

JEFF DERKSEN / The Long Moment

Long moments are a dialectical tussle between the structured and the thought, lived, and possible: they do not resolve, but they do cohere into action and events.

Long moments therefore exist in the future in ways we can not exactly predict, but in ways which we can organize against by imagining a future.

Long moments are not a period because they emerge both through and against periods (ie. the long moment of neoliberalism has extended from the 1970s to today).

Unlike a period, long moments do not have an end point: their influence and effects can mutate, evolve, react and extend (how will neoliberalism exist in five years, will it still be “dead but dominant” [Neil Smith], or will it have mutated and become less recognizable?).

Long moments are not necessarily recognizable as you live through them: one cannot be awake in the present by thinking, “We are living history.”

Long moments are not an extended “event”: events mark certain relationships within a long moment and help to make a structure of feeling “visible” and felt.

Therefore, long moments, as Benjamin’s “Angel of history” finds out tragically, cannot be recognized simply by looking backwards.

Long moments are not Benjamin’s “storm we call progress”: they can be, in fact, formed against the storm of progress.

Therefore, like structures of feeling, there are simultaneous long moments. The long moment of neoliberalism is intertwined with the long moment of *critique*, as it formed post-1968.

Long moments can deny their temporality. Neoliberalism, throughout its long moment, has denied the idea of a future, instead insisting on a continuance of the present (and seeing that present as latent in the past).

Long moments are spatial: they link place and geographies. But these linkages are not necessarily recognizable even as they articulate.

Long moments are therefore spatial and temporal: they can link the past of one place to the future of another. Who knew that the privatization of water in Bolivia, and the reaction against it, could help shape a politics of water today?

Long moments take shape at multiple levels (as Fredric Jameson characterizes his approach to the sixties), but they can exist unevenly at these levels (Neoliberalism is dominant [but challenged] at the economic level, but at the cultural level it is still ascendant, despite resistance to it).

Poetry, like an event, can help make a long moment recognizable.