37

QUEERING AFFECTS, TEMPORALITIES, AND HISTORIES

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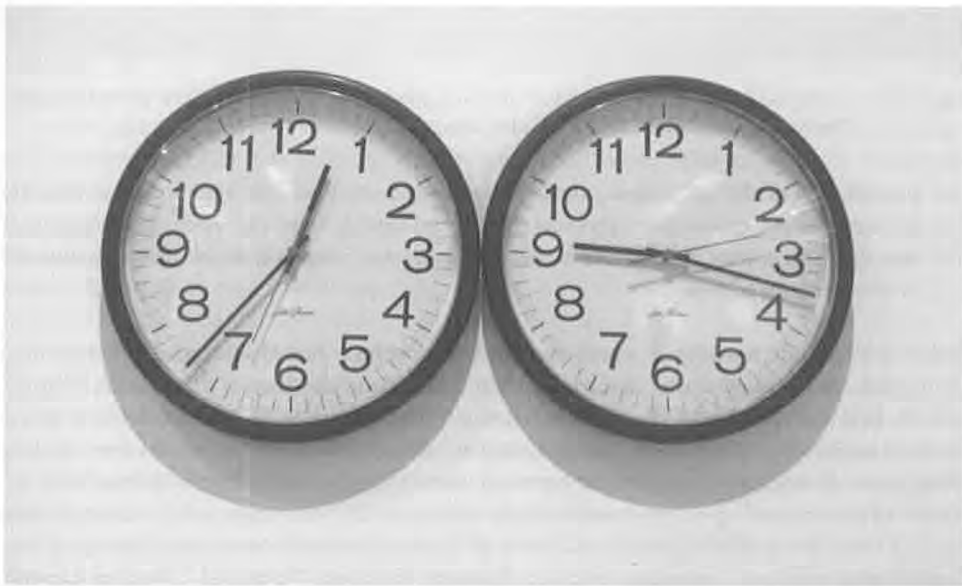

Figure 37.1 Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Perfect Lovers),* 1987–1990. Courtesy of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. © Estate of Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Two black-rimmed clocks sit side by side, touching gently, ticking the time away. "Untitled" (Perfect Lovers) invites a meditation about, around and between time, sexuality, and affect (Figure 37.1). The two clocks, utilitarian in their identical, generic office form and function, seem to be quite far from invoking fleshliness, lovers, touch, or intimacy. And yet, the indexing of affect is present, brought to the fore not in blatant embodiment, but in the subtlety of temporal difference. In the gallery label of another Gonzalez-Torres work, "Untitled" (Perfect Lovers), 1991 (Figure 37.2), the 2019 MoMA explains:

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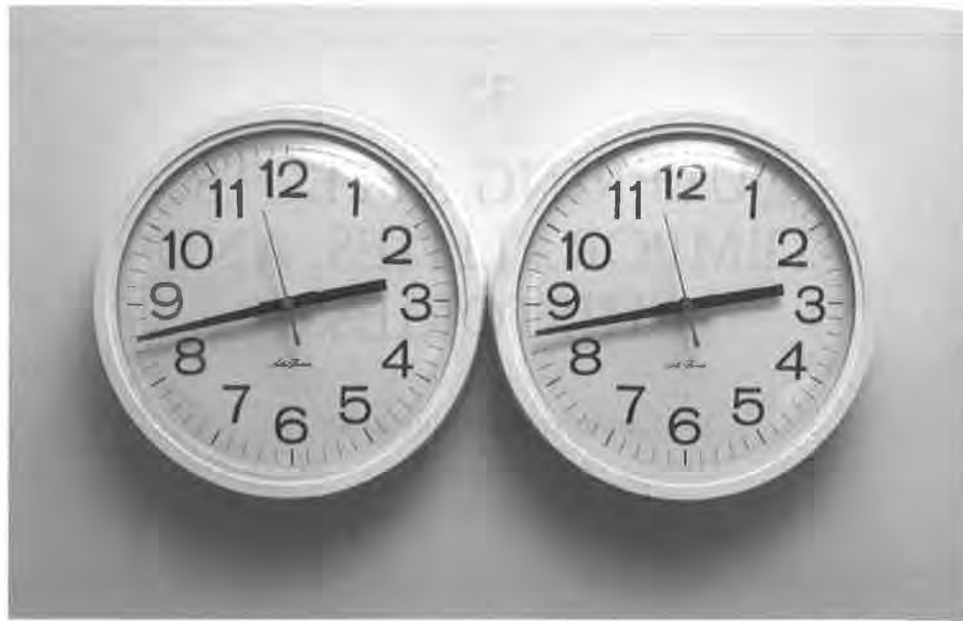

Figure 37.2 Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Perfect Lovers)*, 1991. Courtesy of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. © Estate of Felix Gonzalez-Torres

> Initially set to the same time, these identical battery-powered clocks will eventually fall out of sync, or may stop entirely. Conceived shortly after Gonzalez-Torres's partner was diagnosed with AIDS, this work uses everyday objects to track and measure the inevitable flow of time.

And yet, this is not entirely accurate; the artist had probed, played with, and experimented with clocks in other artworks, as early as 1986 (Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation website, n.d). In fact, the MoMA label's neat explanation points to a specific kind of desire: a desire for the temporality of causality. Diagnosis, then fear of mortality. The stories surrounding these artworks track the very tension between what might be called "straight time" that relies on and produces logical cause-and-effect, or smooth narrative continuity, versus another kind of time: the richly unpredictive nature of feeling, contradictions, attachments, desire, replete with prolepsis, nostalgia, fear, or slowness. Fittingly, "Untitled" (Perfect Lovers), 1987–90, specifies a range of dates. The artist's careful intentionality in crafting titles highlights a beautiful ambiguity to the artwork's own genesis, or the rich network of interpretive possibilities that are shut down by such an adherence to "straight time."

The clocks as identical "perfect lovers" are yoked, not by physical connection, but rather by more intangible resonances, flows, and sympathies—insofar as their sameness in form (the simple clock shape) may belie their intended identical function (the time that each clock tells and the tempo each performs). We are compelled to notice the subtle nuances and sounds of the hands' movements, or to scrutinize the slightest delay marring the synchrony; to pull a phrase from Elizabeth Freeman's work, time is what binds the two lover-clocks together. Gonzalez-Torres's art work thus draws our focus to the very ticking of time. Temporality is no longer simply a neutral concept represented by, or measured by, the clocks. The artwork renders time itself a ripe site of potential, affective force-relations.

Mathematically, we know that two perfect circles placed side-by-side will touch lightly, only at a single tangent point. And yet, "the touching rims of the clocks form the homo-infinity symbol familiar from many of Gonzalez-Torres's other works" (Rounthwaite 2010, 40). Gonzalez-Torres's figure of sameness also hearkens to a longer prehistory of erotically or affectively charged sameness. As early modern scholars Jeffrey Masten and Laurie Shannon have underscored, from Montaigne to Shakespeare, figures of identicality (often likeness between same-sex friends) were widely celebrated as an early modern queer trope. "The rhetoric of these relationships," writes Masten, "is centrally concerned with describing ideally persons of absolute identicality, indistinguishability, and interchangeability" (Masten 2016, 73–74); in these descriptions, sameness is experienced as pleasurable, intimate, even erotic. Sameness invites a back-and-forth motion of scrutiny: looking at yourself, and then the other, and then back at yourself; holding up your own traits and details through the lens of the other; imagining how the traits you treasure in the other are duplicated in yourself; calibrating movement, gesture, and tone to the other, and more. Such ideal identicality is relational, not ontological. It is formed *through* the back-and-forth evaluative movement. Ultimately, in the intensifications invited by sameness, in the temporalities that the clocks convey, in the folds between early modern and the present, and in the meta-narratives and temporalities (propagated by gallery labels or postfacto critiques), there is a "thickening" of temporality. Temporality, far from being a gimmicky concept, a metaphor for *carpe diem* or a utilitarian measurement, becomes affectively charged, richer, and almost sensible.

In fact, the "thickening" that the artworks convey is quite similar to a dramatic paradigm shift of temporality itself in the early modern period in Western Europe. Prior to late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century technological innovations by Christian Huygens and Robert Hooke in France and England, clocks were not portable, and were far from precise. Temporality was revolutionized by a hand that could track the increments of seconds on a watch. As Stuart Sherman explains,

> By 1670, a third hand had begun to appear on the most costly clocks; set within a small dial of its own, it tracked the seconds, spans so small as to elude all notice only a few years before [...] with every swing of the pendulum, the ear hears the clock click and the eye sees the hand move. Technically, Huygens accomplished simply a change in scale, a sixtyfold improvement in accuracy [...] From the vantage of the senses, though, the change in scale amounted virtually to a change in kind: the new clocks were the first to make the progress of time available to the senses by way of a running report.
>
> *(Sherman 1996, 5)*

Such a new temporal sensorium "called attention away from endpoints and invested it in middles—of the current hour, of the ongoing life—that were sharply defined and indefinitely extended" (5). Indeed, building on Sherman's observation that a "change in scale" yielded a "change in kind," I have elsewhere proposed that this innovation yielded a new "onto-epistemology" of temporality (Row 2022, 23).

"Affect can be understood," write Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth in their introduction to the *Affect Theory Reader*,

> as a gradient of bodily capacity—a supple incrementalism of ever-modulating force-relations-that rises and falls not only along various rhythms and modalities of encounter but also through the troughs and sieves of sensation and sensibility, an

incrementalism that coincides with belonging to comportments of matter of virtually any and every sort.

(Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 61–63)

Gonzalez-Torres's work, like the early modern time pieces, indexes not only time, but also these ebbs and flows of temporal gradients, thereby fostering new and unexpected flows of affect. The clocks proleptically allude to the eventual undoing of this temporal flow: the slowing of the ticking hand, the last drawn breath. Finitude is gestured at lightly, only in the process of becoming. Significantly, rather than a binaristic relation to the end or renewed beginning, the clocks open up "a supple incrementalism of ever-modulating force-relations," or what Stuart Sherman might call attention paid to the "middles" of time. We are awakened to the tiniest tick, every clock-hand's lag, the impossibility of sustained perfection. Time is not just limited to endpoints or beginnings; we sense, sharply, the very passing of time itself.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres's works replicate the defamiliarized, keener sense of time that Sherman describes above, not through innovations in chronometric technology, but rather through the simplicity of pairing the clocks, imbuing them with animacy, titling them with the sentimental term "Perfect Lovers." We become intensely aware of the clocks' relation to, and difference from, one another. The clocks are just as bound in their "perfect" synchrony as in their asynchrony. As one clock slows or the other runs fast, *the temporal dissonance itself,* and the distance from identical temporal perfection, is the very measure of the pathos of a strange admixture: the fear of death, countered defiantly with a pair of inorganic plastic objects; the prosthesis of battery power and the tender fragility of the clock's movement relying entirely on this source; the frustration of the ever-futile striving for perfection, attunement, continuity. And yet, Gonzalez-Torres also folds optimism into this end: while on display, the clocks should be continuously running, slowing, falling in and out of synchrony, once a clock stops, both clocks should be immediately reset to the accurate local time. Everything can begin again. Love, loss, fear, desire, and longing are vibrantly present, but so too are the subtle stickiness and the incremental ebbs of affective force-relations wrought by such a complex sensation of time.

Chrononormativities

I highlight these two examples from art and history to show how temporality's naturalized and normal—even neutral—qualities can be both installed and disrupted. We remain cocooned within our settled, sedimented acceptance of temporality's nature, unless there is something unique (a technological innovation, a work of art) to radically defamiliarize it for us. "Chrononormativity," writes Elizabeth Freeman,

> is a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts [...] manipulations of time convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines, which in turn organize the value and meaning of time.
>
> *(Freeman 2010, 3)*

In other words, temporal norms beget a whole host of prejudices and hierarchies, which in turn reinforce temporal priorities: from race (cultures deemed "backward" or "not yet civilized" are considered lagging behind in modernization) to ableism (bodies and minds deemed intellectually or physically "slow"). But temporality also infuses assumptions and

norms around sexuality and gender, from expectations around the timing of reproduction to the imagined "good" of marriage and the longevity of the monogamous couple. José Esteban Muñoz draws upon Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* to show how queerness, and unexpected affective illuminations are key to jostling us out of a settled perspective. He critiques the futurity of straight time, a temporal hegemony that trades in "the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction" (Muñoz 2009, 22). In contrast to this impoverished view of the world,

> Queerness's time is a stepping out of the linearity of straight time [...] Straight time's "presentness" needs to be phenomenologically questioned, and this is the fundamental value of a queer utopian hermeneutics. Queerness's ecstatic and horizonal temporality is a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world.
>
> *(Muñoz 2009, 25)*

Without being too rosily optimistic about queer utopian possibility, Muñoz underscores that part of queer temporality's force derives from its ability to pry open the settledness of the "here and now" to offer a wider, richer perspective (or what he calls the *horizonal*). Significantly, Muñoz does not read this temporal derailment as a grand gesture of resistance; he calls it a mere "stepping out" of the expected linearity. Sara Ahmed explicitly links such linearity with the compulsory nature of straightness (straightness both as socio-cultural metaphor and as sexual orientation): "The normalization of heterosexuality as an orientation toward 'the other sex' can be redescribed in terms of the requirement to follow a straight line, whereby straightness gets attached to other values including decent, conventional, direct, and honest. (Ahmed 2006, 47). Muñoz's and Ahmed's methods align with the aforementioned attention to the subtler, incremental "ever-modulating force-relations" of affect (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 61). Such attention opens up the queer "ground that is shaped by the paths that we follow in deviating from the straight line." (Ahmed 2006, xxxi). Manipulations of time, then, can shift us out of the settledness of the world, fostering queer affect. In other words, the "given" world might be considered that which is oriented around, or by, the straightness of "straight time." Affect is significant because it serves as a measure of "a body's belonging to a world of encounters or a world's belonging to a body of encounters" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 68) and queer affect might be thought of as that which tracks such "unbelonging," however fleeting or overt. Queer affect thus sheds light on how the world-as-is tends to be governed by certain hegemonies and principles primarily linked to straightness, both as an orientation and as a metaphor for "decency" or "directness." Temporal disruptions, including unexpected recourses to a nostalgized past, or glimmers of a utopian future, jostles us out of the settledness of the given world while also opening up the possibility of other kinds of flows or forces of affect.

I argue in my book *Queer Velocities: Time, Sex and Biopower on the Early Modern Stage* (Row 2022) that the temporal innovations and epistemologies in early modern France can allow us to see these temporal-affective bindings and unbindings most clearly. Onstage, and especially in French neoclassical tragedy, sensations of slowness and haste, delay and rushing are interwoven with affect. Velocity, a term taken from physics to indicate a *speed with a directional component*, is a useful way to think of this intertwining between temporality and affect–for example when our lags or hastenings pull us in wayward directions, toward queer intensities or unexpected erotics. As I show, one example of these queer velocities can be found in Jean Racine's neoclassical tragedy *Andromaque* (1667). The eponymous queen and her infant son have been taken captive following Troy's defeat during the Trojan war. Andromaque is

now faced with a chilling ultimatum: she must marry her captor, King Pyrrhus, or allow her son, Astyanax, to be killed. Instead of immediately taking action—to marry and save her child, or to reject the marriage and doom him—she lingers in another, slower tempo. Rather than decide, Andromaque plaintively exclaims, "Ô cendres d'un époux! Ô Troyens! Ô mon père!/ Ô mon fils, que tes jours coûtent cher à ta mère" (III, 8, 1045–46; O, the ashes of a husband! O Trojans! O my father/ O my son, how dearly your days cost your mother)[1]. Crucially, while the list of people she invokes is not strange, in this list, instead of sighing for Hector, she specifically apostrophizes his *ashes*. This gesture is out of "line" with the expected behavior of a mother, to build on Ahmed's conceptualization of the disciplinary nature of "straightness." Andromaque's tempo–diegetically inactive, yet actively engaged with an inanimate object—swerves away from the normative action expected of a mother, widow, or a captive. But her temporal tarrying opens up an entire other realm of affective burgeoning. Other scholars have previously remarked on Andromaque's "perverse" attachment to her dead husband. In the play, Andromaque's friend Céphise counsels, "Madame, à votre époux c'est être assez fidèle:/ Trop de vertu pourrait vous rendre criminelle" (III, 8, 981–82; Madam, you've been faithful enough to your spouse/ Too much virtue could render you a criminal). Andromaque's very lingering with the ashes blooms open a whole site of unexpected, animate affects as Andromaque speaks to the ash as a precious, vibrant remainder of mourning and loss; consults the ashes for guidance, animating them in conversation; and posits the ash as that which might demand fidelity or love. At key moments in the drama, instead of responding to the queries of (living) others, she turns to rhetorical questions (another form of linguistic stasis) that center around the ashes of her husband: "Aux cendres d'un époux doit-elle enfin sa flamme?" (I, iv, 358; "Does she still owe a husband's ashes her flame?") or "Est-ce là l'ardeur tant promise à sa cendre?" (IV, i, 1081; "Is this the love so promised to his ashes?"). Velocity allows us to understand these delays, snags, and otherwise inexplicable lingerings.

Put otherwise, temporal normativity (or chrononormativity) might dictate that there is inherent good in progress, in moving-on after trauma. Muñoz reminds us that "futurity is history's dominant principle," the driving motor toward change, progress, and fulfillment. In contrast, Muñoz views "queerness as a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity" (Muñoz 2009, 16). But other, stranger or queerer affects, can open up the field of possibility, or offer unexpected potentialities of force, tugs, incremental ebbs and flows, like Andromaque's repeated recourses to the ash. These may not fit so neatly with a "body's belonging to a world of encounters," and can be misinterpreted as mere delay or stalling. The same (in)action that can be denigrated as a failure of chrononormative speed can also be reinterpreted as a radical opening up of Sherman's "middles." We come to realize that our understanding of time itself may be impoverished, limited by our recalcitrant attachment to narratives like "moving on" or else, as in the case with the MoMA gallery label, the desire to write a story about the equation between the creation of art, prompted by a fear of the lover's death. However, these neat narratives cannot fully encompass the ambiguities and interpretative possibilities occasioned by queerness.

Animacies, Affect, Time

One might argue that many of the discussions of affect and queerness rely upon certain characteristics of embodiment, pleasure, and sensation—qualities that seem quite far from a pair of plastic clocks. However, naming the clocks "lovers," in parenthesis, imbues the

apparatuses in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's work with a kind of aliveness, an animacy. Temporality necessarily invites us to consider animacy. The clocks themselves spark questions regarding the future: what remains of, or what sustains the "perfection" of lovers? What lingers after the lover departs? Far more than a clunky metaphor for bodily decline (the clock as deteriorating, slowing heart/body), the vibrancy of the title "perfect lovers" invites us to think of the simple clock-object as more an inanimate chunk of plastic. Indeed, the artwork's relationship to the artist's personal history illuminates dimensions of affective "belonging and decompositions." The artwork shifts from inanimate to animate (plastic clocks to perfect lovers), inversing the objectifying effects of the AIDS pandemic, a ravaging force that would prematurely separate "perfect lovers," or reduce bodies, friends, and lovers to inanimate statistics.

New directions in the study of animacy urge us to think about the constellations, juxtapositions, and grammars that allow liveness (vitality, life-like qualities) and affect to flow between and amongst bodies human and non-human, inorganic, and organic. Blurring the boundaries of animacy, as scholars such as Mel Chen and Jane Bennett have proposed, expands the terrain of who, or what, is worthy of compassion, care, or memorialization. Indeed, Chen invites us to think of "animacy hierarchies": instead of fixed, hard binaries between living and nonliving, animate and inanimate, we might consider gradients, or shades of animacy. In so doing, Chen seeks "not to reinvest certain materialities with life, but to remap live and dead zones away from those very terms, leveraging animacy toward a consideration of affect in its queered and raced formations" (Chen 2012, 11). Indeed, there is a strange duality evoked by the clocks; on the one hand, the generic replicability of a pair of clocks seems to flatten specificity, alluding to the fact that viral pandemics can affect nearly everyone. The generic, almost clinical look to the clocks evokes hospital waiting rooms or doctor's offices. However, while the MoMA's label would seem to indicate a one-to-one causal relationship between the artistic creation and the lover's diagnosis with AIDS (a smooth temporal linearity), the nature of illness itself is not, itself, so clearly temporalized, whether in the blurry continuum between health and illness, the ambiguous etiologies of contagion. At the same time, given the "animacy" of the term "lovers" and the particular histories that are invoked, including the artist's own Cuban-American identity, there is almost an avowed disavowal (through apophasis) of the AIDS pandemic's disproportionate impact on people of color and LGBTQ populations.

Similar to Andromaque's strangely animate attachment to ash, in "Untitled" (Perfect Lovers), temporal dissonance itself operates as a magnifying lens, bringing to the fore the unexpected, queer affective flows between (in)animate objects and bodies. Ultimately, queer temporality, as it stretches and contracts, seems to "offer the possibility of unmaking the forms of relationality that we know" (Dinshaw et al. 2007, 188). Through temporal torsions, new forms of relationality emerge, including connections to animate or inanimate objects alike, or an attachment that imbues the object with vitality. If affect marks the ebbs and incremental forces, flows, and belongings that impact embodiment, then the concept of animacy—between a pair of plastic clocks, between a widow and her husband's ashes—expands such flows beyond the norm of what we would expect.

Other Approaches to Queer Temporality

The artwork and the tragedy alike both highlight how different temporal sensations (slowness, haste, delay, asynchrony, nostalgia) can foster divergent animate pathways or unexpected forms of relation. The key, in both cases, was the ways that each work

"thickens" temporality, bringing our attention to the nature of the very passing of time, and highlighting how a "normative," calcified conception of temporality may occlude other forms of being with, or other kinds of affect. Indeed, temporality and affect have often been intertwined, whether in the prolepsis of "becoming" or in the wrenching out-of-syncness of nostalgia. For scholars such as Carolyn Dinshaw and Carla Freccero, the relationship between a distant or not-so-distant past and the present is more akin to what Freccero calls queer spectrality. Freccero asserts that "the past is in the present in a form of haunting," and names this haunting a "queer history, since it involves openness to the possibility of being haunted, even inhabited, by ghosts" (Freccero 2006, 80). "Haunting," for Freccero, allows for a porous ontology; for Freccero this fluidity allows for an inexorably queer, radically open, even promiscuous receptivity to the past. Dinshaw also lingers with the "queer touches" of the past, or moments when the past unexpectedly moves or resonates within us. She considers the sensations of "out of timeliness" in the *Book of Margery Kempe*. Margery, a fifteenth-century English mystic, weeps noisily and inconsolably at the sight of a *pietà* (the Virgin Mary holding a dead Christ). A Priest tries to reassure her, "Jesus is long since dead" (Dinshaw 2007, 107). However, Kempe insists that in her "now," in her temporal present, she experiences a fold between distant past and present. "Sir hys deth is as fresch to me as he had deyd this same day" she explains. The intensity of her emotion—grief, loss, love—is expressed in terms of "freshness:" temporal immediacy serves as a signifier of the intensity of the pain she feels. But it also signals the possibility of multiple temporalities existing in the same "now": the distant past feels as "fresh" and real as the chronological "present." "What does it feel like to be an anachronism?" wonders Dinshaw (2007, 107). Thus, for scholars such as Dinshaw, Freccero, and Heather Love, the relationship to the past that richly engages (or *animates*) the nonliving voices, bodies, emotions, and relations, allows for this plurality of temporalities. As Dinshaw notes, "A history that reckons in the most expansive way possible with how people exist in time, with what it feels like to be a body in time, or in multiple times, or out of time, is a *queer* history" (2007, 109).

For others, such as Peter Coviello and Christopher Nealon, historical moments in the past allow for a window into what Coviello calls "Earliness," or "the experience of sexuality as something in the crosshairs of a number of forms of knowledge and regulation but not yet wholly captivated or made coordinate by them" (2013, 7). What they examine is this sensation of "uncaptured" sexuality, before it has been made to sediment under an identity category or other terms of belonging. Thus unhampered by the assumptions, binaries, and other conceptual snares that encumber contemporary sexuality categories, the historian can probe the extravagant, rich imaginings of the queer past.

All of these approaches pick up on unrealized fragments, loose threads, or fleeting apparitions to fold the past into the present, or to weave together dreamed-of futures that have been otherwise foreclosed. For Freeman, the very method of this recovery is grounded in pleasure, sensation, and embodiment:

> Erotohistoriography does not write the lost object into the present so much as encounter it already in the present, by treating the present itself as hybrid. [...] Erotohistoriography admits that contact with historical materials can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, even pleasurable ones, that are themselves a form of understanding. It sees the body as a method, and historical consciousness as something intimately involved with corporeal sensations.
>
> *(Freeman 2010, 95)*

These methodologies lean into earliness, by remaining radically open to the spectrality of the past, or awakening the sensations of bodily dispositions of "erotohistoriography." To these aforementioned methods, I add a specific concern for velocities, speeds, and slownesses. This allows me to account for the very specific, strange, and rich sensorium that Felix Gonzalez-Torres's clocks or Christian Huygens's seventeenth-century timepieces occasioned. As we continue to think through queer modes of disrupting the settledness of what Muñoz calls the "here and now," we also need to be attentive to both "scales" of temporal analysis- the incremental, subtle scale of velocities as well as the broader-scale folds of historiographies. Nealon, for example, describes how he considers "lesbian and gay writers who lived before the time of a social movement were dreaming of collectivities, and forms of participation in History with-a-capital-H, that they might never, themselves, experience" (Nealon 2007, 179). While "history," "temporality," and "time" can "tangle together" (Nealon 2007, 179) these concepts of lingering with the "queer touches" of the past, capitalizing on the rich ambiguities of uncaptured "earliness" or attention to velocities all primarily seek to destabilize the norms of history, historiography, or historicism. These methods take aim at the hegemony of temporal organization that yields chrononormativity, and both lean into the possibilities afforded by the affective and the incremental.

Velocity in Form and Figure

For literary scholars, attention to literary *form* allow us to see these velocities, temporalities, and affects most clearly. In my book, I analyzed neoclassical tragedy precisely because of its neatly contained form. Seventeenth-century French tragedy adhered to a strict so-called "Aristotelian" poetics of construction, meaning that the drama could only have one main plot, could only take place in one location, and had to unfold within the time span of "one revolution of the sun," or 24 hours. Because of the temporal constraint, moments of delay or haste appear magnified or intensified.

In *Queer Velocities*, I located velocities in animate rhetoric such as Andromaque's rhetorical questions, or in concentrated figures of sameness, such as the quick doubleness of *paranomasia* or repetition. In the field of English Renaissance literature, J.K. Barret has similarly analyzed the temporality of what she calls microstructures, such as promise or rhyme that "entail a temporal component" or "future orientation, because they foreground anticipation and expectation" (Barret 2016, 16). Microstructures, rather than the simple diegetic representations of time, allow for fleeting flashpoints of affect (the pleasure of rhyme's resolution, or the surprise of the rhythm of unexpected enjambment); they allow for an investigation of how literature can foster affect through the simplicity of form itself. Velocities can appear in more subtle incarnations than Margery Kempe's announcement of her temporal dislocation; they may make themselves felt at the incremental level.

Similarly, Gonzalez-Torres's use of the parenthesis as a naming convention in his artwork is temporally and queerly disruptive. The particular queerness of parenthesis is one that is better elucidated through the epistemologies and worldviews of the early modern. As Jenny Mann asserts, in early modern rhetoric manuals, parenthesis was considered a type of *hyperbaton*, "one of a variety of schemes that disorder words within a sentence" (Mann 2012, 89); such disorder can be considered a temporal fold. Parenthesis renders ambiguous which information needed to come prior or after, insofar as readers sometimes re-read the beginning of the phrase interrupted by the parenthetical information. The figure can also snag the smooth flow of the phrase with a cumbersome aside. Parenthesis can convey speed (as in a talkative character trying to cram in extra words, as an aside). Parenthesis can also occasion the velocity of detour (as when the reader might be impatient to get to the end of the sentence but is waylaid by the inserted

intrusion). In short, the "jostling" of the parenthesis—prying us out of our settled temporal relationship to the reading experience—is akin to Muñoz's imagined "horizonal" when the world's temporality shifts ever so slightly, and the wide spectrum of affective possibilities and potentials reveals itself to be richer than anticipated in the otherwise impoverished world as-is.

Early modern English rhetorician George Puttenham, Mann notes, renames parenthesis the "Insertour," giving a slightly sexual bent to the trope. Furthermore, parenthesis operates parasitically: "Descriptions of parenthesis outline a process of textual grafting that inserts unnecessary *verba* into a syntactical unit already perfectly complete in itself" (Mann 2012, 93). In short, parenthesis is interdependent and subtly affective. It conveys the Derridean logic of the supplement, an addition that is simultaneously superfluous to the sense of the phrase and essential to complete meaning. This aporetic status causes temporal disruption. With *"Untitled" (Perfect Lovers)*, the viewer is invited to reflect on "perfect lovers" as a post-facto addendum to, or completion of, "Untitled." Or are we meant to consider (Perfect Lovers) as the *replacement* for "Untitled," reversing former and latter? As Gonzalez-Torres himself has noted in an interview regarding the relationship between the parenthesis and the untitled nature of his art, the parenthesis allows for notions to be

> suggested or alluded to discreetly. The work is untitled because 'meaning' is always shifting in time and place. Also, this isn't really my language, but the language I learned. So, I'm reluctant to give something a name imposed on me.
>
> *(Nickas 1991, 86)*

In his careful attention to naming, Gonzalez-Torres subtly negotiates with hegemonies of power. Parenthesis can amplify ambiguities, queerly play with "insertion," and decline imposed language, teleologies or identities. Obviously, not every use of parenthesis is necessarily queer. But surprising configurations or forms (such as parenthesis) might elicit a sharper sense of time in the reader, spectator, or viewer; and this enriched temporal sensorium, we have seen, may allow for queer, unexpected affects, attachments, or other erotic intensities.

Overall, the concept of velocity allows us to attend to the incremental, subtle effects of temporal disruptions, from the intrusion of parenthesis to the tiny lags of a clock's second hand. Part of affect's power lies precisely in its chameleonic temporal nimbleness: "casting illumination upon the 'not yet' of a body's doing, casting a line along the hopeful (though also fearful) cusp of an emergent futurity, casting its lot with the infinitely connectable, impersonal, and contagious belongings to this world" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 4). In my view, cleaving closely to the subtle temporal textures of intimacy and connection through the analysis of velocities allows a new approach to studies in gender, sexuality, and affect, and a new way of imagining broader-scale contingencies, contagions, and other coexistences as we remain bound (and unbound) by temporality, together.

Note

1 All French translations by Marie Satya McDonough.

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