

Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature

Temporality and Literary Theory

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Subject: Literary Studies (20th Century Onward), Literary Theory and Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Literature and Studies

Online Publication Date: Dec 2016 DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.122

Summary and Keywords

Time is not a strictly literary category, yet literature is unthinkable without time. The events of a story unfold over time. The narration of that story imposes a separate order of time (chronological, discontinuous, *in medias res*). The reading of that narrative may take its own sweet time. Then there is the fact that literature itself exists in time. Transmitted across generations, literary texts cannot help but remind us of how times have changed. In doing so, they also show us how prior historical moments were indelibly shaped by their own specific philosophies and technologies of timekeeping—from the forms of sacred time that informed medieval writing; to the clash between national time and natural history that preoccupied the Romantics; to the technological standardization of time that shaped 19th-century literature; to the theories of psychological time that emerged in tandem with modernism; to the fragmented and foreshortened digital times that underlie postmodern fiction. Time, in short, shapes literature several times over: from reading experience to narrative form to cultural context. In this way, literature can be read as a peculiarly sensitive timepiece of its own, both reflecting and responding to the complex and varied history of shared time.

Over the course of the 20th century, literary time has become an increasingly prominent issue for literary critics. Time was first installed at the heart of literary criticism by way of narrative theory and narratology, which sought to explain narrative's irreducibly temporal structure. Soon, though, formalist and phenomenological approaches to time would give way to more historically and politically attuned methods, which have emphasized modern time's enmeshment in imperialism, industrial capitalism, and globalization. In today's critical landscape, time is a crucial and contested topic in a wide range of subfields, offering us indispensable insights into the history and ideology of modernity; the temporal politics of nationalism, colonialism, and racial oppression; the alternate timescales of environmental crisis and geological change; and the transformations of life and work that structure postmodern and postindustrial society.

Keywords: narrative time, national time, postcolonial time, modern time, postmodern time, queer time, racial time, geological time, the Anthropocene, financialization

Narrative Time

“Time is a universal feature of narrative,” suggests Mark Currie.¹ Why? The story of narrative time begins with a crucial bifurcation in the very idea of a story. The Russian formalists were the first to distinguish between *fabula* and *sjužet*, or the raw events of a story and their plotted representation in a narrative. The events of the *fabula* take place causally and chronologically. In the *sjužet*, those same events are rearranged, dilated, and contracted to form the narrative we are reading. The *fabula/sjužet* distinction is one of the founding premises of narrative theory, where one may confront it in several different versions: for Seymour Chatman, it is the distinction between “story” and “discourse”; for Gérard Genette, it is the distinction between *histoire* and *récit* (“story” and “narrative”); for Peter Brooks, it is “story” and “plot.” In each of these cases, though, the basic temporal division at the heart of narrative is the same: it is the difference between the time implied by the chronological happenings of the story and the time that reshapes that story in the telling.

One of the most important formalist accounts of narrative time is laid out in Gérard Genette’s masterwork of narratology, *Narrative Discourse*. Genette proposes the concepts of *order*, *duration*, and *frequency* as three primary ways of understanding the variety of temporal relations between “story time” and “narrative time” (or between *fabula* and *sjužet*). *Order* refers to the relation between the order of events in the story and the alternate order those same events are given in the narrative. Differences in order produce “narrative anachronies” such as prolepsis (the anticipation of an event that will take place later in the story) and analepsis (the reference to an event that has taken place earlier).² Through such interruptions of chronology, Genette suggests, we discover “narrative’s capacity for *temporal autonomy*”—that is, for a vision of temporality that has been freed from the chronological order of both story time and lived experience.³ The second way to assess the temporality of narrative is through a contrast in *duration*: how long the events of the story “actually” took versus how long the narrative spends narrating them. Genette reminds us that is there is, of course, no “actual” duration of a story. Nevertheless, he suggests that we can grasp the “tempo” of a narrative by tracing how it speeds up and slows down certain key events in the story. The unique tempo or rhythm of a narrative becomes clear in the extreme contrast between, for instance, the use of 150 pages to narrate three hours and the devotion of “three lines for twelve

years.”⁴ Finally, Genette uses the idea of *frequency* to describe the narrative temporality of repetition, which allows a narrative both to return multiple times to a single event and to condense multiple happenings of an event into a single instance of narration. Taken together, these three primary modes of “temporal distortion”—the disruption of chronology, the modulation of narrative pace, and the patterns of condensation and repetition—define the sophisticated “game with time” that is played out in narrative.⁵

Mikhail Bakhtin’s famous conception of the *chronotope* represents an attempt to show how literary time can be not just formally analyzed but also historicized. A chronotope is another name for the particular way that time, space, and plot are interwoven in the dominant literary genre of a given epoch. In a chronotope, “Time … thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged with and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.”⁶ For Bakhtin, the literary representation of time is both a formal question and a historical one, and he shows how the historical development of narrative from ancient Greece to the 20th century depends on the development of different chronotopes. There is the chronotope of the Greek romance, which is shaped by “adventure-time,” a form of time based on “a series of short segments that correspond to separate adventures” but that involves no larger arc of maturation or change.⁷ There is the chronotope of chivalric romance, which adds to adventure-time a temporality of unexpectedness, invoking a new world of “miraculous chance.”⁸ And there is the folkloric chronotope, which finds its most sophisticated articulation in the work of Rabelais, who succeeds in replacing a medieval conception of sacred, eschatological time with a “creative and generative time” of human life and natural processes.⁹ Bakhtin argues that the folkloric chronotope of Rabelais is the unique literary expression of pre-capitalist agricultural society, in which time was “collective,” connected to “labor,” “tensed toward the future,” and attentive to the natural rhythms of the earth.¹⁰ As agricultural society passes into bourgeois capitalism, the literary depiction of time changes in tandem. Thus emerges the gothic chronotope of “castle time” as a resurrection of the past; the chronotope of salons and parlors—the time of “dialogues”—that informs the work of Stendhal and Balzac; the chronotope of the provincial town that shapes Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*; the chronotope of the threshold—of instantaneous crisis or break—exemplified by Dostoevsky; and Tolstoy’s chronotope of biographical time.¹¹ These chronotopes are not timeless structural categories but definitive examples of how literary time reflects particular social circumstances. The chronotope is, in short, a theory of mediation premised on the interrelation between literary time and historical time. As Bakhtin puts it, “a literary work’s artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope.”¹² Ultimately, the chronotope makes time representable through narrative (“time becomes palpable and visible”) while also making time the literary measure of a “historically developing social world.”¹³

The other great theorist of narrative time is Paul Ricoeur, who in his epic three-volume study *Time and Narrative* seeks to theorize the complex form of existential time that inheres in narrative. Ricoeur's theory of phenomenological time was offered as a sharp retort to both structuralists and historicists, who in his view either simplified time or negated it altogether. Roland Barthes, for instance, famously claimed that "from the point of view of narrative, what we call time does not exist."¹⁴ By this he meant that time in a narrative is a purely structural and syntagmatic category: time sequences narrative but does not move through it. (Genette agreed; for him narrative time was really a "pseudo-time.")¹⁵ Against both the "achronological" non-time of structuralism and the oversimplified "chronological" time of historical progression, Ricoeur aims to reveal the "deeper experience of time" that lies at the heart of narrative.¹⁶ Drawing heavily on Martin Heidegger's analysis of time in *Being and Time*, Ricoeur argues that narrative shows us the full complexity of existential time, from the experience of being "within" time to the "historicality" of finitude and mortality to the totalizing temporal power of plot. In all of these ways, narrative expresses what it means to truly live in and "reckon with" time.¹⁷ In doing so, narrative becomes not just an exemplary tool in the phenomenological analysis of time but a necessary one. For Ricoeur, "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience."¹⁸ The true nature of time, in other words, is only made visible when we narrativize it. Ricoeur's work suggests that we cannot understand narrative without time because we cannot understand time without narrative.

Modern Time

Of course, time is not just in our stories or in our heads. It is also an externally imposed and socially regulated logic of modern life. The history of how a certain idea of secular, standardized time came to dominate Western society is the history of what is generally called "modernity." As Peter Osborne writes in *The Politics of Time*, "Modernity is a culture of time."¹⁹ This was a culture that arose between the 15th and the 19th centuries, as a series of social, technological, and economic transformations—from the invention of mechanical clocks to the rise of commercial capitalism to the dawn of the Industrial Revolution—remade European societies, ushering in a series of new relationships to time. One of the defining features of modern time is its separation from sacred or religious time. Unlike the Christian temporalities of eternity and eschatology, the secular time of modernity was understood as measurable, rational, and progressive. As the medieval historian Jacques Le Goff puts it, after the 14th century, "the clock was to be the measure

of all things.”²⁰ More than anything, it was to be the measure of labor time. Alongside the process of secularization, the spread of capitalism reinvented time in terms of productivity and profitability. As E. P. Thompson has famously shown, the development of industrial capitalism made “time-discipline” the primary mode of social organization in modern society. The obsessive measure of time at the workplace—a workplace ruled by time sheets and lateness fines—shaped not only the rhythms of labor and the habits of workers, but also a whole society’s beliefs about time. For Thompson, capitalist time-discipline (in concert with the Protestant work ethic) produced an entirely new ideology of time, one that “taught children even in their infancy to improve each shining hour” and that “saturated men’s minds with the equation time is money.”²¹

The modern culture of time is thus a culture of secular, rational, regulated, and progressive time: the time of factory work, the time of economic development, and the time of social and political revolution. As time became more rational, profitable, and productive in the modern era, it also became more tumultuous and uncertain. Intellectual historians such as Reinhart Koselleck and Peter Fritzsche argue that modern time—particularly as it was conceived in the wakes of the French and American revolutions—is characterized not just by technological modes of measurement and rationalization, but also by a “special consciousness of transition and indeterminacy”: a new sense of history as the “relentless iteration of the new,” a force of constant yet unpredictable social change.²² Forged in the fires of accelerated change and upheaval, modern time is, in Osborne’s words, a time of “permanent transition.”²³ Along similar lines, Jürgen Habermas understands the “new time consciousness” of modernity as the expression of a society newly committed to the values of “the transitory, the elusive and the ephemeral.”²⁴ The “celebration of dynamism” or constant change that Habermas sees at the heart of modern time is also central to Marshall Berman’s famous account of “the experience of modernity” in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*. For Berman, “the maelstrom of modern life” is characterized above all by the temporalities of “perpetual disintegration and renewal.”²⁵ The “turbulence” and “dizziness” of temporal flux is, Berman suggests, “the atmosphere in which modern sensibility is born.”²⁶

One of the first commentators to note the dizzying new temporal contours of modern life—and to dub that life “modernity”—was the French poet Charles Baudelaire. In his 1863 essay “The Painter of Modern Life,” Baudelaire wrestled with how to properly represent in art and writing the rapid transformations of life in the present. This new sense of accelerated change—“the daily metamorphosis of external things”—was, for Baudelaire, the distinguishing mark of what “you must allow me to call ‘modernity.’”²⁷ “By modernity,” Baudelaire explained, “I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent.” As Baudelaire understood them, these qualities were uniquely temporal: they defined his particular moment in time, and they defined it specifically in terms of a historically

unique experience of temporal flux. This “transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid,” was, for Baudelaire, something to welcome, not lament; it “must on no account be despised or dispensed with.”²⁸ Rather than rejecting the fast pace of the present in favor of a nostalgic escape into past, Baudelaire maintained that it was the task of the modern citizen—and, more specifically, the modern artist—to embrace the very thing that made his world modern: its fast, fleeting, and fugitive rhythm of time.

Starting in the middle of the 19th century, the transitory experience of modern time became stabilized through a process of national and global standardization. The invention of standard time was, according to Stephen Kern, the “most momentous development in the history of uniform, public time since the invention of the mechanical clock.”²⁹

Temporal standardization began with the railroad companies, who required time to be standardized across different cities in order to have functional schedules. (In 1870, there were more than 200 different local times in the United States.³⁰) The corporate push for standard time eventually grew, in the 1880s, into the attempt to standardize time on a global scale. The idea of global standard time was debated at the International Prime Meridian Conference of 1884, where representatives from twenty-five countries proposed dividing the Earth into twenty-four time zones, with Greenwich, England, as the zero point for world time.³¹ Although these proposals were not immediately adopted, they marked a crucial turning point in the conception of world standard time. As Adam Barrows argues in *The Cosmic Time of Empire*, the Prime Meridian Conference represents a “signal moment in the history of modernity,” shifting the scale of modern time from the local to the global.³² This scalar shift further exposed the deeply political dimensions of modern time. While proponents of temporal standardization dreamed of transforming the world “into one great cosmopolitan timepiece,” the dream of “cosmopolitan” universality was also a dream of global homogenization, imperial expansion, and economic globalization.³³

As global standard time became the norm at the start of the 20th century, a range of novelists, poets, and artists became attuned to the political stakes of temporal experience. This is the point at which modern time meets modernist aesthetics.

Modernism is perhaps the preeminent aesthetic of time. Modernist writers displayed “a near obsessive fixation with time,”³⁴ as they sought to depict the complexities of both public and private time. The modernist obsession with time is evident in its very self-conception as an artistic movement. Ezra Pound’s famous directive to “make it new,” for instance, established the modernist avant-garde’s commitment to novelty and rupture: the movement’s sense of itself as a decisive break from a now outmoded artistic past. The relation between avant-garde movements and the temporalities of innovation and revolution was made even more explicit by the Italian Futurists, who embraced war, technology, and speed as the fundamental aesthetic facts of the new world of the 20th

century. By celebrating the “beauty of speed,” the Futurists understood themselves to be reacting against artistic and political movements that did not accept the accelerated realities of the present moment. As F. T. Marinetti wrote in the 1909 “Futurist Manifesto,” “Up to now, literature has extolled a contemplative stillness, rapture, and reverie. We intend to glorify aggressive action, a restive wakefulness, life at the double.”³⁵

Yet the Futurist celebration of speed and the avant-garde dedication to novelty represent only one side of modernism’s complicated aesthetic of time. The best-known feature of modernist time is its relation to the inner workings of consciousness. From James Joyce’s use of stream-of-consciousness to Marcel Proust’s exploration of memory and recollection to Gertrude Stein’s and William Faulkner’s deployment of repetition, modernist writers used the nonlinear, discontinuous time of consciousness to interrupt the standard, linear time of the present. Critics have tended to read modernism as defined primarily by this turn inward. According to the dominant critical view, the aim of modernism was, as Kern puts it, to explore “the heterogeneity of private time and its conflict with public time.”³⁶ (The modernist interest in escaping clock time is signaled for Kern by, among other things, the prevalence of broken watches in the modernist novel.³⁷) Indeed, at this historical moment, the exploration of private time was not confined to the sphere of literature. With the rise of psychoanalysis and phenomenology, and in the writings of Sigmund Freud (whose notions of trauma and repetition implied an unconscious time that worked differently than conscious time), William James (who coined the phrase “stream-of-thought”), Henri Bergson (for whom time was not a discrete present but a fluid “duration” that folded in past and future), and Edmund Husserl (who sought to analyze “internal time-consciousness”), a range of new philosophical tools for understanding the time of the mind developed directly alongside modernist literature. Nevertheless, it is important to note that modernist authors were equally attuned to the social and political dynamics of time. This is most obviously the case in a novel like Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*, which revolves around a plot to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. But one might also recall that both Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* take place over the course of a single day, suggesting an explicit concern with the social structuring of time. Furthermore, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa’s flashbacks are regularly interrupted by the chiming of Big Ben, which signals the temporal regulation that underwrites British identity in the post-World War I present. In these and other ways, the modernist novel can be understood not simply as a retreat into private time, but as an engaged meditation on the nature of public time in an age of global standardization.³⁸

Non-Modern Time

The philosopher Walter Benjamin lodged what remains one of the most influential and frequently cited critiques of modern time in his 1940 essay “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” For Benjamin, the “homogenous, empty time” of historical progression is the pernicious myth used to justify the barbarism of modern history. Rather than a logical “chain of events,” history must be seen as “one single catastrophe.”³⁹ From that perspective, it becomes possible to burst the myth of a continuous, sequential time and to rescue the forgotten or suppressed past.⁴⁰ The philosophical tool necessary to “make the continuum of history explode” is, for Benjamin, the concept of “messianic time.”⁴¹ Messianic time, the “time of the now” (*Jetztzeit*), offers a way of understanding time not as steady and progressive but as revolutionary and explosive. Against the rationalized continuum of modern time, Benjamin reintroduces a theological conception of temporality: an idea of now-time that fills every present moment with messianic, transformative potential.

Since Benjamin, the dominance of modern time has been challenged from a range of disciplinary perspectives. In his classic book *Time and the Other*, the anthropologist Johannes Fabian explains how modern time underlies the anthropological notion of otherness, as accusations of primitiveness and backwardness represent “the Other” in terms of temporal distance. Fabian’s central insight is that “*geopolitics* has its ideological foundation in *chronopolitics*.”⁴² That is, geographical relations of power are shored up through a temporal discourse that describes different populations as belonging to different times. This temporal discourse functions through what Fabian calls “the denial of coevalness”⁴³: the refusal of the West to see other societies as existing on the same temporal plane. Because modern time is so relentlessly forward-moving, so preoccupied with linear progress and development, temporality itself becomes a way to divide ostensibly “advanced” or “up-to-date” societies from “backward” ones. Following a model of modern time rendered as linear development and social evolution, various cultures can be measured according to a single metric of civilizational “progress,” and thus compared to one another in terms of time. Every one of the signal concepts of modernity — “[c]ivilization, evolution, development, acculturation, modernization (and their cousins, industrialization, urbanization)”⁴⁴—implies this kind of comparative temporal framework, in which time itself becomes a metaphor for cultural difference.

Fabian’s work makes clear how the imperial and colonial societies of the West are able to conceive non-Western societies as “primitive” or behind the times through recourse to modernity’s dominant timeline. The project of colonialism is thus justified as the need to help other societies “catch up”: to assimilate them to modern time. With this justification

in mind, the critique of modern time has been a particularly salient feature of postcolonial theory. As Dipesh Chakrabarty argues in *Provincializing Europe*, the framework of a “single and secular historical time” is insufficient for understanding the political conditions of colonial and postcolonial India, where modern forms of political subjectivity go hand in hand with ostensibly “premodern” forms of religious belief.⁴⁵ Indian modernity “brings gods and spirits into the domain of the political.”⁴⁶ In doing so, it mixes secular and spiritual temporalities, revealing the fundamental heterogeneity of time in the present. The heterogeneity of modern and religious times that gives rise to the modern political subject in India represents what Chakrabarty calls the “time-knots” of history: the multiple, disjunctive experiences of time that underlie every purportedly homogeneous historical moment. Rejecting the denial of coevalness that disavows the past in order to found the modern, colonial present, Chakrabarty challenges us to rethink “how the archaic comes into the modern”: not as a trace of the past “but as something constitutive of the present.”⁴⁷

The anthropological and postcolonial critiques of modern time have also been taken up in medieval studies, which makes similar objections to the temporal assumptions of modernity. For medievalists, accusations of primitiveness are a function not just of anthropological discourses in the present, but also of historical accounts of the actual “premodern” past. From the standpoint of modernity, the premodern is characterized as having no operative conception of time whatsoever. Explicitly allying herself with the project of postcolonial theory, Kathleen Davis argues in *Periodization and Sovereignty* that “studies of the politics of time” invariably exclude the Middle Ages, thereby implying that the medieval age had no “*real, meaningful*” sense of historical time: that it was “untemporalized, and thus apolitical and historical.”⁴⁸ One of the many problems with this view of the Middle Ages, Davis contends, is that it dramatically oversimplifies the multiple, competing notions of time that shape every historical era. As Davis succinctly puts it, “There is no single ‘medieval’ conception of time.”⁴⁹ Accordingly, there can be no single “modern” conception of time either. And if there is no single, epoch-defining concept of time in either period, then there is no self-evident way to divide the modern from the medieval in terms of temporality in the first place. Instead, it is that very division itself—as a critical as well as political act—that becomes the means to both invent and confirm certain ideological assumptions about the “homogenized historical time” of modernity.⁵⁰

Another major critique of modern time comes by way of queer theory. As queer theorists have turned their attention to the topic of “queer temporalities,” they have sought to recover those aspects of time—anachronism, backwardness, non-maturation, and non-futurity—that are traditionally discounted by modernity. From the perspective of queer theory, modern time can be understood as *straight time*: the linear time of economic

development, national progress, and heterosexual reproduction. This kind of straight time produces what Elizabeth Freeman calls “chrononormativity,” a normativity defined by a reproductive, generational, and unerringly forward-moving relation to time. As Freeman argues in *Time Binds*, “being normatively ‘modern’” can best be understood as “living a coordinated, carefully syncopated tempo” of work, leisure, and reproduction, a tempo dictated by both nations and corporations.⁵¹ By contrast, queer temporalities offer “points of resistance” to the “temporal order” of modern chrononormativity.⁵² As Jack Halberstam puts it in *In a Queer Time and Place*, the normative times of modernity—maturation, marriage, reproduction, inheritance—are disrupted by the “strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices” that emerge out of queer subcultures.⁵³ For Halberstam, queer time is perhaps most paradigmatically visible at the end of the 20th century in gay communities affected by the AIDS crisis, where the very notion of the future has been “severely diminished.” But the queer time of the AIDS crisis involves not only the “compression” of time and the “annihilation” of the future. More powerfully, it also evokes “the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions” of chrononormativity.⁵⁴ Other examples of the unscripted, resistant potential of queer temporality include Lee Edelman’s critique of reproductive futurism, Valerie Rohy’s recovery of anachronism, Kathryn Bond Stockton’s theory of “growing sideways,” and Carolyn Dinshaw’s non-historicist method of “touching across the past.”⁵⁵ Across this wide range of theoretical projects, queer temporality offers a way to resist the confines of modern time by reimagining how the categories of past, present, and future might imaginatively and unexpectedly interact.

National Time

The development of a modern conception of time is inseparable from the rise of the modern nation-state. The mutually constitutive relationship between time and the nation has been most influentially articulated by Benedict Anderson, who in *Imagined Communities* argues that the development of nationalism and the consolidation of national belonging starting in the 18th century was dependent on a new understanding of temporality. For Anderson, the “imagined” notion of the nation—an abstraction that cannot be physically experienced—depends, first and foremost, on the apprehension of shared time. To understand oneself as sharing time with others is to rely on a notion of *simultaneity*: a shared temporal sphere in which multiple events can be understood as taking place at the same time, according to the same set of temporal measures—namely, the clock and the calendar. Clock-time and calendar-time are forms of what Anderson (borrowing somewhat idiosyncratically from Benjamin) calls “homogenous empty time”:

homogenous because it is determined by a shared, standard measure; empty because it can be filled with all of the different everyday acts and events that comprise life within the imagined boundaries of the nation.⁵⁶

The emergent sense of simultaneity that shaped the nationalist imaginary was, according to Anderson, specifically literary in origin. People first learned about simultaneous time from the narrative structure of the realist novel, a genre that likewise emerged in Europe in the 18th century. In Anderson's reading, the realist novel offered a narrative model of simultaneity, showing its readers how parallel plots could be understood as occurring within a single, universalized timeframe—a timeframe that could only be seen as a whole by the reader herself. The novel thus demonstrated to its readers how multiple narrative events could take place simultaneously without those events' actors being aware of each other. But it was not just the realist novel that forged a sense of simultaneous national time. While the novel allowed readers to understand their own imagination as the unifying or homogenizing foundation of simultaneous time, a different form of print culture—the newspaper—showed readers their own contingent, fleeting place in a national community shaped by the day-to-day passing of time. The “calendrical coincidence”⁵⁷ of the newspaper, signaled by the date at the top of each edition, provided the crucial through-line unifying the otherwise unrelated stories printed therein. The newspaper's narrative coherence was thus founded on the single shared date on which all the narrated events happened. And that datedness not only brought together the articles it printed; it also brought together the public that was reading it. Given the fact that the newspaper was printed under the assumption that it would be relevant to—and thus read on—only one day, the newspaper guaranteed an “extraordinary mass ceremony” of reading that was premised above all on its “simultaneous consumption.”⁵⁸ Not only would one read the newspaper in order to discover the hidden narrative coherence of the single date. One would also read it under the imagined but entirely plausible assumption that everyone else was reading it at the same time. Between the narrative simultaneity of the multi-plot novel and the simultaneous reading community instantiated by the newspaper, what Anderson calls “the secular, historically clocked imagined community” of the nation first comes into being through the shared temporalities of both writing and reading.⁵⁹

Anderson's theory of national time has been as influential as it has been contested. From the perspective of postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha was one of the first critics to argue, contra Anderson, that “it is imperative to question theories of the horizontal, homogenous empty time of the national narrative.”⁶⁰ Such questioning is necessary to account for the marginal, the minority, and the postcolonial. Is the temporal experience of imagined community really the same—really so homogenous—for everyone? Bhabha's answer is no. In his well-known essay “DissemiNation,” Bhabha argues that simultaneous time does not simply consolidate a shared sense of the nation; it also produces drastically uneven and

unequal ways in which different communities are allowed into—or excluded from—national belonging and legal citizenship. In Bhabha's view, Anderson misses the "incommensurable temporalities" that interrupt "cultural homogeneity and democratic anonymity."⁶¹ The incommensurable temporalities of nationhood are visible, first and foremost, in the basic temporal contradiction between narration and narrative. Because the imagined community of the nation has to be narrated over time, there is always a temporal lag between the process of narration and the final signification of national meaning.⁶² In failing to grapple with the "alienating and iterative time of the sign," Anderson fails to grasp the inescapable lag that shapes signification and storytelling alike: the time lag between story and storyteller, national narrative and the people doing the narrating. The "processual and performative" time of national narrative refutes the nation's claim to perfect temporal coherence and presence.⁶³ A "nation's people," Bhabha argues, always "must be thought in double-time"⁶⁴: as both the objects of a national narrative about the past and the subjects or tellers of that narrative in the present. But the "double-time" of the nation is not purely an issue of narrative. It is also concretely tied to "minority discourses that speak betwixt and between times and places."⁶⁵ These are the discourses of the subaltern, the postcolonial, the migrant, and the exile, who exist in different, subversive relation to both the geographic and the temporal boundaries of the nation. While the nation stakes a claim to being the benchmark of universal time, the condition of postcoloniality implies an alternative temporality that offers "a strange, empowering knowledge for the migrant"⁶⁶: a knowledge of the discontinuities and inequalities that are concealed beneath the façade of universal national time.

Drawing on Bhabha's pioneering critique of Anderson, critics have continued to explore the multiple, incommensurable temporalities that represent the heterogeneous truth behind the fantasy of homogenous national time. In the context of the 19th-century United States, for instance, Dana Luciano and Lloyd Pratt have both shown how American identity was forged not through the progressive time of national destiny but through a series of discontinuous, even contradictory temporalities. In *Arranging Grief*, Luciano argues that the linear, progressive time of 19th-century modernity was shadowed and subtly undermined in the United States by the persistence of a distinctly non-modern, "sacred" experience of time, which was registered in the embodied rituals of grieving and mourning.⁶⁷ In broader terms but with similar aims, Pratt's *Archives of American Time* offers a "counterhistory of time" that demonstrates how 19th-century American writers cast doubt on the "homogeneously linear time" of American nationalism by giving form to a range of competing local temporalities.⁶⁸ For Pratt, it is precisely the diversity of temporalities we find in antebellum American literature that reveals the extent to which the consolidation of "national and racial identity" was less enacted than inhibited in this period through the fracturing of time.⁶⁹ In Pratt's telling, the archive of multiple temporalities in the American 19th century is a record of the failure to rally around

“America’s common time” of progress and national destiny—a failure to secure a single temporal understanding of what it meant to be American.⁷⁰

In a national context, the question of time is strongly linked to the question of race. Recent critical work on African American literature has emphasized black writers’ sustained interest in the political dimensions of time. In *Each Hour Redeem: Time and Justice in African American Literature*, Daylanne English argues that because of the ways that black Americans have historically been denied personhood, citizenship, and rights, African American writing offers an ongoing meditation on the “profound connection between differential temporalities and differential justices in the United States.”⁷¹ The deferral of justice and the delay of equality are, as English reads them in authors from Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass to Amiri Baraka and Walter Mosley, fundamentally issues of time, as African American experience is perpetually out of sync with ostensible norms of justice, citizenship, and civil rights. Similarly, Anthony Reed’s *Freedom Time: The Poetics and Politics of Black Experimental Writing* uncovers the temporal politics of African American experimentalism, arguing that the black experimental tradition participates in a “larger contest over racial time” by imagining “forms of nonsynchronism in the present.”⁷²

That “nonsynchronism” represents the unequal time of black life not just in the United States but across the African diaspora. As Michael Hanchard argues in his indispensable essay “Afro-Modernity,” it is impossible to understand the African diaspora without reference to African-descended peoples’ unequal experience of nationally defined time. Hanchard’s central insight is that racial inequality must be understood as temporal inequality. The “inequalities of temporality” that define black experience form the core of what Hanchard calls “racial time.”⁷³ Racial time refers to the way that differences of power are experienced as differences of time. Slavery, then, is a power relation in which “no time solely belonged to the slave.”⁷⁴ In the post-emancipation era, the inequality of racial time is defined primarily by waiting, or temporal delay. In the United States, for instance, “to be black … meant that one had to wait for nearly everything.” When it came to education, transportation, police protection, and a whole host of other social services and legal rights, African Americans received access “only *after* those same services were provided for whites.”⁷⁵ Thus, as Hanchard understands it, “the struggle for black civil rights can be conceived of as a movement to reduce waiting” and thereby eliminate “the differentials of human time.”⁷⁶ While the fight against the temporal inequalities of racial injustice emerged in specific national contexts, it also crossed national boundaries. For Hanchard, the very possibility of black internationalism—of solidarity between Third World anticolonialism and US antiracism—depended on the common experience of racial time. The shared temporal inequalities of black experience helped forge a transnational

political movement whose aim was to both reclaim and reimagine the temporalities of black community.

Natural Time

Time may not be a fully natural thing, but modern conceptions of time have been powerfully shaped by discoveries in the natural and physical sciences. In 1687, Isaac Newton described what he called “absolute, true, and mathematical time,” a time that flowed “equally without relation to anything external.”⁷⁷ Time in the Newtonian universe was universal and unchanging, a consistent substance unto itself—the ether through which all things moved. The absolute time of Newtonian mechanics neatly paralleled the development of universal time in European modernity. But if physics began by thinking of time as pure, absolute, and objective, that view changed radically at the start of the 20th century, when physicists began to challenge Newton’s absolute notions of time and space. As Albert Einstein demonstrated in his general theory of relativity, “every reference body has its own particular time.”⁷⁸ If this was true, then there could be no single mathematical time flowing equally through the universe; on the contrary, the universe now had to be understood as being composed of an infinite number of different times. (In his development of the idea of the chronotope, Bakhtin credits Einstein’s theory of relativity for his understanding of the term “space-time.”⁷⁹) The emergence of quantum mechanics similarly transformed the nature of time, as quantum physicists such as Werner Heisenberg argued that, at a subatomic level of observation, ostensibly immutable temporal laws such as cause and effect cease to obtain.

Before the radical reimagining of time in quantum physics, 19th-century work in the natural sciences had already begun to reshape conventional assumptions about the scale and scope of human time. Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution revealed the long-term processes of random variation and mutation through which biological life is formed, slowly and incrementally, over time. To consider evolution was to be forced to immediately reconsider not just the exceptionality but also the temporality of human life, as humans were now just one more species who had been shaped by the uncertain and radically contingent process of natural selection. Some critics, including Johannes Fabian, have argued that Darwin’s theory of evolution was built on a theory of time that was inherently “regressive” and “reactionary.” In Fabian’s view, Darwin hastened the “naturalization” of progressive time that would come to link the emerging discipline of anthropology (which relied on a theory of *cultural* evolution) to the ideologies of colonialism and imperialism.⁸⁰ Yet critical theorists have also begun to rethink Darwin’s legacy in relation to his more nuanced and radical rethinking of the nature of time. At the

forefront of this critical movement is the feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz, who in *The Nick of Time* depicts Darwin as a thinker who, laying the groundwork for philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Bergson, “revolutionized” our understanding of the relation between bodily life and time. In Grosz’s view, Darwin was one of the first thinkers to “introduce indeterminacy into the Newtonian universe,” reimagining temporality as a process based on “the accidental, the random, the unexpected.”⁸¹ Darwin’s theory of temporal indeterminacy was rooted in an evolutionary future that, due to random variation, could not be predicted based on past or present conditions. Evolution is thus, at heart, a theory of “the emergence in time of biological innovation and surprise.”⁸² Privileging the temporal flux of genealogy and descent over the mechanical laws of causality and reproduction, the theory of evolution reconceived the temporality of biological life as an unpredictable and open-ended process of transformation.

Alongside evolution, the other major rethinking of natural time in the 19th century was the discovery of “deep time,” or geological time. Thomas Hutton’s *Theory of the Earth* (1795) and Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830) were among the first works to propose that the earth had been formed through geological processes extending over hundreds of millions of years. The discovery of deep time had serious political and existential implications. As Stephen Jay Gould explains, the “traditional concept of a young earth, ruled by human will” was profoundly threatened by the “incomprehensible immensity” of geological time, which both dwarfed and decentered human life on earth.⁸³ Geological time forced humans to drastically recalibrate their understandings of time and history. “In geologic time,” writes the climate scientist David Archer, “a century is nothing, an eyeblink.”⁸⁴ In the context of the geologic history of the planet, then, the present of human time and human institutions is practically nonexistent, a fraction of a second in comparison to 600 million years of glacially paced geological change. To think deep time is to confront—in the form of timescales well beyond the bounds of human experience and cognition—the very limits of conceptual thought.

Today, the dilemmas posed by geological time have become all the more urgent in the context of climate change. As the economic and environmental historian Fernand Braudel reminds us, it was not so long ago that historians assumed there was no temporal aspect of the climate at all. For a long time, writes Braudel, “all the books and studies were agreed on the immutability of the climate.”⁸⁵ In fact, however, the earth’s climate has long been subject to change, due to both natural variation and human intervention. The increasingly rapid rate at which the climate has been altered in the wake of mass industrialization and the conversion to a global fossil-fuel economy has led stratigraphers to suggest that we might now be living in a new geological epoch: the Anthropocene. Given that the epochs that preceded the Anthropocene—the Holocene, the Pleistocene,

and the Pliocene—tended to last millions of years, the possibility of a new geological epoch is not a temporal consideration to take lightly. Coined by the chemist Paul J. Crutzen and the biologist Eugene F. Stoermer in 2000, the Anthropocene denotes the geological era beginning roughly at the end of the 18th century when human action began to alter the geological and atmospheric processes of the planet.⁸⁶ In periodizing the history of human-induced climate change, the concept of the Anthropocene reminds us that this is a crisis that must be measured not just on a human timescale but also on a geological one; not just in years or decades but also in centuries and millennia. As Dipesh Chakrabarty argues in one of several influential essays on climate change, “The climate crisis produces problems that we ponder on very different and incompatible scales of time,” from the scale of capitalism to the scale of biological life to the scale of planetary history.⁸⁷ As the first of the geological-era concepts to take into account the consequences of human action—consequences that will continue to unfold over the next hundreds of thousands of years (which is the lifespan of carbon in the atmosphere)—the Anthropocene suggests that it is both profoundly difficult and increasingly urgent to think human time and geological time together.

The complex temporalities of the planet and the climate have drawn the sustained attention of literary scholars, who have begun to explore the specifically formal and representation dilemmas posed by climatological time. Tobias Menely, for instance, powerfully describes the “representational intractability of climatic temporality.”⁸⁸ Under the transformed climatological conditions that first became visible during the Industrial Revolution, “time loses its outline,” as it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish among religious, environmental, and industrial timelines.⁸⁹ To live amid the atmospheric fog of climate change is to live in a present whose historical conditions and temporal processes have become hazy and illegible. In a similar vein, Kate Marshall suggests that it is now impossible to read contemporary literature “without reference to the geological concept of the Anthropocene.”⁹⁰ The “Anthropocenic imagination” of the contemporary moment, Marshall argues, has radically transformed the temporal consciousness of contemporary fiction.⁹¹ The impact of the Anthropocene on literature and criticism alike is part of a larger turn that Mark McGurl has dubbed the “New Cultural Geology.” This critical framework includes a variety of contemporary theories and methods that have harnessed the alien timeframes of geological time in order to “crack open the carapace of human self-concern.”⁹² One of the first and most famous proponents of the geological turn in literary studies is Wai Chee Dimock, who argues that “world history begins” not with periodization but with “extended and nonstandardized duration.”⁹³ Dimock’s model for this kind of duration is the concept of “deep time,” which offers a critical framework for tracing the long-term global histories not just of the environment but also of religion, language, and literary genre. As Dimock argues in *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time*, the destabilizing scale shift of deep time offers an enlarged

critical perspective through which “the longitudes and latitudes of the planet and the full length of its recorded history” become a way to resituate national literatures within the temporal and spatial expanses of undifferentiated geological time.⁹⁴

But it is not just the inhuman timescale of the geological that has compelled critics to rethink time in the context of the environment. In his vital *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon argues that the neoliberal practice of exporting environmental risk to the Third World requires a whole new set of temporal frameworks for analyzing the delayed consequences of ecological calamities. “Slow violence,” as Nixon theorizes it, is “a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space.”⁹⁵ The slow violence of environmental crisis is not “spectacular and instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales.”⁹⁶ So slow as to be almost imperceptible, slow violence poses a crisis of both representation and action. Slow-motion catastrophes such as climate change, ocean acidification, and industrial accidents that poison communities for generations are exceedingly difficult to represent or narrate. Without narratives that can make clear the slow violence of such catastrophes, it can be difficult to mobilize against them. From the nonhuman duration of geological change to the inhuman atrocities of slow violence, the temporalities of the natural world profoundly challenge our basic capacity to both represent and respond to the conditions of environmental catastrophe.

Postmodern Time

While “postmodern” is certainly no longer the most timely or up-to-date term for describing the conditions of the contemporary moment, it remains a crucial starting point for understanding how the temporal index of the modern has continued to cast a shadow over discussions of time in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The very phrase “postmodern time” is, for many critics, a contradiction in terms. Conventional accounts of postmodern culture have held that what characterizes postmodernism—in opposition to modernism—is the diminishment of time in both cultural form and everyday life. This is the claim, most famously, of Fredric Jameson, for whom postmodernism constitutes (as he memorably puts it in the title of a later essay) “The End of Temporality.” In several decades of work tracing the cultural shift from time to space—from the modernist mysteries of temporality, memory, and consciousness to the postmodernist estrangements of urban life, globalization, and digital interconnectedness—Jameson documents the “dramatic and alarming shrinkage of existential time” in postmodern life.⁹⁷ The cultural logic of a society shaped by consumption and obsolescence, postmodernism

produces a kind of time that is “isolated, disconnected, and discontinuous.”⁹⁸ As time becomes fragmented into “a series of perpetual presents,” one is left with the sense of living in an isolated and temporary moment, caught up in the ceaseless flow of “a perpetual change that obliterates traditions.”⁹⁹ Challenging a more traditional “experience of temporal continuity,” postmodernism’s fragmented, “schizophrenic” temporality represents the historical disappearance of time itself.¹⁰⁰

The “alarming shrinkage” of time in postmodernity can also be understood in relation to what David Harvey calls, in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, the “time-space compression” of advanced capitalism. For Harvey, the rise of postmodernism is connected to shift in the 1960s from Fordist assembly-line production to an economy of “flexible accumulation.” The flexibilities of new forms of labor management like outsourcing and subcontracting allow production time and turnover time to be radically sped up; exchange and consumption accelerate in turn. These processes of acceleration are mutually reinforcing. The more quickly goods are consumed, disposed of, or given over to planned obsolescence, the more a commitment to ever-faster production times is justified. For Harvey, the “hallmark of postmodern living” is the “temporary contract,” which best exemplifies the “volatility,” “ephemerality,” “instantaneity,” and “disposability” of postmodern time.¹⁰¹

Of course, there is something familiar about Harvey’s emphasis on “the fleeting, the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent.”¹⁰² In fact, the words that Harvey uses here to catalogue the temporal experience of postmodern life are the very same words Baudelaire used in 1863 to describe his experience of *modern* life. (“By modernity,” Baudelaire wrote, “I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent.”) The echo between Baudelaire’s modernity and Harvey’s postmodernity is no accident. As Harvey himself explains, the logic of postmodern time is less a decisive break from capitalist modernity than a perpetuation and intensification of it. Harvey’s allusion to Baudelaire underscores how postmodern time-space compression both repeats and “exaggerates” the longer history of “capitalist procedures of modernization” stretching back into the 19th century, if not farther.¹⁰³ What defines the compressed, flexible time of postmodernity, then, is not its qualitative difference from the time of modernity but its exaggeration and intensification of modern time. Postmodern time is modern time multiplied: even more temporary (because of newly flexible labor arrangements), even more accelerated (because of sped-up production and consumption), even more instantly obsolete (because there are now so many more products and experiences to choose from and dispose of).

How do we get, though, from the “compression” of time to the “end” of temporality? Harvey’s and Jameson’s accounts intersect in several significant ways, most notably in their descriptions of how all the routines and activities of daily life—work, leisure,

consumption—have been fragmented into smaller and smaller units of time. For Harvey and Jameson, the ultimate consequences of temporal compression concern the diminishing horizons of political possibility. The pairing of acceleration and contingency in a postmodern regime of flexible accumulation terminates in nothing less than “the loss of a sense of the future.”¹⁰⁴ In a faster and more precarious world, the temporal continuities that define individual identity, social belonging, and utopian desire disappear. This is how compression progresses toward zero. At a certain point in the ceaseless speed-up of production, circulation, and consumption, the loss of history and the aspiration to instantaneity become not forms of time but instruments of time’s negation.

In her book *Chronoschisms*, Ursula Heise offers a more hopeful account of the transition from modernist to postmodernist time. Heise agrees with Jameson and Harvey that postmodernism marks a point at which “individual as well as social and historical time” has been weakened.¹⁰⁵ For Heise, however, the narrative experiments of the postmodern novel represent an alternative to the weakening of temporal experience that has occurred in the context of an increasingly media-driven culture. Taking a “very different approach to time” than their modernist predecessors, postmodern novelists highlight the complexity, contingency, and nonlinearity of time.¹⁰⁶ In doing so, they emphasize not the psychological experience of time but the newly “labyrinthine” and fragmented logics of time that shape postmodern society.¹⁰⁷ These temporal logics tend not to be reducible to a single human subject; instead, they are expressed only at the level of the postmodern text as a whole. For Heise, the narrative expression of a time that is textual as opposed to psychological affords a crucial opportunity for defamiliarization and critical distance. Displacing both social progress and human psychology as frameworks for representing time, the “multiple alternative temporalities that structure postmodern novels” force readers to reflect on the ways that time is scientifically and technologically determined in the postmodern present—and to think beyond those forms of determination in order to imagine what it might look like for time to be told differently.¹⁰⁸

Today most critics agree that our contemporary moment can no longer be accurately described as “postmodern.”¹⁰⁹ Yet Heise’s emphasis on the imbrication of technology and time in postmodern culture importantly foreshadows the centrality of networked information technologies to conceptions of time in the globally interconnected, digitally synchronized world of the 21st century. In *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, Jonathan Crary replaces what Jameson called the “perpetual present” of postmodern culture with an updated account of the “24/7” present of digital capitalism.¹¹⁰ “24/7” is the mantra of a time in which the technologically mediated habits of work and consumption have expanded to occupy every waking moment of our lives. As Crary describes it, the “uninterrupted operation of markets, information networks, and other systems”

transforms time itself into “a principle of continuous functioning.”¹¹¹ The nonstop time of 24/7 culture represents the closest humans have come to the annihilation of time altogether. The around-the-clock functioning of digital life is effectively a “non-time,” a “time without sequence or recurrence.”¹¹² It is a time that barely resembles time at all. As digital technologies come to demand more of our attention and to occupy more of our time, so does something else: work. In a culture of 24/7, it’s increasingly hard to know when—if ever—we’re really off the clock. As digital tools make it possible to work from anywhere at any time, the increasing “indistinction between the times of work and of leisure”¹¹³ suggests a somewhat different way to understand the end of temporality in the contemporary era. It is not necessarily that time as such has ended. It may simply be that, given all the extra hours most people work, what has ended is the idea that there is any time left that truly belongs to us.

Alongside the new rhythms of work, consumption, and networked life that coordinate time in the contemporary moment are new strategies for the monetization of time itself. These strategies fall under the rubric of financialization, which provides one last piece in the puzzle that is 21st-century time. As Robin Blackburn points out, finance has an essential “temporal dimension.”¹¹⁴ The “financial revolution” of the late 20th and early 21st centuries involves the invention of a range of financial instruments, such as derivatives and credit default swaps, designed to profit off ever-smaller increments of time. While stock market bets and futures trades in the first half of the 20th century depended on the relation to a future that had not arrived yet, contemporary financial speculation involves bringing the future into the present, where it can be assessed, managed, and more thoroughly monetized. Financialization thus changes the very temporal fabric of capitalism. Long-term investment, no less than the creation of value through the exploitation of labor, takes time. Finance, by contrast, promises a world in which time need no longer be an obstacle to profit. The “short-term gains” made possible by financial derivatives and computer trading work to garner “an immediate profit at the expense of what might have been a long-term social surplus.”¹¹⁵ Contemporary financial instruments replace the duration of long-term investment with the volatile temporalities of immediacy and instantaneity. These temporalities abolish the very idea of the future. As the speed of financial trading comes to be measured in nanoseconds, cycles of boom and bust are transformed into daily, even hourly, events. If 24/7 time is so incessant that it ceases to feel like time at all, financial time is so infinitesimally short that you are unlikely to realize it has already passed you by.

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(1.) Mark Currie, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 2.

(2.) Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 35.

(3.) Ibid., 85.

(4.) Ibid., 92.

(5.) Ibid., 157.

(6.) M. M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

(7.) Ibid., 87, 91.

(8.) Ibid., 152.

(9.) Ibid., 206.

(10.) Ibid., 206, 207.

(11.) Ibid., 245–249.

(12.) Ibid., 243.

(13.) Ibid., 250, 254.

(14.) Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 99.

(15.) Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 34.

(16.) Paul Ricoeur, "Time and Narrative," in *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*, ed. Brian Richardson (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 35.

(17.) Ibid., 36, 38.

(18.) Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

(19.) Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995), 10.

(20.) Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 52.

(21.) E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 95.

(22.) Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 54, 9. For a related account of acceleration and open-endedness in modern time, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); and Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

(23.) Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 14.

(24.) Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: New Press, 1998), 3.

(25.) Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 16, 15.

(26.) Ibid., 18.

(27.) Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), 4, 12.

(28.) *Ibid.*, 13.

(29.) Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 11.

(30.) *Ibid.*, 12.

(31.) *Ibid.*, 12.

(32.) Adam Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire: Modern Britain and World Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 1.

(33.) *Ibid.*, 52.

(34.) *Ibid.*, 7.

(35.) F. T. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2006), 13.

(36.) Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 16.

(37.) Stephen Kern, *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 110.

(38.) For a thorough account of the politics of modernist temporality, see Barrows, *Cosmic Time of Empire*.

(39.) Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 257.

(40.) *Ibid.*, 262.

(41.) *Ibid.*, 261, 263.

(42.) Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 144.

(43.) *Ibid.*, 31.

(44.) *Ibid.*, 17.

(45.) Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 18, 17.

(46.) *Ibid.*, 14.

(47.) *Ibid.*, 251.

(48.) Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 1, 104.

(49.) *Ibid.*, 104.

(50.) *Ibid.*, 20.

(51.) Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xii.

(52.) *Ibid.*, xxii.

(53.) Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1.

(54.) *Ibid.*, 2.

(55.) See Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Valerie Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009); Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); and Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

(56.) Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 24.

(57.) *Ibid.*, 33.

(58.) *Ibid.*, 35.

(59.) *Ibid.*, 35.

(60.) Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 152.

(61.) *Ibid.*, 158.

(62.) *Ibid.* Bhabha is here drawing on the classic distinction between *fabula* and *sjužet*, or story and narrative. For more on the temporal stakes of that distinction, see the section on “Narrative Time” above.

(63.) Ibid., 159.

(64.) Ibid., 145.

(65.) Ibid., 158.

(66.) Ibid., 168.

(67.) See Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

(68.) Lloyd Pratt, *Archives of American Time: Literature and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 6.

(69.) Ibid., 3.

(70.) Ibid., 4.

(71.) Daylanne K. English, *Each Hour Redeem: Time and Justice in African American Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 3.

(72.) Anthony Reed, *Freedom Time: The Poetics and Politics of Black Experimental Writing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 207.

(73.) Michael Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora," *Public Culture* 11.1 (1999): 253, 256.

(74.) Ibid., 256.

(75.) Ibid., 263.

(76.) Ibid., 265.

(77.) Isaac Newton, quoted in Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 11.

(78.) Albert Einstein, quoted in Kern, *Culture of Time and Space*, 19.

(79.) Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope," 84.

(80.) Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 16-17.

(81.) Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 9, 7.

(82.) Ibid., 19.

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