

Montages (I)

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When you are at the lowest ebb, exposed to an eternity of torment inflicted upon you by other human beings, you cherish, as a dream of deliverance, the idea that a being will come who will stand in the light and bring truth and justice for you. You do not even need this to happen in your lifetime, nor in the lifetime of those who are torturing you to death, but one day, whenever it comes, all will nonetheless be repaired [...] It is bitter to be misunderstood and to die in obscurity. It is to the honour of historical research that it projects light into that obscurity.

- **Max Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline* (1934)**

My friend's echo of these appeals to the judgment of history made me realize how powerful a fantasy the notion is, how strong its messianic promise holds even for skeptical secularists like myself, even in an age when "the end of history" has been declared, and when belief in reassuring progressive master narratives ended sometime in the twentieth century. After all, there is no history (or History), apart from what we make of it; no higher court of judgment than our own moral compass; no way to disentangle moral argument from political purpose.

- **Joan W. Scott, *On the Judgment of History* (2020)**

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<https://cure.uni-saarland.de/en/?p=11316>.