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Qualified Hope

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Introduction

1. Throughout *Qualified Hope*, I assume an experiential understanding of time. Science would of course tell us that time does not actually exist, that it is an illusion created by the relative motion of objects, but this scientific truth has yet to influence our affective and physical sense of time's role in our lives. Although the way we understand our own temporal experiences may not be true and accurate, that understanding, grounded as it is in the basic experiential categories of "earlier," "now," and "later," nevertheless affects nearly every aspect of our lives, including the political alliances, struggles, and ideals that we choose to pursue. At the same time, however, I do not think that "experiential" is synonymous with "linear" or "transparent," as my recourse to Bhabha's "ambivalent temporality" suggests.

2. Louis Althusser's work provides a spatial articulation of the same paradox: "Now it is this [scientific] knowledge that we have to reach . . . while speaking in ideology, and from within ideology we have to outline a discourse which tries to break with ideology, in order to dare to be the beginning of a scientific (i.e. subjectless) discourse on ideology" ("Ideology" 173). Whether conceived spatially or temporally, the paradox derives from the tension between part and whole: we cannot simultaneously be part of a whole and have knowledge of it; and if we remove ourselves from the whole to better secure our knowledge, then the resulting whole is not the same whole of which we desired knowledge in the first place. In addition, the paradox reveals an irresolvable tension between content and form, or what Yeats describes as the impossibility of separating the dancer from the dance. Van, for example, cannot fully know the content-term "Time" because time's form, the fact that knowing "takes time," shapes and determines the process of knowing time as an object.

3. In suggesting that Grosz abandons intelligibility and content for "the new," I am focusing on the ultimate effect of her temporal grounding of politics, charging it with an immanence that cannot support political claims or acts. Grosz works very hard to develop a theory that accounts for time *and* knowledge, form *and* content, but I think she achieves this only in theory and not in terms of a feminist politics that can be put to any practical use.

She achieves it theoretically by drawing on Deleuze's virtual ontology which allows for the simultaneity of immanence and difference and thus of time and knowledge. She explains: "Duration is a mode of infecting self-differentiation: difference is internal to its function, its

modes of elaboration and production, and is also its ramifying effect on those objects located 'within' its milieu" ("Thinking" 28). This union of immanence and difference (duration as both a "mode of elaboration" and a "ramifying effect" that can be known) allows Grosz to have it both ways: she achieves an immersion in time's flow *and* the difference required for any production of meaning and knowledge. As a practical matter, however, and as Grosz readily admits, Deleuzian ontology leaves her with a contentless politics. Moreover, in equating time's self-differentiation with Deleuze's notion of immanent difference, she takes what for Deleuze is a rhizomatic network of differences and makes them linear and future-directed. The result is a single-paneled approach to the politics of time. (In chapter 2 I suggest that Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* imagines a self-differentiating temporality that differs in more than just one direction.)

See Deleuze's *The Fold* for an explanation of virtual ontology and the debt it owes to Leibniz's notion of possible worlds. See Grosz's "Deleuze's Bergson" for her most explicit description of the role Deleuze's virtual ontology of becoming plays in her own thought. Also, see the Introduction to her more recent *Nick of Time* where she backs away from her attempt to reconcile time and knowledge, at least when time is the object of said knowledge.

4. I employ an expansive definition of "form" throughout the book, taking it to refer to any aspect of a text that affects how it is read.

5. For additional examples of this core impasse of the phenomenological project, see Bergson's distinction between intuition and intellect in *Creative Evolution*; Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism," which describes the limits and complications of *Being and Time*; and Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense* on the struggle to represent "Aionic" time, which I discuss in chapter 2.

6. See Jacques Lezra's *Unspeakable Subjects*, particularly the Introduction and first chapter, for an argument that sees speculation's tendency to reiterate the problem it wants to solve as a symptom of time's stagnation.

7. In general, I will use the term "postmodern" to designate a time period beginning after World War II. The texts I address are all marked by socio-political events unique to the postwar era, and this history is the primary referent of the word "postmodern" throughout *Qualified Hope*. At the same time, however, I do not intend my treatment of postmodern literature to contravene other approaches to and understandings of postmodernism, be they social, economic, or cultural.

8. Although not explicitly about literature, see Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* and its sequel, *Thirdspace*, two texts which not only describe but also fuel postmodernism's spatial turn.

9. For such characterizations see Ermarth, Heise (*Chronoschisms*), Elias, McHale, and Hutcheon (*A Poetics*).

10. See, for example, Avery and Newfield, whose edited collection maps multiculturalism; Davis and Womack, whose collection maps ethics; and Elden, who maps time itself. Brian Jarvis's *Postmodern Cartographies* describes the late-twentieth-century's love of maps in full.

11. On borders see Anzaldúa, José Saldívar, and Michaelsen and Johnson's edited collection *Border Theory*; on liminality see D'haen and Bertens's edited collection; and on "third space" see Soja (*Thirdspace*) and Toro.

12. This is, of course, a broad generalization, as epistemological and ontological questions are never so mutually exclusive, and any given politics will always confront both. I thus want to emphasize that I am merely arguing that epistemology constitutes the primary but not exclusive thrust of one form of politics, while ontology defines the primary but not exclusive thrust of the other.

13. See Chow for a compelling argument about the foundational similarities between "critical theory" and "cultural studies."

14. In transferring Lacanian ideas about signification to queer bodies, Lee Edelman's difference is simultaneously epistemological and ontological, a function of linguistic mediation and

other people, but he most certainly does not locate difference in time. However, when Elizabeth Grosz highlights time's self-differentiation as the feature that permits knowledge in the midst of an otherwise intense immanence, she does locate difference in time rather than in language or being. Indeed, my own work would not be possible without Grosz's foundational argument about temporal difference. Nevertheless, by grounding her work in philosophical and scientific notions of time, Grosz limits time's self-differing to its linear motion into the future, effectively severing time from practical, political knowledge. To avoid this limitation, *Qualified Hope* contends that literary form allows time to differ in more than just one direction, creating the possibility for new political knowledge.

15. Edelman makes a similar point about queer identity when he notes that for both the right, which wants to "eliminate queers," and the left, which wants to honor their difference, "queerness . . . must mean *nothing* . . . : on the right the nothingness always at war with the positivity of civil society, on the left nothing more than a sexual practice in need of demystification" (*Post-Partum* 184). In other words, the moment the left invites queers into its liberal society that esteems their difference, the queer is annihilated, absorbed into the identity of liberal politics.

16. Of course, meta-epistemology is not unique to postmodernism. Knowledge has always been an object of study, and ever since Kant placed his famous "block" on knowledge in the First Critique, contending that part of what constitutes knowledge is the very fact of its limitations and imperfections, knowledge's failures have also been an object of study. (See, in particular, the Introduction to *Critique of Pure Reason* where Kant broadly discusses the underlying premises of his transcendental philosophy.) For Kant, knowing knowledge's limits makes it a bit more whole and perfect, albeit negatively. What marks postmodern meta-epistemology, I am arguing, is its utter self-absorption with its own limits and its inability to synthesize them and move beyond them. Throughout the book I will be suggesting that time in its many forms can move us beyond meta-epistemology's wheel spinning precisely because temporal experience produces knowledge.

17. Hutcheon more or less understands irony in terms of self-consciousness, a self-reflexive statement that calls attention to itself by undermining its own truth-value—hence, its critique will always remain provisional. See Paul de Man's "The Concept of Irony" for a description of irony that sees it as a function of time.

18. For defining collections that herald this turn to ethics, see Rainsford and Woods, Garber et al., Davis and Womack, and the special *PMLA* issue on ethics from 1999.

19. See the Autumn 2001 issue of *New Literary History* for a broad examination of ethical objectivity in the context of Mohanty's ideas.

20. Although they understand "ethics" to mean something more like moral and intellectual improvement and not necessarily progressive politics, both Martha Nussbaum and Wayne Booth also offer theories that treat ethics as something already located in textual content. See, for example, Nussbaum's *Love's Knowledge* and Booth's *The Company We Keep*.

21. The temporality of the ethical encounter is similarly preempted in Paula Moya's description of the creation of "post-positivist realism," a school of thought, closely associated with Mohanty, which aims to treat identity objectively: "The scholars who initially came together did so partly in response to the excesses of the wide-spread skepticism and constructivism in literary theory and cultural studies and partly because they were interested in formulating a complex and rigorous theory of identity that could be put to work in the service of progressive politics" (footnote 4).

22. For book-length examples of this language-based, deconstructive ethics, see J. Hillis Miller, Bauman, Critchley, Eaglestone, and Newton. Miller takes a de Manian, tropological approach while the others are clearly influenced by what might be called Derrida's "Levinasization" of deconstruction throughout the 1990s.

23. See, in particular, Grosz's "Thinking the New," which adopts an epistemological framework, and the interview with Grosz in *Found Object*, which focuses instead on ontology, describing epistemology as "a kind of theft from ontology, from the real."

24. For another example, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*, particularly their discussion of the multitude in Part Four, "The Decline and Fall of Empire," which emphasizes the crucial role that temporalities of production play in negotiating the vexed relationship between immanence and difference.

25. See Slavoj Žižek's *The Ticklish Subject*, particularly chapter 3, "The Politics of Truth," for an analysis of Alain Badiou's theory of the "Truth-Event" that links truth to "the temporal process of Being" without succumbing to rigid ontologization or postmodern subjectivism.

26. See Barthes's *S/Z* and Morson's "Narrativeness" and *Narrative and Freedom*.

27. Although Barthes's notion of the writerly text grants form a significant role, its emphasis on a text's performativity similarly reduces the temporality of reading to a narrow sliver of pure presentness. See, in particular, the opening pages of *S/Z* where Barthes describes the writerly text as "a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed" (5).

28. See Mitchell for an even more explicit defense of form as the primary site of literature's politics. He writes, for example, that "a commitment to form is also finally a commitment to emancipatory, progressive political practices united with a scrupulous attention to ethical means. Insofar as formalism insists on paying attention to a way of being in the path rather than to where the path leads, it seems to me central to any notion of right action" (324).

Chapter 1

1. Just to give authorial intent its due, DeLillo contends in a 1985 interview with Caryn James that he never set out to write an apocalyptic novel.

2. See Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, particularly pages 36–40, on the ideological function of "as if."

3. See, for example, Lentricchia and the essays therein by Lentricchia, Ferraro, Moses, and Cantor. See also Duvall, Billy, do Carmo, Heller, and Boling.

4. See, for example, Hayles, King, Reeve and Kerridge, Heffernan, Maltby, Caton, and Phillips.

5. For a rare exception to such readings, see Heise's "Toxins, Drugs, and Global Systems."

6. This effect is nicely described in Frank Lentricchia's Introduction to *New Essays on White Noise*. He cites two undergraduate students' reactions to reading the novel, and both seem to argue that the book does not just speak to them, but that it *is* them: "'This is the first book in the course about me.' Another undergraduate tells me that he did not 'read' *White Noise*; he 'inhaled' it" (7). Lentricchia does not reveal if inhalation is here a metaphor of life or addiction.

7. In this and many other scenes, Jack remains silent while Murray expounds on the surrounding cultural curiosities. But once the text accrues a layer of reading, Jack's silence actually reinforces the preemption of textual meaning that comes with Murray's all-too-knowing commentary. After all, because ideology is a function of knowledge, not of speaking, Jack's silence does not exempt him from the iterations of watching as long as he knows the game being played. And as the aforementioned discussion about rain suggests, DeLillo gives us no reason to see Jack as unknowing; he is plenty hip to ideology's cruel games. His role as narrator requires it. If ideology is a function of knowledge rather than speaking, then the only character possibly exempt from ideological mediation is Wilder, as I will discuss later in the chapter.

8. This same form-content conflation appears to be a side effect of Dylar, the drug Babette takes to allay her fear of death. When Willie Mink, Babette's supplier, becomes addicted to Dylar, one symptom includes misconstruing signifiers, merely uttered words, as their signifieds. Thus, because the words are the actual things they name, Jack attacks Willie by simply saying, "Hail of bullets" and "Fusillade" (311). The scene suggests that we might think we are better off because we know that words are not things, because we can see the difference between them, but our recognition of that difference is dangerous because reversible. That is, our recognition of the difference simply reverses the word-thing relation, leading to Heinrich's self-satisfied (and no less dangerous) complacency with all things, like rain, just being words.

9. I made a similar point in the Introduction's discussion of Nabokov's *Ada*. There I noted that Van's failure to know Time stems from the fact that the content and form of his investigation are identical. Nabokov solves that problem by engaging a different medium or form (the novel) to think about time.

10. Treating metaphor as a totalizing assertion of presence is not necessarily an incorrect interpretation of the trope's function. It seems, after all, that if one wanted to keep the ways in which one thing "is not" like another thing present in the trope, one might use a simile rather than a metaphor. To say that one thing "is like" something else certainly implies the ways in which it is also not like that thing; conversely, metaphor's assertion that one thing *is* another thing clearly suppresses such differences.

11. Eugene Goodheart's *The Reign of Ideology* offers an opposing view. Goodheart believes that ideology critique argues "that there is nothing but ideology," and he calls for a return to "aesthetic value," "reason," and "transcendence." This opposition between ideology and absolutes, however, is tendentious—a simple, oppositional reversal that structurally reiterates the ideological opposition between "truth" and "concealment" that Goodheart wants to abolish. He is correct to argue that exposing and recognizing the ideological underpinnings of a language whose meaning is purportedly open for all to see is no longer a sufficient critical task. But demystifying ideology critique's demystifications is also no longer sufficient because ideology no longer functions as mystification and illusion. Thus, attempts like Goodheart's to avoid or transcend ideological mystification have simply become ideology *par excellence*.

12. Post-ironists do not reject irony in favor of sincerity but rather try to ironize irony, to announce it so self-consciously that its tendency to sting and distance can instead be defused and enlisted for those sincere and sentimental ends for which we all truly long. Such authors take Wallace's point about irony's pathological metastasis, but they suggest that it can be configured and deployed in a way that produces generally sincere effects.

13. See Hungerford for an indispensable argument in favor of historicizing the contemporary, and see McGurl for an example of how we might do so.

Chapter 2

1. The same theme appears in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* when Oedipa Maas drives north to visit John Nefastis, inventor of the Nefastis Machine, which engages the fictitious Maxwell's Demon to keep hot and cold molecules in perpetual motion, thereby contradicting the second law of thermodynamics. This law states that heat energy (as opposed to kinetic, potential, or electrical energy, for instance) is a lower-quality energy because it cannot be reversed into its original form. Violating this law creates a closed system which, despite being unable to draw energy from an outside source, would nevertheless remain in perpetual motion.

2. Contemporary scientists measure the most quickly occurring events in attoseconds. One attosecond is a billionth of a billionth of a second. That means that 1,000,000,000,000,000,-

000 attoseconds elapse over the course of one second. (There are only 2,366,820,000 seconds in a life spanning 75 years, which means that there are 422,507,837 times more attoseconds in a second than there are seconds in a lifetime.) See Labrador.

3. Puns achieve this same effect by meaning two things simultaneously. Specifically, in the moment of its event, a pun contains both the simultaneity of meaning that characterizes it as a pun and the temporalized deferral of meaning that allows us to hear a pun first one way and then another. Not surprisingly, an aural pun on “Horology” instigates Emerson’s introduction of the watch. He tells Dixon that the watch “will revolutionize the world of Horology;” and Dixon responds, having heard “whore-ology,” by asking if it “calculates when she’s over-charging and by how much” (317). Also, just after Dixon shows the watch to R.C., R.C. speculates as to whether the watch might earn the prize money that the Longitude Board is offering for standardizing the longitude. Dixon describes the Board as “tight-fisted,” explaining that one must open one’s grip on the money with a “Prying-Bar,” to which R.C. punningly responds, “Must be why they call it ‘Prize’ money” (322).

4. For more on parallax form, see Burns.

5. When I say “larger” here, I am speaking not of measurable space but of multiple versions of time contained in one instant of time. Fractalization is usually a spatial metaphor; it denotes highly irregular shapes, generally formed by iterative and recursive structures that are noncategorizable according to the principles of Euclidean geometry. The particularly innovative feature of Pynchon’s use of this idea, then, is that he fractalizes narrative temporality, not just its spatial content. The particular irregularity of Pynchon’s temporality is that it is neither linear nor circular, but both.

6. Asserting that humans experience the world as a continuous flow rather than as a succession of isolated moments, Bergson’s *Time and Free Will*, published in 1888, treated time as a phenomenon of consciousness that he called *durée*. This interiorization of temporal experience instituted a rigid mind-material divide that the 1896 *Matter and Memory* and the 1907 *Creative Evolution* overcame by extending *durée* to all components of the material world, a gradual exteriorization of *durée* that Deleuze describes as the accrual of a “complex ontology” of duration (*Bergsonism* 34). Insisting that time can exist only as uninterrupted flow, Bergson contends that even temporal concepts such as sequence, succession, and simultaneity spatialize and thus corrupt time’s true essence.

7. Jacques Derrida exploits this notion of instantaneity as the opposite of *durée*, using it to prove the impossibility of the gift, a theme he pursues in both *Given Time* and *The Gift of Death*. In the former, Derrida argues that gifts and exchanges are radically different: gifts are of the instant, while exchanges require duration. Gifts belong to the instant because a true gift lacks all conditions. Because claiming that a gift should lack conditions is itself a condition, however, the gift can be defined only by its own impossibility. Or a gift can be a gift only instantaneously. The moment that time extends beyond the instant—which it always does, because time keeps “moving”—the gift necessarily becomes an exchange and, by definition, not a gift: “the temporalization of time (memory, present, anticipation; retention, protention, imminence of the future; ‘ecstases,’ and so forth) always sets in motion the process of a destruction of the gift” (14). In suggesting that the temporality required for exchange precludes the possibility of the gift, Derrida thus implies that the instant only ever functions as the opposite of duration.

8. In a sense, Mason and Dixon’s journey in the New World could also be read through the lens of anthropology, a discipline long concerned with the problematic relationship between time and cultural understanding. Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Michel de Certeau all address the problem, and Johannes Fabian’s *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* organizes much of their work, arguing that “time is involved in any possible relationship between anthropological discourse and its referents” (28). Although somewhat short

on practical solutions, Pierre Bourdieu strongly makes the same case in *The Logic of Practice*, and in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, he shuns the “phenomenological reconstitution of lived experience” (4), arguing instead that anthropology requires that one “situate oneself *within* ‘real activity as such,’ i.e. in the practical relation to the world” (96).

9. The four key moments of the Transit mirror the structure of the chapter containing its description. The chapter begins in the frame tale, corresponding to the period before Venus’s initial, external contact: (1) the transit is then narrated in exemplary generalities, a narrative style corresponding to Venus’s ingress into the sun; (2) the narration of the actual event corresponds to “Venus now standing alone against the Face of the Sun” (97); (3) the actual event then ends with a transitional section narrating Mason and Dixon’s departure from Capetown which corresponds to the planet’s egress out of the disc of the sun; and (4) the chapter concludes back out in the frame tale, where it began, just as when Venus fully detaches from the sun’s disc.

10. This relation can be figured as a Klein bottle. Essentially a three-dimensional mobius strip, this shape, identified by the German mathematician Felix Klein, is formed by elongating a bottle’s neck, passing the neck through the bottle’s side, and joining its opening to a hole in the base. The effect is a one-sided surface without volume that nevertheless functions as a container. The bottle is both its own inside and outside, a singular surface with multiple properties.

I offer this model of “mutual invagination,” which denotes a relation of singular multiplicity, as an alternative to deconstruction, which operates according to a logic of mutual exclusion. In this model the two terms, like the inside and outside of a Klein bottle, need not be negated; unlike deconstruction, “singular multiplicity” need not name its paradoxes “impossibilities.” This is because the two terms are not deconstructed to the point that we can say that all insides are really just outsides and vice versa. To do so would ignore the fact that Klein bottles successfully function as containers.

11. The Mason-Dixon Line, which we should read as a metaphor for the novel itself, also manifests a motion born of a subdivided instant. Like a model of Bergsonian *durée*, the line moves forward inexorably, flowing on in perpetual motion. With his relocation of aleatory openness in the instant, however, Deleuze would remind us that the line also divides each moment along the way. That is, the line is vertically as well as horizontally asymptotic, functioning as that infinitely subdivisible space which ensures that two entities will never converge into one. Because of this irreducible, vertical gap between them, Pennsylvania and Maryland, like Mason and Dixon, or even like Emerson sitting “inches from [Mrs. Emerson’s] Quill,” converge forever without uniting, producing another version of perpetual motion.

12. Occasionally, Cherrycoke’s cranky frame-tale listeners force him to abandon the “representational sense” of his narration. For instance, Cherrycoke alters his narrative after Uncle Lomax charges him with “Parsonickal interpolation” of others’ words. Although he initially defends the liberties he takes with his narration, Cherrycoke eventually concedes that his characters “withdrew out of my hearing, so that regretfully I quite miss’d the Information” (652).

13. As E. J. W. Hinds’s “Sari, Sorry, and the Vortex of History” discusses the role of anachronism in *Mason & Dixon*, I will not repeat the same argument here. I would simply note that anachronism allows Pynchon to enact the same structure of a future collapsed into a past present that Cherrycoke’s narration employs.

14. Pynchon makes the topological implication of this argument clear as images such as the shuttle of a loom and the shuttling across the river intersect with images of the turning of the heavens around the star named *tropus*. Vehicles such as the ferry and Cherrycoke’s mysterious carriage thus metaphorize metaphor itself, thereby suggesting the integral role that language, and even more importantly the temporality of language’s production of meaning, plays in achieving timely knowledge.

Chapter 3

1. For an elaboration of Freud's ideas on the temporality of trauma, see Laplanche ("Notes on Afterwardness"), Caruth, and Freud's own *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

2. As Joseph Witek explains, "The 'x' of the word 'comix' distinguishes the irreverent and iconoclastic self-published black-and-white comic books often associated with the Sixties counterculture from their mainstream, four-color, corporately produced cousins." Spiegelman's early work in underground publications is clearly in this vein, and his use of the "x" here aligns *In the Shadow of No Towers* with that tradition. Following Spiegelman's lead, I will use "comix" to refer to his work and "comics" to refer to the reproductions of historical material that he appends to the end of his book. (*In the Shadow of No Towers* includes a non-paginated Introduction; ten newspaper-sized pages of Spiegelman's comix; another nonpaginated meditation on historical comics entitled "The Comic Supplement"; and seven examples of old comics, numbered Plates I–VII.)

3. See Abel for a reading of DeLillo's essay that treats its cinematic temporality as an alternative to "simile and analogy." Abel believes that DeLillo's essay treats "narrative as a mode of seeing" (1240)—thereby demonstrating "the impossibility of saying anything definitive about 9/11—especially anything that captures the event's meaning" (1237). Abel's ideas offer a provocative way to read DeLillo's recent novel *Falling Man*, which has been widely described as his "9/11 novel." If Abel is correct, however, it must be a 9/11 novel that refuses to actually be about the meaning of 9/11.

4. See Nancy Miller for an interesting reading of the "Portraits of Grief" series that *The New York Times* published to honor and remember the attacks' victims. Also see Hirsch for a discussion of Spiegelman's use of images in *In the Shadow of No Towers*. Both essays rely on the "punctum," the term Roland Barthes uses to designate the "piercing quality" of photographic "details that shock and disturb, grab, puncture and wound" (Hirsch 1211).

5. See Baudrillard, Žižek's "Welcome to the Desert of the Real," Spivak, and Pease for competing theoretical perspectives on the attacks. Grounded in his thinking about hyperreality and simulation, Baudrillard theorizes a series of reversals in which 9/11 functions as the irreducible real that overthrows pre-9/11 fictions but then eventually succumbs to the fictionalizing power of the event's infinite mediation. See Wilcox and Butterfield for different takes on whether or not the reality of 9/11 can withstand the Baudrillardian logic of simulation.

Žižek too interprets the event through the logic of reversal. In arguing that 9/11 gave the United States "a taste of what goes on around the world on a daily basis," he reads the event as a symmetrical reversal in which the inside becomes the outside and the unreal is made real ("Desert" 388). He offers a similar reading of the torture at Abu Ghraib: "What we get when we see the photos of humiliated Iraqi prisoners is precisely a direct insight into 'American values,' into the core of an obscene enjoyment that sustains the American way of life" ("Rumsfeld").

While Baudrillard's and Žižek's insights are certainly illuminating, their reversals endlessly perpetuate themselves without substantially engaging the temporal imperatives of our post-9/11 world. Spivak, however, comes much closer to addressing the temporal implications of the problem when she insists that any response to 9/11 must "pre-figure change." Instead of a preemptive response that forecloses the future, Spivak describes an action in the present that prefigures the future. Admitting that figuration's imprecision makes such response risky, she nevertheless contends that cognitively based "consciousness-raising" "closes off response altogether" (87). This is what Donald Pease does when he contends that Bush's policies cannot be countered "until the global state of emergency state is itself *exposed* as the cause of the traumas it purports to oppose. Its exceptions will then be *recognized* as the criminal violence of a terrorizing state" (18; my emphasis).

6. McGlothlin relies on the distinction Gerard Genette makes in *Narrative Discourse*

among story (the world of the narrative's content), discourse (the world from which the story is narrated), and narrating (the metacommentary on the other two levels) to identify these interlocking stories. As she admits, one could quibble with her application of Genette's terms since the discourse, which comments on the story and its narration, is also metafictional. Thus, the level of narrating could be called meta-metafictional, as it comments on both the commenting and the story.

Chapter 4

1. For a more thorough description of these events, see McGrath.

2. A fourth book, *Bass Cathedral*, was released in 2008, well after the completion of this chapter.

The band, named the Mystic Horn Society, consists of N., who plays the bass clarinet, bassoon, and saxophones; Lambert, who plays the harmonica and saxophones; Penguin, who plays the oboe; Aunt Nancy, who plays the violin and congas; and Djamilaa, who sings. The drummer, whom they find in the second book and play with in the third, is Drennette.

The Mystic Horn Society, who later change their name to the Molimo m'Atet, play a genre of jazz that is akin to free jazz, an extremely cerebral and theoretical experimental style that was developed in the 1960s as a response to the quick appropriation and commodification of African-American music by the dominant culture. Free jazz abandons the ordering constraints of melody and harmony, frequently producing walls of sound frequently described as "inaccessible."

3. Hereafter, *Bedouin Hornbook* will appear as *BH*; *Djbot Baghostus's Run* as *DBR*; *Atet A.D.* as *AD*; and *Discrepant Engagement*, a collection of Mackey's critical essays, as *DE*.

4. Mackey's work belongs to an important tradition of black literature typically deemed too experimental and aesthetically driven to be considered political, a tradition of writers such as Robert Duncan, Kamau Braithwaite, William Kelley, Will Alexander, and Harryette Mullen. Of course, as Mackey's own scholarship on many of these authors reveals, their work is adamantly engaged in the politics of race despite its apparent inaccessibility. See Nielsen's ground-breaking *Black Chant* for an analysis of the politics of black experimental literature, including work by many of these writers.

5. Freud devotes the first section of "The Uncanny" to an etymological investigation of the word *heimlich* which eventually reveals that the word contains its own opposite—that it means everything from "homely" and "familiar" to "concealed," "secret," and "covert." Thus *heimlich* also means *unheimlich*; or the home contains its own undoing. The word applies well to slaves and their descendants, then, whose "home"—be it in Africa or the "New World"—is always a non-home. A further analog might be drawn to Du Bois's notion of double-consciousness and the linguistic and epistemological duplicity it entails. In addition, as will prove relevant later in the chapter, *heimlich* lends itself not only to split consciousness, but also to split speech and puns.

6. This idea that sublimity can project "social roles" relies on a specifically Kantian formulation of sublimity; whereas an early thinker like Longinus located sublimity variously in the genius of the author and in the excellence of the text, Kant contends that sublimity arises solely in the audience through a two-step, masochistic process. First, sublimity's horror and fear arise when the understanding is confronted with a mathematically or dynamically massive object that it cannot comprehend. Second, the pleasure of that pain comes when that original failure of our understanding makes us aware of an even stronger mental process, the supersensible aspect of reason, which is the faculty that demands a comprehensive totalization of the understanding's apprehensions in the first place. The pleasure comes from learning that cognition is

not just limited to sensory apprehension but is also governed by supersensible powers of reason. For Kant, therefore, sublimity resides in the mind, not in things; it is a mental process, not a characteristic of an object or event (*Critique of Judgment* §25–29). It is this cognitive function, this ability to effect new modes of thought, that makes the sublime potentially political.

7. Adjaye's essay chronicles the development of this argument, beginning with Edward Evans-Pritchard's 1939 "Nuer Time Reckoning," running through Pierre Bourdieu's 1963 "The Attitudes of the Algerian Peasant toward Time," and culminating in John Mbiti's 1969 *African Religions and Philosophy*.

8. See Bhabha, 204–5, for a discussion that envisions the temporal cut as the founding condition of modernity itself, resulting in what he characterizes as the temporality of "time-lag."

9. I intend for this idea of "disposition" to echo the discussion of Althusser's "Cremonini" essay in chapter 1.

10. "Aliquant" is an appropriate word choice for this excess as it is from the Latin *alius* for "other" and *quantus* for "how great" or "how much." Thus the aliquant remainder also functions as an index of othering (literally, "how much other").

11. In "The Uncanny," Freud cites E. Jentsch's belief that one of the more uncanny moments in fiction occurs when the reader is uncertain "whether a particular figure in the story is a human being or an automaton" (132). When applied to *From a Broken Bottle's* racial themes, we should hear an implied return to slavery, to an instrumentalization of the black body, echoing in this discussion of uncanny automatism.

12. Djeannine's association with "the X-ray wafting of an imaginary musk" aligns her with Djamila's similarly forward-looking "X-ray accessibility." At the same time, however, the "X-ray"-ness moves from the seductions of her "musk" to the distaste of her spittle, thereby revealing that "X-ray" anything is probably too good to be true.

13. See, for example, Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 118.

14. Dubey makes a similar diagnosis, criticizing the temptation to identify alternative third spaces that appear to avoid postmodernism's totalizing logic of identity and difference. Instead, she notes, "This romance of the residual that beguiles so much postmodern thinking about race . . . exempt[s] black culture] from the contingencies of the postmodern condition. . . . Converting a structural position of relative powerlessness into a desirable ontological condition, we mine sites of material deprivation for their cultural capital" (8–9). Also see Kevin Gaines for a discussion of the lackluster treatment scholars invested in black politics and culture give to "time and history." Gaines believes that their "concern for the recovery of a usable past . . . has often led to an ahistorical preoccupation with a search for origins," resulting in an impotent historicism complicit with the very discourses it seeks to challenge (224–25).

15. Dimitri Anastasopoulos and Paul Naylor effectively argue that Mackey's embrace of transcendence distinguishes his work from more conventionally postmodern literature.

16. Baraka's discussion appears in the tenth chapter of *Blues People*.

Chapter 5

1. On the epistemological, ontological, and political limitations of "the possible," see Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, particularly chapter 4, "Ideas and the Synthesis of Difference."

2. Although this loose feminist taxonomy of "waves" is much contested, it nevertheless offers a helpful shorthand for my schematic purposes here. I associate second-wave feminism with essentialist notions of the female body and women's experience, a rigidity that was perhaps necessary as the second wave, which focused on *de facto* discrimination and oppression, was aiming at a more protean target than the first wave, which was primarily fighting against more fixed, *de jure* forms of sexism. Accordingly, the third wave resists the second wave's essentialist

tendencies by embracing a more poststructural understanding of difference, effectively taking aim not just at patriarchal hegemony but at any logic, including that of feminism's second wave, which inhibits and hypostatizes the proliferation of difference. Consequently, the third wave expands feminism's reach, allowing it to critique all forms of dualistic thinking—not just the male-female dichotomy—and all forms of imperialism. This is why when Grosz talks about “global patriarchy,” she refers to “corporate capitalism, international racism or local government regulation.” Leslie Scalapino's feminism will also seem conspicuously uninterested in gender, but only because she sees poverty, capitalism, and AIDS as feminist issues *par excellence*.

3. See also Stone and Bennetts for two book-length studies that avoid such ideological arguments in favor of pragmatically materialist ones. Coming to complementary conclusions, Stone suggests that women “opt-out” of the public sphere because most workplaces sexistly marginalize women who have children, and Bennetts argues that more women should resist the “mommy track” because women, even those who are married to a financially solvent partner, need economic independence in case of divorce or some other form of financial abandonment.

4. In particular, see the interviews with Frost and Hinton. Also see Frost's “Signifyin(g) on Stein” where she makes bold feminist claims about Scalapino's poetry, arguing that Scalapino's and Harryette Mullen's works politicize Gertrude Stein's writing, which Frost views as more personal, private, and detached from the public sphere.

5. For an array of perspectives on the political possibilities of Language poetry, see Bernstein, Silliman, Hartley, Mack et al., Perloff's *Radical Artifice*, Perelman, Golding, and Andrews.

6. See, for example, Elizabeth Frost's “Time-less or Hieroglyph.”

7. The same reading could be applied to the poem's seriality as a whole. The lack of relation among the words mirrors a lack of relation among the stanzas and sequences of the poem in its entirety.

8. Scalapino's ideas about time and motion come as much from Gertrude Stein's understanding of “the inherent nature of a being, object, or event as motion” (*Phenomena* 30) as they do from contemporary physics' insight that “because all of the infinity of factors determining what any given thing is are always changing with time, no such a thing can even remain identical with itself as time passes” (*way*, epigraph). The foundational nature of change and motion, therefore, creates a version of simultaneity that is highly disjointed. If a thing will never, at any moment or over any period of time, be identical to itself, then the present is always in a state of turmoil, is always and simultaneously “again,” “first,” and “before.”

9. Scalapino's example of language without referential content comes from her teen-age years at Berkeley High School where she heard kids deploy “a fragment of speech functioning as a musical phrase, ‘Sh(a)-ma-faa,”’ ostensibly a recasting of “shit-mother-fucker.” Scalapino interprets its use this way:

The phrase had a benign, communicative use, which was exclamation of awe, or pretended exclamation of awe, which was therefore a commentary meaning the opposite; or *both* at the same time, both ironic commentary on and exclamation of awe.

It was nonreferential words, the obscenity taken into a different (not transcendent) usage by *being* that (by being obscenity). Therefore it seemed to imply being outside the ‘social’ as the act of creating that ‘social’ (communing, as two people speaking to each other only then).

By their speaking they could go past the bounds of speaking—and were also outside any ‘social’ apprehension and interpretation. (*Public* 57)

As the idea of being “outside any ‘social’ apprehension and interpretation” suggests, nonrefer-

ential language simply refuses to ground its politics in any act of recognition—even the post-structuralist recognition of the limits of language or the arbitrariness of reference and meaning. Instead, without being blindly transparent, the referents of the words are the forms of the words; the words’ meanings derive from the fact of their being, not from their ability to refer.

Chapter 6

1. As most histories of *Brown* detail, Congress was reluctant to pass legislation that would enforce the Court’s decision. Many school districts simply refused to adhere to the decision, and those that were inclined to pursue integration frequently lacked the means and resources necessary to achieve such a large feat of social engineering. In the decades following the ruling, therefore, integration was sporadic and resisted at nearly every turn. The *Swann* decision, however, provided school districts a court-tested means to integrate their schools. See Clotfelter’s *After Brown*.

2. Although the districts’ particularizing categories were not specifically “white” and “black,” they were equally clumsy and awkward. In Louisville, students were either “black” or “other,” while in Seattle they were either “white” or “non-white.” Presumably the schools thought these categories adequate, but in applying the criterion of “narrow tailoring”—a concept, developed in the *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña* decision from 1995, requiring that all state-mandated racial classifications demonstrate a “compelling government interest”—Chief Justice Roberts’s majority opinion takes issue with just how broadly these programs are “tailored.” He explains, for instance, that “under the Seattle plan, a school with 50 percent Asian-American students and 50 percent white students but no African-American, Native-American, or Latino students would qualify as balanced, while a school with 30 percent Asian-American, 25 percent African-American, 25 percent Latino, and 20 percent white students would not” (15–16).

3. While Justice Thomas joined the majority opinion striking down both race-conscious assignment programs, he also felt compelled to write his own opinion, drawing a strict distinction between segregation, which he contends can only be *de jure*, and racial imbalance, which, to his mind, is “innocent” and in no way amounts to *de facto* segregation.

4. Further blurring the racial lines of this debate, both white and black families brought the Seattle lawsuit, suggesting that these problems are not easily reduced to the bogeyman of “reverse discrimination.”

5. Explicitly highlighting the temporality of this process, Justice Thomas reasons, “As for Louisville, its slate was cleared by the District Court’s 2000 dissolution decree, which effectively declared that there were no longer any effects of *de jure* discrimination in need of remediation.” To emphasize the point, Justice Thomas adds in a footnote, “Contrary to the dissent’s argument . . . the Louisville school district’s interest in remedying its past *de jure* segregation did vanish the day the District Court found that Louisville had eliminated the vestiges of its historic *de jure* segregation” (9). Moreover, “[r]emediation of past *de jure* segregation is a one-time process involving the redress of a discrete legal injury inflicted by an identified entity. At some point, the discrete injury will be remedied, and the school district will be declared unitary” (10).

6. Noting the “cruel irony in the Chief Justice’s reliance on our decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*,” Justice Stevens, who concurred with Breyer’s dissent, charges Roberts with “rewriting history.” Mocking Roberts’s declaration that “history must be heard,” Stevens suggests that his interpretation of *Brown* better exemplifies the “familiar adage that history is written by the victors” (2).

7. Viewing these claims as “a cruel distortion of history,” Breyer avers, “The lesson of his-

tory . . . is not that efforts to continue racial segregation are constitutionally indistinguishable from efforts to achieve racial integration.” Instead, history has taught Breyer that whatever the cost of using race-conscious means to achieve race-neutral ends, “that cost does not approach, in degree or in kind, the terrible harms of slavery, the resulting caste system, and 80 years of legal racial segregation” (67).

8. At first, the Supreme Court arguments about race, which seem most preoccupied with African Americans and the legacy of their particular history, might seem to have little to do with Chicano identity and border consciousness. I would contend, however, that they speak quite directly to Chicano concerns because the cases are not about race as much as they are about the ambiguity of race, particularly when it becomes a function of history. Justice Roberts and Justice Breyer quarrel about what makes you the race that you are—is it your skin color or your history—and this same tension rests at the heart of Chicano identity itself. Perhaps even more than for African Americans, discourses of Chicano identity manifest a fundamental undecidability about exactly what race Chicanos are. On the one hand, the first national victory for LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) involved classifying Mexicans as “white” on the U.S. Census in 1936. On the other hand, Chicano identity has been deeply committed to its “indigenous” status ever since *El Movimiento* adopted “El Plan Espiritual de Atzlán” in 1969 at the First National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference. Chicano Studies stabilizes the ambiguity of the race question, I would suggest, by locating the differential status of Chicano identity in the border rather than in race—hence the title of this chapter. If chapter 4, on Nathaniel Mackey’s work, is about race, then this chapter is about the undecidability of race when it becomes linked to history. The existence of race is not at issue in Mackey’s work, which is concerned instead with racial advancement, as it is in both the Supreme Court cases and Gilb’s novel.

9. The name Mickey Acuña certainly sounds fabricated. “Acuña” is the name of a border town in Mexico, approximately 150 miles due west of San Antonio, Texas, while “Mickey” obviously conjures images of a large rodent with red pants most popular on the other side of the border. This yoking of Mexican and U.S. terms symbolizes one of the many tensions at the core of Mickey’s identity. Also, “*acuñar*” is Spanish for “to coin,” as in “to invent,” an apt description of Mickey’s stories, and perhaps even of the name “Acuña” itself.

10. In ascribing words, thoughts, and actions to Mickey, I realize that I am making assumptions about identity that I have just suggested the book radically undermines. Nevertheless, because I am treating his character as a representation of a specific philosophical problem that Gilb tries to solve, treating him as an ontologically stable identity allows me to set up the precise terms of the identity crisis that I will be describing. Later in the chapter when I discuss the narrator’s depiction of Mickey, his representational “identity” will prove to be more in line with the ontological compromises I describe here.

11. See, for example, Donahue, Saez, and the Birnbaum interview.

12. To be fair, Saldívar is interested in the dialectical interaction between the content and the form of Chicano narrative. My citation focuses solely on the content side of that process and is thus appropriately stagnant. In fact, Saldívar’s turn to the dialectic permits him a much more coherent theory of the relation between identity and difference than Anzaldúa’s, which contradictorily predicates identity on difference.

13. See also Gutiérrez-Jones and Pérez-Torres on the relationship among history, the border, and political resistance. For influential critical works that complicate this relationship see Pérez, Mendoza, and Brady. Pérez’s Foucauldian model deconstructs the discursive articulation of Chicana identity rather than liberating it—hence she describes her work as “decolonial” rather than “postcolonial” (127). Mendoza shifts our attention to the discrepant relationship between historical and fictional Chicano texts to “enable a vision of a future that is not predicated on past injustices” (275). And Brady nicely combines notions of history and the border by insisting

on a spatial analysis of Chicana literature that emphasizes the production of space over time.

14. See *The Shape of the Signifier*, particularly the Introduction and chapter 1, for Michaels's argument about disagreement. See also Warren and Castronovo, writing in a special edition of *New Literary History* devoted to "post-identity," for similar arguments.

15. See Michaels's "Plots against America" for a provocative argument that links the call to respect racial and cultural difference to neoliberalism's desire to ignore the economic disparities so crucial to its successful function. And see Palumbo-Liu's "Assumed Identities" and "Awful Patriotism" for critiques of this "economics-first" argument.

16. In "After Identity," Eric Lott turns to Laclau's work to fill in the gaps he sees in Michaels's otherwise compelling reasoning. I think that Lott sells Michaels's negativity short and that significant parallels are to be found between Michaels and Laclau on the universal.

17. The criticisms of Michaels's approach to history are legion. See, for instance, Ross, 835–42; Millner, 546; Lott, "The New Cosmopolitanism," 121–28; Gunn, 660; Glass, 12; Wiegman, 433; and Perloff, "Modernism without the Modernists," 101–5. For a general critique of post-ethnicity's ahistoricism see Palumbo-Liu, "Assumed Identities," 777.

18. See Freeman for an excellent discussion, in the context of feminist politics, on the political power of empty history, or what she calls "the interesting threat that the genuine *past*-ness of the past sometimes makes to the political present" (728).

19. The version of time Mickey embraces here bears striking similarity to Wai Chee Dimock's notion of "deep time," which she uses to transnationalize our understanding of "America." See *Through Other Continents* for her attempt to empty American literature of its nationalist history by making recourse to geological and astronomical scales of time.

20. Gilb reveals nothing about the novel's narrator. We do not know the narrator's sex, age, location in time, relation to Mickey, investment in the story, and so on.

21. See the "Frequency" chapter of Genette's *Narrative Discourse*.

Conclusion

1. For a more comprehensive discussion of the ideas Jameson raises in "The End of Temporality," see *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*.