Introduction

Becoming Unbecoming

Untimely Mediations

E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen

Queer time has long been colloquially understood to be about fifteen minutes later than the appointed time—"she's not here yet because she's running on queer time." That local color signals a larger, more complex set of discrepancies and variances between queer modes of experience and the rational, clock-based existence of the social mainstream. Living on the margins of social intelligibility alters one's pace; one's tempo becomes at best contrapuntal, syncopated, and at worst, erratic, arrested. To apprehend this living, to make sense of queer temporal vernaculars, we explore in this volume the intricacies and complexities of queer time beyond that quarter-hour delay, in order to link the vital question of temporality to the perversities of becoming. Michel Foucault ends his first, influential volume of *The History of Sexuality* with a move to "biopower" or "biopolitics," signaling a significant, almost epidemiological shift in thinking about and defining the organization of individuals, collective practices, power, identity, and, of course, history. Foucault's call to attend to "bodies and pleasures" was quickly taken up by incipient queer theorists, as if what Foucault were affirming was precisely the sort of uncategorizable polymorphous perversity that a facile reading of queer theory would seem to advocate. But the bodies and pleasures Foucault elucidated were manifestations of the deployments of power, elements that became legible under or as a certain rubric of resistance to a specific formation of power. Foucault charts how "the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by the power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point

of death" (138). For Foucault, this transformation from governing a legal subject ultimately and arbitrarily subject to death to governing the processes of life, using a matrix of knowledge and power to take charge of the habits and practices of living beings, marks "nothing less than the entry of life into history" (142). The move from subjects to processes comprised part of the intellectual transformation toward systemic and antifoundationalist thinking that catalyzed the emergence of queer theory and distinguished it within and in contrast to gay and lesbian activism, including the academic domestication of LGBT studies.

While Foucault's *History of Sexuality* has long been considered one of the founding texts of queer theory, the implication of his move to biopolitics engages questions of time and becoming whose implications for queer theory are only recently beginning to be fully examined.[1] Biopolitics and biopower, which mark a specific break into modernity in the eighteenth century, a break recurring every time a society reaches this same threshold "when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies" (143), are inextricably bound up with a theory of temporality, and in particular a theory of historical time. "If the question of man was raised," Foucault avers, ". . . the reason for this is to be sought in the new mode of relation between history and life" (143). In other words, the emergence of biopower at a certain historical moment is conceived of not only through the conversion of the biological rhythms of a society from death to life, but in terms of interpreting time in a particular way.

Yet we should retain the fact that Foucault's emphasis on biopolitics and biopower also situates our view squarely on *life*, on how life as a dynamic and self-sustaining force is necessarily an expression of becoming. Foucault's bodies and pleasures may well be construed to be in line with the trajectory that feminist theorists like Elizabeth A. Wilson or Elizabeth Grosz have pursued, drawing on the lessons of neuroscience or evolutionary theory to advance a feminist critique and to counter feminist theories' reluctance to engage with biological and bioscientific discourses for fear of lapsing into essentialism. The turn to biopolitics, moreover, opens a trajectory that connects with the resurgence of interest in Henri Bergson, and certainly a vitalist reading of life has been generative for thinkers—like Gilles Deleuze—of alternative paradigms of becoming. Crossbreeding Bergsonian ontology with the Nietzschean concern with history's productivity, Grosz's and Deleuze's vitalist paradigms require that we think existence not in terms of being, of what exists, but of becoming, or the being of becoming—that we consider

"the fundamental mobility of life" (Grosz, *Nick* 194), life "as fundamental becoming" (*Time* 37).

The tensions between life and becoming, on the one hand, and an antiessentialist hermeneutical critique hospitable to textual analysis, on the other, organize the contributions to this volume. Our contributors frame their engagements with the vagaries of becoming through literature, films, and performances, as well as through philosophers and theorists ranging from Bergson and Deleuze to Agamben and Anzaldúa to Sedgwick and Žižek. To address this problem of time and of life thus indirectly, by problematizing language, categories, definitions, and framings, is to follow a critical, antiessentialist line of thinking—a philosophical scaffolding through which queer theory, impelled not only by Foucault but by deconstructionist critiques of identity and feminist contestations of constricting definitions of sexual differences, emerged out of a critique of Western metaphysics and its stable ontology. This philosophical framework includes Nietzsche's contention against historical time—the three species of monumental, antiquarian, and critical—which parses how historical man has, in being so caught up with history, come to "think and act unhistorically," thereby obscuring life itself. Like Foucault, the Nietzsche of the second *Untimely Meditation*—who is, let us note, roughly contemporaneous with the emergence of the "homosexual"—finds the question of the relation of history and life of utmost importance.[2] The fixation of monumental historians on great men and deeds of the past cloaks "their hatred of the great and powerful of their own age" and enables them to appropriate a monumental past to propel them to great deeds in the present (Nietzsche 72). By contrast, the antiquarians piously tend the past in the present, to "persist in the familiar and revered of old" (72), while the critical historians use history as a tool to throw off oppression. Even these latter, who would seem to be using history's contrast with life judiciously, are, in Nietzsche's view, a threat to life, for the critical historian is merely the flipside of the antiquarian historian: as the latter carefully preserves, so the former "takes a knife to [the past's] roots, then . . . cruelly tramples over every kind of piety" (76). It is as if none of these three modes is queer enough to satisfy Nietzsche's radical impulse of reappropriating history and temporality for the moment, for a mode of life liberated from baleful teleology.

As the question of sexuality emerged critically and politically in the academy, it did so within a historical and identitarian framework complicated by the antiessentialism of the queer—marking the hundredth anniversary of homosexuality, rediscovering tolerance of homosexuality endorsed by the

early and medieval Church, or claiming historical figures like the rake or the dandy as premodern queer formations. The tensions between history and its uses for life, especially queer life, have been a generative force both for documenting and broadening our understanding about queer, lesbian, gay, and bisexual modes of living and social practices—as well as for rigorously analyzing the paradigms of historical reasoning itself, as Carolyn Dinshaw's work, for instance, has done. As scholars in this millennium began to think through the ways in which *time* undergirds this relation and these tensions, they confront the political and ethical as much as the historical. One might be tempted to claim that the turn to gay and lesbian history, while politically necessary to counter a fundamentalist and absolutist cultural moment—which is also to say, in the current moment which remains dominated by historical thinking—demonstrates precisely Nietzsche's emphatic claim that "*the excesses of the historical sense from which the present day suffers are deliberately furthered, encouraged, and—employed*" (115). But, as Dana Luciano reminds us in this volume, the decisive work in queer history has opened up new lines of questioning and new insights into how we relate to the past, as well as to the present and future. If critical history tends to deracinate the past—"tak[ing] a knife to its roots" (Nietzsche 76)—for Nietzsche the danger of historical thinking is that it can "cut off the strongest instincts of youth, its fire, defiance, unselfishness and love, at the roots, damp down the heat of its sense of justice, suppress or regress its desire to mature slowly with the counter-desire to be ready, useful, fruitful as quickly as possible, cast morbid doubt on its honesty and boldness of feeling" (115). In other words, history, thought in terms only of progress or development, becomes antithetical to life. Queer engagements in rethinking forms of time, life, and becoming put us back in touch with the real radicality of Nietzsche's approach, which is rooted in his conception of the individual cutting against the masses surging onward through history.

To read Nietzsche here as appealing to a pure and vivid mode of being that is interrupted by history's imposition on tender youth is not quite accurate. Rather—and Foucault helps us see this—this figure of "youth" counterposes an already-structured, already-extant set of practices against those of historical men. At stake is not a vision of a purely free, unformed, and untamed youth, but rather one where one mode of temporal becoming is pitted against another. Nietzsche privileges the "free cultivated man," as opposed to "the scholar, the man of science, and indeed the most speedily employable man of science," whom he, hardly mincing words, regards as an "historical-aesthetic cultural philistine" (117). In Nietzsche's schema,

the temporally marked category "youth" designates the juncture where the two possible paths can each be chosen, a hiatus that keeps the future from closing into a telos.

Nietzsche's prima facie developmental model chafes against the things he values and the aspects of historical living that he criticizes through his description of "youth": haste, in his view, is waste, whether it is the rush to become employable as a man of science or the rush to become fruitful (and, presumably, multiply). By contrast the "cultivated man"—clearly refined, probably effete, no doubt gay—is one who has not rushed, either into profession or marriage. He is operating on queer time, off the designated biopolitical schedule of reproductive heterosexuality. Nietzsche's aim is counterdevelopmental, however: he argues for an understanding of life as a craft that must be practiced "remorselessly" in order that a youth might "experience something himself and feel evolving within him a coherent living complex of experiences of his own" (118). This momentum is *evolutionary* rather than developmental—the cultivation of a sensibility that becomes more adept with practice, but not necessarily progressively more moral or more productive or more quantifiable. Such is the practice that the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips advocates when he writes, "the real problem of adolescence is that most people can't sustain it" (169).

We might understand Nietzsche's paradigm—which ultimately pincers the historical between the unhistorical and the suprahistorical—as promoting a life drive, an openness and combinatory force that queers temporality by working our habitually time-marked (time-imbued) categories against their own grain. The tension between living in the moment—the fire, defiance, unselfishness, and love of youth—and the mode of suprahistorical living—an antiteleological, antieschatological mode, which "sees no salvation in the [historical] process and for [which], rather, the world is complete and reaches its finality at each and every moment" (Nietzsche 66)—affords a vantage on the past that both acknowledges it and enables us productively to forget it. It is in that spirit that Nietzsche lets fly on the notion of "becoming." Critical of the Hegelian paradigm of becoming, which he attacks surrogately through E. von Hartmann, Nietzsche asks:

> Who cannot see and hear in [Hartmann] how historical culture, which knows only the word "becoming," is here deliberately disguising itself as a parodistic deformity, how from behind a grotesque mask it utters the more mischievous nonsense about itself? . . . [W]hat does the historically cultivated make, the

> modern fanatic of the process of swimming and drowning in the stream of becoming, have left to do if he is one day to harvest that disgust we have spoken of, that most exquisite grape in the vineyard? . . . [F]or him there is only one sin—to live differently from the way he has hitherto lived. (109–10)

Becoming, in this view, is a mode invested in a progression narrative that seeks to transmit conformity, reminiscent of the biblical generational legacy where the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the sons' teeth are set on edge (Ezekiel 18:2—which similarly reproves the idea that one bears the responsibility for one's forbears' actions, albeit in a theological rather than historical trajectory).

And yet, Nietzsche's challenge in his untimely meditation is precisely to exhort us to live differently; this is why he seizes on the notion of "youth." He doesn't mean the actual young people of his generation, whom he accuses of being greybeards, but rather, we suggest at the risk of being maudlin, the young at heart, open to opportunity rather than settled in the carapace of habit. And who, developmentally speaking, are younger at heart than queers, who in the homophobic imagination are retarded at the irresponsible age of youthful dalliances, refusing to grow up, settle down, and start a family? Thus, "the time will come," Nietzsche proclaims, "when one will prudently refrain from all constructions of the world-process or even of the history of man; a time when one will regard not the masses but individuals, who form a kind of bridge across the turbulent stream of becoming. These individuals do not carry forward any kind of process but live contemporaneously with one another" (111). Such individuals are not invested in what Lee Edelman calls "reproductive futurism." In other words, as youth are slow to be pulled into the rush to become fruitful, to embrace historicality, to smother life with history by producing offspring who in turn will stand on their shoulders monumentally, cherish them antiquarianly, or oedipally and critically seek to overthrow them—as they refuse "becoming," these youth become queer.

Like Nietzsche's meditations, queerness has always been marked by its untimely relation to socially shared temporal phases, whether individual (developmental) or collective (historical).[3] More often than not, this connection remains defined in negative or hurtful ways, ways that reinforce queerness as a failure to achieve the norm. Or queerness is altogether excluded from the very possibility of trajectory; as Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley ask, "What is the effect of projecting the child into a heteronormative future?

One effect is that we accept the teleology of the child (and narrative itself) as heterosexually determined" (xiv). In Western discourses, queerness has been characterized by a lack of proper orientation in terms of time as much as of social norms. For Freudians, homosexuals were developmentally regressive or marked by a failure to harness their drives and to orient themselves properly with respect to the future. Outside psychoanalysis, the understanding of homosexuality as an atavistic condition in the nineteenth-century discourses of evolution and racial sciences—a notion that haunts queers through homophobic political discourse even in this century—reinforces the sense that queerness is marked by a peculiar form of untimeliness. Western discourses of sexual and racial otherness most explicitly meet at the juncture of developmental time: "queers," as Heather Love observes, "have been seen across the twentieth century as a backward race," "as a drag on the progress of civilization" (6). The concern with proper timing in representations of queer subjects resonates with the role of non-Western others in Western philosophical and cultural thought, such as Hegel's conceptualization of Africa as "the land of childhood" (196), the inert and atemporal space outside historical time. David Marriott observes: "In European thought, blacks have tended to be excluded from the historical and from futurity as such. . . . As unhistorical peoples, Africans lack the ability to know and express time, and as such they remain the children of world history. As primitives, their identity and language makes the future unthinkable and therefore impossible" (232).[4] Analogously, the comedian Margaret Cho notes how a failure to follow the normative temporal arrangements of adolescence disqualifies one from "life" not only in terms of one's participation in reproductive futurism but also in the protocols of middle-class whiteness. She points out the models and cautionary examples of proper adolescent temporalities offered to her generation by John Hughes's teenage dramas, such as

> the eccentric old maid Annie Potts in *Pretty in Pink*, living in the "ethnic" neighborhood Chinatown in order to telegraph her insanity to the viewing audience. She wears thrift store clothes and works at a record store, well beyond her youth, in a futile attempt to deny the inevitable, the fact that she must get married in order to move on, like the unfortunate ghosts of the unjustly murdered and unavenged angry spirits of the dead that must be shown the light, the portal to the other side, so that they might be guided to the afterworld and be released from their bondage here on earth. (163)

The developmental model, in which an Annie Potts functions as a cautionary tale, constructs a timeline that, guiding the subject to adulthood, also delivers her from the "bondage" of ethnicity into unmarked whiteness. In this, Hollywood teenage imaginary recapitulates Hegel's delineation, in *The Philosophy of History*, of the development of world spirit, which dialectically culminates in the telos—the adulthood—of European civilization.

Yet it is precisely the skewed relation to the norm that also gives queerness its singular hope, as this collection's essays demonstrate in considering the ways in which queer theory has acknowledged, resisted, appropriated, or refused divergent models of temporality. Untimeliness has undergirded more recent critical work in historical periods. Scholarly efforts to chart, for instance, the persistence of homosexuality in sundry time periods have convincingly historicized sexual practices, but now researchers such as Carla Freccero and Jonathan Gil Harris have made a turn to historicize whilst critiquing the assumptions at work in historical conceptualizations of time. More synchronically, untimeliness dislodges queers from socially shared, normative periodicities. For those without children or ambitions to procreate, queers are cut loose not only from parenting responsibilities but from the quotidian temporal rhythms that the familially-oriented community imposes (school, soccer, shopping). Failing to look to the future, ever adolescent, queers in these stereotypes embody youths likely to extinguish their desires and lives in the present moment (the serial lovers, the expendable and replaceable bodies of circuit parties, sex practices that risk the subject's longevity). Rather than embrace or contest such images in terms of individual practices, we seek to examine what various modes of becoming queer—or of queer becoming—tell us about the biopolitical forces at work in queer cultural life.

This volume thus builds on and contributes to the broader intellectual momentum in queer thinking to complicate history, ontology, and politics by reconsidering the paradigm of becoming, deconstructing the opposition between Nietzsche and Hegel, bridge and stream, adolescent and aging through readings of cultural texts ranging from canonical literature to contemporary dance. Queer theory's involvement with time signals its persistent speculation in questions of becoming as the processes of unforeseeable change. With the notion of queerness strategically and critically posited not as an identity or a substantive mode of being but as a way of becoming, temporality is necessarily already bound up in the queer. This temporality, we further suggest, is not that of *chronos*, of linear time whose very name mythically signals lineage (in the ancient Greek myth, Kronos is father to Zeus); rather, the contingencies of the queer might be closer to the time of

kairos, the moment of opportunity. Not incidentally, Freud's final, unfinished paper, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence" (1940), drifts off with a meditation on the time of paternal lineage and castration, recounting a boy's "artful" practices of disavowal that allow him to go on masturbating despite the threat of paternal retaliation. The boy's regression to the oral phase, symptomatically felt as his "fear of being eaten by his father," recalls for Freud "the primitive fragment of Greek mythology which tells how Kronos, the old Father God, swallowed his children and sought to swallow his youngest son Zeus like the rest, and how Zeus was saved by the craft of his mother and later on castrated his father" (464). At the end of his career, then, Freud suggests the temporalization of Oedipus—or the oedipalization of time—via Kronos the father. More recent queer theorists have suggested that other temporalities punctuate queer subcultures, drawing on but also reconfiguring the potentialities of biological linkage and the norms of the biopolitical. For example, in *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (2009), Tim Dean argues that the subcultural norms informing the practices of breeding, gift-giving, and bugchasing are in direct conflict with the mainstream ideals of health that biopolitics has established as the unquestioned good of Western modernity.[5] The perversity of barebacking consists in its disregard of such biopolitical imperatives. Instead of health and longevity—the *chronos* of futurity—barebacking, according to Dean, "offers a different perspective on the future" in its "embrac[e of] the human finitude that modern life, especially modern medicine, has become expert in disavowing" (66). Human finitude here is articulated in the insistence on sexual pleasure, what one might call the *kairos* of jouissance; bareback "breeding" constitutes kinship networks according to a temporal intuition incompatible with those that orient the *chronos*-logical activity of straight "breeders."

Dean's suggestion that the subcultures of barebacking, offering new formations of kinship, remodel futurity and provide an example, however unsettling, of the ways becoming may be sustained outside of a heterosexual reproductive paradigm. Our contributors (Dean among them) seek other examples of how lineage can become nonlinear or nonfiliative—or might we even become uninvested in lineage as a temporal paradigm in favor of new ways to figure our relation to each other through time. How might other ways of imagining time, taking into account heterogeneous models of temporality, serve to queer time itself? The introduction to this anthology argues, and the subsequent essays demonstrate, that the processes of becoming are not only the object of queer inquiry but characterize queer

theory's methodology at its most distinctive moments. If queer theorists have agreed on anything, it is that, for queer thought to have any specificity at all, it must be characterized by becoming, the constant breaking of habits. In Gloria Anzaldúa's words, "Rigidity means death. . . . [We] constantly ha[ve] to shift out of habitual formations" (79).

Of course, "becoming" has figured explicitly in queer theory's idiom, particularly in terms of its traditional opposition to "being"; to think queer becoming, then, is to carve out a space for contesting the essential appeal, however strategic, of gay and lesbian identity politics. Judith Butler's early work, in particular, productively deploys the senses of incompleteness and, in an echo of Nietzsche's homo, of repetition connoted in becoming. Her reliance on repetition as compulsory reassertion of gender identity—and therewith, the intertextual interplay that governs the intelligibility of the subject—has compellingly delineated a theory of queer becoming. In Butler's central question, "What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?" (*Gender* 32), becoming is figured not so much as a narrative of self-development, a bildungsroman, but embraced as a constant challenge to the limits, norms, and constraints on intelligibility that hem in and define a subject. Insofar as her work undoes the subject of becoming—countering ontology through language as well as through the cultural semiotics of sexual differences—Butler opens up the space to think queer becoming as *unbecoming*, as a question of the lack of fit, the difficulties of interpretation, the moments of textual resistance or of unintelligibility that scholars in literary, film, and cultural studies wrestle with in their work. If the sense of becoming were to hinge on the adjectival meaning of the word, designating a "property, attribute, quality, or action, suiting or gracing its owner or subject" (*Oxford English Dictionary*), becoming becomes notably un-queer, describing an orthodox relation between subject and its context: queer is nothing if not improper, unfitting, unsuitable. This is where Butler's deconstructed queer subject becomes—so to speak—crucial for understanding queer becoming, for contesting anew the relation of history and life. For what are our accessories as unbecoming subjects but things like time and space, history and politics, gender and its concomitant identity-regulating categories, aesthetics and ethics? History becomes us, insofar as our relation to it produces subjects for whom a historical species is suitable. Queer life is unbecoming for history and its disadvantages—and thereby offers a propitious opportunity for extemporalizing on time itself.

To think queer becoming is to think, not only that one might never learn to straighten up and fly right, but the possibility of one's becoming

something other than queer. The essays in our volume stage encounters with a range of theorists and texts across time, in order to elicit further developments and involutions on this trajectory of becoming—to render queer thought unbecoming, improper, and untimely to its present self. For example, with Claire Colebrook's "Queer Aesthetics," which opens the collection, we might note that the process of becoming Butler theorizes is paradigmatically Hegelian in its orientation. This is indicated not only by Butler's assessment, in the 1999 preface to the reprint of *Gender Trouble*, that "all of [her] work remains within the orbit of a certain set of Hegelian questions" (xiv), but also by the fact that her oeuvre opens with the very question of *Werden*, the (Hegelian) time of becoming. In the early essay "*Geist is Zeit*: French Interpretations of Hegel's Absolute" (1985), Butler explores the afterlife of dialectics in the work of twentieth-century theorists such as Alexandre Kojève, Jean Hyppolite, and Jacques Derrida. As representatives of "French Hegelianism . . . concerned with historical consciousness in a post-teleological age," each of these thinkers, according to Butler, "turns in his own way to a consideration of time in an effort to show either that a non-teleological time can be formulated in Hegelian terms, or that any Hegelian effort to surmount the teleogical premise ends up returning to that premise in tacit ways. The question which occupies them all is, in effect, can Hegel be made modern? Can we think time without teleology? Can we think time without at once thinking an end to time?" (67). Such a problematic organizes all of Butler's subsequent queer-theoretical work, beginning with *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (1987), which lays the groundwork for the theory of performativity in *Gender Trouble*, queer theory's little magnum opus. Butler's solution to the teleological drive of Hegelian dialectics—which, as Stuart Hall writes, rests on the notion "of going forward to meet that which we always were" (47)—is to open the future by refusing the closure—the *Aufhebung* of *Werden* in the Absolute—a move that she most explicitly theorizes in the first chapter of *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). Yet the fact that Hegel functions in Butler's work—and, subsequently, in a lot of queer theory—as the kind of matrix of intelligibility whose foreclosures her own work explores is perhaps suggested by the unexpected reference to Henri Bergson's theory of "creative evolution" in the long, and oddly ectopic, endnote on time in *Bodies that Matter* (1993). The only allusion, as far as we know, to Bergson in Butler's work, this endnote designates time as perhaps *the* most central dimension in her theory of performativity. "To argue that construction is fundamentally a matter of iteration is to make the temporal modality of 'construction' a

priority," she writes. Only time allows the performative to reveal the stabilities of being as nothing but the flux of becoming. Butler opines:

> The notion of temporality ought not to be considered as a simple succession of distinct "moments," all of which are equally distant from one another. Such a spatialized mapping of time substitutes a certain mathematical model for the kind of duration which resists such spatializing metaphors. Efforts to describe or name this temporal span tend to engage spatial mapping, as philosophers from Bergson through Heidegger have argued. Hence, it is important to underscore the effect of *sedimentation* that the temporality of construction implies. Here what are called "moments" are not distinct and equivalent units of time, for the "past" will be the accumulation and congealing of such "moments" to the point of their indistinguishability. . . . Indeed, the notion of the "moment" may well be nothing other than a retrospective fantasy of mathematical mastery imposed upon the interrupted durations of the past. (244–45n8)

Crucially, at the moment when she explicitly theorizes time as that which undergirds performativity, Butler turns to a philosophical tradition of thinking becoming that for many—most notably, of course, Deleuze—remains incompatible with Hegelian conceptualizations of time. That the rejection—one might call it a "foreclosure"—of Deleuze's work functions as a constitutive gesture in the early formulation of performativity in *Subjects of Desire* might suggest the paradigmatic incompatibility of Hegelian and Deleuzian philosophies of becoming.[6]

Doing away with a stable subject is thus crucial to retooling becoming in a queer way, but it's only the first step. To imagine the new forms of relationality that queer becoming promises—or, for that matter, to fully imagine a dynamically queer becoming—calls for a reconsideration of the axes of becoming, a rethinking of the modes of temporality queers inhabit, beyond a Hegelian or even a Nietzschean or Deleuzian framework. Queer subjects are not only performatively reworking themselves, but also simultaneously reformulating the property, attribute, qualities, or actions that surround them, for the essence of the performative—in the Austinian, Derridean, or Butlerian senses—is the interplay between text and context, subject and environment, language and meaning. This interplay, grounded in language but also time, is what is at stake in the critical reframings of queer representations. While

most of the essays in this volume deal with literary works, some examine other forms of cultural production—film, dance, popular music—that are not so much a refusal of writing as writing writ large, performances that enact the very essence, problem, and limits of writing-as-becoming.

To recast the paradigms of becoming, our collection begins, unbecomingly enough, with Colebrook's querying of becoming's normative force. Her appropriation of Deleuze and Guattari's vitalist reading of Kant affords her the leverage to rethink the uses of becoming for life, and especially for a reinvigorated sense of aesthetic power, the impersonal efficacy of the art object resulting from a collision "not intended or reducible to any single life" (32). Colebrook inflects Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-animal through a reading of poems by Pound and Lawrence, tracing out how vitalism transforms the opposition between being and becoming into active vitalism and passive vitalism, a conversion that aptly intervenes in framing the philosophical terms of queer becomings. Moreover, because, as Colebrook notes, becoming-animal and becoming-woman are tied to writing, and thus to a nonteleological becoming that is an encounter, a potential "towards which thought might direct itself" (29)—this more vitalist perspective lays the groundwork for why the problem of queer temporality in this volume is so frequently cast through textual analysis, in relation to what is written but also what is recorded on film or digital media. Colebrook's chapter sets the stage for how the essays in first part, "The Intimacies of Time," examine queer becoming through relationships with others within the scale of the intimate, that such intimacy may be based on a personal or impersonal relation, or one that is becoming more personal or impersonal. The temporal complexities between life—as a becoming, as a dynamic process of an individual's vital and embodied engagement with the environment—and language—as reading and writing, narrating, or analysis—have a power to open up innovative forms of intimacy that betoken not only new modes of becoming, but new ways of affiliation with others and alternative modes of transmission.

Taking up literary practice more directly than Colebrook, Jane Gallop explores the queer eddies of time in reading and writing through her close reading of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* and *Tendencies*. Gallop thus returns us to an influential and original theorist of queerness, one whose deft imbrication of theory and the literary best encapsulates the commitment to thinking queer time and queer becoming through the written text. Gallop's typically astute close textual analysis reveals how the date stamping in those two works produces queer anachronicities as the process

and occasions of writing track with terminal medical diagnoses. Tracing the intrication of writing, reading, and Sedgwick's affiliations with queer men, Gallop discerns the queer moment of facing death in the diagnosis of illness, and her readings of the personal and the persona demonstrate how reading and writing circle through attachments to render lives out of sync with the model of linearity and progress.

If AIDS was a death sentence at the moment in the late eighties and early nineties in which Sedgwick was writing *Epistemology* and *Tendencies*, the antiretroviral cocktails introduced in the middle of the latter decade suspended the sentence. This transformation, Tim Dean argues, has produced new temporalities in HIV/AIDS, temporalities that are lived in the subculture of barebacking. Extrapolating beyond his recent examination of the queer kinship networks that barebakers create, Dean looks at the ways in which unprotected sex among gay men exposes them to a new kind of temporal contingency. In linking the queer becoming of these experiments with the queer desires for consanguity that he suggests barebacking expresses, Dean broaches the complexities of queer transmission in a way that complements Kevin Ohi's more literary consideration of the subject in his contribution to the following part; both chapters are interested in the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, denoting a circularity in and circulation of retroaction and the aftereffects of an event.

If *Nachträglichkeit*—for whose translation Jean Laplanche has suggested "afterwardsness" in lieu to James Strachey's "deferred action"—signals postponement, that posting must be to some future moment. Turning the discussion, then, specifically toward the question of the future, David Marriott picks up on the thread of "impersonality" raised by Colebrook and augmented by Dean, weaving it through a psychoanalytic discussion that draws on Henry James's "Beast in the Jungle," Patrice Leconte's *Confidences trop intimes*, and Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips's *Intimacies*—particularly the latter's consideration of barebacking. Marriott reconsiders the stakes for the very nature of futurity through the problem of noncorrespondence or missed passions and the logic of virtuality. Arguing that the future is not all that Edelman's *No Future* has made it out to be, Marriott suggests that Bersani and Phillips's investment in and reliance on a notion of the virtual opens up a space for understanding intimacy with others as "perilous possibility" (107) and how that orients us toward an epistemologically contingent future.

Rounding off this part, Dana Luciano's richly textured analysis of the temporal layers of queer attachment in Todd Haynes's film *Velvet Goldmine* examines the contingencies of the future through her close examination of

the stakes for a queer archive. Although *Velvet Goldmine* ostensibly offers a retrospective narrative of the glam rock world, and thus, she argues, a paradigm for a queer archive that foregrounds attachment over affect, Luciano finds that the layers of narrative, temporality, texture, and textuality recast memory into potentiality, generating an alternative model for queer cultural historiography as a means for making possible alternative, nonnormative ways of life. In so doing, Luciano implicitly but persuasively imagines another way of framing how we think about this aspect of temporality called the "future," which has catalyzed so much discussion in queer thinking.

Building more explicitly on the possible deformations of the future—and turning, like Dean's essay, to Ernst Bloch's work[7]—Sara Ahmed's "Happy Futures, Perhaps" opens the second part, "Looking ahead to the Postfutural," by exploring the queer possibilities of disintricating happiness and futurity through her reading of a text about an unhappy, unreproductive future in the film *Children of Men*. Following in the wake of Michael Snediker's intervention in the politics of negativity in his book, *Queer Optimism*, Ahmed's reading of *Children of Men* pits pessimism against chance, arguing for queer thinkers "to put the hap back into happiness" (178), and thereby implicitly offers a way to think optimism and futurity via *kairos* rather than *chronos*. Her reading hews critically to the ways one might recast the role of children, and reproductivity more generally, more complexly and fully than normative becoming's narrow optimism might indicate. One can consider hers an argument for an experimentation with happiness not as a form of complacency or immobility but of expansiveness, force, and production—with what Proust calls "that prolongation, that possible multiplication of oneself which is happiness" (718).

Lloyd Pratt's chapter follows through on the queer optimism surrounding the child by taking up the grown child in Eudora Welty's *The Optimist's Daughter* (1969) and the queerly presentist optimism at work in Welty's oeuvre. If Colebrook complains that becoming is normative, perhaps that view is nowhere more intransigent than in the realist novel and particularly in the work of a writer whose complex relation to political engagement as a novelist would seem to augur no promise for queer theory. For Pratt, however, Welty's approach to realism, and in particular her increasingly contrapuntal linearity in the novels, reveals the queerness of other modes of time, positing how non-clock chronology is found and founded in the interstices of "normal" life. Integrating a reading of *The Optimist's Daughter* with an analysis of Welty's biography and reflections on her own life and work, Pratt delineates how a commitment to radical present tenseness renders

Welty's works a fitting countermodel to reproductive futurism. Pratt's reading offers a compelling alternative model to the death drive around which Edelman's queer temporality operates.

The concern with lineage, heritage, and childless grown children is of course deeply imbricated in the problem of transmission, for the anxiety about reproductive futurity is not merely about peopling the world but about transmitting one's knowledge, values, norms, and culture. Following through on the question of legacy and the grown queer child (or at least the college-aged one), Kevin Ohi's reading of *Absalom, Absalom!* examines the larger problematic of queer cultural transmission. Faulkner's novel not only presents queerly out-of-whack generations haunted by the divisive history of the American South, but maps the porous boundaries of Quentin Compson's own sense of self within the layered social context of his family's relation to the Sutpen narrative and his homoerotically coded scene of storytelling in his Harvard dorm room. Ohi's reading offers a nuanced understanding of the complexities of identity as richly layered with multiple time frames—memory, history, story, anecdote—hinged by a continual palimpsest of texts: letter, Bible, testimony, conversation. His mapping resonates with the archaeology of the self and the queerness not only of the archive but of historiography that Luciano traces in Haynes's glam rock story: both chapters delineate the queer affiliations of how nonfamilial intimacies shape identity, identification, and history.

If queer transmission and the archaeology of the self hinge on the complex interweaving of past alliances and how they haunt present circumstances, then we should consider how that bears on a presumptively linear model of temporality. Turning the intersection of literary becoming and narrative back toward how we think about time itself, E. L. McCallum's chapter uses Gertrude Stein to read Heidegger's *Being and Time* more queerly. Asking not only how the death drive differs from Being-towards-death but how we might recast linear forward thinking given the vantage of language and death in hermeneutic ontology, McCallum argues that Stein's novel *The Making of Americans* (1925) gives us an answer in the form of a queer hermeneutic ontology. The work that Stein does on language reveals how it might be possible to rearticulate a progressive politics without a kind of teleological progress.

The third part, "Chronic Anachronisms," brings the collection to a conclusion by turning from language or text to performance. The part performs an anachronic rendition of the collection itself—recapitulating the concerns with reading, alternative lineages, AIDS, and transmission

initiated in earlier sections, and rehearsing in micro the macro-organization of the essay sections: theory, literature, performance. If Sedgwick has been the leading light for many canonically literary queer theorists, as well as herself a centrally influential queer theorist, Gloria Anzaldúa has most effectively worked the borders and margins, not only of the literary canon but of philosophy, feminism, and queer theory. Eliciting a competing paradigm for theorizing time, Mikko Tuhkanen points our attention to the complex implications of Anzaldúa's work for thinking queer temporality and queer becoming, particularly in contrast to the Butlerian theory of performativity. Turning to a moment in Sedgwick's *Tendencies* that Gallop, too, discusses, Tuhkanen argues that Anzaldúan metaphysics privileges the "constitutive crossing," the "movement athwart" (270), that characterizes queer's trajectory. Reading Anzaldúa with Deleuze and Guattari, he tracks a movement between what's past and what's possible, between what queer thinkers have read and what they work toward, to show how we must confront the limitations that the deconstruction of ontology has put on our ability to more productively engage creative thinkers like Anzaldúa.

Turning the performative from the theoretical to the literal, Valerie Rohy's chapter asks about the agency of the letter in crafting the identity not only of the character on the page but the staging of the book itself, its performance in the larger cultural sphere. In her astute reading of the two editions of James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, tracing out the imbrication of individual identity and the letter, Rohy is concerned with the excesses that emerge in the juxtaposition of the two editions, which she compares to the queerly retroactive temporality of coming out. Her reading, through an emphasis on repetition and the production of identity through variation analogous to the theoretical performative, offers fresh and forceful perspective on the notion of queer performativity within time.

Steven Bruhm's essay on Bill T. Jones's AIDS choreography as danse macabre gives performance its more familiar denotation. Picking up on the timeframes of AIDS in both the lived and represented experiences broached by Dean and Gallop in the first part of the volume, Bruhm examines how the work of mourning that for so long drove AIDS cultural work has been, if not completed, attenuated not only by the passing of time but the slowing of the slaughter. However, as Bruhm reminds us, we should not yet settle into complacent celebration of the end of AIDS as the virus is still working its choreography on queer bodies and in queer cultures. Far from being an anachronistic relic of the nineties, the work of Jones remains a vital figuration of the viral temporality that continues to haunt us.

Judith Halberstam shifts our attention from visual performance to musical performance, examining the work of the cover band Lesbians On Ecstasy and the problematics of "queer voice." Comparing the effect of Sylvester's falsetto with the LOE covers of k. d. lang and Tracy Chapman, Halberstam demonstrates the ways in which musical performance opens up queer genders to new times of performativity. Halberstam's essay resonates with the queer musical performances that Luciano treats in her reading of *Velvet Goldmine*, and recalls us again not only to the queer cultural archive—this time through cover performances—but also to the interplay of emotions, attachments, and affects that are so crucial to performance. Finally, Kathryn Bond Stockton performs an irresistible meditation on rhythm and the temporalities of work and play, to dispatch our readers from the text back into the world, to go forth as the collection of individuals bridging across becoming but to keep the Sabbath queer. If lesbian bands or the injunction of the queer Sabbath seem far from the dissension between Nietzsche and Hegel over becoming, which has been central to this introduction's limning of what has become of queer becoming, that is quite the point of the anthology. As the collection turns from the performative to performance, and from performance by professionals to the everyday performance of queers on the streets, we take philosophy unbecomingly from the bedroom to become what queer may.

Notes

1. For recent queer theoretical engagements with the question of temporality, see Freccero, Freeman, Halberstam, D. Hall, Jagose, Love, Muñoz, Rohy, Snediker, and Stockton, as well as the *GLQ* special issue, edited by Freeman.

2. The first use of the word *homosexual* was in 1869, and Nietzsche's Second Meditation appeared in 1874.

3. The "untimely" of Nietzsche's German title, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, has been variously translated as "out of season" "unfashionable," "unmodern," "unconventional," and "inopportune." Perhaps the most germane—queerest, but also most atemporal—translation, however, is H. L. Mencken's "Essays in Sham-Smashing" (17).

4. For African-diasporic writers' and thinkers' negotiations with this Hegelian legacy, see Wright.

5. Charting the rise of biomedicine, and the concomitant morality, since the nineteenth century, Dean draws on Nikolas Rose's work.

6. On this incompatibility, see also Tuhkanen.

7. On Bloch and queer time, see also Muñoz.

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