

‘Here’ and ‘Now’

Rethinking Rationality through Time, Space and Corporeality

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I am not a specialist, I am an undergraduate student but more than that I do not want to see the separation of work and play; free time and work time. This thesis plays with time and through this, it questions what constitutes work time. This project is an accumulation of many people and moments; my parents and I frequent critiquing of theatre, the brilliant lecturers at Amsterdam University College and Bard College Berlin, a pandemic, a heartbreak, the artist residency of Rue Didot and many other moments and stories that have impacted me. I would like to thank my supervisor Christina Buckley who put up with my rambling emails and supported me with such perseverance throughout the process. Tom Winter and Phoebe Chetwynd for putting up with my many questions and giving me a home. George Winter and Zeynep Serinkaya for being inspirational academics. And you who have chosen to read this, for whatever reason, I appreciate the time you have taken.

Abstract

This paper explores the flexibility of time as a concept. In doing so it aims to expose how time within Neoliberalism functions hegemonically, existing in a temporal regime. Time is what surrounds us, goes through us, runs our everyday experiences. However, the current Western conception of time, based on Enlightenment philosophy, is a distancing one, its characteristics constituting the very nature of our current Neoliberal society. This paper, therefore, strives to explore how our progress-driven, rationality-based, linear conception of time is created through our daily practices at the same time that it structures them. Through this process, these practices become naturalized, taken as an objective reflection of the ideals of “a-priori” capitalist systems whilst also functioning as a truth claim for these very systems. As such, this thesis explores alternative theories of time, in an effort to gain a new understanding of our everyday practices, and how time can separate us. This study will connect alternative theories of the concept of time to the embodied experience of performance, using performance as a case study to demonstrate how against-the-grain thinking on time functions. Drawing parallels between the space of performance and time’s flexibility will allow a discussion of affect theory and the importance of interpersonal relations within space. This study, therefore, argues against linear, progress-driven conceptualisations of time and towards an experience that not only counters this capitalist mode of thinking but brings bodies closer.

Key Words: *Temporal Regime, Neoliberalism, Embodiment, Performance, Collectivity*

Introduction



Fig 1. Maarten Baas, *Real Time: Schiphol Clock*, 2016, Carpenters Workshop Gallery.

A man stands behind a translucent screen. On the screen is a painted clock. As time goes by the man, dressed in blue work overalls, wipes away the minute hand and paints another to stand in its new place for the next minute. This goes on and on. The clock ticks and we see the labour behind it. Between changes, the man cleans the clock, rinses his cleaning rags, hangs around, checks his phone, readying himself to be in place for the passing of time. What if the man in the clock is late? Does that suggest time itself has changed? Or is it, in fact that time, disciplines the body? This performance piece by Maarten Baas titled, *Real Time: Schiphol Clock* (2016) displays how time itself is manufactured, this is the main thread of this thesis. The man in the clock displays the flexibility of time. The time changes due to palpable work from the body. The man is trapped for the rest of time in clock-work, working not only “around the clock” but by the clock and for the clock, portraying the power-structures embedded in the reasoning of time itself. The observer can make out the contours of the man’s body covered in blue overalls, but not his face, symbolizing both his anonymity and universality. Time is considered to be a stable, measurable quantity, understood by all. We base experiments, appointments, rendezvous on it. It is, in Western culture, considered to be concrete. However, time is far less tangible, far more unknown than our quotidian perception (West-Pavlov, Harvey, Halberstam, Adorno). As Russel West-Pavlov states, “time is intangible, invisible, colourless, odorless, soundless” (4), we have not and cannot grasp it.

Our contemporary Western understanding of time can be traced back to the emergence of Enlightenment philosophy. This wave of philosophy in the 18th century was coined by Immanuel Kant in his essay *What is Enlightenment?* (1784), in which he states the Enlightenment is to “have courage to use your own reason!” (Kant 1). Whilst Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant were encouraging rationality as the cornerstone of Western civilisation, the industrial revolution was unfolding. This combination of events paved the way for our understanding of being within time itself. This is at the heart of Baas’s performance. The clock, and therefore time itself, is reliant on understandings of the body and how it should behave in space.

It seems important to look into the ways in which time has been thought of throughout modern history, to give a brief introduction to the topic. The regular use of clocks, in the home, only began with the industrial revolution. Clocks began to be internal and internalised, in both home and mind, through the monitoring of workers, increasing the potential production load (West-Pavlov 14). In this sense, ideology serves as a timekeeper. Previously the church held time, as Russel West-Pavlov explains, “the earliest clocks did not run continuously, but served as alarms set to ring bells to wake the monks for night prayer [...] monasteries, however, were not merely places of prayer, they were also places of work” (16). It was only in connection to economic productivity that clocks were introduced, as a tool for control of workers. Bliss Cua Lim in her text *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (2009) also references how time became an object of work-related discipline. Cua Lim describes how “the tolling of public time, of church or civic work bells, has been experienced and resisted by workers as a form of time-discipline, a means of controlling and standardizing the regularity, intensity, and length of periods of labor and intervals of leisure” (10). As society became secularized, clocks moved into the private domain, and time became integral to the current ideology, the current hegemonic mode of being. As mass-production increased so did the use of the clock. Our societal relation with time changed with the state’s control over the body. As Cua Lim states, “modern time consciousness is a means of exercising social, political, and economic control over periods of work and leisure; it obscures the ceaselessly changing plurality of our existence in time” (11). The use of the clock in regimenting time and work alike is directly related to the symptoms of Neoliberalism which I shall go onto define in the later chapters. The clock is used as a mechanism of control, to place the subject in relation to ‘work time’ and ‘free time’. However, as Adorno claims in his essay *Free Time* (1977), “free time depends on the totality

of social conditions, which continues to hold people under its spell. Neither in their work nor in their consciousness do people dispose of genuine freedom over themselves” (187). In this sense, time is not stable but malleable, its “nature” changing with the culture in which it is understood.

How can we understand this duality embedded in time? (On the one hand, it plays a part in the construction of the modern subject, linking rationality with the monitoring of the body, collective and individual. And on the other the flexibility, and ungraspability in its moving nature?) As Adorno and Horkheimer discuss in their text *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) Western society is underpinned by Enlightenment philosophy in which thinkers created “a schema for making the world calculable [...] the multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter” (4). One, dominant way of looking at the objects and subjects was formed. As previously mentioned, the apex of Enlightenment thinking coincided with the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. This movement towards mass production not only changed the nature of work through the introduction of machinery, but it also impacted how space and time “worked” on the subject. The Enlightenment was a movement that conceived a rationality which impacted the social-political thinking of self. The rationality of Enlightenment thinking paved the way for the construction of the modern subject which again held the rational at its core. As Ching et al. assert, “modernists accept as their main objective the discovery of truth, typically in scientific method” (9). In Tom Gunning’s essay *Chaplin and The Body of Modernity* (2010), Gunning aptly describes the modern body by examining Chaplin’s films. He argues that Chaplin’s body is “one closely related to the modern preoccupation with portraying the physical body in its grotesque” (240). This aversion to bodily functions can be traced back to Enlightenment thinking on the rational. The body is forgotten and instead, the mind (as if separable) is congratulated. Through rationality, no alternative - to thinking or to the body- is proposed. It is here that the absolute notion of time and the modern subject can be seen as one. It is this rational individual subject which comes into question through the discussion of time.

This paper is interested in exploring the ways in which time functions in contemporary Neoliberal society. However, it is not enough to critique; we must go forward and provide alternatives to the current hegemonic regime. This paper will analyse the temporal regime, and in unpinning its assumed solidity, will turn towards exploring the flexibility and new consciousness which comes with rupturing time’s linearity. Using theatre

and its “ungraspable nature” as a case study, I will look at how non-linear time conceptions behave on bodies within space and will argue that these experiences of time do not necessarily change how one may *think* about time, but instead how one behaves in space. Performance as case study functions on multiple planes. Due to its liveness, it disappears into the ever-folding present, working against linearity. Yet it is also an emotive based experience. Time slows, quickens, warps signifies based on context. I am often at least 30 minutes late for most meetings. When running for a train, time seems to run with me, fastening its pace as the clock runs down the seconds to departure. However, when preparing this thesis, for example, during writing blocks, time seems to slow, its refusal to run becomes very clear. Performance is a vehicle that has the potential to unpin and denaturalize the temporal regime. It can serve as a method of shifting from the paradigm of the Cartesian subject to the affective realm of embodied exchange of subject/object.

Research Context -

The first section of my project works with theories of time and connects these to the current political climate of Neoliberalism, using Wendy Brown to define the sprawling term. I will then synthesise how Neoliberalism uses time as a mechanism of control through the theorists, Adorno, Preciado and Kaffer. I will apply a synthesis of these texts, to time, contemporary Neoliberalism and how that functions on the body.

From setting up how time works in the contemporary I will examine how time can be warped in moments of performance. This will engage with performance studies theories such as those of Phelan, Dolan and Lavery, to produce an original close analysis of theatre case studies. This section will move from the rationality of Neoliberalism to the affective turn. Here I bring together how time functions within specific spaces and the affective notion of this encounter, building on the discussion of the body in Butler. To do this I will consult Peggy Phelan’s book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) which bridges the gap between time, politics and the body. This seminal text discusses how performance in its very nature, “becomes itself through disappearance” (Phelan 146). This very disappearance means the resistance of time, the resistance of productivity. Phelan’s portrayal of the slipperiness of theatre asserts that it too exists in a time frame not governed by the temporal regime. I will focus on three case studies in order to gain a variety of performance methods and uses of time. The first being a more classical approach to what performance consists of, in the work of She She Pop, a Berlin-based theatre company. The second being the performance-opera

Sun & Sea (Marina) and lastly, work by the performance artist Alok Vaid Menon. Using these three explorations of performance, I will undertake a close analysis of the ways in which time functions within the theatre space and the relations it allows around this. Each object creates an experience of time and space that are relevant to analysis in terms of connection, affect, time and the destabilization of the individual subject.

It is important to acknowledge counterpoint in my argumentation. It should be understood that the theatre itself cannot take down the Neoliberal system. Carl Lavery in his text, *Introduction: Performance and Ecology - What Can Theatre Do?* Discusses the idea of 'weak performance'. This idea I will use to acknowledge what theatre can (or cannot) actually do. This is an integral critique and idea I wish to remain aware of throughout my thesis. I wish to convey that theatre should not be considered an ending point but more as a place in which questions may be posed, an important part of a process of rupturing normativity. This will show that time and space are in a process which can create connections outside of hegemonic models which cannot fit everyone. The exploration of time and theatre, I believe, is a stepping stone in understanding this process.

It is also relevant to discuss that I am writing this from quarantine in Paris due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. It seems somewhat ironic to discuss time and space when for each of us in quarantine our notions of it have already changed so much. Yet because of this, it seems all the more relevant to discuss the system which is failing to act. There is a policy of social distancing in place which does not allow for the theatre space to function in the classical sense. However, through an analysis of Alok Vaid Menon's use of technology and performance, I hope to make this thesis function through different modes of space; the technological one and that of separation.

Methodology -

The first section of the paper will consist of a literature review. I will lay the groundwork for examining time and its relation to neoliberalism. Throughout the study, I will be using a mix of primary theory texts to do my definitional work on Neoliberalism and time. Within this context, I will explore performative time as much as a close analysis of performance. The aim of the methodology of my paper is for the content to directly relate to the form. When discussing rationality and time I will use a linear argumentation, in the more classical academic style of literature review. However, when moving onto exploring bodies and space within performance, my methodology will change. I will intersect these chapters with poetry,

playing also with both the spacing of the page and the language, to achieve the effect of the writing as a performative piece in itself, writing as a performative practice in turn. The poetry I will use will work in tandem with my argumentation, acting as a comparative piece in order to allow multiple perspectives, for as Audre Lorde states in her essay, *Poetry is Not a Luxury* (1984), “it is through poetry that we give names to those ideas which are - until the poem - nameless and formless” (1). Poetry as well as the other methods, destabilizes my argument much like my argument destabilizes the subject. This idea of content becoming form can be linked to the idea of prefigurative politics. In Darcy K. Leach’s words from her text *Prefigurative Politics* (2013), “the term prefigurative politics refers to a political orientation based on the premise that the ends a social movement achieves are fundamentally shaped by the means it employs” (1). Through this the thesis functions in itself in an atemporal, non-linear performance. I hope it may be read as much as a thesis as a collage of my undergraduate experience and constant becoming through time. My aim is that my capstone’s means will shape its ends, and its methodology will thus function as a prefigurative standpoint, aiming to counter linearity in its very form.

Neoliberalism: The Nervous System

This chapter aims to give further insight into the historical-present of Neoliberalism. As mentioned previously, Neoliberalism is a vast and sprawling term, one that to some degree resists definition. However, through looking at how this political, economic and social phenomenon functions on the subject and the body we may glimpse the ever-evolving present. I shall use the work of political theorist Wendy Brown to draw together an idea of how Neoliberalism functions, and then discuss the precarious state this renders people within. The notion of rationality in the contemporary shall be explored and explained further through Brown's understanding of *homo oeconomicus*. Through Lauren Berlant's text *Cruel Optimism* (2011) insight can be made into the historical-present or 'impasse' as Berlant calls it. This notion sheds light on the fleeting and precarious present in Neoliberalism through an affective lens. The application of affect theory will be crucial here since Neoliberalism not only structures economics and politics but also subjectivity. It is a system that controls all areas of life, rendering subjects precarious; it is the *nervous* system.

As Brown writes in *Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism's Remaking of State and Subject* (2015), Neoliberalism "is a loose and shifting signifier" (20). It is to some extent undefined and undefinable. It is an "economic policy, a modality of governance, and an order of reason [...] yet inconstant, differentiated, unsystematic" (Brown 20). And still its break from 20th-century capitalism (Keynesian economics) is palpable. Neoliberalism is the political-economic system that is based on free-market economics in which the state shifts from the provider of public welfare to the promoter of free markets and competition. Yet it is also an analytical term to describe the system, extending from the "free market" to every part of our public and personal worlds, opening up our lives to dominance by market thinking. This breakage from Keynesian economics can be marked by the integration of the social into economic state structures. As Brown argues, "all conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics" (10). Brown uses Foucault's term *homo oeconomicus* from *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978-1979) lecture series to discuss this paradigm shift. Brown argues that there is a new image of the subject, *homo oeconomicus*, through the disappearance of the ability to participate politically in society - the *homo politicus*. As the "already anaemic homo politicus, [is] vanquishing with enormous consequences for democratic institution, cultures, and imaginaries" (35). Drawing on

Foucault, Brown helps us to understand that Neoliberalism has transformed the political and the social; “we are only and everywhere homo oeconomicus” (33). In Neoliberalism the self is commodified and corporatized to the extent that “every human need or desire [has been turned] into a profitable enterprise” (Brown 28). Everyday life is now financialized entirely through the cancellation of homo politicus. There is in the Neoliberal present the “financialization of everything” (Brown 28). Thus, in Neoliberalism, the social realm has been dramatically shifted into the economic realm meaning that how we think of ourselves has been transformed entirely. The body is now more than ever an individual commodity.

Brown outlines the effects of Neoliberalism, the first of which I shall synthesize in order to gain insight into Neoliberal governance. This effect is that of “*intensified inequality*” (Brown 28). This notion describes the intensified gap between rich and poor. This notion although very apparent in Keynesian economics holds a different relationship to “the middle strata” who “works more hours for less pay, fewer benefits, less security, and less promise of retirement or upward mobility than at any time in the past half century” (28). This rendering of precarity I deem the most notable. It not only describes the liminal state into which Neoliberalism positions the subject but also allows insight into the body within this liminality which I shall go onto discuss.

Precarity as Isabell Lorey describes in her book, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious* (2015), “means more than insecure jobs, more than the lack of security given by waged employment. By way of insecurity and danger it embraces the whole of existence, the body, modes of subjectivation” (1). It is as outlined previously more than an economic model but a mode of being, a state of living with the constant unknown. The “fear of what is not calculable marks the techniques of governing and subjectivation” (Lorey 2) within Neoliberalism. Lorey describes three dimensions of the term ‘precarious’ which I wish to acknowledge before going forward with the term. The first is that “precarization in neoliberalism is currently in a process of normalization, which enables governing through insecurity. In Neoliberalism, precarization becomes ‘democratized’” (Lorey 11). Although precarity was a symptom of the Keynesian economic system, the normalization and reinforcement of precarity was not, now there is far less opposition between the precarious and the immune (Lorey 11). The second aspect of precarity is that it “is to be understood as a category of order, which designates the effects of different political, social and legal compensations of a general precariousness” (Lorey 12). Precariousness is the normalized and reified notion of inequality. The third aspect Lorey outlines is that of the “*governmental precarization*” (13). It is “not only destabilization through employment, but also

destabilization of the conduct of life” (13) in other words, the governing of bodies is centred around preserving precarity “so as to strengthen the state and serve the productivity of the capitalist economy” (Lorrey 13). These elements allow an insight into the working of precarity in reinforcing the Neoliberal state. Precariousness functions on the vast majority however it should be said that levels of precariousness still vary. This is not to say that a university lecturer on a zero-hour contract and an unemployed single mother have the same vulnerability, but it is to say that the university lecturer is now in some sense vulnerable. This is the jump and breakage from Keynesian economics, in that Neoliberalism ‘democratically’ affects us all and places us into a liminal state of being, characterised by insecurity.

In order to discuss the dichotomy of time within Neoliberalism and the affective position of it on the body, I turn to Lauren Berlant’s work. There is a dichotomy as Brown describes, “neoliberalism is doubly impossible to grasp: on the one hand, as our present in the making, it shares with all such forces the difficulties of apprehending and theorizing it. On the other hand, it is not a stable or unified object” (49). This relationship to the present as unstable yet unfolding through Neoliberalism is discussed in Berlant’s chapter *After the Good Life, an Impasse: Time Out, Human Resources, and the Precarious Present*. Berlant uses the term ‘impasse’ to discuss this “new historical phase” (Berlant 193). ‘Impasse’ is the historical-present in which “the promise of the good life no longer masks the living precarity of this historical present” (Berlant 196). It is the unstable present, marked by the dramatic shift in the political, economic and now social regime of Neoliberalism. Berlant describes how she offers “impasse both as a formal term for encountering the duration of the present and a specific term for tracking the circulation of precariousness through diverse locales and bodies” (199). It allows for the precariousness of the present to be seen with all of its complex uncertainty. It “opens up different ways that the interruption of norms of the reproduction of life can be adapted to, felt out, and lived” (199). It centres the political within the realm of the subjects’ relation to themselves in “a thick moment of ongoingness” (200). This aptly describes the Neoliberal rendering of time on the subject.

The commodification of the self that is produced by Neoliberalism is rooted in the rationality that underpins this vein of economic thought. The economic-political system is rationalised to the extent that the precarity of all is deemed normal. The rational in society is the economic driven mind. The system is thought of as one that there is ‘no alternative’ to, which denies the space for other modes of being and thought processes to exist outside thinking of the self as a commodity. Neoliberalism sets up subjects as individuals competing in the market. This does not allow for failure or collectivity. It is this ‘rational’ that I argue

against. The system is, in fact, nervous, it is not stable and does not stabilize one's life - instead, it creates precarity. The people are quivering with 0-hour contracts and 'living wages' which are not enough to survive on. The nervous system within the body controls the senses and actions. Neoliberalism can be seen as a nervous system not only due to the anxiety-inducing position it places us into but also due to its transformation of our actions and senses into economic ones. This is why it is of importance to critique Neoliberalism through the affective realm, i.e. via the reclamation of the senses. The senses are something we own without a price and can also guide us to understand the rationality of Neoliberalism as entirely irrational.

Through this definitional work, I hope to have grasped at some of the key aspects of the Neoliberal time. Both in the sense of temporality but also the rendering of modes of being which Neoliberalism evokes. This chapter not only works to set the stage of the current economic-political-social condition but shall also be used going forth to gain understanding into the liminal and yet ordered temporal state we find ourselves in. It is a mode that regulates itself on the quivering of selfhood and undoing of political engagement; it is a nervous system.

“Fuck the Future”

The Neoliberal Normalization of Time

As the last chapter outlined, Neoliberalism places one in a liminal space, yet the idea that time is linear is still used by the state as a mechanism of controlling productivity, reproductivity and which humans matter. This chapter shall look at the temporal regime of Neoliberalism and how that decides, to use Judith Butler’s words, “who counts” (17). Through an examination of Adorno’s essay *Free Time* (1947), we may glimpse how the state controls not only the working hours but puts all time in relation to productivity. I will then use the work of Paul B. Preciado to introduce the biopolitical aspect of hegemonic time telling and go onto to examine queer crip time. This chapter aims to shed light on how time in the contemporary landscape upholds Neoliberal state control, displaying the various tools in which it does this.

Adorno’s essay describes ‘free time’ not in opposition to ‘work time’ but instead part and parcel of the same notion of state-enforced productivity. He writes of ‘free time’ that, “people are at least subjectively convinced that they are acting of their own free will, this will itself is shaped by the very same forces which they are seeking to escape in their hours without work” (188). The idea of ‘free time’ is thus not ‘free’ in the slightest, but instead an extension of the time of production. Despite the fact that Adorno was writing during the Fordist era, his paper on ‘free time’ still holds relevance. McKenzie Wark in her book *Capital is Dead: is This Something Worse?* (2019) describes how the same system of ‘free time’ control still manifests itself in the contemporary era yet with a new and improved disguise. She writes, “the old culture industries had figured out how to commodify leisure. The organized labor movement struggled hard for free time for working people. Capital was forced to compromise, but it found a way to commodify leisure time as well as work time” (3). Through this commodification which Adorno and Wark discuss, people were allowed time off work yet still worked through time, meaning it essentially is never ‘free’. In the post-Fordist landscape, however, “the culture industries are superseded by the vulture industries [...which] collect the rent, and they collect it on all social media time, public or private, work or leisure” (3). Through the integration of technological power, the control of workers through time becomes “not just our labor, not just our leisure - something else is being commodified here: our sociability, our common and ordinary life together” (3). As such, we

can see that not only has time been used to control the work sphere but every other sphere in our lives as well. It is used by the state as a constant generator of capital.

With this as a backdrop, I wish to hone in on how the state's use of linear, regular time affects the body. Preciado's book *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in The Pharmacopornographic Era* (2008) describes how the body has been subjected to the scientific gaze of capitalism. Preciado focuses on how 'gender' and 'sexuality' are controlled by the state and as manufactured products they thus control the people. He argues that "the changes in capitalism that we are witnessing are characterised by the transformation of 'gender' 'sex' 'sexuality' 'sexual identity' and 'pleasure' into objects of the political management of living" (25). The body is thus controlled as "Technoscience has established its material authority by transforming the concepts of the psyche, libido, consciousness, femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality, intersexuality and transsexuality into tangible realities" (34). Gender is no longer a fluid, floating concept but instead, it is written onto the body through the scientific lens and control of capital. Preciado describes the regulation of bodies through reproductive control and the introduction of the pill. He writes, "women were told to - 'Brush your teeth, wash your face, take your Pill . . . once a day, every day, at the same time'" (200). This not only provides a given normalized everyday time frame but also places the body into a system controlled and operated by capitalism. The everyday and the organisation within the day, is now centred around the techno capital control; "In the pharmacopornographic era, the body swallows power" (Preciado 207). Although the pill allows AFAB (assigned female at birth) people control over their fertility, sexual agency and economic independence, it also places a certain amount of the power of the state into the body. Through the pill one swallows state power through the regulation, fragmentation and implementation of time on the body. Preciado goes on to describe how the pill's original circular packaging reflects architectural resemblance to Bentham's panopticon; "the contraceptive pill is an edible panopticon" (202). The panopticon as described by Preciado "was an industrial 'inspection house' designed to optimize surveillance, control, and worker production in a factory complex. [...] as Foucault speculates, could have been empty or occupied by the abstract eye of God, which would remain hidden" (202-203). As Preciado writes, "biopower doesn't infiltrate from the outside. It already dwells inside" (208). Here we can see how this "abstract eye" is one of the states controlling AFAB people's bodies.

To continue with examples of how state governance of time has real and concrete effects on the body, I turn to Alison Kaffer and her analysis of crip time. In her book

Feminist, Queer, Crip (2013) Kaffer outlines how the normalized conception of time is an ableist one, reaffirming normative ideas on who may exist and how. Disability is often placed onto a timeline that relates to cure; however, it is not the case that one is temporarily disabled but instead that we are all temporarily able-bodied, “that the abled/disabled distinction is neither permanent nor impermeable” (Kaffer 25). On defining crip time Kaffer writes that “as one slang dictionary puts it, ‘crip time’ means both ‘a flexible standard for punctuality’ and ‘the extra time needed to arrive or accomplish something’ (26). Crip time is the acknowledgement that not all bodies (and in fact no bodies) can function within the hyper-productive temporal regime of the contemporary. It may take some people more time to move through space, but also to move through space with ableist restrictions, as a simple example, the lack of wheelchair access. It means that “operating on crip time, then, might be not only about a slower speed of movement but also about ableist barriers” (26). However, as Kaffer proposes, crip time is not just an alternation of normative time but instead, “Crip time is flex time not just expanded but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time” (27). It not only counters the hegemonic notion of what should be done in time but proposes a “reorientation” of time (27).

Kaffer proposes three possibilities for a queer crip reading of time, against futurity, which I shall synthesise in order to gain an understanding of how normative notions of time impact the body. The first she outlines is in reference to Lee Edelman’s queer reading of time and his assertion that “queer theory would be better off refusing the future altogether” (Kaffer 28). This is due to the image of the future child which prevails in politics. This child is a white, straight, rich, cis-gendered, male¹ “Edelman argues that futurity [...] is almost always figured in reproductive terms: we cannot “conceive of a future without the figure of the Child”” (Kaffer 28). The image of the future child is what politics bases itself on, the preservation and production of children which uphold the normative and impossible. As Kaffer writes, “sites of reproductive futurity demand a Child that both resembles the parents and exceeds them; “we” all want “our” children to be more healthy, more active, stronger and smarter than we are, and we are supposed to do everything in our power to make that happen” (29). This not only excludes the bodies of so many but provides a future that reflects the racist, sexist ableist politics of the present.

¹ Jack Halberstam also discusses this notion at length in his book *In Queer Time and Place* (2005) wherein he describes that queer people are rendered in queer time as “time is a production of normalcy” (35). Queer people through not fitting into the normative timeframe of get married, have kids etc. arrive at a new temporality.

The second issue is that “a politics based in futurity leads easily to an ethics of endless deferral” (Kaffer 29). Through a constant focus on the future there is a disavowal of the issues of the present. It has the effect of invisibilising bodies that do not fall into the prescribed ideal body. It claims that “we must cure Jerry’s kids now so that there will be no more Jerry’s kids in the future” (29) which not only places a disabled body onto an able bodied timeline of “cure” but does not allow for the disabled body, or anybody that does not fall into the white, straight, cis-gendered, rich future child imaginary, to exist in how the future is conceived.

The third aspect proposed by Kaffer is that “eugenic histories certainly bear the mark of reproductive futurity” wherein “tens of thousands of people diagnosed with various ‘defects’ were targeted by eugenic professionals and policies for the first half of the twentieth century” (30). This is the active administration of the future child notion within the present. It categorises people as “defects” which “included not only people with disabilities but also people from “suspect” racial, ethnic, and religious groups as well as poor people, sexual ‘delinquents,’ and immigrants from the ‘wrong’ countries” (Kaffer 30). This categorisation lends itself to state administered gendercide, “people placed into one or more of these categories might be tracked by family records offices, institutionalized and segregated from the public, sterilized against their will, barred from entering the country, or, in extreme cases, euthanized” (Kaffer 30). This clear use of the image of what the future should look, act, and be like reinforces the nation state and frames people deviating from the image of the future child “as sick, as pathological, as contagious” (Kaffer 32). Emphases on futurity therefore “reveal the biases of the present; it seems entirely possible that imagining different futures and temporalities might help us to see and do the present differently” (Kaffer 28). To summarize, in Carla Freccero’s words, “fuck the future” (Freccero 2006).

The Neoliberal landscape driven by capital and precarity thus places the body under a system of control through the fragmentation and normalization of time. This chapter sheds light on some of the ways in which this tool of the state further excludes and controls bodies. It is not the imagining futures that this chapter is against, however we need to rethink the future, not based around the image of the white, cis-gendered, able-bodied child. As such, I hope that we may begin to see new possibilities to this order.

Dear X

The chapter I am writing (which will be done-ish by tomorrow) is about theatre and time but I'm integrating a poem which I will also attach -- It's the 'Alok Poem' screenshots. I want the experience of reading the chapter to also explore time in a performative way so I will write it more emotionally/poetically than most academic texts.

Hope you are winning at table tennis as I write this.

All my love
xxoxxo

How can I make you, the reader, X, understand but more than that *feel* what this thesis is about? I write about performance, a genre which more than anything runs on emotion. How can I replicate that? How can this text be in and of itself a utopia? How can I invite you in, give you a drink, sit you into a red velvet chair and start the show? This chapter attempts to touch on the power of performance through its warping of normative time and potential access to the utopic. The Enlightenment produced a heightened hierarchy of the rational as most notably regarded and the emotional deemed not relevant or even a hindrance. This I wish to counter through the writing of this thesis and the following chapters in order to show that the two do not have a binary relationship but in fact co-exist. Whilst being bound to the academic form, the following passages are attempts, whether successful or not, to make you not just think but also feel. This does not deny rationalism but instead integrates rational with emotional processes. As Laura Marks writes in her article *Video Haptics and Erotics*, “by engaging with an object in a haptic way, I come to the surface of my self [...] losing myself in the intensified relation with an other that cannot be known” (345). It is through the ‘unknown’ and haptic experience in combination with rationalism that is the project of this chapter and larger thesis. Whilst the Enlightenment saw a turn to the rational, the Romantics centred the individual’s emotion, leading to a significant and complex effect on politics. This attempt of reshaping the rational is not to entirely annul it but to jolt it out of its white male history. This chapter therefore takes an affective approach to writing about theatre and time. Through the integrating of poetry, we may hope to gain the coexistence and integration of the rational and emotional.

the body is not a fleshy prison for the spirit.
 we transcend the arbitrary boundaries drawn around our skin.
 we are so much more than the physical.
 our bodies are just mere suggestions, not ordained truths.²

What is a utopia? And how may we conceive of them with ties to reality? As Benedict Anderson in his text “*Transcending Without Transcendence*”: *Utopianism and an Ethos of Hope* (2006) describes, utopia is a “distinctive type of process that opens up the present through plural, underdetermined, “‘goods’” or “‘betters’” (697). It is not a separate time or space but instead a present which allows for plurality. It is by Anderson’s definition a “distinctive type of process in which something better is “‘not-yet’” and thus has disruptive, excessive qualities even as it is immanent to lived and material culture at multiple scales” (698). Insofar as we can call this a definition, the term is not an inaccessible place of homogeneous wellbeing but more a process of what could become. It is a “departure from the here and now and it is this act of departure that is thereafter given a positive or negative value” (Anderson, 694). As such, utopia is not the direct opposite of dystopia. Utopia is not a valued term but instead a movement of the here and now, yet something very much rooted in the material. In this sense utopia is more common and everyday than one might assume, it is not a transcendent space which one yearns for but rather a space in the present which accesses multi-temporal planes.

what if we were to dream while awake?
 the hyper individuation of the west crumbles beneath our feet + in our lungs.
 we desire past the confines of the now.
 we reject their reason, and instead we are honest — painfully so — in our feelings.

² The poem used throughout this chapter is the performance artist’s Alok Vaid Menon *We Remain Incurable*, 2019.

Jill Dolan's book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope in The Theatre* (2005) describes how performance can create a space in which new futures can be imagined. It is a space where people come together in the present yet it brings the past and future into that moment. I use Dolan's text as a way of looking at performance as a utopia but through the lens of non-normative, non-capital driven conceptions of time. As Dolan asserts, "performance's simultaneity, its present-tenseness, uniquely suits it to probing the possibilities of utopia as a hopeful process that continually writes a different, better future" (13). In this sense, performance is in a state of becoming. It stands in the present, looking at the future whilst carrying a history of cultural reference. To Dolan, "performance's temporality excites audiences with a slight disorientation; its spatiality often anchors it to an imagined place, a "'what if' of matter and expression" (13). It is this ability to propose a 'what if' through temporal disorientation that is my point of focus. Performance, through the integration of collective bodies, out of time-liness and possibility to propose new futures, makes it a site for potential political action.

truth is polyamorous. time is, too,

we are connected to the past, the future, the present,
the people we are, the people we love, the world that surrounds us, is us.
invisibility is not an objective state, it is a lack of ambition.

Yet in what ways does performance disrupt time? I wish to explore this point further before continuing as it is at the heart of my argumentation. For this I turn to Peggy Phelan, a prolific performance studies author, and her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993). Her chapter "The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction" argues that theatre is ephemeral in its very form and therefore resists reproduction. Phelan argues that "performance's only life is the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (146). Performance can be defined by its use of time. It cannot exist without creating a hyper-present space, one that counters the fragmentation and future-child centred Neoliberal time. It to some extent cannot be commodified and fit into the Neoliberal imaginary, as "the economy of reproduction it

betrays lessens the promise of its own ontology” (Phelan 146). This is not to say that Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals are necessarily an example of radical leftist politics, fighting against the state and re-distributing the wealth, but in performance’s very form lies the ability to resist some of the ties that Neoliberalism holds through playing with time; it “clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital” (Phelan 148). As Phelan proposes, performance “becomes itself through disappearance” (146). The live aspect of performance means that it can never be done the same way, “it can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as ‘different’” (Phelan 146).

Commodities which create surplus value need to be able to be reproduced. Through this act of disappearance performance lives in the “maniacally charged present —and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control. Performance resists the balanced circulations of finance. It saves nothing; it only spends” (Phelan 148). Through the very fact of performance, time is disrupted. It is in the disruption of the normal modes of being in time that means “performance indicates the possibility of revaluing that emptiness; this potential revaluation gives performance art its distinctive oppositional edge” (Phelan 148). This means that performance can become a site of playfulness and insight outside of the constraints of the Neoliberal temporal-regime.

we spill outside of the containers they filter us through.

we remain incorrigible, impure, and delightfully contaminated.

porous + welcoming of all the transitions, the refugees, the becomings, the future, the now.

Nevertheless, as previously discussed, it cannot be said that performance is inherently active in politics. Lavery points this out aptly in his essay, *Introduction: performance and ecology – what can theatre do?* (2016), which discusses theatre’s place in environmental activism. He writes that, “for many activists, for instance, theatre’s politics are vicarious and rhetorical – they can only gesture towards the ‘real’ rather than impacting on it” (229). Theatre exists in a world of privilege and is detached from the masses yet Lavery goes on to argue that it is through an acknowledgement of the failure of performance that we may begin to arrive at a place in which theatre can be political. Lavery argues that “the most – or maybe

best – that one can hope to achieve is to produce a theatre that highlights its own incapacity to signify, its own failure to act” (223). He uses Gianni Vattimo’s term ‘weak performance’ to do this, “the point of ‘weak performance’ is not so much to do as to ‘undo’, to impose a certain limit on the possibilities of theatre, to trouble notions of mastery and intentionality, to remain hypothetical and suspensive” (230). Coming from Vattimo’s concept of ‘weak thought’ “– thinking that hesitates to prescribe a ‘strong meaning’ and which willingly opens itself to further interpretation and dialogue” (Lavery 230) ‘weak performance’ then opens up dialogue which does not presume itself as inherently strong, or in this case inherently political. As Lavery writes, “instead then of ‘strong performance’ that would succeed in meeting its targets, weak theatre holds out the possibility of an alternative kind of eco-practice, rooted in a recognition of limits and capacities” (232). It is through this lens that performance is able to acknowledge its shortcomings in terms of political action. In performance, “as an art of weakness, theatre’s role is not to produce the real, it is to corrode it, to make the world problematic, multiple and complex” (Lavery 233). This sets performance up not to be the answer but instead the question. As such, one step may be taken in figuring out the multi-layered problem of Neoliberalism. Through theatre, “the human being is always part of a larger assemblage of objects, technologies, and processes; and last, but no means least, the sense in which theatre’s temporality is fabricated, malleable and multi-scalar, able to contest the limited (and limiting) teleological chronologies insisted upon by capitalist modernity” (Lavery 231). These ideas also speak to Anderson’s conception of utopia. Performance is not a place of departure itself but the point from which departure takes place.

that behind every fact is a carousel of feelings.

behind every law is a panic attack.

behind every judge, and every doctor, and every politician is a broken heart.

Within this context I wish to draw attention to the performative potential of writing itself. In Phelan's words, "to attempt to write about the undocumentable event of performance is to invoke the rules of the written document and thereby alter the event itself" (148). In this sense, as I continue, I do not wish to re-create or pin down performance/performances but instead write in a performative manner. This means, to use Phelan again, "the act of writing toward disappearance, rather than the act of writing toward preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself" (148). This not only counters the rationalization of thought of the Enlightenment but also the temporality of academic writing. I hope to make this chapter and those to follow exist in their own temporality, through playing with poetry to allow multiple sites of emotive-based knowledge and space. The performances I have chosen to examine are for no other reason than their immense emotional claim over me when I saw them. It is not a rational or argument building feat but purely a personal choice to examine these pieces. In that same way, I hope that they may convey the in/out of time experience, utopia if you wish to call it, that I felt and feel.

the natural disposition of the world is infinity.
we are oriented towards multifaceted universes that exist beyond comprehension.
we resist being known, we insist on being experienced regardless of reason.

there are as many ways to exist as there are existences.

everything lives: the stone beneath our feet, the clouds above us. nothing dies — it just
transforms. it goes elsewhere.

we are the descendants of elsewhere. star dust, skin cells, stray dreams.

Repeat After Me

This chapter shall examine the varied temporalities in the German theatre group, She She Pop's production, *Oratorio* (2018). She She Pop is a non-hierarchical theatre collective whose main focus is exploring verbatim stories centred around shame. They are not interested in exhilarating parts of life but instead the mundane, every day, the stories which we don't necessarily want to tell a room full of strangers, the stories that we all share. *Oratorio* is a show about the difficulties of renting. It sheds light on the inequality in the Neoliberal privatisation of property and inheritance. As She She Pop describes on their website, the show converses on the "context of the bourgeois public, property and democratic empowerment". It centres itself around personal stories of ownership, asking who is represented and who is allowed to speak in this conversation. The production opened through a karaoke like text on a screen inviting the audience to speak the script, for example saying "we are the protagonists". At some points, this script would ask the 'pensionless mothers' to say a line, or the 'pessimistic Marxists' to say another. Through this, the conversation was not held only by those on stage but the entire room; the stage was democratised. Parts of this chapter require your participation much as the show did. Please read aloud when instructed by the karaoke text in the blue boxes. The reader and the writer do not share the same space as in *Oratorio*; however, this practice allows for some potential collectivity in the process of reading and hopefully creates a sense of catharsis. This chapter shall examine the ways in which non-hegemonic modes of time were used by She She Pop to create a collective and non-centralised discussion on private ownership in reference to ideas on utopia and inheritance.



I am the protagonist

Oratorio was an ensemble monologue, not only from the actors on stage but the audience. The play forced people who would not commonly discuss renting issues into a space where they could. The play was centred about the actors, moving and speaking in an ensemble, and the audience, who under the categories given for example ‘pessimistic Marxist’, ‘student’, ‘theatre expert,’ spoke the lines given to them. The ensemble on stage then responded. This was of course under the assumption that the audience members could fit into one of the categories given, yet these identities were then dissolved later in the show. The stage no longer drew a boundary between actor and spectator but became a site of dialogue, every single person in the room speaking in chorus. The ‘ones who will inherit’ and the ‘pensionless mothers’ were able to enter into a scripted conversation. It played with identity categories, renter and owner, audience and actor, *us* and *them*. There were monologues in which someone inheriting a house voiced their comfortability and shame in their privilege. The fourth wall was broken throughout with the karaoke text, meaning the audience intersected the performance. The actors started off in everyday clothing yet as they stepped away from the ensemble to do a monologue, each of them telling a personal experience of ‘unrenting’, they put on flags which they wore as dresses. These flags did not have a particular symbol or iconography but instead represented representation. The flag as used in *Oratorio* did not display a particular political alignment; instead they represented the idea of politics, of belief, of one ideological standpoint. The actors wore the flags, connoting the idea that we wear our identity. The separations between the ‘pensionless mothers’ and ‘the ones who will inherit’ became less and less defined until, at the end of the piece, the flag/dresses were laid out on the floor and everyone sang a collective song. This, along with the messiness of the audience’s reading, seemed to symbolically display the undoing of strict boundaries.

The closed theatre space became a sight of conversation. A community was created, we are all the ‘pensionless mother’, ‘the theatre expert’, the ‘pessimistic Marxist’, all experiencing in one way or another the effects of private ownership and steadily increasing rent prices. We assigned ourselves to the groups that the subtitles told to talk, a process of identification taking place, however, the audience was not tied to these identity groups. One may decide to speak the role of the sceptic or the theatre expert even though not identifying with that category. Through this the rigid roles of the ones who would inherit and the Marxists become less solid, the categories mix and the audience are confronted with the idea that we are not all that different; the actor and the audience, the one who will inherit and the pensionless mother. Instead, we are all subjects to a system that has gone wrong. It allowed the theatre to exist in a non-privatised space.



We are all the protagonists

Yet how does this relate to time? How did this become successful through time? I will explore time in this production through two points of entry; the collective karaoke and the role of inheritance within the production. The play allowed for a new space to be created inside the theatre. This space countered the private space of theatre through the collective voice. It is here that normative time is warped. If we turn back to Jill Dollan’s writing on performance as utopia, we may begin to see the temporal state of becoming which the play renders. Recall the quote, “performance’s simultaneity, its present-tenseness, uniquely suits it to probing the possibilities of utopia as a hopeful process that continually writes a different, better future” (Dollan 13). The ‘present-tenseness’ of the performance was seen through communal speech which allowed not only the stories of many to be heard but also a re-writing of what space means. The time shared in the present allowed for a look on the future as a collective body. The line “when no one speaks everyone is alone” that was spoken by all


can be highlighted here to speak of the utopian present and the collective future. The fragmentation of identities that the play used and then disrupted through the present tenseness of the play created a time zone where all were speaking and no one was alone. The chorus of voices was allowed through the present coming together of people within space.

[Say out loud if you will inherit]

I will do all I can to
redistribute the wealth,
even if that means giving
money to the person who
wrote this weird thesis

I now turn to the topic of inheritance. In the middle of the play, all of the people who were going to inherit were called up on stage. They calculated an approximate collective wealth of the members on stage and then through karaoke-d lines, highlighted the inequality in inheritance. The play in this sense also functions after the show had ended. This played with the temporality of inheritance that forms Neoliberal time. Inherited time upholds the image of the future child as discussed previously. It upholds power structures through time, that ensure certain people privilege through the passing of time. This was not entirely countered but instead highlighted. It denaturalized the normalized, made it strange, creating a new temporality; one of the collective present.

The play, therefore, countered what theatre-time can be through the pluralization of the protagonist. *Oratorio* is about all of us, extending past the theatre space and the present tense.



When no one speaks
everyone is alone

Exhaustion, exhaustion, exhaustion, exhaustion...

“Imagine a beach—you within it, or better: watching from above—the burning sun, sunscreen, bright bathing suits, sweaty palms and legs. Tired limbs sprawled lazily across a mosaic of towels. Imagine the occasional squeal of children, laughter, the sound of an ice cream van in the distance. The musical rhythm of waves on the surf, a soothing sound (on this particular beach, not elsewhere). The crinkling of plastic bags whirling in the air. Their silent floating, jellyfish-like, below the waterline. The rumble of a volcano, or of an airplane, or a speedboat. Then a chorus of songs: everyday songs, songs of worry and of boredom, songs of almost nothing. And below them: the slow creaking of an exhausted Earth: a gasp”

Lucia Pietroiusti, *Sun & Sea (Marina)* program.

The Lithuanian Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale 2019 was an opera-performance which transported spectators to the beach. Held in a warehouse in central Venice, viewers were directed up to a mezzanine where they looked down onto an artificial heavily populated beach scene. There were children and dogs playing, people reading under the hot lights, all singing an opera of the Anthropocene, a term which I shall go onto define. This chapter shall examine *Sun & Sea (Marina)* (2019) created by Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė, Vaiva Grainytė and Lina Lapelytė. Through doing this it takes a look at the time of the Anthropocene, the museum and the performance itself. Alongside this analysis is my own photo journal of Paris during quarantine. This photo series works in tandem to the subject of this chapter, allowing further insight into the constructed-ness of nature in Neoliberalism and the idea of a subject too large to fathom, such as the climate crisis or COVID 19. The photography series plays with the boundaries of the exterior and interior, just as *Sun & Sea (Marina)* did. This thesis in a broad sense is about how we define the interior - who is allowed to be in it and what constitutes the interior of the body. How can subjects such as time and the Anthropocene which seem, along normalized rationale to be exterior to us, in fact build and come together to create a broader, more fluid understanding of our own interiors. The aim of including this series is to allow for multiple modes of entry to this subject as well as to in some way document the confinement from which I am writing this thesis.

The performance-opera installation ran for eight hours each day, yet viewers were advised to stay for 20 minutes at a time. We were directed up a staircase onto a dark

mezzanine where we looked down at the opera beneath. The beach was populated by people of many ages, couples on towels, friends having a picnic. A beach scene, living out below. The floor was made of sand, and the beach was warm. It was a realistic replica of a constructed beach.

from chorus to solos.
time at the beach,
their boredom, their
note of the climate
however, was not the
motif in the opera.
through their own
touched upon the
issues connected to
was a listless,
environment which
to how we relate to
songs were about
trip to a coral reef,



The opera itself went
All singing about their
musing on their lives,
worries, washed with a
crisis. This subject,
first or most notable
Instead, each character
personal stories
complex and sprawling
the Anthropocene. It
relaxed beach
created personal links
the planet. Some of the
being overworked, a
getting too much sun or

a philosopher commenting *A Day at The Beach*, May 2020 on the beach, the earth, the sun. These songs collected to make a rounded and compelling experience of a beach and our connection to our environment and political system. It touched upon thinking of something so large as the climate crisis through our small, personal, and everyday experiences.

Song of Exhaustion, Workaholic's song I, *Sun & Sea (Marina)*.

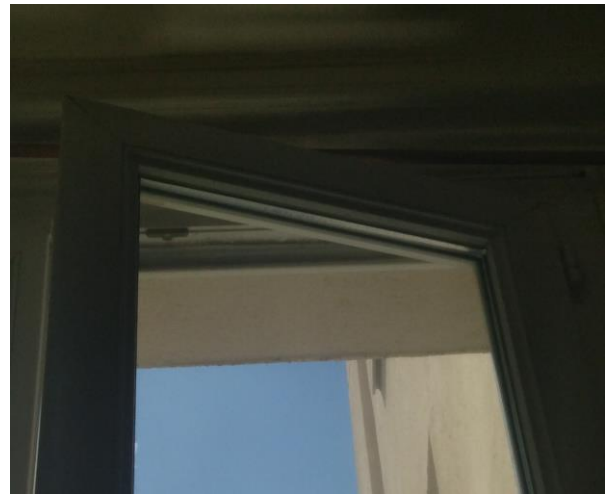
I really don't feel that I can let myself slow down,
 Because my colleagues will look down on me.
 They'll say I have no strength of will.
 And I'll become a loser in my own eyes.

Exhaustion, exhaustion, exhaustion, exhaustion...
 Exhaustion, exhaustion, exhaustion, exhaustion...

Exhaustion –
 I like to say it as a joke –
 It's like a mammoth,
 A nonexistent creature, gone extinct.
 Encyclopedias have it,
 But in life – a thing you'll never meet.

Let's outline briefly what the Anthropocene is and how we may go about thinking of it. The Anthropocene is the current geological time frame we find ourselves in. It is said to begin when human beings started to mark the earth in ways that cannot be reversed, this is tied to around the time of the industrial revolution. Timothy Morten in his essay *Poisoned Ground: Art and Philosophy in The Time of Hyperobjects* (2013) works with the notion of the Anthropocene and how philosophy and art may start to reflect this new reality. He does this through a discussion of the hyperobject; "the ecological crisis is best thought of as the time of hyperobjects" (Morten 39). The hyperobject is something that is temporarily and spatially too large and strange to fathom, "entities such as biosphere, climate and climate change [...] are massively distributed across Earth" (Morten 39). The hyperobject is everywhere, "we find ourselves inside them, part of them yet not part of them" (Morten 39). The ecological crisis has propelled us into a time of the hyperobject. "Concepts such as world are plausible only when distinctions between here and there, or foreground and background are possible. These distinctions are precisely eroded by hyperobjects" (Morten 39). The hyperobject blurs time and space, the local and the global into the unknown, liminal, the unclear spatial and temporal frame of the climate crisis. Time has changed drastically when thinking in terms of the Anthropocene, "the Newtonian-Cartesian idea of time and space as neutral containers in

which objects float is now ended, decisively, in our everyday experience of the ecological emergency” (Morten 39). Therefore we must change our thinking of self and context--“the grounding of reason in the human subject is over, while the idea of a neutral ground beneath our feet has also ended” (Morten 39). Issues surrounding the Anthropocene create a new urgency yet also a complex state of insecurity involving entities larger than we are able to comprehend.



Far Away Views, May 2020

In order for philosophy and art to come to terms with the new realities of the Anthropocene, Morten suggests that art should “evoke hyperobjectivity in its very form” (39). Through doing this we may be able to grapple with the vastness of the climate crisis. Morten outlines the components of a hyperobject some of which I will go on to use to analyse *Sun & Sea (Marina)*. As Morten describes “hyperobjects are viscous, molten, nonlocal, phased and interobjective” (40). I would like to zoom in on the molten and nonlocalised characteristics of these objects in relation to the performance-opera. Morten writes that hyperobjects have a “molten temporality” as “any massive object distorts space-time” (40). Many hyperobjects do in fact do this, for example, on the earth, “time runs faster on a plane than on Earth’s surface” (40). The temporality of a hyperobject is therefore seeping, adaptable, oozing. This leakage of time or the awareness of its molten qualities can be seen in *Sun & Sea (Marina)*. The performance-opera had a run time of 8 hours however audiences were advised to stay for only 20 minutes. The play, therefore, had a quality of neverendingness, it was listless like the beach. The time of the theatre was ruptured. It did not have a start, an interval, a finale, applause, instead, it was an everlasting day at the beach. For this reason, it became uncanny. To watch from a birds-eye view and not have the general cues

and acknowledgements of seeing a performance heightened the ‘real-life’ effect of the production. Yet it also mimicked the distorted time of the Anthropocene. It meant that we never could have all of the information. The show itself was larger than the person watching it. The temporality of the show was of molten and it clung to our clothes as we left.

Another element of a hyperobject is “nonlocality. Hyperobjects cannot be localized” (40). Morten uses the analogy of swimming. When underwater one finds oneself submerged, “everywhere the cool water caresses our body as we move through it, yet we are nonetheless independent of the water” (Morten 40). We are both in and without. The waves crash into us, the sand rubs on our skin yet we do not become one, “this disturbs normal modern human categories of here and there, hither and yonder” (Morten 40). The foreclosure of here and there can be directly seen through the Venice Biennale itself. It is held in Italy, yet each pavilion is privately owned by a country. They could even be called small embassies. They transform Venice into a global city. The Lithuanian Pavilion, houses Lithuanian artists in Italy, curated by the Italian Lucia Pietroiusti who lives and works in the UK. The pavilions cause a mesh of *here* and *there* resembling that of the hyperobject. The constructed beach itself also stands as a universalised image. It does not hold a place but rather a universal

understanding of a place.



My View from Quarantine, Tom Winter, May 2020

This performance-opera thus allows one to grapple with the unimaginable, sprawling and seemingly in-concrete reality of the climate emergency. Through playing with time it allows us to be transported on many planes. We exist in the ‘real’ place of Venice, looking down onto a constructed beach, in a room that represents Lithuania. The multiplicity of the performance, the everydayness of each solo allows the audience member to exist in the beach,

within each character and in the time of the Anthropocene. However, this global scale of

Venice Biennale should not stand without critique. As an institution, it generates one of the largest tourist migrations yearly. It is not an accessible art show and has often been likened to an art fair through its firm hold on the art market. Performance, as discussed earlier, to some extent, resists commodification. However, that does not exclude *Sun & Sea (Marina)* from

the privileged backdrop of the Venice Biennale. Nevertheless, the tourism that the Venice Biennale attracts is at the core of this performance. The performance deals with the idea of tourism in many ways. The characters' songs touch upon the hypocrisy of 'going to nature' on a constructed beach and the work time they had to put into that 'playtime'. The man-made element of the beach is highlighted. The audience is distant from the beach, looking down, we are not immersed in the experience but instead maintain a distance. The beach's clear construction heightens the walls of the performance. It stands in a seeping temporal state yet within clear constructed boundaries. The time therefore is tangible and yet larger than the viewer. The performance-opera therefore allows an insight and makes real the larger than 'I' temporality of the Anthropocene.

And so again,

"Imagine a beach—you within it, or better: watching from above—the burning sun, sunscreen, bright bathing suits, sweaty palms and legs. Tired limbs sprawled lazily across a mosaic of towels. Imagine the occasional squeal of children, laughter, the sound of an ice cream van in the distance. The musical rhythm of waves on the surf, a soothing sound (on this particular beach, not elsewhere). The crinkling of plastic bags whirling in the air. Their silent floating, jellyfish-like, below the waterline. The rumble of a volcano, or of an airplane, or a speedboat. Then a chorus of songs: everyday songs, songs of worry and of boredom, songs of almost nothing. And below them: the slow creaking of an exhausted Earth: a gasp"

Lucia Pietroiusti, *Sun & Sea (Marina)* program.

Amsterdam is a Lonely City

What feminine part of yourself did you have to destroy in order to survive in this world? At what point does femininity become synonymous with apology? Who hurt the people who hurt you?

- Alok Vaid Menon *Femme in Public* Program, Compagnie Theatre

This last chapter is a coming together of sorts. I shall be discussing Alok Vaid Menon's ground breaking performance *Femme in Public* (2018) and how we may begin to see new possibilities of collectivity through performance. Menon is a non-binary, transfeminine performance artist and writer who uses they/them pronouns. Their show in Amsterdam, *Femme in Public*, touched upon race, class, gender, ableism but most of all it touched upon the personal. Through highlighting some of the techniques Menon used in their performance I will look at variations of co-presence in the technological era, in doing so I hope to explore how normative modes of being may be transcended.

“hello my name is alok and i believe that feelings are real and that gender is not”³

Menon's performance was a myriad of poetry, comedy and monologue. The one-person show explored what it means to be a trans person of colour in a society which functions on the oppression of those deviating from the white, cis-gendered, male 'norm'. The performance touched on many themes, queer collectivity, what it means to be seen, friendship as an act of love, institutionalised racism and Amsterdam being a lonely city. Their poetry turns the emotional into the political and works from that basis, as they say, “i believe that feelings are real and substantive. i believe many of our big words and politics and ideas can be distilled down to, ‘i am hurt.’”. Their performance was a collective cry. Throughout the performance, Menon used poetry and comedy to discuss isolationism, racism and transphobia, using personal experiences to explore our broken political system. One moment that stood out was Menon's use of technology to create multiple spaces. They used a screen, placed behind them, to project what they were doing on their phone, for the audience to see. They then went onto Instagram and live-streamed a segment of their show. Menon began discussing how public space does not allow for their body, that being in public is a constant,

³ The poetry throughout this chapter is *Our Natural State is Water* (2017) Alok Vaid Menon.

violent struggle. Online space is where they often feel safest. They can curate that space in a way that ‘real’ or ‘physical’ space does not allow. This was poetically expressed whilst the audience was able to see individuals online commenting on the live stream. This performance demonstrates how the personal merges with the public, and the body coalesces with technology.

This segment of the performance exemplifies Larissa Hjorth’s ideas in *Visualizing Play* (2016), on co-presence. Hjorth examines how the smartphone and social media have created new ways of understanding time and space, re-writing cartography and instead creating a form of “critical cartography” which “challenges the authority of traditional mapping that presented limited and closed readings of geography” (Hjorth 338). Live streaming thus allowed Menon to firstly co-exist in two spaces at once, but secondly to transcend the ‘physical’ world which is so concrete in the enforcement of a certain kind of body, a certain kind of visual. Menon streamed live on Instagram meaning that audiences across the world were now included in the theatre space. As Hjorth argues, “apps such as Instagram offer multiple ways in which place can be ambiently mapped, represented, experienced, shared, and remixed through both representational and abstract ways” (338). Not only was the subject of being a trans body in space explored but what space itself means was played with in that Menon put a technological mirror up to the audience. As such, audience looking at audience, the two able to meet through the screen of the phone. This invited a new collective to be formed that allowed for the “making sense of everyday life and co-present intimacy across various temporalities, spatialities, and histories” (Hjorth 340). The real time and space of the performance was expanded to allow for a theatre experience open to all. In Hjorth’s words “binaries such as here and there, virtual and actual, online and offline, absent and present have been eroded through media practices such as mobile media (340-341). Menon’s poetry described the experience of feeling unsafe in public due to the cis-gendered white gaze. It could be said that through creating a new space and collective time, the meaning of co-presence was expanded which provided “a broader context for understanding intimacy” (Hjorth, 341), and an experience of feeling safe in public.

“i believe that loneliness is an international state of emergency. i believe that crying in public is political. i believe everyone in the world is mourning the disconnect between who they are and who they pretend to be.”

Through this expansion of co-presence Menon was also able to explore interaction with people and bodies that subverts isolationism and supports precarity. Judith Butler in her chapter *Besides Oneself; On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy*, from *Undoing Gender* (2004) discusses notions of vulnerability and collectivity which are very present in Menon's performance. Butler begins the chapter by asking "who counts as the human, and the related question of whose lives count as lives, and with a question that has preoccupied many of us for years: what makes for a grievable life?" (17-18). Through questioning "who counts" Butler explores grief and who is grievable. This question I find strongly related to time. Which bodies are allowed to exist in time, the bodies of those who are subjected most to variations of time⁴ are grieved least by society. They are not included in the normative future based time relation of Neoliberalism and thus in death are not given grieving time. Butler argues that "we are constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies; we are constituted as fields of desire and physical vulnerability, at once publicly assertive and vulnerable" (18). The very fact of our own and other's inevitable vulnerability constructs us. Butler goes on to explore how grief changes you, and how by displaying the ways in which we are connected intrinsically to others, "one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel" (19). Through this Butler means that "to be a body is to be given over to others even as a body" (20). We are never just ourselves but instead made up by those around us. The realisation that we are all connected and thus vulnerable has political potential as "to allow oneself to extrapolate from this experience of vulnerability to the vulnerability that others suffer through military incursions, occupations, suddenly declared wars, and police brutality" (Butler 23). In doing this we may begin to see the precarity in all of our lives and break through from sympathy to empathy. Menon's performance allowed one's vulnerability to be explored and shared through the transformation of the theatre space into a global shared one. Their poetry focuses on the highly personal - the women's yoga class that they went to, and then draws this out to discuss the cis-gendered gaze. In this manner Menon allowed their personal experiences to create a conversation about the larger precaritarisation in society.

"i believe that performing is the closest i have ever come to being honest. i believe that i am weak and scared and confused and i believe that is ok. i believe that everyone in the world

⁴ 'Vulnerable' bodies are subject to feeling the Neoliberal temporal regime as they cannot fit into the white, male, able-bodied, cis-gendered body that it caters to and allows futures for.

needs someone to have hot chocolate/mango laasi/coffee (your choice) and just talk about it. i don't know what "it" is but I believe it haunts you like it does me"

The "hot chocolate/ mango laasi/ coffee (your choice)" allows us to feel safe, allows us the potentiality of safety in the future. Butler goes on to discuss the potential for fantasy in order to rethink the future in a vulnerable and collective manner. Through exploring the idea that no one can exist as an individual, no one fits into the 'child of the future' normative thinking of time, new possibilities for what fantasy can and do open up. Butler writes, "to posit possibilities beyond the norm or, indeed, a different future for the norm itself, is part of the work of fantasy when we understand fantasy as taking the body as a point of departure for an articulation that is not always constrained by the body as it is" (28). Through Menon's radical vulnerability on stage which opened up new possibilities of inhabiting a body and moving through space, in some sense fantasy, possibility and utopia became a reality. The theatre space did not exemplify the normative mode of embodiment but instead showed a queer understanding of time, space and co-presence, that is to say that "fantasy is part of the articulation of the possible; it moves us beyond what is merely actual and present into a realm of possibility, the not yet actualized or the not actualizable" (Butler 28).

"i believe we want to fall apart because water is our most natural state"

Femme in Public allowed for a queering of time, space and offered a collective selfhood. This was achieved by breaking down what existing in space means. Menon's performance created a critical vulnerability through performance that is necessary for thinking of the self outside the Neoliberal work-time that does not allow for vulnerable bodies. Although this performance did not enact law changes, it moved people into a place where they were allowed to exist within a flexible notion of time and therefore a flexible notion of the self. It could be argued that the performance provided an echo chamber, however the negative value of an echo chamber can be questioned. This performance provided solstice, a chance for imagining and rethinking our bonds. Political action resides on the health of the people. Work such as Menon's allows people to feel seen in ways that normative society does not allow. The echo chamber, although potentially holding the same views, is never static. It provides a state of becoming, a furthering of views and the opportunity for community which works to counteract Neoliberal isolationism.

“i believe we want to fall apart because water is our most natural state. i believe in falling apart routinely -- every once in a while. like a forest burns and a heart bends, i believe in breaking down just to see what was waiting there underneath”

Un-translating

All true feeling is in reality untranslatable. To express it is to betray it This is why true beauty never strikes us directly. The setting sun is beautiful because of all it makes us lose.

-Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*

This thesis aimed to examine how time divides us. Within Neoliberalism, time is used as a mechanism of control. It fragments the days into binarized work time and playtime, it produces an image of the future which is produced via the oppression of the present, it constitutes a consciousness of the fragmented body only apt for generating capital. Theatre by virtue of its ungraspable nature allows a rupture of hegemonic time. In some cases, it allows for a collective body to rethink the present and create a utopian future. Theatre, however, is by no means an end but part of an unravelling which I hope to have conveyed in the passages of this thesis. The three performances I have analysed give room for the flexibility of time and therefore flexible notions of the self. In *Oratorio* we may gain insight into how the theatre space can transform identity categories. Through *Sun & Sea (Marina)* we may glimpse what it means to live in the time of the Anthropocene. In *Femme in Public* the gendered body as a state of becoming invites us to move towards collective understandings of selfhood. In all of these chapters, the notion of rational, linear and productive time and views of the body is perhaps not forgotten but warped in ways that allow for a positive failure. Theatre itself is an art of failure, a representational method that can never touch reality, yet through examining it, it may allow for failure in the Neoliberal idea of being, inviting time to crumble.

This thesis is by no means an answer but instead serves as a question. It proposed other mechanisms for being in time. The bodies that do not fall into the hetero-normative, white, cis-gendered, able-bodied ideal of Neoliberal futurity (which is all of us) of course cannot cease to recognise and live by hegemonic time. However, through this project, I hope to have proposed other ways of thinking which do not destroy the system of time but instead expose moments in which it can be rethought. It is a privilege to be allowed the time to even think of time in such ways. Yet through an awareness of collective consciousness, we may begin to be more understanding of ourselves and others. I have argued against rationality as

the only means to perceive the world. Yet this is not to discount rationalism all together but rethink the oppressive use of the rational, which categorizes the bodies that are supposed to be equal. As the *Xenofeminist Manifesto* (2018) states, “reason, like information, wants to be free, and patriarchy cannot give it freedom. Rationalism must itself be a feminism” (Hester 2). This thesis then works against the rationality that emerged from the Enlightenment in order to rethink rationality that does not exist outside the affective realm. My hope is that it has broadened the scope for further investigation into how the emotional and rational can exist not as opposites but instead as one, equal and co-habiting emancipatory thinking.

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