Introduction

Time for Change

Around noontime on October 15, 2017, American actress Alyssa Milano took to Twitter and encouraged people to use the hashtag #MeToo in an effort to raise awareness about the magnitude of sexual assault and harassment experienced by girls and women around the world, and to let others know they are not alone in what can otherwise be an extremely isolating experience. To say that it "went viral" is an understatement. Within twenty-four hours, the phrase had been tweeted by half a million people and had appeared in twelve million Facebook posts. Since then, it has been used in at least eighty-five countries, and has instigated heated public debate about the experiences that have surfaced, the power dynamics they reveal, and the pervasive nature of sexual offenses that they attest to—cross-culturally, cross-generationally, and across social and professional strata.

But this was not the first time these words had been used for the purpose of empowering survivors of sexual violence. Over a decade earlier, in 2006, the activist and community organizer Tarana Burke had begun using the phrase on MySpace, following a conversation she had had with a thirteen-year-old girl at a summer camp confiding to her about having been sexually assaulted. At the time, Burke had not felt ready to offer advice or support to the girl, and later, she recounts, the guilt she felt became a refrain, a repeated question: "Why couldn't you just say 'me too?'"[1] A movement was born, and since then Burke has been hard at work to help women and girls—particularly women and girls of color—who, like her, had endured sexual abuse.

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Why do I begin here, in the bifurcated birth of the MeToo Movement, as I set out to examine the role of time in the work of two French feminist thinkers? On the one hand, because it is a story about a moment in very recent feminist history that mirrors just about every story about feminist moments and movements. As Abby Ohlheiser puts it, "a viral hashtag that was largely spread and amplified by white women actually has its origins in a decade of work by a woman of color."[2] It serves as a reminder that each and every feminist beginning (and of course not only feminist beginnings but, as I will argue in this book, all beginnings) points to yet another beginning—sometimes through an act of erasure or appropriation, other times through acknowledgment or mutual exchange. Feminist work is always already in some sense feminist historiography, and feminists have had a lot to say about history, beginnings, and birth.

But much more specifically, the MeToo Movement brings attention to the complex ways in which feminist concerns tend to be embedded in temporal questions and considerations, even when these are not explicit. Burke's inability to say "me too" to the young teenage girl who came to her for advice, and her subsequent ability to do so loudly and publicly in a heroic effort to support women and girls throughout her community and eventually across the world, each speaks of different temporal modes of existence and response, and of the gendered nature of temporal experience. "Me too" are words meant to communicate identification, solidarity, affinity, and support—what Burke calls "empowerment through empathy."[3] As such, they signal a relational temporality of sorts—the "too" is pronounced with reference to a claim made by an other (or others)—but through its current usage it has also come to function as an assertion that opens up the possibility for certain forms of relationality and solidarity ("me too" not as a response to what another confides to me, but rather as a statement that invites for collective action and public conversation). As such, these two words reverse a linear temporal order requiring that "this happened to me" comes before "it happened to me too," and open up for an alternative temporal and relational order.

At the same time, "me too" inevitably tells the story of a past to which the speaker must return in order to utter those words, most likely not without pain, and at the risk of having traumatic memories from that past resurface. Pronounced here and now, in a present marked by a flood-wave of Hollywood scandals and everyday abuse, the words "me too" open up a passage to a past that is singular and collective both at once (it tells of my story, but also of a story shared by many,

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and this juncture between the singular and the globally shared is what gives it its power). By pronouncing those words we partake in the act of acknowledging and giving voice to past events (and those that are still ongoing) that by and large have remained silenced and suppressed through the pressures of social taboos and mechanisms of shame. This has happened. To you. To me. To us. And once a movement is born, there is a sense that things could be different. That healing is to come. That there can be change.

While this book is not about the MeToo Movement, it is about change. And it tries to lay bare the temporal structure that allows for change: a temporal movement of return, from the present of our here-and-now, to a past that by and large has been silenced and repressed, into a future that might be otherwise.

French Feminism and the Problem of Time

In her essay "Women's Time," Julia Kristeva defines the different waves of the feminist movement in terms of their respective relationship to time.[4] My own task, in this book, is to continue the trajectory of that essay, and to focus specifically on two of the most important feminist thinkers of our time—Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray—as I offer the first extended reading of their work that systematically unearths the role of time in their corpus. While I acknowledge profound differences between these two thinkers, I argue that the particular issue of time is one that brings their respective work together in ways that should shed new light on the particularities of each of their thinking.[5] The objectives of my project are twofold: On the one hand, I trace a dialogical relationship between Kristeva and Irigaray, suggesting that their respective projects are structured around and driven by a common interest in questions of time and temporality. On the other hand, I look at the broader political implications of this re-articulation of time—most importantly its capacity to formulate a useful critique of patriarchal presuppositions about sexual difference.

My ambition is thus to show that by bringing the issue of time to the forefront, we can highlight some hitherto neglected aspects of the

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thought of these two thinkers—aspects that connect them in perhaps unexpected ways. Despite the fact that temporal questions are present throughout their texts—from the earliest to the most recent ones—few serious engagements with this aspect of their thought have emerged, and no book-length reading of this kind exists.[6] This might in part be due to the fact that neither Kristeva nor Irigaray has published a comprehensive text where their own "theory of time" is spelled out: there is nothing like Aristotle's examination of time in the *Physics*; no engagement as sustained as the one Saint Augustine presents in his *Confessions*; nor do we find in Kristeva or Irigaray any claim to a radical reinterpretation of time like we see in Immanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl, Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, or Jacques Derrida.[7] The question of time is, instead, raised throughout their texts: it appears in almost all of them, at times explicitly, more often as an implicit subtheme.[8]

While Kristeva's and Irigaray's works differ significantly, I argue that the question of time stands at the heart of both of their writing, and that it functions as that which organizes and motivates their respective feminist projects.[9] I claim, moreover, that a feminist critique of identity thinking relies on a re-articulation of time as it has been conceived in the Western tradition. Feminist scholarship has up until recently tended to focus on issues of spatiality and embodiment—both of which are typically associated with femininity—but I argue that a philosophical critique of time and temporality is essential for an adequate discussion of questions of sexual difference and female embodiment and subjectivity.[10]

Time has, of course, been a central philosophical concern for millennia. The early ancients and Plato associated it with the movement of the celestial bodies, thus framing it in cyclical terms and modeling it upon the cycles of nature. Aristotle conceptualized time as an infinite series of now-points that constantly are coming in and going out of presence. We then see a trajectory from Augustine to G. W. F. Hegel, where time becomes conceptualized as an "extension of the soul" (Augustine) or "the form of inner sense" (Kant); a tradition, in other words, that associates time with the internal, non-corporeal mind and that, since René Descartes, posits a transcendental subject or ego capable of temporal synthesis.[11] Heidegger famously suggested that temporality should be seen as the fundamental structure of the existential analysis of Dasein, and in so doing he transformed our very conception of time and the inquiry into our own temporal experience, and set the stage for a revitalization

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of the question of time within the framework of phenomenological, existentialist, and poststructuralist critiques of Western metaphysics.[12]

But if to exist, as Heidegger claims, is to project oneself toward the future and to resolutely seize hold of ecstatic temporality, what, Elaine P. Miller asks, happens if there is a fundamental, historically determined structural difference in the ways in which the sexes are able to carry out this existential project? What if, for certain subjects, the possibility of taking hold of the present, releasing the past, and anticipating the future were from the outset prevented or brought to a halt?[13] It is this structural foreclosure of the possibility of embracing existential temporality that feminists, queer theorists, and decolonial thinkers alike have subjected to critical analysis. I will introduce this problem by turning to the account provided by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. I will proceed, however, to point to some problematic aspects of her analysis, as I argue that the works of Kristeva and Irigaray allow us to better address the question of time with this set of problems in mind. I will then go on to elaborate an analysis of temporal experience that acknowledges and sheds light on the relation between the question of time and that of sexual difference.

What do I mean when I say that there is a relation between the question of time and that of sexual difference? Let me address this question by making a rather general claim about the way in which time and temporal movement have been perceived. By and large, two models of time have been made available: cyclical time, and linear time.[14] Each of these has been associated with its own particular mode of subjectivity. Women, so often relegated to the natural realm and to embodiment, have become the bearers of cyclical time, while men, who have taken upon themselves the task of subordinating nature and the body in the name of culture and reason, have come to lay claim on linear time and the progress associated with it. Historically speaking, the two models thus correspond to the conception of woman as an embodied creature and man as a rational subject not bound to his body.[15]

On this view, female (cyclical) time is associated with temporal stasis, while male (linear) time reaches forward into the transcendent future. Man becomes associated with time (with progress, futurity, and forward-thrusting movement), while woman is reduced to spatiality and repetition (the eternal recurrence of nature and the docile receptive materiality that regenerates life without itself being capable of creativity or agency). Woman, as Beauvoir has noted, gives life, while man tran-

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scends or risks it.[16] Western patriarchal society, we might say, depends on a sexual division of temporal labor. The question of time—even as it has been treated in the Western philosophical canon—is in other words intimately linked to the question of sexual difference. But this link has remained unacknowledged, and my task in this book is not only to draw attention to this link as such but also to show that the covering over of this relation has led to a disfiguring of both time (and the relationship between the different modes of time: past, present, and future) and sexual difference.

To deconstruct the Western patriarchal distinction between nature-woman-immanence and culture-man-transcendence, we must therefore undertake to deconstruct the temporal division between cyclicality and linearity, offering instead a temporal model that moves beyond such dichotomies. While some feminist scholars have attempted to recuperate and valorize cyclical time, and while others have attempted to grant women access to linear time, I argue in this book that neither cyclical nor linear time carries true potential for liberation and change. Building on the work of Kristeva and Irigaray, I seek to develop my own concept of revolutionary time, which is modeled upon the perpetual movement of return that is meant to retrieve the very body that was repressed in order to construct the linear-cyclical dichotomy and paradigm. When Kristeva and Irigaray urge us to return to the body, what is at stake, I argue, is not an essentialist tendency to imprison us in our bodies. Rather, we can trace in their work the effort to construct a model of time and transcendence that neither represses the body nor confines women and other oppressed groups to the realm of embodiment, but which recognizes embodiment as the condition of possibility for futurity. In developing the concept of revolutionary time, I aim to make this implicit effort explicit, and to lay the groundwork for a politics of futurity and change.

My concern with time is threefold: First, I am interested in looking at the ways in which Kristeva and Irigaray seek to establish a view of presence that remains grounded in the past and open towards the future (what I call a living present or co-presence). Second, I want to look at the past by examining what it would mean to retrieve what they see as forgotten histories, and critically think through the relationship between what they call maternal beginnings and what has traditionally been articulated in terms of a single paternal origin. Third, I wish to address very briefly a set of questions about the future—briefly precisely because the future remains elusive. I argue that both Kristeva and Iri-

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garay are devoted to the possibility of the not-yet, the new, and the unforeseen, but that such an unpredictable future fundamentally depends on an initial return into the past and a vitalization of the present. The future is, in other words, not a break with the past, but rather a result of our perpetual and active return to and tarrying with the past, and this movement of return can only take as its point of departure a living present. I am thus attempting to establish a dynamic link between the three modes of time (much like Heidegger did when developing his notion of ecstatic temporality), while (and here, to be sure, I depart from Heidegger) bringing life back to each of them by linking them to the question of sexual difference.

My discussion of time in this book evolves over five parts. The present one introduces the question of time, its relationship to change, and its place not only in French feminism, but also in recent scholarship in decolonial and queer theory. The next one treats the question of time as it appears in Kristeva and Irigaray, respectively, and sketches their critique of both linear and cyclical time and teleological-progressive models of development. My discussion in this part draws from the analysis provided by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. Turning to the work of Kristeva and Irigaray, I trace a view of time as a perpetual movement of return, articulated in terms of revolution and revolt. On my account, it is only through this movement of return into the past that futurity and change become possible. The attempt to develop a theory of time as perpetual return is thus meant to make possible a feminist politics of transformation and change. In the remaining three parts, I examine the aforementioned three moments in this movement of return and renewal: the present, the past, and the future. Part 3 focuses on the tradition that we have come to call the metaphysics of presence, and offers a series of alternative ways of treating the question of presence in intersubjective terms (through phenomena such as yoga, poetry, and love; and through the psychoanalytical view of the subject as inherently divided, not only by the unconscious but also by time). Through an engagement with Derrida's deconstructive project, I depart from him by arguing that the metaphysical tradition is one concerned with absence rather than with presence, and through a discussion of Sigmund Freud's work on the timelessness of the unconscious, I begin to develop an ethics grounded

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in co-presence and temporal difference. Part 4 examines the past, more specifically articulated in terms of maternal beginnings. This part offers an examination of the role of the maternal in Kristeva and Irigaray, respectively, with reference to central passages from Plato's *Timaeus* and *Republic*, as well as a critical engagement with Judith Butler's work. In the final part, which also serves as a conclusion, I turn to the future, and to a set of issues connected to novelty and change, by putting Kristeva and Irigaray's work into conversation with that of Hannah Arendt.

While the overarching argument of the book is that the concern with time is a common feature of the work of Kristeva and Irigaray alike, and while I argue throughout that an analysis of the role of time in their œuvre allows us to explore the similarities of their respective projects, I would, as I have mentioned already, not want to uncritically bundle them together, nor suggest that they are in full agreement about matters of time and difference. I hope to be able to treat them in their differences, and to remain sensitive to the singularity of each of their works. That said, however, the reader will notice that the core ideas and the central tropes of my analysis appear in my reading of both thinkers, and my comparative study is meant to show that these two thinkers complement each other in fruitful ways. It will thus often be the case that I turn to Irigaray in order to develop an argument that my reading of Kristeva fails to fully articulate, or that I address gaps in the work of Irigaray by turning to Kristeva. In this way, I hope to show that the differences between their respective bodies of work are productive ones, and that taken together they allow us to treat the question of time in its relation to difference in rich and profound ways.

On Time and Change

Before fleshing out the notion of revolutionary time and its relation to sexual difference in further detail, allow me to say a few words about what motivated me to treat the issue of time in the first place. My own work has always been concerned with the possibility of change, and more specifically with the prospect of challenging patriarchal assumptions about sex and gender. With this book, I hope to lay bare the conceptual structure that we assume every time that we speak of the possibility for such change to occur. Time has always provided the framework through which we are able to articulate both continuity and change, yet the

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progressive temporal paradigm that is taken for granted in Western modernity (linear time, which, I will argue, functions through a repression of cyclical time and the material conditions of our existence) is one that runs the risk both of *forgetfulness* (it does not allow for the "return" into the past that would ground us in history and materiality) and, at the same time, of *repetition* (it simultaneously and paradoxically traps us in the past, foreclosing the production of "new" horizons).[17] As Tina Chanter has noted before me, we "need an understanding of processes of social change that accommodates both a sense of continuity with the past and the possibility of and need for discontinuity."[18]

The temporal model that I elaborate here is meant to provide exactly that. It seems to me that any feminist politics depends on the belief that things can change, that we need not repeat a history that has tended to exclude and silence women and other oppressed groups. Feminism is the vision that things can be otherwise, that the future holds unprecedented opportunities and the potential for emancipatory change—that we can "break" with a past that has excluded women and other minorities to protect white male privileges. As Elizabeth Grosz has pointed out: "One of the most challenging issues facing any future feminism is precisely how to articulate a future in which futurity itself has a feminine form, in which the female subject can see itself projected beyond its present positions as other to the one."[19]

Women, people of color, and queer folk (among others) have a particularly strong investment in moving beyond a past that has locked them in their bodies and in positions of subordination. As Frantz Fanon puts it, the Black man "is a slave to the past," so to refuse alienation is to refuse to "be locked in the substantialized 'tower of the past,'" which is to say that he must reclaim time in his own terms: "I do not want to sing the past to the detriment of my present and my future."[20] Yet at the same time, it seems to me, feminism must also be an antidote to the future-oriented *forgetfulness* that characterizes Western culture: the covering over of our maternal beginnings, bodily registers of experience, and our place in the cosmos, as well as our tendencies to conceal and silence the lived realities of marginalized groups. In this sense, it is colonial patriarchy instead that marks a "break" with certain aspects of history, and our task would be a work of recovery, of anamnesis, of unearthing a forgotten history and silenced stories.

The task for feminism is thus both to uncover forgotten aspects of history, and to change structures and patterns that have been repeated

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for generations. To be sure, woman, like the Black man in Fanon's work, should no longer be locked in the past. But to claim the present and the future—to engage in what Fanon calls "disalienation"—requires that she revisit and reclaim the past too.[21] Recalling a Nietzschean trope, we must both remember and actively forget. The latter, in fact, depends on the former. This dual task can be achieved through a view of time as a movement of perpetual return and renewal—what I call revolutionary time.[22] If both traditional accounts of time have failed to establish future horizons (cyclical time allegedly repeats itself indefinitely, and linear-progressive time is driven by a teleological desire to produce a future according to already established ideals and norms, which means that it too is bound by repetition), what I call revolutionary time is meant not only to put an end to the dichotomy between these two models (a dichotomy that on my reading structures the very regime of colonial patriarchy), but more importantly to achieve what these models of time have failed to do, namely to set in motion a temporal movement that neither forgets nor repeats the past; a model of time that allows us to redeem the past and the present without instrumentalizing them in the name of a future always already defined in the present.

I want, in other words, to suggest that our current conceptions of time foreclose the very possibility of change, since time in Western modernity has become reduced to a copying of sorts, a recurring movement of repetition. The founding principles of this tradition—the belief in a singular origin and in linear progress alike—set into motion a repetitive reproduction of sameness, hence thwarting variation and difference and the heterogeneity of life itself. It is first and foremost this heterogeneity and the production of irreducible difference that is at stake as we try to re-conceptualize time as a movement of return. If Western metaphysics most commonly has been the study of things that do not change—the nature of Being and the first cause of things—I want to develop something like an ontology of the living, of becoming, and of change. And if philosophers have placed their discussion of time in their treatises on nature (think only of Plato, Aristotle, or Hegel), most modern accounts of time tend to nevertheless overshadow or foreclose the rhythms and oscillations of nature. I want to reclaim the cyclical movement of time without reducing it to monotonous repetition.

The model of time that I articulate here can thus not be equated with the kind of cyclicality that so often has been ascribed to women and to the female body (as well as to the "primitive" cultures of colonized

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and indigenous people). I am, rather, interested in the ways in which both Kristeva and Irigaray think cyclicality (the "revolutionary" nature of time) in terms of difference, differentiation, displacement, and change. For both, I argue, it is through a temporal model of return only—through revolutionary time—that we can think and live beginnings as that which makes politics and political change possible and revitalizable. As Irigaray puts it: "To return means to make possible a new beginning."[23]

To be sure, such a feminist appeal to a temporality of change is also an appeal to a more dynamic understanding of the relationship between corporeality and social construction. As Chanter puts it:

> It has become increasingly evident that the notion of social construction, and the view of historical change that informs it, is in need of conceptual clarification, if we are to move beyond the impasses that have appeared in many areas of cultural studies, feminist theory, and race theory, and indeed in any political debate, insofar as the possibility of change is central to its concerns. Inherent in the notion of historical change are preconceptions about time.[24]

The notion of social construction—and the manifold feminist and queer theories that have attempted to conceptualize the relationship between sex and gender—has in the last few decades revolutionized our understanding of identity, subject formation, and the relationship between nature and culture. But while these new concepts have provided hope for the possibility of change and a sense of liberation from historical structures that previously had seemed "natural" or "essential" (and hence presumably unalterable), the constructivist and "anti-essentialist" rhetoric has also brought to us a set of pressing concerns and questions regarding the status of materiality, embodiment, and sexual difference.

It is my contention that an analysis of time and temporal matters, and a reconfiguration of the relationship between "nature" and "culture" and the temporal terms that we have been prone to use to articulate the complex entanglement between them, might offer some of the "conceptual clarification" that Chanter calls for. In the wake of Beauvoir, much feminist discourse has been grounded in the view that "nature" (and hence the body, or our sex) is static, while "culture" (and hence language, or our gender) is dynamic and subject to change. It has thus inherited and reproduced the assumption that cyclical time (insofar

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as it is associated with the life of the body) should be understood as repetition (stasis) while linear time (associated instead with the life of the mind) must be linked to progress. By disrupting this division, and by paying attention to the dynamic character of the realm that we call "nature" (the body, our sex) we might begin to articulate a more complex account of the relationship between sex and gender (although it should be clear that this also will involve critical analysis of the very concept of nature, such that it can be freed from the moors of essentialism).[25] As Grosz points out:

> Culture produces the nature it needs to justify itself, but nature is also that which resists by operating according to its own logic or procedures. A reconfiguration of nature as dynamic, of matter as culturally productive, of time as a force of proliferation, is thus central to the ways feminism itself may be able to move beyond the politics of equalization to more actively embrace a politics affirmative of difference elaborated in the most dynamic forms of feminist theory today.[26]

While I am unable here to devote sufficient attention to extremely complex categories such as "nature" and "culture," or "sex" and "gender," this book is nevertheless meant to contribute to feminist theories that seek to avoid reducing sexual difference either to static essence or to mere discursive construction. My ambition is to provide additional concepts to contribute to those projects that seek to complicate the relationship between embodiment/materiality and social change, exactly by providing a critique of the temporal structure that hitherto has organized our discourse on these matters. Thinking the body in relation to revolutionary time will allow us to get beyond the impasse of essentialism and anti-essentialism, and to productively intervene in debates about the relation of sex, gender, and the body.

To be sure, many twentieth-century thinkers within the so-called continental tradition have articulated interesting critiques of linear time and progress. The reason that I turn to Kristeva and Irigaray, specifically, to articulate my own views on political change, is precisely that their insistence on the relation between time and sexual difference allows us to think through the question of time as inherently linked to questions of embodiment and materiality.[27] If the body most commonly is seen as that which limits our freedom and transcendence, I see it instead as the

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condition of possibility for transcendence (I will say more about how I use this term in what follows). It is only insofar as we are embodied, I argue, that we have access to time and to temporal change.

Decolonial and Queer Critiques of Time

Before we look more carefully in the chapters that follow at how it is that Kristeva and Irigaray, respectively, tie the question of time to that of sexual difference, it is worth noting that questions of time (and those related to it, such as history, memory, revolution, and change) are at the heart of much contemporary discourse on coloniality and race, as well as recent work in queer theory. Time is an issue of power, and normative temporal regimes are, arguably, not only patriarchal in nature, but also colonial, heteronormative, and cisnormative, and they have served to ostracize all those who fail to conform to Western modern conventions about time, progress, and development. What Dana Luciano in Foucauldian fashion has termed chronobiopolitics,[28] what Daniel Innerarity simply describes as the social rhythm of chronopolitics,[29] and what Elizabeth Freeman in turn refers to as chrononormativity,[30] are all concepts that name the temporal regimes "by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts," or "forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege."[31]

Clearly, if time is a feminist issue, it cannot be framed as an issue of sexual difference alone, but must be understood at the intersection between sexual, racial, and colonial difference, among others. If women have been made to bear the burden of embodiment such that men could be liberated from their bodies as they embarked on their project of progress, so have indigenous and subaltern people (male and female alike), from the cotton fields in times of slavery to contemporary sweatshops and mines. And black and brown women are constantly made to bear an especially heavy burden of embodiment such that white women are able to join their male counterparts on that linear trajectory forward. From domestic work (housekeepers) to childcare (nannies) and reproductive labor (surrogate mothers), these women put their bodies on the line so that their white "sisters" can enter linear time.

Let me be clear that Kristeva and Irigaray's work is limited in this respect, and that it is marked by European whiteness in ways that should trouble us from the start. Important work has been done to address

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this limitation of their work, such as Penelope Deutscher's *A Politics of Impossible Difference*, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's now classic essay "French Feminism in an International Frame."[32] We should also add that their work by and large engages questions of sexual difference in cis- and heteronormative fashion. With this in mind, I want to speak briefly to the ways in which the concept of time is tied up with coloniality, heteronormativity, and cisnormativity, respectively, so as to highlight the need for cross-fertilization between feminist, decolonial, and queer work on these issues, despite the blind spots that haunt much French feminist thought in this regard. It is my hope that these initial remarks will reverberate throughout the book, such that conversations can be opened up between French feminist thought on time and the important body of work wherein temporal matters are tackled more explicitly from decolonial and queer perspectives.

While we tend to associate colonization with space—the imperialist "discovery" and annexation of "far away lands"—it was and remains just as much about annexing time. In *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Walter Mignolo, for example, argues that "the Western concept of 'time' became the essential 'connector' of colonial and imperial differences throughout the globe," and that time as we know it today, "is a result and a consequence of the colonial matrix of power."[33] The colonial logic entails that "the planet was all of a sudden living in different temporalities, with Europe in the present and the rest in the past."[34] Or, as Aníbal Quijano puts it, Eurocentric modernity basically relied (and continues to rely) on the foundational myth of "a linear, one-directional evolutionism from some state of nature to modern European society," as well as "the distorted-temporal relocation" of cultural differences through the displacement of non-Europeans into the past.[35] The rendering of racialized and indigenous people as inferior ultimately depended on rendering them as anterior, as "belonging to the past in the progress of the species."[36]

It is worth noting that such temporal division between a colonized past and a European present (the latter of which, we should add, simultaneously lays claim to the future) depends through-and-through on the very distinction between nature-cyclicality and culture-linearity that we have examined above. Mignolo speaks of "an imaginary chronological line going from nature to culture," and ties this very construction to the

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colonial division between modernity and tradition, such that time becomes a colonizing device that turns geography into chronology in a move that reduces non-European others to "primitives" who are seen as "closer to nature" (rather than at the peak of culture) and "traditional" (rather than modern).[37] Mignolo elaborates: "At the inception of the colonial matrix of power, 'barbarians' were located in space. By the eighteenth century, when 'time' came into the picture and the colonial difference was redefined, 'barbarians' were translated into 'primitives' and located in time rather than in space. 'Primitives' were on the lower scale of a chronological order driving toward 'civilization.' "[38] María Lugones has also written about this moment as one whereby Europeans came to justify the colonial project with reference to a temporal-hierarchical distinction between primitive and civilized, such that "other human inhabitants of the planet came to be mythically conceived not as dominated through conquest, nor as inferior in terms of wealth or political power, but as an anterior stage in the history of the species, in this unidirectional path."[39]

A linear-progressive temporal regime was thus installed at the heart of Western modernity, one that figured—and that continues to figure—"uncivilized" others as relentlessly stuck in the past, in the cyclicality of nature and mythology. As Mignolo goes on to note, " 'Modern man' built his sense of superiority and his pride in the process of cutting the umbilical cord with 'nature,' while 'primitive man' was still too close to it; and being too close to nature meant (from the perspective of 'modern man') being far from civilization."[40] It also of course meant being figured as "inert and fixed," as incapable of progressive movement forward and obstinately tied down by "slow time" in a world propelled by the survival of the fastest.[41] Linear time's embeddedness in notions such as "progress" and "development" is, in other words, far from innocent from the point of view of the colonized. And just like there can be no linear time without an underpinning repression of cyclical time (a notion that I will develop at length in this book), there can be no "development" without the complementary notion of "underdevelopment," nor any modernity without its hidden side, namely coloniality.[42]

Quijano frames his analysis of the temporal regimes of European modernity by attending to the link imposed on racialized subjects to the state (and stasis?) of nature: "According to . . . the chain of the civilizing process that culminates in European civilization, some races—blacks, American Indians, or yellows—are closer to nature than whites."[43] Importantly, he goes on to stress that this "new and radical

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dualism affected not only the racial relations of domination, but the older sexual relations of domination as well."[44] His analysis in this context relies heavily on a critical examination of the (Cartesian) mind-body dualism that organizes the Western modern project, and the association of man (as in "the human" but also the male gender) with the mind and of women—especially women of color—with the body. Quijano's analysis is a reminder that these things cannot be thought apart—that the examination of the sexual division of temporal labor that I offer in this book is inextricably tangled up with these important discussions of racial, cultural, and colonial difference.[45]

Chandra Talpade Mohanty has proposed that transnational feminist coalition building depends on "a temporality of struggle, which disrupts and challenges the logic of linearity, development, and progress that are the hallmarks of European modernity," adding that such temporality of struggle "suggests an insistent, simultaneous, nonsynchronous, process characterized by multiple locations, rather than a search for origins and endings."[46] I will return at length to this idea that we have to disrupt any and all logics that appeal to "origins" and "endings" as I insist, in my discussion of revolutionary time, that we upend the colonial-patriarchal annexing of time, and the hierarchical model of difference it perpetuates. To be sure, if time as we know it "continues to nourish the imaginary that reproduces colonial and imperial difference,"[47] then new temporal imaginaries are desperately needed. It is my hope that the concept of revolutionary time developed in this book can offer some resources on the path to further exploring such imaginaries.

If time has come to be viewed as a pressing feminist issue in the last few decades, some of the most important attempts to challenge stereotypical conceptions of time and change have come from queer theorists thinking about these issues.[48] The editors of a special issue on trans temporalities bring attention to the link between the coloniality of time and the heteronormative cis-masculinity of time: "Western queer and trans subjects were temporalized in ways that mimicked the temporalization of colonial subjects," they note, such that "norms concerning race and colonization have formed the basis for measuring gender nonnormativity as 'out of time.' "[49] Queer time offers an obvious alternative to the normative straightness of linear time, and queer and trans theorists have "opened

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up a number of ways of exploring the limitations of progressive and generational modes of time."[50] Queer and trans temporalities swerve and interrupt, stretch and bend, wrinkle and fold, halt and diverge, redeploy and twist, are "out of joint" and uncanny while attending to gaps, failures, and slippages in the seemingly smooth texture of heterolinear time. The task—like my own in this book—has been to reenvision time so as to put critical pressure on normative assumptions about past, present, and future alike.

Just as in feminist and decolonial engagements with time and history, the past in queer thinking about time is broached as an ongoing site of contestation. As Freeman puts it, "one of the most obvious ways that sex meets temporality is in the persistent description of queers as temporally backward, though paradoxically dislocated from any specific historical moment."[51] Queer folk, like women and racialized subjects, are simultaneously seen as relentlessly stuck in the past and as lacking a past of their own. "Gays and lesbians have been figured as having no past: no childhood, no origin or precedent in nature, no family traditions or legends, and, crucially, no history as a distinct people."[52] The challenge has thus been to establish alternative historiographies and archives, ones that return to and reclaim the past in queer terms, ones that defy linear-generational narratives and that disrupt the very notion that the past can be located in the "before" of our present—that the "now" follows in linear fashion from a "then" that is no longer.

That queerness has a temporal dimension, indeed one with a particularly complex relation to the present, should be evident, Carolyn Dinshaw notes, to anyone "whose desire has been branded as 'arrested development' or dismissed as 'just a phase.' "[53] Similar to feminist and decolonial critiques of the so called "metaphysics of presence" (a tradition that I will examine in chapter 4), queer theorists have insisted that time in general, and presence in particular, is lived rather than hollow: "it is full of attachments and desires, histories and futures," which is to say that it is neither empty nor neutral, and that we need "a fuller, denser, more crowded now" than that we tend to encounter in heterolinear accounts of time and presence.[54] We need, in other words, to examine the present in its intimate relation to desire, pleasure, embodiment, and affective attachments, as I will in part 3 of this book.

The status and value of the future is also contested in queer theory. Sometimes queer time is future-oriented, such as in José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*, where queerness is envisioned as "not yet here," as a

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"rejection of the here and now" and the "quagmire of the present," indeed, as an "ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future."[55] Others conceptualize queer time as precisely refusing any and all futural logics, insofar as such logics allegedly depend on heteronormative assumptions about the value of reproduction and child rearing. In Lee Edelman's *No Future*, for example, queerness comes to name "the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism."[56] Others still navigate the precarious reality of a seemingly foreclosed future—in the context of looming death during the AIDS crisis—while at the same time trying to articulate a futural vision "unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing," such as in the work of Jack Halberstam.[57]

In her introduction to a special issue of GLQ on queer temporalities, Freeman insists that what makes time a distinctly queer question is its embeddedness in issues of embodiment and eroticism. Time, she notes, not only has, but is a body.[58] Yet, as I argue throughout this book, the embodied nature of time has by and large been ignored in a cultural context wedded to abstract-universal models of time that link temporal experience to the mind alone. "We are still in the process of creating," Freeman notes, "a historiographic method that would admit the flesh, that would avow that history is written on and felt with the body, and that would let eroticism into the notion of historical thought itself."[59] In the chapters that follow, I hope to contribute to the making of such historiographic method admitting of the flesh, giving time its body back, as it were, while attending to the heterogeneity that marks bodies as sexed and singular.

A Note on Language

Let me conclude this introduction by drawing attention to some of the vocabulary that I will use in what follows. Both Kristeva and Irigaray have focused on the significance of language and the weight that words carry as we go about describing—and shaping—the world in which we live. Their political thought is, from the outset, motivated by a commitment to the idea that any transformation of our views on subjectivity and identity depends on a thoroughgoing revolution in language. In other words, words matter, and I hope in what follows to use them with care and precision.

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In the wake of Heidegger and subsequent phenomenological thought on time, contemporary philosophers tend to distinguish between time and temporality. I should flag that I myself use these terms interchangeably. While revolutionary time is meant to express temporal experience, or lived time, rather than some abstract objective notion of time (and in this sense temporality might have been a better term to use throughout), I nevertheless have chosen to speak of it in terms of time, since this is the term most often used by Kristeva and Irigaray in their texts. That said, I ask the reader to bear in mind that the time of which I speak is, precisely, lived and experienced time, and I am just as much concerned with questions of subjectivity as I am with the question of time. To be sure, while I view my project as pushing a set of ontological questions, it does not do so in any traditional sense. I am thus not, for example, concerned with whether or not time is "real." I view it as an irreducible aspect of human experience, and it is as such that I want to examine it.

Revolutionary time can be reduced neither to linear nor to cyclical time, but it nevertheless includes certain aspects of both temporal models. My aim is thus not to simply discard these two models once and for all. Such revision would neither be possible nor is it desirable. As we shall see in my discussion of her critique of the symbolic order in chapter 8, Kristeva's strategy is not to erase or destroy the symbolic law altogether, but rather to shed light on the interdependence between symbolic and semiotic (categories to which I will return) in an attempt to thereby transform and revitalize a symbolic order all too driven by disembodied abstraction. Both Kristeva and Irigaray are thinkers of the in-between—a category that links dual opposites while simultaneously exceeding them altogether. Revolutionary time similarly both bridges cyclical and linear time (by showing that one cannot exist without the other) while introducing entirely new aspects of time that neither of those two models was able to embody (precisely because of their one-sided character). As the term as such implies, revolutionary time is indeed repetitive (like the revolutions of the planets around the sun or those of the moon around the earth), yet it brings about novelty and change (like political, cultural, or scientific revolutions aim to do). It is this tension and oscillation between repetition and change that I want to explore, and I will argue that it is intimately linked to a critical analysis of sexual difference.

This is not to say, however, that revolutionary time is equivalent to women's time or feminine time. The latter are terms often used

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both by Kristeva and Irigaray (as well as other feminist thinkers), but I deliberately do not use them in my own account. At the heart of my elaboration of revolutionary time stands the conviction that time only can be experienced in the singular (which is not to say individual—nor does it assume any clear-cut distinction from relational or collective), and I will emphasize this precisely by stressing that revolutionary time is a movement of perpetual return to the body. My model of time is, in other words, grounded in the singularity of the body, and as such it can be reduced neither to ideal form nor to an expression of experience in any general(ized) sense. I will pay close attention to—and provide a critical analysis of—the fact that each temporal model hitherto available to us has been associated with one of the two normative sexes (male or female), and with that sex alone. But my own model of time is precisely meant to disrupt that division, and to articulate temporal experience in singular rather than gendered terms. To say that time depends on sexual relations does not amount to saying that time is feminine, or that all women (or all men) experience time in the same way. Nor does it assume a binary model of sexuate identity. It allows us, rather, to think time in embodied and singular terms, which is to say that the very concept of revolutionary time is one that avoids (even refuses) abstraction and universalization, as well as sexual dimorphism.

As I read their work, both Kristeva and Irigaray aim at establishing a new beginning for woman, where she can enter into history on her own terms, projecting herself into the future and not just securing the projection of man. We might add, in light of what we have said above, that such new beginnings are at stake not only for women, but for all those who have been excluded from and erased by the modern project of history and progress, and also that an interruption of that project involves a fundamental re-articulation of what it means to be a "woman" (or any such marginalized subject) in the first place. The language of "woman," in what follows, will therefore often be used in reference to a subject position as of yet unthought, rather than as an already defined identity category that serves as a (complementary) counterpart to "man." In light of this, it may well be that we should get rid of terms such as "woman" and "man" altogether, so as to not reproduce their current meaning and normative force. I have nevertheless decided to keep them in what follows (again, in part because both Kristeva and Irigaray do), but would ask the reader to engage the text with these claims in mind.

This brings me to another term that needs some elaboration: I will from now on use the term sexuate difference, rather than sexual

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