

Introduction

DAVE BEECH

Dave Beech is PARSE Professor of Art at Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg. He is the author of *Art and Value: Art's Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics* (Brill, 2015), which was shortlisted for the Isaac and Tamara Deutscher Prize. He is an artist in the collective Freee (with Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan), whose work has been exhibited at the Istanbul Biennial; the Liverpool Biennial; BAK, Utrecht; Wysing Arts, Cambridge; SMART Project Space, Amsterdam; the ICA, London; the Collective Gallery, Edinburgh; International Project Space, Birmingham; and 1000000mph Gallery, London.

ANDERS HULTQVIST

Anders Hultqvist is a composer, sound artist and Professor of Composition at the Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg. Besides writing for different orchestral, chamber music, electro-acoustic and sound art settings, he has since 2005 been involved in different artistic research projects concerning musical interpretation and sound in city spaces. The research projects "Transmission, Urban experiments in sound art and sonic space" and "Into noise" were undertaken by the research group USIT—The Urban Sound Institute. He is currently involved in the artistic research project "At the conceptual limits of composition: A shrinking emptiness – meaning, chaos and entropy", which explores certain topics concerning the creation of meaning in musical and literary composition.

INGRID ELAM

Ingrid Elam is a Swedish writer and critic. She is a Professor in Literary composition and currently Dean of the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts at the University of Gothenburg and Chair of PARSE. She holds a PhD in Comparative literature since 1985. Between 1989 and 2000 she was the cultural editor of the Swedish newspapers *iDAG*, *Göteborgs-Posten* and *Dagens Nyheter*. From 2003 to 2012 she was employed at Malmö University, where, among other positions, she acted as the Dean of the School of Art and Communication.

ANDREA PHILLIPS

Dr Andrea Phillips is PARSE Professor of Art and Head of Research at the Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg. Andrea lectures and writes on the economic and social construction of publics within contemporary art, the manipulation of forms of participation and the potential of forms of political, architectural and social reorganisation within artistic and curatorial culture.

WHEN ASKED TO RESPOND to the question “what is time?” for their presentation at the 2015 PARSE conference on the theme, both Bruno Latour and Simon Critchley deflected in their answer. Latour asked “what is *the* time”, and Critchley made the locution plural: *times*. In composite, and as an appropriate introduction to this issue of the PARSE Journal, with its complexity of artistic, philosophical, political and social thought, we might ask: “what are the times?”

For Latour and for Critchley, time is a fiction of modernity, specifically European. As Latour says in his article, “[i]t is very difficult to situate oneself in time. Very few people are contemporary of one another. And now we all have to decide in which time we live.” Latour’s observation is urgent and planetary in scale. His analysis of the limits of modernity are shaped by the constricted nature of the history of human-scale thinking and acting—of humanism per se. For Critchley, the idea of time as uniform succession needs to be opposed “in the name of a time which is reversible, intermittent, episodic, various and variable, pluriform, relative, relational, and, importantly, finite.”

What are the times? Such a question has multiple inflections. It refuses the commonplace, it locates both a historical and an epistemological concern. The time *is* out of joint, says Shakespeare’s Hamlet, the times *are* out of joint says Brecht’s Azdak in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Derrida’s hauntology begins with this concept of time out of joint.¹ Ontology becomes temporal and multiple: a hauntology is at least two points in time that coincide in some troubling way. If the time is out of joint, there are two or more times that do not sit well. In the conversation between Hanna Hallgren, Somaya El-Sousi and Jenny Tunedal in this issue, such out-of-jointness is rendered palpable. Writing between Europe and Gaza in the summer of 2014, talking through skype, they ask, what is the time of war? “Time to kill versus / Time to get killed or not.”

Time is more abstract than times. The plural form has the advantage of addressing time through its instantiations rather than its disembodied essence. Time understood as times is

unlocked through *this particular time* and *that particular time* in a differential system of times. We can speak of the particularity of time by mentioning the time of an exhibition or the time of rest, but we can also refer to the era of the exhibition, as Peter Osborne does, and the epoch of rest, as William Morris did.² Is this multiplication of times, these sequential and parallel times, the times that we prefer to time in general?

Certainly this is true of the contributors to the PARSE 2015 conference and those who have continued their explorations in this issue of the journal. If there is any uniting factor, like Latour and Critchley the contributors reject any unification of time on the basis of its social, political, historical and aesthetic hegemony. If time equals unity, the artistic and philosophical response on these pages is that such unity proscribes hierarchies, social and historical forms of power that must be repurposed to develop altered worlds. Here, the advantages of artistic research emerge, especially when developed in collaboration with other disciplines: as Valerie Pihet and Benedicte Zitouni say, what we need to do is “shuffle” times, to reorder and reimagine both historical, anthropocentric and futurological time, using aesthetic and fictitious means. As The Otolith Group do in their contribution, in which, alongside stills from their film *Medium Earth* (itself a meditation on the viscosity of deep time on the landscapes of Southern California), a performance script of both real and fictional “earthquake sensitives”—people who can sense the quake before it occurs—is reprinted.

However, according to Doreen Massey, since the advent of phenomenology time and temporality have been consistently understood as more dynamic than space. Time, in effect, has been relaunched strategically against the perceived metaphysical traps of space, objects, fixed structures and reified concepts. Time is the dimension through which actions are performed and events occur. Heidegger and Bergson are the intellectual sources of a powerful train of thought in which space appears to be static and time appears to be the element that gives life to both space and creative renditions of the social world. The mistake of misrecognising the interdependencies of time and space, of the ways in which time and

space become congealed in instances of “fact”, is noted in this issue by Marc Boumeester, as it leads to the supposition of the unrelatedness of events: “Any category of cognitive dissonance, conceptual dislocatedness and emotional non-connectedness seems to have its grounding in this concept, causing the endless stream of mental and physical abuse, racism, hierarchical misuse, moral injustice and pure criminal behaviour that has been part of the chronology of humanity itself.”

Deleuze has taught us to think in terms of becomings rather than beings in order to acknowledge the contingent dimension of time. “Our time”, therefore, is the time of time. One of the distinguishing features of “our time” is that, in its conceptual and philosophical productions, it seems allergic to abstraction, especially the great abstractions of metaphysics. The preference for the plurality of times over time in the singular follows from this. Deleuze, Foucault and Agamben exemplify the taboo on abstraction when they prefer to speak of various dispositifs rather than the state. Time seems to be a trap under this philosophical regime. Yet, as many contributors to this issue point out, such thought is marginal to the normative concept of progressive time—time with a future and a past—that governs and determines the structure of our working day with its habitual reliances, profits and losses.

As Atzu Amann y Alcocer and Rodrigo Delso Gutiérrez point out in this issue in their insistence that we grasp heterotemporalities, while it was the accurate timetabling of trains that established the uniformity of time between regions, it was the introduction of wage labour that gave time its modern abstract character: “Ultimately, the urban environment and its synchronisation is the result of the fastest rhythms—related to production, power and consumption—and cannot accommodate the

slower ones; the ‘others.’” Historians of work have charted the processes by which the artisan was converted into a worker through the disciplining of the use of time. Medieval workers were not paid by the hour and work was not measured in time. Christopher Hill observed that work for the generations preceding the industrial revolution operated with a tempo of “seasonal fits and starts”.³ Each hour was not equivalent but occupied a differential place within a natural, customary and sacred matrix of time. At the threshold of the modern regime of work and the modern concept of time, John Locke complained that the poor will not work for more than two hours a day, and Sir Josiah Child lamented that the poor would not work more than two days a week.⁴

Max Weber charted the transition from a traditional attitude to work to the modern ethos of industry, which is a shift from agricultural and artisanal patterns of work to an industrial urban regime of wage labour. On closer inspection, however, it is time that is overhauled. Weber highlights how the Calvinist ethos of hard work and condemnation of idleness was accomplished by the introduction of the concept of time wasting.⁵ For Baxter, time wasting was a sin, whereas for Franklin every five shillings’ worth of time wasted was the equivalent of tossing five actual shillings into the river. Two kinds of hell are implanted into the new experience of time. Sonja Dahl’s description of Yogyakarta-based artists’ practice of “nongkrong”—literally “squatting by the side of the road with a cigarette” or “sitting around because you’re not doing any work”—contrasts with such Western Protestantism in a stark fashion: in her article she argues for the imperative of time-wasting, not simply for artistic but also political reinvention (Europe has its traditions here too: think of Surrealism and the Situationist International).

1. Derrida, Jacques. *Spectres of Marx*. New York, NY: Routledge. 1994.

2. Osborne, Peter. *Anywhere or Not at All*. London: Verso. 2013. p. 167; Morris, William. “News From Nowhere: An Epoch of Rest”. In *News From Nowhere and Other Writings*. Clive Wilmer (ed.) London: Penguin Books. 1993.

3. Hill, Christopher. *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*. London: Penguin Books. 1986 (1964). p. 125.

4. John Locke quoted in Linebaugh, Peter. *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*. London: Verso. p. 48; Sir Josiah Child quoted in Linebaugh, *ibid.*, p. 4.

5. Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge. 2001 (1930). p. 24.

Time occupies a central place for the curiosity and attention of practitioners and researchers across all the arts. The intensification of the question of time has, in recent years, prompted some to speak of a “temporal turn” across the disciplines. Although bodies usually turn in space, the idiom of “turns” refers to events in time, markers of ruptures in time. This does not make the “temporal turn” a redundancy or a logical error. The temporal turn, or the time of time, of time being brought to a certain kind of alert consciousness and self-reflexivity, is an event that takes place in time as well as an event that has an impact on the concept of time itself. The performativity of this—the event and the concept performed synchronically—is encapsulated by Jason E. Bowman and Anthony Howell’s contribution to this issue in the form of a series of stills (and full video documentation online) of the workshop Bowman organised leading up to the PARSE Time conference. It is also encapsulated by Gerhard Eckel’s documentation and re-transcription of his sound work *Zeitraum* (a version of which was installed at the Time conference). Indeed, both contributions, with their editorial challenge to the very idea of producing a printed journal following on from a live event, have instigated for us not simply a conceptual but also a pragmatic challenge: how to adequately enunciate the complexity of such interventions of the time (then, and now, as you read) without reducing the acuity of intervention to the time so fundamentally disputed by all our contributors?

Time is generated by symmetry breaking; breaks create memory—memory creates time. “Memories are just storages, and they follow forwards causality as well as all other storing” Murray Gell-Mann writes.⁶ Increasingly intricate structures lead to the experience that psychological time is also becoming more divided. The degree of complexity, which thus is dependent on time, is proportional to the amount of information present in the system. The conceptual metaphors extend the mental (conceptual) room and thereby also introduce more time.

Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers write in their book *Order out of Chaos*:

Indeed, one aspect of the transformation of a natural object, a stone, to an object of art is closely related to our impact on matter. Artistic activity breaks the temporal symmetry of the object. [...] We can no longer accept the old a priori distinction between scientific and ethical values. [...] Today we know that time is a construction and therefore carries an ethical responsibility.⁷

One aspect of this ethical responsibility is constituted around how different cultural belief systems act as the foundation of our different views on time. Compare for instance the concepts of time in the West with the Japanese or Hopi-Indian concepts of space and time. As Latour points out here, our special Western concepts concerning the dynamics of time can in other languages and cultures be represented by totally different words for the same timely situations being described.

When Andrew Weir in his article suggests with Siegfried Zelinski that “the idea of geological deep time is so foreign to us we can only understand it as metaphor [...] To be ‘stunned’ by deep time is to focus on the attendant sense of human awe and wonder at such cosmic timescales”, we can remember what Italo Calvino wrote in connection to Leopardi and our cognitive limitations:

Leopardi went on thinking about the problem aroused by the composition of L’infinito. In his reflections, two terms are constantly compared: the “indefinite” [indefinito, without limit] and the “infinite” [infinito, without end]. [...] But since the human mind cannot conceive the infinite, and in fact falls back aghast at the very idea of it, it has to make do with what is indefinite, with sensations as they mingle together and create an impression of infinite space.⁸

Even if quantum probabilities are seen as the foundations of time, by implying a basic asymmetric relationship between past and future through its probability functions (and transferring order from these initial conditions to later organisational forms), we still have to make it work together with our different psychological chronotopes. Maybe our tendency to synthesise so many aspects of reality within one word just makes us more

bewildered? Time-related quantities and qualities are mixed in a way that often adds to the conceptual confusion. There seems to be a need to be at the same time more precise and more inclusive in our conceptions on how we create and are created by our concepts around time. Perhaps it is time, at least within Western culture, to make some kind of atonement between evolutionary time and entropic time. Between psychological time and geo-history. But again: not by limiting the amount of times but by making the concepts around time richer. Valérie Pihet: "Linear time literally immobilises us, preventing us from seeking out the 'possibles' necessarily contained in a situation [...], a problem without a solution is a badly formulated problem. There is always something to be done when the problem is that of life." And Benedicte Zitouni writes in the same article: "How to make things present, how to trigger in and through the story-telling, is the key question for those storytellers who want to thicken our present and multiply its possibilities and potentialities."

Maybe "time" in its present form as an "epistemic object" has to change, or at least combine, its interior and exterior structure? If time is causal relations, and ultimately born out of quantum uncertainty, also human beings and how they handle the (anthropocentric) Earth are dynamic products of that initial condition. As Andrew Weir writes quoting Ray Brassier: "thought is embedded in the reality which it seeks to know."

What would happen if we were able to obliterate the binary division between scientific and lived time(s); if there existed only one "time" in the sense that there is only a dynamic *plenitude* of "times"? In their article concerning John Latham's Flat Time House, Claire Staunton and John Hill write that: "[...] all events—physical, cultural, or psychological—can be measured and related to one another (this is what Latham meant as 'flat time'). Art and physics are infinitely inter-

relatable. Importantly for Latham, the 'incidental person', often an artist, is an observer who can both enact events and be sensitive to them beyond anthropocentric perceptions of passing time."

Most art forms can now be thought of as time-based. But the temporal turn, if we are to embrace such an idea (which in itself might be said to be caught in the logic of progressive time) does not simply describe the structure of art practitioners' work—be it in film, crafting, dance, composition or installation—but the concern of artists regarding the structure of their work—how it takes place in the world and how it is conditioned by that taking place. As Edgar Schmitz says in his conversation with Vermeer & Heiremans in this issue, "[t]his is not a question of precedence between symbolic, financial and institutional registers... but rather a question of how can one temporarily subsume the other. This is an escapist attitude, one of subterfuge, rather than one of analytical engagement."

Art objects have life breathed into them through the activities of curators, critics, teachers and viewers, but also by cleaners, maintenance workers and security guards, who provide the physical conditions for the work to appear timeless (as Mierle Laderman Ukeles so precisely demonstrated in *Maintenance Art Tasks*, in which she cleaned the objects, interiors and exterior of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut in 1973—time in this sense, is importantly and often unremarkably gendered and ethnicised through labour). Artists are concerned with the event of their work and increasingly structure happening in time as a core research question—a core aesthetic and also, as our contributors assert, a political point of departure. This issue of PARSE Journal seeks to examine such interventions into, of and through the times. Artists across disciplines have the advantage of shuffling, overcoming, undermining, fictionalising time.

6. Gell-Mann, Murray. *The Quark and the Jaguar*. New York, NY: Holt. 1994. p. 225.

7. Prigogine, Ilya, and Stengers, Isabelle. *Order out of Chaos*. London: Flamingo (Fontana Paperbacks). 1985. p. 312.

8. Calvino, Italo. *Six memos for the next millenium*. London: Penguin Classics. 2009. pp. 62-63.