

# Search for Tomorrow. An Epimodernist Future for Literature

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**ABSTRACT:** “The Future is in the way things are,” says “the Minister of the Future,” Timothy Morton, in a recent exhibition at the Centre de cultura contemporània de Barcelona, *After the End of the World. Search for tomorrow*: it’s already here and now. So how does contemporary literature address and envision the very possibility of a future as such? This essay argues that there is a renewed *diagonal force* of the contemporary called *epimodernism*. The epimodernist values are superficiality, secrecy, energy, acceleration, credit, and consistency. These six values are necessary for envisioning any future that doesn’t involve hyperfinance, rating agencies, systematic calculation of behaviors—and their consequences for politics.

**W**HEN I FIRST HEARD OF THE TOPIC for the preparatory workshop of this issue of *Dibur Literary Journal*, it was said to be “contemporary visions of the future in literature and art.” I don’t know why (maybe because I wanted it to be so) I thought it meant not “visions of the future *in* literature and art” (the future within literature, “*le futur dans la littérature*” in French) but “visions of the future *of* literature and art” (*le futur de la littérature*), as in “this literature has no future” (*cette littérature n’a pas d’avenir*).

I’m French. So I was quite optimistic. I do have a vision of the “future of literature and art.”

But then I received another e-mail, with the final title: “Contemporary Visions *of* the Future.” And I realized it was all about the future *in works of* literature and art. Utopias, dystopias, dreams and prophecies: not my kind of thing, really. I’m more of a historical novel person myself. Or even more of an “istorical [*sic*] novel” person since I sometimes argue that there is

nowadays an interesting kind of novel that tells history by fictionalizing the eyewitness of the past (which can be called *istor* without the *h*, in a Latin transliteration of the pre-Herodotean smooth-breathing accented Greek *histor*). As if the present was the vision (the *autopsy*) of the future by an imaginary eyewitness of the past. Or, the contrary maybe: as if the present was the vision of the past by an imaginary eyewitness of the future.

I could have (maybe I should have) turned down the invitation. Then I realized that, in a time when “compression of the present” (*Gegenwartsschrumpfung*, according to Hermann Lübbe) and constant technological, informational, and social acceleration (Hartmut Rosa, after Reinhart Koselleck) prevail, *it’s already tomorrow*.<sup>1</sup>

*Search for tomorrow*:<sup>2</sup> it’s already here and now.

“Where is the Future?” asks “the Minister of the Future,” Timothy Morton, in a recent excellent exhibition at the Centre de cultura contemporània de Barcelona, *After the End of the World*.<sup>3</sup> “The Future is in the way things are” (he answers).

That is exactly what “contemporary visions” may mean—since the “contemporary” is a period without any sequel: “present” visions (compressed-present visions) as a potential future, as the very potentiality of a future. This is at least what *actuel* means in French (or in “Deleuzean” French): what we are becoming, the future in us, here and now.

There’s no present, says Timothy Morton: “only ghostly platforms overlapping.” Only mental and narrative *dispositives* in which, as Deleuze said, “we must untangle the lines of the recent past from those of the close future: the element of the archive and the element of the present time; the share of History and the share of the becoming.”<sup>4</sup>

What future, then, is to be untangled from the past in the present time?

What future is to be drawn out of this “mainly invisible, depoliticized, undisputed, under-theorized, and inarticulate time-regime”—as Hartmut Rosa puts it?<sup>5</sup>

How does contemporary literature address and envision (*envisage* in French) the very possibility of a future as such?

By the time I received this invitation from Stanford’s *Dibur*, I was reading a novel by Jonas Lüscher: *Kraft*, a smart novel dealing with the perilous ways one may envision the future. Mr. Kraft—a brilliant Swiss philosopher—receives an e-mail with a very kind and tempting invitation from Stanford University to attend a fancy workshop on “Theodicy and Technodicy: On Optimism for a Young Millennium. Why all is good, and why it can be improved.” “The *modus operandi* was clear: the conference would take place during an afternoon in the Cemex auditorium

<sup>1</sup> Hermann Lübbe, “The Contraction of the Present,” in *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*, ed. Hartmut Rosa and William E. Scheuermann (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2009), 159–78; Hartmut Rosa, *Aliénation et accélération: Vers une théorie critique de la modernité tardive* [Alienation and acceleration: Toward a critical theory of late modernity], trans. T. Chaumont (Paris: La Découverte, Théorie critique, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> *Search for Tomorrow*, as in the old, never-ending (9,130 episodes, from 1951 to 1986) US soap opera of the past future.

<sup>3</sup> *Después del fin del mundo* (Barcelona: Centro de cultura contemporània de Barcelona, 2017). Featuring Kim Stanley Robinson, Benjamin Grant, Rimini Protokoll, Superflux, etc.

<sup>4</sup> “Dans tout dispositif, nous devons démêler les lignes du passé récent de celles du futur proche: la part de l’archive et celle de l’actuel, la part de l’histoire et celle du devenir.” G. Deleuze, “Qu’est-ce qu’un dispositif?” [What is a dispositive?], in *Michel Foucault philosophe* [Michel Foucault, philosopher] (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 191.

<sup>5</sup> “Les sujets modernes . . . sont régentés, dominés et réprimés par un régime-temps en grande partie invisible, dépolitisé, indiscuté, sous-théorisé et inarticulé. Ce régime-temps peut en fait être analysé grâce à un concept unificateur: la logique de l’accélération sociale” (Rosa, *Aliénation et accélération*, 8).

of Stanford University. Quick succession of eighteen-minute talks, highly recommended use of PowerPoint presentations, fancy worldwide audience, live stream connected—the coordinators seemed convinced that the whole of humanity was waiting for it. And a one-million-dollar prize for the best proposal.<sup>6</sup>

Well, *tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles*, but it can be improved—thinks Kraft, who’s badly indebted. He has to compete with a smart Scandinavian inventor of modular, artificial, offshore Sea-Steadies and Work-Life Habitats and with a provocative Frenchman who had quit the École normale supérieure in order to peacefully practice his hyper-skepticism out of Paris.

I won’t tell the story. I will say only that he should have turned down the invitation from the start. The Elon Musk type of billionaire (Erkner) who funds the prize and likes to be told of a very specific bright *open-source* future would not have been up to appreciating his final presentation.

Anyway: I’m not Kraft and there’s no million to win here. And I’m not as desperate as he is (although I certainly need to repay my debts). So I’ll try to remain candidly optimistic about the “technodicy” that contemporary literature and art provide, shelter, and nourish.

For between past and future, in this “strange in-between” that insinuates itself into historical time, in this interval in time entirely determined by things that are no longer and things that are not yet, there is a *diagonal force* we need to be empowered by, as Hannah Arendt once said:<sup>7</sup> a diagonal force to deal with the contemporaneity of the present future.

A few great novels have already embodied this diagonal force at the very beginning of the millennium:

*War and War*, by László Kraznahorkai: diagonal force as the ideal literary archive of history, set in the shape of a secret prophecy which mingles the past and future of humanity by leading from war to war and even kind of foresees the falling down of the Babel Twin Towers in Lower Manhattan.<sup>8</sup>

*Cosmopolis*, by Don DeLillo,<sup>9</sup> the novel of the “financialization” of the mind and of temporality as “a corporate value”; the novel of the “ghost of capital” according to Josef Vogl, an “assault of the future on the rest of time” and a chaotic circulation of violence and speculative apperception—on the verge of recent past, present, and future late-capitalist crises.<sup>10</sup>

And *2666*, by Roberto Bolaño<sup>11</sup>—which is, I believe, the best contemporary literary critique of any theodicy, technodicy, or “*oikodicy*” (as Josef Vogl again puts it). “Une oasis d’horreur dans un désert d’ennui” (An oasis of horror in a desert of boredom) as the Baudelairean epigraph says Santa Teresa, Mexico, can be.<sup>12</sup> The documentary-fictional Santa Teresa (and its horrific everlasting series of feminicides) as a metaphor of our *millennial future*.

<sup>6</sup> Jonas Lüscher, *Monsieur Kraft; ou, La théorie du pire* [Mister Kraft; or, The theory of the worst], trans. Tatiana Marwinski (Paris: Éditions Autrement, Littérature, 2017), 6–8; Jonas Lüscher, *Kraft* (Munich: Beck, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *La crise de la culture: Huit exercices de pensée politique* [The crisis of culture: Eight exercises in political thought], trans. Patrick Lévy (Paris: Gallimard, Folio, 1987), 19–21; Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking, 1961).

<sup>8</sup> László Kraznahorkai, *Háború es háború* (Budapest: Magvető, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Josef Vogl, *Spectres du capital* [Specters of capital], trans. Olivier Mannoni (Bienne-Paris: Diaphanes, 2013), 77; Josef Vogl, *Das Gespenst des Kapitals* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Roberto Bolaño, *2666* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Wanger’s translation, in *Selected Poems of Charles Baudelaire* (New York: Grove Press, 1974).

And maybe also, a few years later, another posthumous novel: *The Pale King*, by David Foster Wallace<sup>13</sup>—which seems to me like the American flipside of *Cosmopolis*.

I do like posthumous novels: they provide an archaic glance at posthumanism. Do you know what Bolaño said, a few months before his death, when *Playboy* magazine asked him about the word *posthumous*? “It resembles the name of a Roman gladiator. An unbeatable gladiator. At least this is what the miserable Posthumous prefers to believe to work up the courage.”<sup>14</sup>

These three or four novels may have already delivered, with a great deal of courage, the most accurate visions of the possible future in contemporary literature (as an art).

But they can still be improved. For there’s no need to let the pervasive and everlasting imaginary of the end rule the visions of the future in literature.

So I decided to give a name to this renewed *diagonal force* of the contemporary: *epimodernism*.

By “epimodernism” I mean a kind of “post-postmodernism” that would replace the double “post” (as in Jeffrey Neaton’s book, for example)<sup>15</sup> with six different possible values of the ancient Greek prefix *epi*: surface contact, origin, extension, duration, authority, and finality. “Epimodernism” would thus set up six different relations to the heritage of modernism, by reorienting its postmodern critique and rebooting, with all due irony, its ambition of new forms of anti-late-capitalist engagement and paradoxical empowerment.

These six values for the future in literature (and the future of literature) are reinterpretations of the six “memos” that Italo Calvino suggested more than thirty years ago for “the new Millennium” and that he called *lightness*, *quickness*, *exactitude*, *visibility*, *multiplicity*, and *consistency* (which he never had the chance to define, since he died before he could finish his Norton Lectures at Harvard). The six epimodernist values would now be *superficiality*, *secrecy*, *energy*, *acceleration*, *credit*, and (again) *consistency*.

Here is—in short—what they are, and how they can help literature (as an art) to envision our future.<sup>16</sup>

First is *superficiality*. It corresponds to *epi-* according to the idea of *surface contact*. Just as Calvino thought, superficiality is a virtue (a quality): it is what makes apparent that which is hidden in depth. It is related to the “thoughtful lightness” in Calvino’s memos: both lightness of sensation and enlightenment of reason—as in the works of Olivier Cadiot and Enrique Vila-Matas. Therefore, it symbolizes the idea of an *epigraphy* as surface writing in literature (and art) of the in-depth possible reality in the present future. *Epigraphy* is an “illiterary” response (as Bertrand Gervais puts it)<sup>17</sup> to the major issue of the screen cultures and their *epigonality*—as in Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000), Guy Tournaye’s *Le décodeur* (The decoder; 2005), and Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Tree of Codes* (2010).

<sup>13</sup> David Foster Wallace, *The Pale King* (New York: Little, Brown, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Roberto Bolaño, “Final, Étoile distante: Entrevue avec Monica Maristain” [Finale, Distant star: Interview with Monica Maristain], in *Entre parenthèses: Essais, articles et discours (1998–2003)* [Between parentheses: Essays, articles, and speeches] (Paris: Bourgois, 2011), 452.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey T. Neaton, *Post-postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Emmanuel Bouju, “L’épimodernisme: Une hypothèse” [Epimodernism: A hypothesis], in *Fragments d’un discours théorique: Nouveaux éléments de lexique littéraire* [Fragments of a theoretical discourse: New rudiments of literary vocabulary], ed. Emmanuel Bouju, 89–117 (Nantes: Éditions Nouvelles Cécile Defaut, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Bertrand Gervais, “Sur l’illittéraire,” in Bouju, *Fragments d’un discours théorique*, 193–223.

Second is *secrecy*. It corresponds to *epi-* according to the idea of *origin*. Secret stories mingle family and historical lineages of disappearance or treason and reinterpret genealogies as a kind of *epigenetic* practice—as an imaginary *epidrug* reading of (or talking about) the secret genetic code of experience. This epigenetic secret in literature confronts virtual-reality schemes and transhumanist fantasies: it deals with the *phantom pain* of a lost past and a possible future—as in *La velocidad de la luz* (The velocity of light; 2005) by Javier Cercas, *The Lazarus Project* (2008) by Aleksandar Hemon, *Judas* (*Ha besora al-pi yehuda iskariot*; 2014) by Amos Oz, and *L'enfance politique* (Political childhood; 2016) by Noémi Lefebvre (one of the best French writers today in my opinion). Temporal and political fictions address both past and future issues by means of specular thought and narrative experiences—by using, as a present absence, the very same technique that neurobiologists and psychologists use when they deliver *mirror-box* treatments to their patients.

For we very well know that even the most future-envisioning dystopias draw their narratives from the “multidirectional memory” of the past: especially in the counterfactual fictions that work as a mirror-box treatment for the phantom pain of what could have happened.<sup>18</sup>

Third, *energy* corresponds to *epi-* according to the idea of *extension* (or adjunction). By “energy,” I mean both *energeia* (the actual etymon) of the actualization of a historical or temporal potentiality and *enargeia* (the false etymon) of a rhetoric able to render visible and vivid (*evidentia*) the experiences and emotions associated with it. It means “to render visible what is potentially real by the acting force, the energy, of writing (or representing)” —as in the whole body of work of Elfriede Jelinek, Svetlana Alexievitch, David Albahari, Orhan Pamuk, Juan Gabriel Vásquez, and David Grossman. This literary energy specifically challenges every identity assignment (gender, race, or class)—as in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*—mainly by what I call *biodocumentary composition* novels: neojournalistic, intersectional, ecocritical, or even “zoo-poetical” novels, such as Vincent Message’s *Défaite des maîtres et possesseurs* (Defeat of the masters and owners; 2016) and Yoko Tawada’s *Etüden im Schnee* (Studies in snow; 2014).

Fourth is *acceleration*. It corresponds to *epi-* according to the idea of *duration*. The new energetic vividness of literature seeks to confront the “acceleration” of time through new forms of experiences of temporality: of *detemporalization*—conceived as a form of resistance to this acceleration and as the heuristic exercise of anachronism and uchronism (in narratives of counterfactual or alternate history)—whether perennial/protracted (as in the works of Antoine Volodine and Ricardo Menéndez Salmón) or anticipatory (as in those of Brian Evenson and Kim Stanley Robinson).

The fifth value is *credit*. It corresponds to *epi-* according to the idea of *authority*. The credit given to the authority of literature and art tries to counterbalance the discredit of fossilized institutions, vain discourses, and unequal economies; it aims to expose the overall debt contracted by political, economic, and social organizations and owed to the citizens of the world and the nonhuman components of the earth; it has to imagine the possibility of a future rescued from the succession of debt inheritance and the reenactment of the past. This means credit as *credibility* of narratives and art representations: placed at the heart of the “dead pledges” (*mort-gages*) of debt economies,<sup>19</sup> as well as in the double-bind logic of refugees’ bionarratives, helplessly pleading

<sup>18</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Annie McClanahan, *Dead Pledges: Debt, Crisis, and Twenty-First Century Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

for *droit de cité* (citizenship)<sup>20</sup>—as in Shumona Sinha’s *Assommons les pauvres* (Let’s beat up the poor; 2011).

The sixth and last epimodernist value is *consistency*. It corresponds to *epi-* according to the idea of *finality* (or consecution). It is the final goal of epimodernism: to overcome the *exhaustion* of postmodernism in a new consistency of literary and art discontinuity, as in the work of Pierre Senges, Bernardo Carvalho, and Adam Thirlwell; to make shared authorship, digital circulation of models and languages, and *transfictionality* (Richard Saint-Gelais) be the new guiding system of the contemporary. This powerful *hypertext-linked* consistency of the future has to be embodied by a new rhetoric of our digital literary and art culture.<sup>21</sup>

Now, with regard to the very possibility of this epimodernist future, I’d like to focus on the fifth value (the phenomena of an on-credit authority) as the symptom of a gradual shift from what Carlo Ginzburg called the “indiciary paradigm” (investigation model, indicial patterns, and empire of the traces) to what I would call a “fiduciary paradigm.” Here is where questions of credit and debt, confidence and risk, and, more generally, questions of promise-making credibility gain prominence.

This may be the way contemporary literature and art envision the possibility of a common nondystopian future: by challenging (or addressing) the *post-truth* discourses and information; the deflation of democratic values and institutions; the reinforcement of every physical border and the cancellation of the financial ones; the aporia of the enigmology of capitalist finance and the *derivative* ways it deals with the on-credit temporality.

From this perspective, I’m currently working on the Debt Narrative as the Rosetta Stone of the future.<sup>22</sup> Like the Rosetta Stone, the Debt Narrative is a historical, symbolic, and aesthetic way to decrypt the articulation between the three languages of economy, politics, and ethics—and may thus enable us to read any *possible text of our future*.

Among the many European novelistic examples of this articulation, I would stress a very few.

First, *Resistance Is Useless* (*Resistere non serve a niente*, 2012) by Walter Siti is an imaginary biographical portrait of a genius in international finance (Tommaso Aricò) who is secretly working for the Calabrian Mafia (the *Ndranghetta*). The novel studies the anatomy of a frightening link between covert Mafia power and licit wealth—a link promised to be endlessly tightened by accelerated calculation systems and dematerialized finance.<sup>23</sup> It’s not only a matter of exploitation of the faults of neocapitalism by some covert organizations; the novel deals with the very constitutional form of the contemporary economy, where the erasing (or the unreadability) of the tracks of any transaction and the noninstitutional financing of liquidities allow the “natural” insertion of Mafias into the political texture of our societies and the perversion of any democratic contract. As Morgan Lucchese, the theoretician of the new Mafia, tells the author (who agreed to be Aricò’s portraitist): “The future belongs to enlightened oligarchies who pass over the frontiers

<sup>20</sup> Marielle Macé, *Sidérer, considérer: Migrants en France* [To stun, to consider: Migrants in France] (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Alexandra Saemmer, *Rhétorique du texte numérique: Figures de la lecture, anticipations de pratiques* [The rhetoric of digital text: Reading patterns, acting anticipations] (Villeurbanne: ENSSIB, “Papiers,” 2015).

<sup>22</sup> The Rosetta Stone allowed Champollion to decipher hieroglyphics by comparing three different versions of a single text: three versions of a decree that settled the account of credit and debt of the Ptolemaic priests in Memphis. The first one was written in hieroglyphics (the language of the gods), the second in demotic Egyptian (the language used for documents), and the third in Greek (the language of communication).

<sup>23</sup> Walter Siti, *Résister ne sert à rien*, trans. Serge Quadrupani (Paris: Éditions Métailié, 2014), 130.

and the laws of any singular State. . . . We are becoming the white noise of the economy: not its metastasis but its regular texture.”<sup>24</sup>

Next are two Greek writers. Rhéa Galanaki’s *The Final Humiliation* is a tragicomedy of two elderly women, Nymph and Tiresia, who become lost in a monstrous and violent protest in Athens. Their odyssey takes them to a kind of *nekuia* in a burned-out theater, where one of them dreams of her father, who elaborates on the myth of Europe. He argues that Europe, after being raped by Zeus-the-bull, became “a female Minotaur,” capable of evading every trick of Ariadne and Theseus, in order to “survive forever in the labyrinth of her kingdom” and to enjoy the everlasting tribute of Athens: the sacrifice of its youth.<sup>25</sup>

The second Greek writer is Christos Chryssopoulos, whose books echo the final line of David Graeber’s tome on debt (a dystopian definition of our future): “What is a debt, anyway? A debt is just *the perversion of a promise*. It is a promise corrupted by both math and violence.”<sup>26</sup> Chryssopoulos’s *The Destruction of the Parthenon* is a novel in the form of a documentary of a symbolic Far-Left attack against the Parthenon in a protofascist Greece.<sup>27</sup> His *Land of Wrath* describes how Achilles’s wrath becomes the collective anger of Athenian society, which is manifested in corporations, in street protests, in families, in every relationship.<sup>28</sup> The narrator of *A Lamp in the Mouth: An Athenian Chronicle* wanders in Athens and stands in front of a wall where he can read that “ $2 + 2 = 4$  and  $2 + 2 \neq 5$ ,” and he thinks: “the awareness of the crisis takes the form of an inability to dream . . . outside of the official arithmetic.”<sup>29</sup>

So, this is the main difficulty: how can we envision any future that doesn’t involve hyperfinance, rating agencies, systematic calculation of behaviors—and their consequences for politics? How can the future be anything other than a *black swan* of the pseudorationality of capitalist *oikodicy*?<sup>30</sup>

“The final humiliation,” “resistance is useless,” “land of wrath”: is this the diagonal force meant to contradict the apocalyptic imagination of an algorithmic *black-mirror* life?

Yes it is, though I should take time to elaborate on the power of irony and the ventriloquism of dominant discourses and representations—as in textual, pictorial, or photographic artwork installations on risk insurance, rating agencies, and tax havens/heavens by Julien Prévieux, Philippe Durand, and the late Denis Briand.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>25</sup> Rhéa Galanaki, *L’ultime humiliation*, trans. Loïc Marcou (Paris: Galaade Éditions, 2016), 238, 277; Rhéa Galanaki, *Η άκρα ταπείνωση* (Athens: Kastaniotis Press, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> David Graeber, *Debt: 5000 ans d’histoire* (Paris: Les Liens Qui Libèrent, 2013), 391; David Graeber, *Debt: The First Five Thousand Years* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2011).

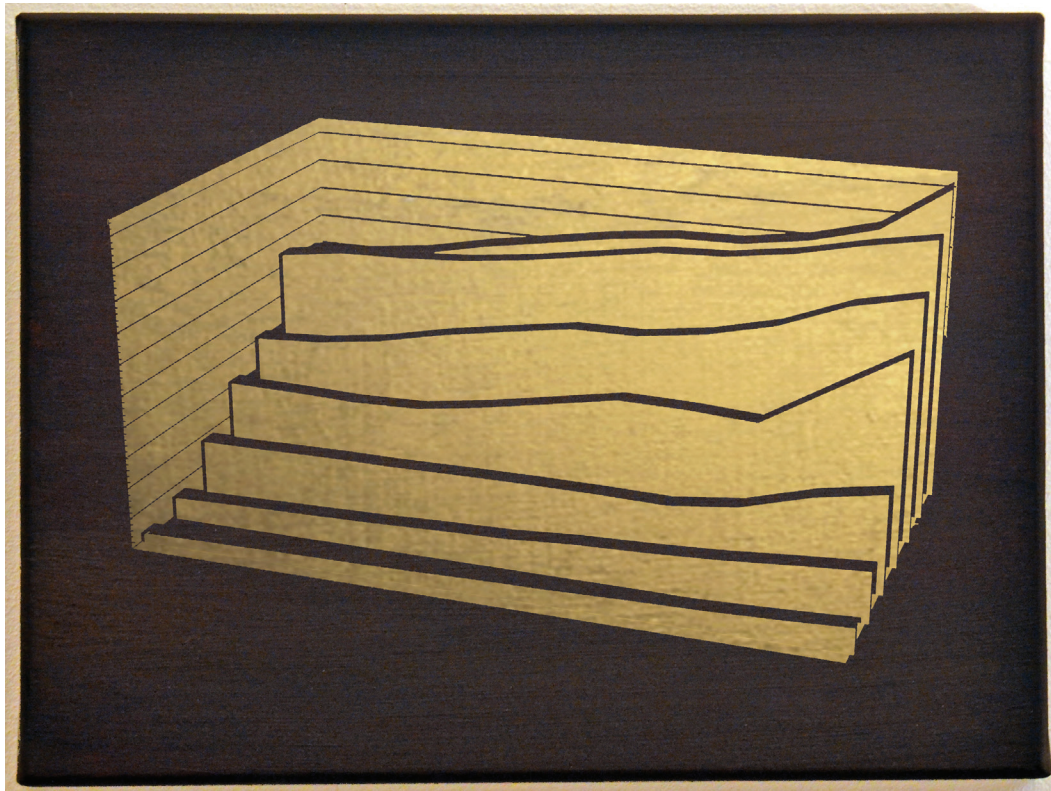
<sup>27</sup> Christos Chryssopoulos, *La destruction du Parthénon* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2012); Christos Chryssopoulos, *Ο βομβιστής τον Παρθενώνα* (Athens: Kastaniotis Press, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Christos Chryssopoulos, *Terre de colère* (Paris: La Contre Allée, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Christos Chryssopoulos, *Une lampe entre les dents: Chronique athénienne* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2013), 110; Christos Chryssopoulos, *Φακός στο στόμα* (Athens: Χρονικό Εκδόσεις Πόλις, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Vogl (*Spectres du capital*, 125) reminds us that *futures* is the technical term for *affaires à terme*: “perfect capitalist invention and fundamental principle of the circulation of capital.”

<sup>31</sup> Julien Prévieux, *À la recherche du miracle économique* (In search of the economic miracle; 2007) and *Les connus connus, les inconnus connus et les inconnus inconnus* (The known knowns, the known unknowns, and the unknown unknowns; 2010), Collection du FRAC Bretagne, ©Adagp; Philippe Durand, *Offshore* (2008); Denis Briand, *Ratings, série* (Ratings, series; 2012–14).



Denis Briand, *Ratings Maps, Debt Evolution*, model, cocoa and gold leaf on canvas, 2012.

Searching for tomorrow, I go back to Timothy Morton, the Minister of the Future, as a contemporary Hamlet, mocking the famous line of *Hamlet* (5.2): “We defy augury. There’s a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, ’tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all.”

It seems to me that Hélène Cixous is absolutely right to read it as an imperative: “*Défions l’augure*” (Let’s defy augury).<sup>32</sup> For we need no theodicy, technodicy, or *oikodicy*. We don’t need special providence—neither in France, in the United States of America, in Israel, or anywhere else.

We need the diagonal force of contemporary literature and art to fight back against the antidemocratic calculability of behaviors: because the *readiness for the future* is all in the *reading of the contemporary*, a decompression of the present, a widening of the past, an openness to the possible, and, above all, a stimulating way of rekindling once more the discussion of the future in literature and art. A

<sup>32</sup> Hélène Cixous, *Défions l’augure* (Paris: Galilée, 2018).