topic, Dog believes that the alien visit is real and bears significant consequences. In March, Dog, who suddenly decides to end his relationship with Bird, is trapped by the pandemic at the house of an ex-actress, Fossa, who spends her days obsessively re-watching *Ancient Aliens*, a film in which she acted some decades ago. Dog's political ambitions are buried as a result of his candidate's campaign's fiasco. The experience of supporting Salamander now feels as if "he had spent months campaigning to have air conditioning installed in hell" (Black 2021, 91).

Meanwhile, Bird is confined to London, where she goes in hope of unwinding after the outbreak, as the borders are shut down to prevent the spread of the virus. During a visit to an elderly person from the London Black community, Bird speaks to an alien mind that wanders through human bodies and collects knowledge about people's social organization. Although aliens learn fast, some human concepts, such as the idea of prison, remain inaccessible to them and make their "collective mind suffer" (Black 2021, 109). The concept of riot, on the contrary, is perceived by them as "deeply healing" (Black 2021, 109). In June, the murder of George Floyd by the police sparks massive and relentless protests. Even though authorities try to cut them down, the aliens, who by now had made a base on Cuba, endorse the riots; their support and the force of communal organization lead to the abolition of old laws, and the New York Commune where all groups and classes of society can live

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and thrive together is established in September 2020. As once the Bastille[1], the Rikers prison is taken over and liberated. Bird and Dog, both back in the city, "half-obliterated by plague and rescued by riot" (Black 2021, 161), accidentally reunite in Manhattan.

The central ingredient of Black's novella, though, is an obsessive and careful depiction of the feeling of the passage of time that runs throughout all the twists and turns of the narrative. Throughout the text, the changing rhythm of time marks a shift from a future saturated with paralysis and nostalgia to a future that is "infinitely open" (Black 2021, 121). At the beginning of the book, still in the pre-pandemic world, time is depicted by Black as a thick, immobile and unshiftable mass that impedes any sense of flow, movement, or direction and leaves the subject extremely unfocused. Frederic Jameson (1991) defined such inability to make sense of direction as a breakdown of temporality that "suddenly releases this present of time from all the activities and intentionality that might focus it and make it a space of praxis; thereby isolated, that present suddenly engulfs its subject with indescribable vividness" (27). In the beginning of *Tuesday or September or the End*, time drags towards an unidentifiable aim, accompanying the sensation of closure – "an atmosphere of saturated, narrative repetition" (Black 2021, 11) of the present. Black (2021) writes:

> A lot of things could have happened, a lot of forms of social organization, but at this point in history, January 2020, the world of dwindling animals, the wage and its dread exterior had achieved insane predominance as an organizing principle. Human life at that point was like a fucked-up car. Some people who understood how it worked could drive it a certain distance, but it would eventually have to be taken to the scrapyard and recycled into something more bearable. (14)

The arrival of the pandemic only accentuates what was already present, decelerating the passage of individual time and installing the regime of frozen time. Paradoxically, the plague – quite extraordinary in itself – obliterates the last hopes that anything out of the ordinary could happen. Quite lucidly, Black maps a discrepancy of temporalities at stake: the individual time, which comes with the embedded impossibility to make desirable changes in its pace, and the global time accelerated by technology, capital, and disasters that are perceived as alienating, oppressive, fleeting, and impenetrable – the crystal-clear statement of a regime

[1] Hannah Black made a series of installations dedicated to the storming of the Bastille that were shown at Manifesta 13 in Marseille in 2020.

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governed by what Bird defines as the "mind of capital" (Black 2021, 106). In contrast to the fast-paced time of global capitalism, the individual time of its subjects appears frozen due to the impossibility of reaching any congruence between the world's pace and the pace of the self. Acceleration of individual time can only happen within clearly drawn confines of capitalist profit in order to make an individual into a more productive and therefore more desirable element of the capitalist system. Such acceleration only aggravates the atrophy of political will. As Paul Virilio (2002) suggests, "[p]olitics depends upon having time for reflection. Today, we no longer have time to reflect, the things that we see have already happened. And it is necessary to react immediately" (43).

In the era of "dead" time, frustration and disillusion are part and parcel of any endeavor, whether public or personal. The "dead" time, I argue, can be understood through Paolo Virno's (2015 [1999]) concept of *déjà vu*. In late capitalism, as Virno suggests, we find ourselves frozen in the present moment while watching our lives happen from the perspective of a spectator. It seems, he elucidates, that we don't believe in our agency to shape our future anymore: the future appears to be prescribed in advance, making any action useless. Virno implies that what we are left with is a state of pure observation of a spectacle that is unwrapping in front of our eyes; it's a spectacle in which we, by default, play one of the central roles but also are constrained to watch it happening to us without being able to actively act upon it. The state of the *déjà vu*, therefore, determines the apathy, fatalism, and indifference to a future that is known-in-advance and unalterable.

Such liminality surfaces throughout the novel. It seems that in *Tuesday or September or The End,* Black is remarkably disinterested in tackling the issues of the past and actively avoids employing nostalgia as her coping strategy. This, however, does not mean that the process of looking back into history is not important for the author per se. On the contrary, the shadow of the past undeniably shapes the present – as if punctuating that the present has already failed to deliver a hospitable world where the individual and the collective co-exist in balance and nourish each other. In the novel, Black's take on nostalgia, as well as the feeling of a prevailing inextricable stagnation become clear in a scene where a peripheral character of the novel, Fossa, wallowing in self-pity and bemoaning her bygone youth, spends days re-watching the only film of her unsuccessful acting career. Fossa's nostalgia is exclusively past-oriented and leaves no chance for a future

change. In the lives of Black's protagonists, the freeze of time is directly linked with the capitalism-conditioned inexistence of the horizon of the future, depriving people from collectively projecting their desires. That horizon is taken hostage by forces that are motivated to accelerate production and profit and tolerate the possibility of a global catastrophe conditioned by that growth.

The temporal perception of Bird and Dog, however, undergoes a fundamental change as the riots spark and inflame the capacity to dream: the future bursts open and time runs smoothly at a pace congruent with human capacities. The personal circumstances of Bird's life – in unison with the collective resurgence – take up a new turn upon the arrival of the revolution and the liberation it brings to the world "fertilized by the new abundance of time" (Black 2021, 131):

> The riots made the world new, and sadness is always old, so in that brand new summer, in the liquid return of feeling, Bird forgot to dwell on her losses. The losses themselves were healed by the novelty of being with others, and not only that, but seeing police cars burn and not only that. Her soul rushed toward the riot. She had no opinion about her fate. The wheel of fortune spun wildly; the future was infinitely open. (Black 2021, 121)

What is accentuated in Black's text is the interconnection between an open future, thickening individual time that can finally be grasped, and a fertile sociality; they are placed on the same axes where one pulls in the other. An active social field and the feeling of communal belonging make labor meaningful. The feeling of the purposefulness of daily actions, in return, makes human time run quicker, hence the thickening of it into a state in which each minute is meaningful or, as Black writes, shines "like the ocean at the surface" (Black 2021, 130) and hope for the future is reborn. Such alignment is stipulated by the confluence of individual and collective times, which for a moment are not shattered by the imposed temporal order of the state system of late capitalism. In the book, this moment, even with the help of an alien mind, is kept and perpetuated through an idealistic image of New York City, which turns into a self-governed commune as the result of the riots.

However, through interviews with real witnesses of the *BLM* riots presented at Black's exhibition *The Meaning of Life* (2022) that continued some of the book's threads[2], the artist acknowledges the current impossibility of making this moment

[2] In 2022, Hannah Black presented an exhibition *The Meaning of Life*, developing some threads from the book in a visual form. The exhibition was centered around the video-recorded accounts of people present in the moment of lootings that took place in SoHo, New York, during the riots in the wake

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last: "the meaning of life" is to be experienced only for a brief instant and is destined to quickly fade into a memory devoid of the ecstasy of real-time witnessing. On the one hand, Black's attempt speaks of a desire to prolong this moment, for she is perpetuating it through a video recording as if trying to spark it anew. On the other hand, it speaks of the necessity to document an instant moment as an account of a revolution that almost managed to succeed and to archive a glimpse into the future, proving that once it might become visible again. By setting up an exhibition that is premised on her speculative book, Black turns her artistic practice into a space of collision between the documented and the fantasized, thus stretching the realm of the possible and insisting that it is in that interim, a sum of actions and intentions, that a nerve of reality can possibly be struck.

3. Future-hauntology against the grain of nostalgia

Aliens in Black's book function as spectra of the future or its proxies. In a way, what Black is trying to construct, I argue, can be analyzed as a working model of future-hauntology. The term "hauntology", which was coined by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* (1993), describes the ghost-like tendencies of accumulating features of the past as we move towards the future. Mark Fisher (2012) uses the term to tackle an obsession with nostalgic repetitions that can be traced in popular culture, whose new productions are often duplicates of what had been created some decades ago. Moving beyond Derrida, Fisher suggests that hauntological tendencies are to be traced in a broader context of post-liberal culture centered around looping trends. Contemporary culture, in Fisher's view, mourns the absence of new energy, which cannot radiate in the absence of a working image of the future. Contemporary cultural production is, therefore, incapable of escaping the cycle even when it comes under the guise of freshness:

> This anxious insistence on the paraphernalia of the contemporary obfuscates the fact that the formal features of what we are seeing and hearing are familiar to the point of being exhausted. Relentless technological upgrades – the same thing, seen and/or heard on a new platform – disguise the disappearance of formal innovation and new kinds of sensory experience. (Fisher 2012, 18)

of George Floyd's murder by the police. The interviews highlighted the revolutionary spirit of the rioters and the communal feelings arising among them.

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The haunting object, subject, or concept is not materially present; however, by casting a long shadow, it manipulates the present not only on the plane of ideas but also on the material level.

For Fisher, hauntology is bidirectional: it operates both in the realm of the past as well as in the future. On the one hand, the term can be applied to the past, to what ceased to exist in reality but still shapes us virtually – "the traumatic 'compulsion to repeat,' a structure that repeats, a fatal pattern" (Fisher 2012, 19). On the other hand, hauntology can be connected to the future, to something that does not yet exist but is expected or anticipated and thus is authoritative in the present, having repercussions on current behavior. In Fisher's reading, the *déjà vu* situation is characterized by being irreversibly squeezed between both an overabundant haunting past and a haunting future which is being calculated on our behalf by "dataficating" machines and getting implemented as we go. In his analysis of the hauntological mode of contemporary cultural production, Fisher (2012) notes that what seems to be mourned is "less the failure of the future to transpire – the future as actuality – than the disappearance of this effective virtuality" (16). In fact, nowadays, it would be wrong to say that the future as actuality is deficient, as it is quite concretely present in the multiple models constructed and calculated by the machines fed with infinite data. Rather, it is this calculated concreteness alienated from the everydayness of ordinary people that makes the horizon of the future inaccessible, hence feeding into the disappearance of its "effective virtuality" and producing recursive nostalgia. In addition, the ongoing ecological catastrophe, military conflicts, and the new rise of autocratic governments only aggravate our current prospects, thus informing a picture of the future which is so dreary that the common circuit of fear and reluctance associated with it are hardly surprising. As Fisher (2009) remarks, "in these conditions of ontological precarity, forgetting becomes an adaptive strategy" (56). With the very same reality at her disposal, Black tries to intervene in the very nature and quality of the haunting future. If the future is always hauntological because its image, by definition, exerts its influence on the present, the problem lies in the inability to inform this image. Then, simply put, her effort is directed at appropriating the future's hauntological force – in Fisher's words, again, its "effective virtuality" – for her own purpose. A radical transformation of the city of New York into a commune, as well as Black's attentive description of the feelings of joy, comradeship, and meaningfulness that spread

among the protestors, aims at building up a strong image as a future that haunts from afar.

The temporality in which Black's characters live in the first part of the book stands for the condition of hauntological stasis where time, as well as space, is stretched and fixed – the condition that is only enhanced by the "dead time" of the arriving pandemic. As Fisher (2012) notes, hauntology can "be seen as intrinsically resistant to the contraction and homogenization of time and space. It happens when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time" (19). In the book, such sites are the ordinary spaces of everyday life, for instance, the flat of Fossa, where she and Dog spend their days glued to the repetitive images on the TV screen.

In *The Metaphysics of Crackle*, Fisher (2013) points out that the hauntological condition can be compared to the absence of temporal self-positioning Black people were subjected to for centuries: "We might say that postmodernity and hauntology confront 'white' culture with the kind of temporal disjunction that has been constitutive of the Afrodiasporic experience since Africans were first abducted by slavers and projected from their own lifeworlds into the abstract space-time of Capital" (Fisher 2013, 46). The hauntological stasis, therefore, is experienced by many[3] as yet another level of temporal breakage that aggravates the already present and chronic conformity to what Fabian (2014), in the context of time and colonization, calls "the oppressive uses of time" (28). In Black's narrative, the temporality of the crisis has been so persistent that its source has long vanished from sight. The Blackness of the main characters of the novel emphasizes the condition of a permanent crisis that, has for a very long time been part and parcel of Black populations' lives, accentuated by pandemics, economic insecurity, and wars, which covered the whole planet: "Living in a steady state of crisis is now a globally familiar dread, and yet a doubled doom for folks who have managed to exist – even thrived – under the crisis of Blackness for lifetimes. To persist in an ongoing state of crisis is to be made vulnerable by time's indefatigability" (Ibrahim and Ahad 2022, 3). A crisis that persists through time makes one forget that a feeling of liminality should be out of the ordinary, a crisis that becomes our

[3] Although the blackness of Black's protagonists accentuates the degree of the temporal crisis they face, it does not separate them from other groups that find themselves involved in the same hauntological perpetuation; in fact, in the novel, the commune that takes over in the liberated city is everyone's shared dream that comes true.

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everydayness domesticates drudgery, sickness, disorders, depression, and abandonment of hope. Linking the condition of a perpetuated crisis to a specific perception of time, Ibrahim and Ahad (2022) note that

> [...] while a crisis is generally considered a moment that necessitates urgent action, the constancy of crisis manifests in the experience of an enduring, unending, and unfinished past. [...] The traumatic suggests that devastation has already happened, that it exists in the past tense. Yet, the prolonged state of crisis creates a sense of liminality that is neither past nor present; instead, the time of crisis feels more like flight rather than arrival" (2).

The life of Black's characters appears to be made of monotonous patches of daily routines that feed into the absence of curiosity for the world to the degree that even an alien visitation seems to be just yet another unexciting fact – no one in the novel seems to marvel at their appearance. When aliens start communicating with Bird through another person's body, she doesn't seem to be surprised. In other words, even extraterrestrials seem incapable of getting the frozen time into the swing. Although the novel speaks of the year 2020, hence already in the past, the introduction of an alien element adds to it a futuristic dimension. Perhaps due to a significant role that aliens played in science-fiction literature of the twentieth century that simultaneously embraced extraterrestrials as an object of fear and worship (Rieder 1982), the image of aliens is naturally perceived as a symbol of the future. A future as a "not yet" houses a multitude of outcomes and is more likely to gain weight in the present in comparison to the tales about the past that come across as self-contained.

Moving away from an unproductive nostalgia, Black consciously negates the act of grieving: as the riots grow, Bird decides to "forget to dwell on her losses" (Black 2021, 121) and directs her energies to the support of the revolution. This way, Black lays the groundwork for the "opening" of the future and convincingly describes the experience of a seemingly unproductive moment of revolt that did not manage to shift hierarchies. Even though Black's practice as a visual artist can be analyzed as being prompted by the desire to process recent events and bemoan the unrealized promises of the past, in the novel's case, grief is a stopover rather than a destination. Using her own nostalgic longing for an unrealized potential of the BLM protests, Black moves forward and directs the audience's attention to the energizing accounts of the uprising as a relief, a revelation of one's purpose of being, and a source of new hope for the future that helps surpass the instant when grief could

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seize initiative and absorb one into the feeling of unyielding nostalgia. The utopian narrative of the book seems to mark a clear directionality without allowing nostalgia to gain weight and dictate an interpretation that could easily slip into bitter lament. In *Retrotopia* (2017), Bauman, analyzing the crises of protentional imagination, suggests that nostalgia and utopia, if summed up, build up a sort of whole; hence, the greater the presence of the former, the less space is left for the latter. Bauman's idea also correlates to Stiegler's (1998 [1996]) theorization of the codependency of retentional (past-oriented) and protentional (future-oriented) attitudes. However, for Stiegler, it is not so much an immoderate devotion to *retentions* that results in the absence of *protentions* but rather an uncritical consumption of the former; the firm link between the two, whatsoever, is crucial in both cases. Yet, nostalgia and utopia seem to be a logical dialectical pair, as they both stand for a brightly-colored and strongly-articulated longing for the past in the case of nostalgia and for the future in utopia's case.

Black too blends utopia and nostalgia in order to direct nostalgic impulses into the future. By nostalgia, in regard to Black's writing, I don't mean a "nostalgia for the context in which the old types of praxis operated" (Fisher 2009, 26) in relation to a longing for an outdated but still alluring promise of change. Fisher addresses the lack of new ideas that gets substituted by resorting to the old, once-proven efficient methods, obliterating the change in political context and material circumstances. However, communities that have no access to the privilege of having had such methods in the past – as those "who have already known the end of worlds and lived past them" (LeMenager 2020) – also do not possess access to the privileged melancholic nostalgia for the "good old days". An unproductive form of nostalgia, in Black's case, would mean surrendering to a constant and energy-draining pivoting around the joyous moments when the future seemed near, hence also being re-enmeshed into the former apathetic temporality that obscured any possibility of having hopes and desires, let alone any chance to negotiate their fulfillment. Instead, Black probes the method of "selective repetition" (Shaviro 2014) of the affective landscape of the uprising. Distinguishing between "open" and "closed" speculation, Shaviro (2014) develops the idea that in the living world novelty comes out of selective repetition: out of creative, non-duplicative replication able to renew perception and open new ways of thinking and being. By accumulating real (in the exhibition) and fictional (in the book) voices that talk

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about the moment of revolt, Black selectively repeats the past, hoping that the moment of change and a new abundant temporality could once again emerge from within, as back in 2020. In Stiglerian terms, Black's writing serves to re-establish the lacking scope of *protentions* where both the human (and the aliens, as in Black's novella) could thrive and where dreams could again be fertilized by the future-oriented striving.

4. Future in spite of all

What is Black's method of future-making, and how does she put it into use? Why does she insist on the necessity of telling the story of a failed revolt, making it obvious that it can only succeed under extraordinary, fantasized circumstances in a parallel reality? In an interview conducted by Hannah Zeavin, when asked about her decision to introduce the alien element into her story, Black says that she used it as a deception maneuver to avoid making people feel heavy when confronted with the memories of the COVID-19 pandemic (Black and Zeavin 2022). The invasion also serves to balance the historically accurate threads of the story, and it adds to the speculative character of the book. In Black's novel, aliens appear every time the narrative becomes too serious or too realistic. At the same time, the invasion is crucial to the plot's development: the revolution of *Tuesday or September or the End* becomes successful only because of the support of the aliens, who approve of the idea of the riot. In other words, a non-human intrusion is required to realize human hopes. Here, the tone of Black's writing begins to seem pessimistic: shouldn't it just be understood as a blunt warning that, as much as we strive for radical change, our efforts will always be insufficient; that the only thing one can still hope for is the arrival of some otherworldly force that is kind enough to support our political aspirations?

Yet, I tend to believe that Black's rendering of utopia as an unrealistic image of the future can also be approached from another angle that, perhaps, makes more sense in the frames of the question of a future-concerned version of nostalgia: namely, where to find the energy to project into the future when one is being held by the firm grip of the *déjà vu* condition? It seems that Black's major gesture is designed to mark the materiality of the future and to point to the possibility that it can take shape as a result of communal action. Although the future is always an idea of the time to come and, therefore, each given moment can only exist as a

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concept, in connection to the present, the future always acquires clearer features, laying the ground for very concrete actions that are executed now in order to gain a certain result later on. While the result is imaginary, the actions are real. This is why the inability to imagine possible futures Paolo Virno talks about goes hand in hand with numbness and passivity, constraining one to watch one's life unwrap as if in a theater. Black, however, insists on searching for an image despite its inaccessibility. The revolution in the book occurs as a result of the multiple projections of the future that happen to fall on common, fertile ground. Thus, the horizon of expectations is interwoven with the threads of the present; it does not appear out of thin air.

The auspicious revolt of the utopian *Tuesday or September or the End* sets out to create a common space for shared *protentions* towards the future. These can only stem from collective *retentions*, collective memories of the past. Here, concentrating on the revolutionary fervor, even if it did not yield change at that time, Black's novel aims at sustaining a collective image of the revolution and enhancing the possibility of a common horizon of the future. In Black's work, individual expectations of the future, in other words, individual projections of people involved in the revolt, ought to become individual *retentions* or personal memories. However, these individual *retentions* built on a shared past collide into collective *retentions* through Black's writing and the collection and curation of the protesters' voices. On the basis of the common horizon of *retentions* societies formulate new desires or new *protentions*, thus accumulating a feeling of belonging to a specific time or epoch. Utopian storytelling in Black's book, therefore, serves to collect, archive, and internalize accounts of the revolution in the form of art as knowledge that can be maintained for the future in the hope that it might help to prevent the energy of the protests from fading away. In this light, I perceive Black's work not as an attempt to conceive of a blueprint for the future that is guaranteed but as a study that proves that futures can still be sensed as open and real.

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5. Conclusion

What flips the world around, as Black suggests, is the revolutionary spirit that intensifies time and makes it homogeneous with the human experience: the ecstatic feeling of euphoria comes from the possibility to take part in the moment that actively reshapes our reality. In *Tuesday or September or the End*, Black denounces nostalgia and puts forward her vision of utopia by juxtaposing half-documentary and half-fictional accounts to the images of a wearisome dystopia that "far from warning of an apocalypse, has aestheticized it and transformed it into an object of aesthetic consumption and satisfaction" (Jameson 2016). With her work as a writer and visual artist, Black also illustrates that artists of her generation do not lack protentional imagination. Going against the grain of Fisher's (2009) idea that younger generations will be able to completely reject any nostalgic attitude and face the future without looking backwards, Black shows that nostalgic longing can be transcended rather than eliminated, in other words, used as a speculative driver towards a yet-to-be-written future. The major difference between Black's own nostalgia for a revolutionary attempt and the conventional nostalgic outcries of the previous generations has to do with her ability to immediately initiate a way of approaching events through fiction that allows an articulation of protentive potential before the spark disappears.

In a present where imminent futures are imagined through calculation but are hardly graspable subjectively, *Tuesday or September or the End* embodies Black's longing for the effective images of the future and exemplifies an attempt to create her own radical virtuality that haunts us from afar and stirs forgotten dreams. In this virtuality, the lootings that Black's characters witness in New York are described as a moment when masses act in unison and derive enjoyment from a collective action. They enhance the circulation of communal enthusiasm, Black's state of exception – illegal or outside of law, but at the same time critically important for the resurgence of *protentions* that indicate a future. In this virtuality, a spark of protest activity can plunge the whole country into revolutionary turmoil that, in a couple of months, results in an all-encompassing abolishment of capitalism and racial oppression. "Regarding May and June of 2020: anything that can happen once can happen again. That's what's still with us," she concludes (Black and Zeavin 2022). It is not as a political strategy or tactic for a future revolt but rather as an

artistic statement that opens and maintains a critically important conversation that Black's work gains its justification and validity.

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