

“Women’s Time” in Theory

*I*n considering the dauntingly open-ended question posed by the editors of this special issue (“What’s the Difference? The Question of Theory”), my impulse is to answer laconically, “It’s time.” First, it’s about time to measure the difference between theory in its *heyday*—the eighties and early nineties, during which continental philosophy, situationism, Frankfurt School critique, semiotics, poststructuralism, feminism, queer theory, histories of sexuality, critical race theory, spatial urbanism, biopolitics, postcolonial subaltern studies, and cultural studies converged in productive cacophony—and *now*, when theory has arguably been reabsorbed by established disciplines and approaches such as ethics, political theory, phenomenology, cognitive psychology, book history, pragmatism, new media, and cultural and intersectional analysis. Second, it’s Time’s time, that is to say, a moment in which theoretical paradigms of temporality (Bergsonian *durée*, the untimely, the century, periodicity, the outmoded, contemporaneity) are garnering renewed critical attention. Third (and my focus here), it is women’s time, again, in feminist theory.

In fall 2008, I received an e-flyer circulated by two Whitney Independent Study Program participants, Jen Kennedy and Liz Linden. Announcing an event billed as “Back to the Future . . . An Experimental Discussion on Contemporary Feminist Practice,” it was both an invitation to and a preparatory brief for a town-hall meeting that took place at the Whitney Museum of American Art on February 21, 2009. What came to the fore—in addition to manifest rifts among self-identified feminists—was a distinct uncertainty about where feminism stands at the current pass: pro- or anti-theory? Alive or dead? Stuck in white middle-classness or responsive to wider communities of race, ethnicity, and social belonging? Politically activist (on behalf of equal pay, same-sex marriage, abortion rights) or politically enervated by reflexive pieties? Faithful to feminocentrism or committed instead to sex and gender pluralism (trans/homo/bi/inter/neutral/queer . . .)?

Listening to the discussion at the Whitney, I was struck by the fact that while temporal references abounded (labor time, the biological clock, intergenerational tensions in the women’s movement), nobody addressed the problem of time as such. This was all the more striking given that Kennedy and Linden’s manifesto-questionnaire highlighted contemporary feminism’s stakes in rethinking historical and temporal markers. The periodization of the women’s movement, the gerundive condition of “lived practice,” the coexistence of multiple chronotopes that “untime” the temporal measures of capitalist labor and tempo were signaled as defining concerns by the language of their short *Dictionary of Temporary Approximations*. “In drafting this dictionary,” they wrote, “we have intentionally selected potentially problematic words that *evoke the past and have thus helped pin feminism in one historical moment*. In their stead, we have suggested *temporary* placeholders to be used for the *duration* of our discussion. [. . .] HOW DO YOU PRACTICE FEMINISM TODAY? KEEPING IN MIND THAT WE HOPE TO CREATE A SHORT LIST OF WORDS PROBLEMATICALLY ROOTED IN THE PAST, ARE THERE ANY CHANGES YOU WOULD SUGGEST?” (my emphases; upper case in orig.). There was an interesting double desire to preserve keywords of feminist history while assigning them different values as placeholders of the present.

ACTIVISM; Protest, as in: *I support the potential of viral forms of activism to raise awareness and provoke debate in areas of life that otherwise go unconsidered.*

PREJUDICE; Misogyny, as in: *My friend was surprised to encounter prejudice when a colleague told her she should “stop being hysterical.”*

PARENTING; Motherhood, and/or the state of being a parent, as in: *I believed that parenting is socially constituted not biologically determined.*

LIVED IDENTITY; Womanhood/manhood/subjecthood, as in: *My lived identity is something I take for granted, which is in part due to my success in an atypical profession.*

LIVED PRACTICE; Feminism, as in: *I participate in lived practice through my dedication to equal rights and women’s health. Or: I am a lived practitioner because I want opportunities for my daughter.*

SUBORDINATION; Patriarchy, as in: *While subordination is intertwined with other forms of group oppression, we must attempt to distinguish it in our own lives, in order to combat it.*

PLEASURE; Sexual liberation, as in: *Part of my attraction to lived practice involves my right to pleasure.*

SEXUAL HEALTH; Reproductive rights, as in: *Sexual health is a priority to me in that it is a safeguard for my future.*

Here, the citations (a mix of conversation and declaration) favor the progressive present tense (being, parenting, living) and recall the kind of temporal fluidity that Julia Kristeva associates with “women’s time.” In her celebrated 1979 essay “Women’s Time” [“Le temps des femmes”], Kristeva argues that female subjectivity is divided between cyclical, natural time (repetition, gestation, the biological clock) and monumental time (eternity, myths of resurrection, the cult of maternity). These modalities are set off against the time of linear history (defined by project, teleology, progression, *Bildung*) and its territorial correlatives (national spatial imaginaries, supranational cultural and religious memory). Existentialist feminists aspired, according to Kristeva, “to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and history” (193). By contrast, post-’68 feminists sought “to give a language to the intra-subjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past. [. . .] [T]hey have undertaken a veritable exploration of the *dynamic of signs* [. . .]. By demanding recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex and, as such, exploded, plural, fluid, in a certain way non-identical, this feminism situates itself outside the linear time of identities which communicate through projection and revindication” (194). Kristeva discerned in the successor generation not only a reclamation of motherhood on different terms but the emergence of

“aesthetic practices” devoted to demystifying “a community of language as a universal, unifying tool which totalizes and equalizes” (210). Globally speaking, Kristeva posed creative time against epic time.¹ In literary studies, epic time is typically enshrined in the largely male-authored tradition of the historical novel, which seeks to grab the event through an epoch-defining narrative of watershed dates (wars and revolutions). Kristeva provided the impetus for untiming these historical periodizing frames not just as Nietzsche did through his antiteleological, antihistoricist concept of the untimely (*Unzeitgemässigkeit*) or as the Althusserians did through the notion of “epistemological break,” but through a feminist recuperation of archaic and futural temporal measures: cycle, period, pregnancy, the creative time of aesthetic practice. Kennedy and Linden, some thirty years later and perhaps unwittingly, seemed instinctively to have returned us to the problem of “women’s time,” but instead of voting in cyclical over linear time, they alighted on evanescence and contingency played out in the situationism of “lived practice.”

Between Kristeva and Kennedy and Linden there was, of course, a midterm generation of feminist thinkers engaged with temporality as a feminist issue. For Naomi Schor, periodicity was paramount. In “Depression in the Nineties,” a poignant essay whose very title activated periodizing consciousness, Schor used the nostalgic lever of the “decades” time-signature to snap into focus her personal and very melancholic sense of an era’s ending. The waning of feminist theory is traced to its implication in the affect-averse aloofness of postmodernism:

[I]n the age of postmodernist “waning of affect,” those who wish to bring back affects such as depression are not viewed as very good company. [. . .] Clearly there is a lot to be depressed about in these twilight days of the bloodiest of centuries, especially when one is, as I am, of a melancholic disposition. But I have no intention to invoke either Prozac or Zoloft or even the substantial clinical and autobiographical literature of and on depression. My aim is rather to speak of depression as a condition internal to academia [. . .]. I want to speak as someone who used to write, and write with a certain gusto, about gender and fiction, but who was sidelined by illness for a couple of years and woke up like a female Rip van Winkle to find herself plunged into a state of deep confusion over both the terms gender and narrative. [. . .] The old mapping, or mapping of gender onto narrative, which assumed

both the stability of gender and its privilege as a category of difference on the one hand, and the centrality of narrative as a mode of cultural expression, no longer holds. (159)

Schor's dismay over the loss of a clear-cut politics of sexual difference never abated, and her life was tragically foreshortened, depriving friends and colleagues of the chance to learn how she might have moved from the Kleinian "depressive position" to "reparative" intimations of gender theory's future. Had she lived, she might well have articulated *a new time for women's time* in her unfinished project on universalism (a concept normatively keyed to the "standard time" of established historical and philosophical milestones).

Schor's reliance on "decades-think" was notable in the preface to *Bad Objects*, where she mined associations around "the seventies" to summon recollections of her consciousness-raising youth. "The eighties" for Schor were especially marked by European, British, and American psychoanalytic feminism. Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Michèle Le Doeuff, Luce Irigaray, Rosi Braidotti, Teresa de Lauretis, Laura Mulvey, Juliet Mitchell, Jacqueline Rose, Toril Moi, Mary Jacobus, Parveen Adams, Nancy K. Miller, Alice Jardine, Shoshana Felman, Jane Gallop, Judith Butler—all, like Schor herself, used Freud and Lacan against the grain to mount a critique of patriarchy, the phallic symbolic order, and the discursive sex-power axis. They stamped the period with a brilliant lexicon: *chôra* (unbounded semiosis), *jouissance*, fluid erotogeneity, *écriture féminine*, and "women's time." "The eighties," as Schor acknowledged, were equally galvanized by feminism's belated engagement with postcolonialism (initiated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's landmark essays "French Feminism in an International Frame" [1981] and "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice" [1985]) and the politics of racial and cultural difference (mapped as a critical field by Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Nell Painter, Hortense Spillers, Valerie Smith, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Hazel Carby, and Françoise Vergès).

"The nineties," in Schor's timeline, belonged to queer theory, a movement that acquired momentum in response to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990). Though Schor worried that queer theory's plethora of indeterminate sexualities rendered feminism illegible as a configuration of gynocentric specificities, her coeditor Elizabeth Weed nonetheless wrote with verve about their "skewed coupling"

(viii) in a 1994 special issue of *differences* (later published as the book *Feminism Meets Queer Theory* in 1997). In this collection and others like it (*Coming Out of Feminism?* edited by Mandy Merck, Naomi Segal, and Elizabeth Wright [1998]), there was a kind of face-off between “women’s time” and “queer time,” with the former defined by an attachment to anachronism (as in Judith Butler’s claim that psychoanalytic feminism was justified by the need to examine the anachronistic traces of kinship in psychic life [16]), and the latter characterized by temporal supersession (of the category of woman).

The task of trying to resolve these “time wars” fell to a younger generation of critics writing in 2007. In *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*, a book that overtly announced its debt to Sedgwick’s classic, Sharon Marcus made it “women’s time” again in queer theory. Contesting Sedgwick’s defense of the absence of lesbianism in *Between Men* on the grounds that it was “a necessary decision, since my argument is structured around the distinctive relation of the male homosocial spectrum to the transmission of unequally distributed power” (18), Marcus replied:

Yes, homophobia was less powerful between women than between men, but was that because all forms of love between women were essentially interchangeable, as the continuum theory suggests? Yes, women’s relations were less violently policed than men’s, but are they therefore less interesting? Yes, women had more latitude with one another, but aren’t we beginning to see that some relationships between Victorian men enjoyed the fluidity Sedgwick considered the monopoly of women? Yes, relationships between women were different, but don’t we need at least an entire book to explore that—a book that engages Sedgwick’s wise insight that homo- and hetero- are inherently interrelated? (10)

Marcus herself devoted “an entire book” to retraining critical attention on relationships between women for “the 2000s.” Sedgwick, for her part, left us with a blueprint of “queer time” that was equally productive for twenty-first-century theory. In her introduction to *Novel-Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (1997), Sedgwick wrote about generationalism outside the confines of heteronormative chronometries and invoked the potential of queer life to modify pregiven notions of life span, survival, and community:

Think of the epiphanic, extravagantly reparative final volume of Proust, in which the narrator, after a long withdrawal from society, goes to a party where he at first thinks everyone is sporting elaborate costumes pretending to be ancient—then realizes that they are old, and so is he—and is then assailed, in half a dozen distinct mnemonic shocks, by a climactic series of joy-inducing “truths” about the relation of writing to time. The narrator never says so, but isn’t it worth pointing out that the complete temporal disorientation that initiates him into this revelatory space would have been impossible in a heterosexual père de famille, in one who had meanwhile been embodying, in the form of inexorably “progressing” identities and roles, the regular arrival of children and grandchildren. [. . .]

A more recent and terrible contingency, in the brutal foreshortening of so many queer lifespans, has deroutinized the temporality of many of us in ways that only intensify this effect. I’m thinking, as I say this, of three very queer friendships I have. One of my friends is sixty; the other two are both thirty, and I, at forty-five, am exactly in the middle. All four of us are academics, and we have in common a lot of interests, energies, and ambitions; we have each had, as well, variously intense activist investments. In a “normal” generational narrative, our identification with each other would be aligned with an expectation that in another fifteen years, I’d be situated comparably to where my sixty-year-old friend is, while my thirty-year-old friends would be situated comparably to where I am.

But we are all aware that the grounds of such friendships today are likely to differ from that model. They do so in inner cities, and for people subject to racist violence, and for people deprived of healthcare, and for people in dangerous industries, and for many others; they do for my friends and me. Specifically, living with advanced breast cancer, I have little chance of ever being the age my older friend is now. My friends who are thirty years old are similarly unlikely ever to experience my present, middle age: one is living with an advanced cancer caused by a massive environmental trauma (basically, he grew up on top of a toxic waste site); the other is living with HIV. The friend who is a very healthy sixty is the likeliest of us to be living fifteen years from now.

It's hard to say, hard even to know, how these relationships are different from those shared by people of different ages on a landscape whose perspectival lines converge on a common disappearing-point. (26–27)

Sedgwick's prediction that she would not reach sixty (she died of breast cancer at age fifty-eight in April 2009), adds a testamentary quality to this rich and complex idea of untimed lifespan and "uncommon" points of generational disappearance. And if we read this passage in connection with her work on Buddhism, queer time may be affiliated with the act of "conscious dying" ("Pedagogy" 167). In "Pedagogy of Buddhism," Sedgwick gives us something like a model of companionate death defined by an ethic of care, an art of living with and through others, a transcendent experience of shared "unmaking" (175).

Buddhism (with its techniques for experiencing the sensation of spatial infinitude) was for Sedgwick not unlike Deleuzianism (with its Spinozist construct of extensive, virtual being) for Elizabeth Grosz. In both cases, time theory makes imaginable an ontology of post- or transfinity. Sedgwick's projections of queer intergenerationalism are affiliated with explorations into Buddhist circular time, while Grosz's 2004 book *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* derives a nondialectical feminist politics of the virtual from Nietzschean, Bergsonian, and Deleuzian philosophies of time: "[F]eminist struggles of all kinds aim to produce a breach between the overwhelming weight of the patriarchal (or racist) past, its disruption in the present (which is to some extent controllable), and its overcoming in the future (which is not controllable or predictable). [. . .] The task is not so much to plan for the future, organize our resources toward it, to envision it before it comes about, for this reduces the future to the present. It is to make the future, to invent it" (258, 261). Grosz seems to be articulating here something on the order of what Alain Badiou (glossing Quentin Meillassoux) calls "transfinity," "a relation which simultaneously undoes the 'necessitarian' pretensions of classical metaphysics as well as the 'critical' distribution of the empirical and the transcendental" (vii).

Grosz's commitment to a noncausal, redistributed critical present; Sedgwick's inculcation in how to die together at off-points in life's "normal" phasing; Schor's polemical periodization of feminist theory's recent past; and Kennedy and Linden's feminist politics of "lived practice," though discrepant, stand as preeminent examples of feminism thinking

the temporal (see also Deutsche et al. and Freeman). I would add to this representative list the *démodé* in its multivalent capacity as an aesthetic function of women's time.

Moyra Davey's photographs, particularly those included in her book *Long Life Cool White*, invite theorization through themes of archive, memory, fetish, the loss and possession of part objects, and domestic interiority. But for my purposes, the work's greatest interest lies in its use of the *démodé*—with that term understood in its full panoply of significations as the out of fashion, the outmoded, and the untimely.

The notion of the untimely (*Unzeitgemässigkeit*) is taken, of course, from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (*Untimely Meditations*), sometimes translated as *Unfashionable* (or *Unmodern*) *Observations*. The work was published in 1874, some two years after *The Birth of Tragedy*. In the chapter "History in the Service and Disservice of Life" ("Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben"), Nietzsche offered a comprehensive analysis of the ills of contemporary civilization, an analysis of decadence that hinged on a mythical idealization of Greece and an enthusiasm for the music of Wagner. Nietzsche invoked the notion of *Unzeitgemässigkeit* to refer both to a generic, confrontational stance against his own epoch and to a distaste for being "abreast of the times" typical of those who suffer from "historical malady." Philistinism, Nietzsche's other name for historical malady, rested on the notion of a civilization obsessed with the past, hobbled by the archaeological drive or will to knowledge. Extreme historical awareness, he argued, kills off any desire to invent the new. To create or to take action required historical forgetting, since a hyperconsciousness of life's ephemerality fostered servility to the status quo. For Nietzsche, historical malady embraced all strands of historicism, from *Geistesgeschichte* (spirit as telos, absolute spirit, classless society, progress of humanity) to historical relativism. The only way to break with this historicism—and its obsession with the recovery of lost paradise—was to embrace temporality and the concept of eternity.² The fundamental problem was how to give the nonhistorical element priority over the historical one, thus intensifying and enhancing action in the now. "Only from the highest power of the present can you interpret the past," he wrote (99), in what has been adduced to be a dogma of radical presentism. It was thus through the unfashionable, or history off its hinges, that one could have an effect on the future.

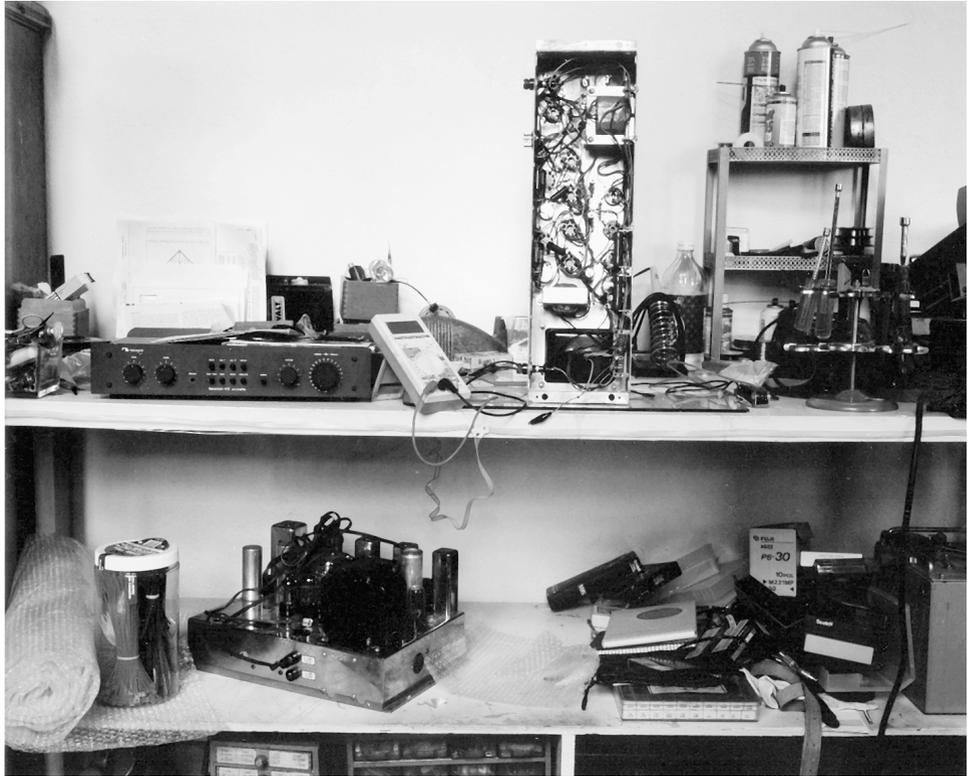
Figure 1
Moyra Davey,
“BirdSongs,”
1999.



Nietzschean efforts to untime academic historicism, particularly those notions of *Zeitgeist* that anchor the archeological and political dating of history, take their place, paradoxically enough, in a long *history* of antiphilosophy. Premier philosophers of the “untimely” include Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger, and Walter Benjamin (who, in the words of Karl-Heinz Barck, invented “a new mode of writing history—*à rebours* in a nonlinear way, as it were—and in the ‘white heat’ of actual experience” [41]). Each theorist disabled the time signatures that assign tempo to the capitalist temporality underwriting labor, production, profit, and social calculation. And arguably, each helped lay the ground for antiperiod concepts like “epistemological break,” “situation,” and “event” (given their imprimatur by Althusser, Sartre, Foucault, and Badiou).

Davey’s photographs and writings expose the stigmatization of period within aesthetic ideology. According to a familiar formula, “Timelessness,” the guarantor of modernism whose trademarks comprise geometric abstraction, whiteness, minimalism, withheld ornament, formalist universalism, autonomy, and the psychically shattering experience

Figure 2
Moyra Davey,
“Nakamichi,”
1999.



of *Jetztzeit* or the “now-time,” is proverbially pitted against “Period.” Period or period style is what is most anathema to modernists: period rooms, photographic albums, vintage fashion, all are freighted with associations of historicism, cultural particularism, planned obsolescence, decadence, and the outmoded. Despite the common recognition that modernism has become a style, especially in the current era of recycled midcentury modernism in art, design, and critical theory, timelessness and period, like temporality and history more generally, continue to be played off against each other as polar opposites.

Davey’s *Long Life Cool White* offers relief from this stalemate. Timelessness and period fuse in images of modernist icons framed as outmoded media technologies. Vinyl records (fig. 1), speakers, receivers, turntables, household appliances (fig. 2)—all reference that moment when modern gadgets veer into obsolescence. They are still viable machines, not fully ripe for the dumpster or the Museum of Jurassic Technology, but they wear their programmed archaism on their sleeve. They offer, as it were, a glimpse of the preconscious period. This precocious periodicity

Figure 3
Moyra Davey,
"Bottle Grid,"
1996–2000.



is stored in Davey's inventory of untimely objects, which fall in and out of modernist sequence. The sequence is marked visually by Davey's reprise of the formal codes of geometric abstraction (a signature technique of Man Ray, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, or the *Neue Sachlichkeit* photographer so disliked by Benjamin, Albert Renger-Patzsch). Davey's circular light fixtures, repeated squares of microwave and blocky fridge, and serial rectangles of radio consoles defer to timeless modernism, but in her images, this classic modernism is undercut by a period aura almost Old Masterish in its lighting effects: the radiant glow emanating from black and white studies of empty bottles of spirits (fig. 3); the deliciously tawdry layer of dirt on a white lighting fixture; the dust clumps under a dog's paw (fig. 4); the

Figure 4
Moyra Davey,
“Paw,”
2003.



magical, midnight color glinting off a record-player arm; the holographic visage of a woman shimmering through a plastic LP sleeve (fig. 5). These photogenic touches cultivate viewer nostalgia for articles of modern life captured at a moment just prior to their being jettisoned.

Davey, it would seem, is not afraid to mine the aesthetic potential of outmoded *techne* in order to exonerate nostalgia: “In critical circles,” she writes, “nostalgia has a negative, even decadent connotation. But the etymology of the word uncovers other meanings. [. . .] I am told nostalgia is the intellectual’s guilty pleasure” (128–29). Often evoked in the same breath as postmodernism, nostalgia has been tainted as an expression of commercialized historicism, especially in its populist guises as kitsch, camp, or the *démodé*. Susan Sontag, a constant muse and interlocutor

Figure 5
Moyra Davey,
“Nyro,”
2003.



for Davey, was among the first to pinpoint the peculiar desire aroused by objects of congealed nostalgia: “[S]o many of the objects prized by Camp taste,” she wrote, “are old-fashioned, out-of-date, *démodé*, not out of a love of the old as such. It is simply that the process of aging or deterioration provides the necessary detachment—or arouses a necessary sympathy” (60). Following Sontag, it seems plausible that period style exerts a powerful appeal because it grants permission to submit to time’s ravages: decay, fade-out, erosion, discontinued brands, trash. Davey’s work, in its focus on the aging of modernism, poignantly engages with the psychic attraction to period aura that attaches itself to outmoded things.

In making timeless modernism appear mortal and the outmoded appear forever young, Davey’s work inadvertently responds to questions set out by the editors of *October* in their spring 2002 issue:

“The obsolescent, the ‘outmoded,’ the nonsynchronous, discarded forms, marginal mediums: all of these seem to be resources of special interest to many of the most interesting artistic projects today. How does obsolescence figure in your work? Do you mobilize it for critical purposes primarily? What is the critical purchase of obsolescence? Or does it serve constructive purposes in your work—i.e., the making of a new sort of medium or form?” (Baker 6). In the same issue, Hal Foster ponders whether contemporary art practice can usefully mine “the mnemonic dimension of the outmoded” or whether “the outmoded is now outmoded too—another device of fashion?” (195–96).

Responding to the questionnaire, the artist Martha Rosler takes a similarly dim view of the outmoded in contemporary art practice, arguing that “planned obsolescence, associated with manufactured objects, outdated by technical or stylistic innovation,” lends itself to an artistic obsolescence that panders to patrons by “dusting off the discarded and the overlooked.” Rosler objects to “translating these elements into treasures of taste and allegories of mortality.” For her, “Exotic objects and moments function as fragments revalorizing the bourgeois course, a Nanook narrative for the modernizing middle-class” (Baker 7).

Though Davey would no doubt be as averse as Rosler is to reducing obsolescent goods and places to the status of exotic eye candy for the bourgeoisie, she seems polemically eager to “love” the outmoded, even at the risk of embracing commodifiable period style. She credits Zoe Leonard with bringing “love and estimation of the old-fashioned gelatin silver print into the equation, at a time, in the early ’90s, when it was thought most uncouth to do so” (98). She applauds Thomas Hirschhorn’s loving recycling of Emma Kunz’s “healing images,” with their store of “pictorial energy.” And her own images, as we have seen, cultivate an unapologetic love for outmoded technology. “Fridge” (fig. 6) is especially iconic in this regard. “A well-stocked fridge,” the transcript of Davey’s video *Fifty Minutes* specifies, “always triggers a certain atavistic, metabolic anxiety, like that of the Neanderthal after the kill, faced with the task of needing to either ingest or preserve a massive abundance of food before spoilage sets in” (121). Atavistic, resurgent time, the time of metabolism (vitalist consumption), the lead time to spoilage—all these temporal modes are put into play.

Rather than fall into the familiar trap of simply dismissing the fashion for the outmoded as an engine of late capitalism dedicated to pumping up the flagging charts of world-weary consumerism (Foster) or as a symptom of patronage (Rosler), Davey’s work enables us to see the

Figure 6
Moyra Davey,
“Fridge,”
2003.



démodé as a mechanism that makes possible the radical dispossession of time. There is a temporal violence to outdated; when it erupts, it loosens periodicity’s possessive perimeters around spots of time and releases arrested images into the future.

The measurement of time in Davey’s work is also underscored by the title of the video piece: *Fifty Minutes*. Here, we see how Davey untimes (through the subtraction of ten minutes) the sacred sixty-minute hour. We are prompted to ask: what got lost or went unrecorded in those disappeared ten minutes? The video makes us aware of the normativity of the hour unit. *60 Minutes* is the name of a long-running television show, ritually turned on by millions of viewers every Sunday who enjoy the redemptive purgation of American scandals. It is also the sanctioned time

of the psychoanalytic session (Lacan, we recall, was excommunicated for tampering with its length). By setting the clock at “fifty minutes,” Davey instills a heightened consciousness of *durée*, along with the intimation that time might be apportioned differently once uncoupled from the measurement of profit. In Davey’s piece, the labor time of women’s work—repetitive multitasking, domestic chores—is placed on an aesthetic continuum with the unproductive activity of reading. Through such experiments with the decelerated pulse of daily accomplishment, Davey performs an art of the untimely, bringing us (as do Grosz, Kennedy, Linden, Schor, and Sedgwick) back to Kristeva’s seminal construct of “women’s time.”

In this reading, it is precisely the “dated” character of Kristeva’s *temps des femmes* that matters, for it describes the anachronistic resurgence of “seventies theory” in the guise of feminist theory now, itself focused on time and the politics of periodicity. Women’s time in this iteration is no longer confined to essentialist, universalist formulas of embodied cycle, reproductive measure, maternal history, “timeless” ideals of femininity and feminine beauty, domestic labor, or the eventual rupture with patriarchal social and political orders. It is identified instead with rethinking (among other topics) causality and teleology; the geopolitics of periodization; “deep” (transcivilizational) time; epochal historicity versus situational, contingent, or provisional eventuality; prophetic time signatures (familiar in contemporary invocations of a “communism to come”); epistemological break; psychic duration and endurance; pastness and futurity (fossil time to transfinitude); and temporal remainders. A recent collaborative project initiated by Judith Butler and provisionally titled “Remainders: Feminist Translations in Geopolitical Time” indicates how time has become indispensable to feminist theory: a component that helps move fields not marked as “feminist” per se (global geopolitics; translation studies) into position such that they become feminist concerns. There is then a “becoming-feminist” of time theory itself.

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Notes

- 1 Kristeva’s “creative time” conserves a referential foundation in the act of childbearing. It may be contrasted with Deleuzian theories of creative time that emphasize the singular, virtual unfurling of being. On Deleuze, see Hallward.
- 2 For an excellent exposition of the untimely in Nietzsche’s work, see Vattimo 30–42.

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