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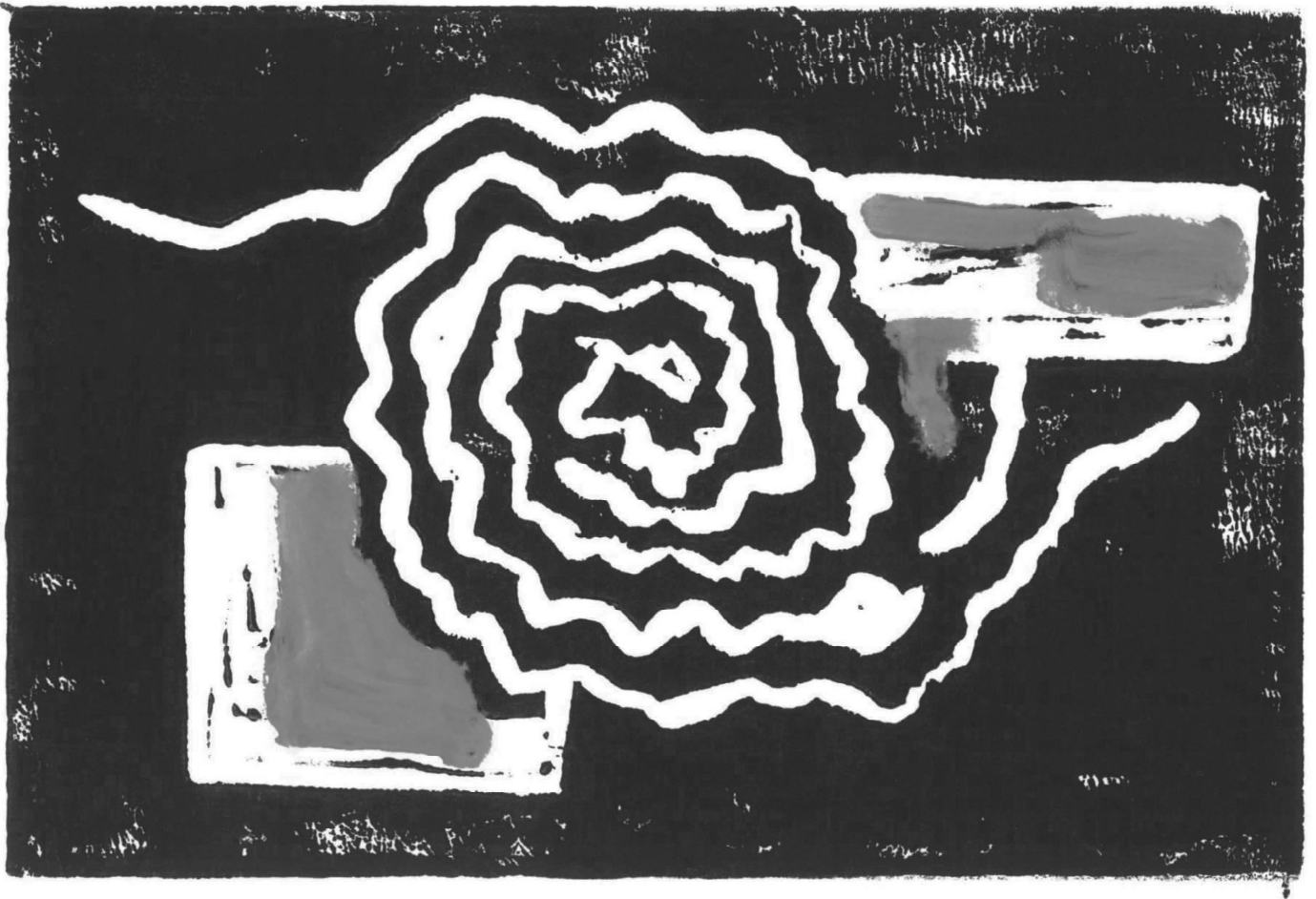
kein hexenwerk

JUNE 2022 - ACADEMIE VOOR THEATER EN DANS AMSTERDAM



un/ **folding**

(the) t i m e



IMPRESSUM

JUNI 2021

ACADEMIE VOOR THEATER EN DANS, AMSTERDAM

Note: KEIN HEXENWERK is trying its best to be a safe space and accessible to all students from the ATD. We are aware of the intricacies of creating safe(r) spaces within institutions. If you have any feedback on accessibility and safety, please feel free to reach out. We will take advice to heart.

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QUEER TIME(S)

An interview with Dr. Moira Pérez, whom we had the pleasure to talk to about the temporalities that arise from queer and anti-colonial perspectives, about temporal exiles - and about possible futures.

What does queer time mean to you? What histories arise from there?

The idea of “Queer time” calls attention to the time that flows in the margins and interstices of hegemonic time. Our culture has a particular form of organizing temporality, of rationalizing it, but time occurs and is experienced in many different ways, even within one same subject. Hegemonic time is attached to capitalist productivity, progress, individuality, rationality and quantification, a complete dissociation from what we call “nature”, and so on. Around and within these experiences of time, we find other forms: messy times, whose limits, speed, meanings and directions are unclear. Queer times are multiple and multidimensional, they overlap and contaminate each other.

When we begin to look beyond hegemonic time, we start to perceive a whole range of histories, histories of joy and resistance, and histories of oppression and violence. Histories of those who are constantly “left out” of mainstream progress, those who pay the price of it; tales of an exhausting, life-consuming waiting for access to a livable (and joyful) life. But we also find histories of celebration, of micro

communities built around care and understanding, of survival against all odds, of “wasting time” just being with each other.

It must be said that “Queer” is of course a contemporary Western, particularly Anglo, notion, and this means that when we use this term to refer to other cultures and contexts we are imposing a nomenclature which may not make sense there (what in an Anglo context is “queer”, non-hegemonic or subversive time, for others may just be “time”).

What can an un/folding of time offer?

When you say “un/folding of time” I visualize time as a cloth, or various cloths, that are folded into themselves and each other in very specific ways. This allows for some bridges and connections at the points where various folds meet, but it hinders others and hides the richness that lies at the crevices. So un/folding time could mean opening those folds, beginning to perceive that which was hidden inside them, but also experimenting with new, alternative foldings where new connections, new bridges and temporalities can germinate...

How can we connect with others in the present, the past and the future? How can we bring in all those excluded from contemporaneity? How can we think of time and temporality beyond the human? We need to experiment with alternative figurations and experiences of time.

If you would imagine a texture, a visual to queer time - what do you see or feel? Or: if there was a clock or a calendar attuned to queer time - what would it show?

I don't think there can be a calendar or a clock attuned to queer time, precisely because queer time cannot be quantified into one single shape. Queer time would rather look like a beautiful mess!

How can temporalities/conceptualizations of time be weaponized against marginalized communities?

We tend to think of time and temporalization as something that "is just there", independently of us and our contingency. But those apparently neutral forms of temporal figuration must be understood in the context of social relations and always-contested historical understandings. They are powerful instruments of social administration. Time is organized and represented in very specific ways: what we place in the past, the present and the future; when we make a certain time end and another begin; how we understand and distribute ruptures and continuities... These figurations are built in such a way that there is only place for certain subjects and forms of life, whereas others are exiled from contemporaneity. This exclusion can work for example by expelling certain subjects and collectives into the past (those considered "primitive", "backwards", examples of what Man -here purposefully gendered- was but no longer is). These subjects can at best aspire to occupy a slot in hegemonic temporality, provided they agree (and manage) to walk along the chrononormative trajectory set for us all, in which of course they will always be behind (that is for instance the price to be paid by those of us from the South, if we want to be seen in the North: we might be invited into the conversation, but will always be regarded as lagging behind, because the temporal parameters are rooted in coloniality and racism). It can also work by conceiving a future, and building it from the present, in which there is no place for such subjects. Here activism has a central role in critically revising what kinds of future it struggles for and who has a place in them.

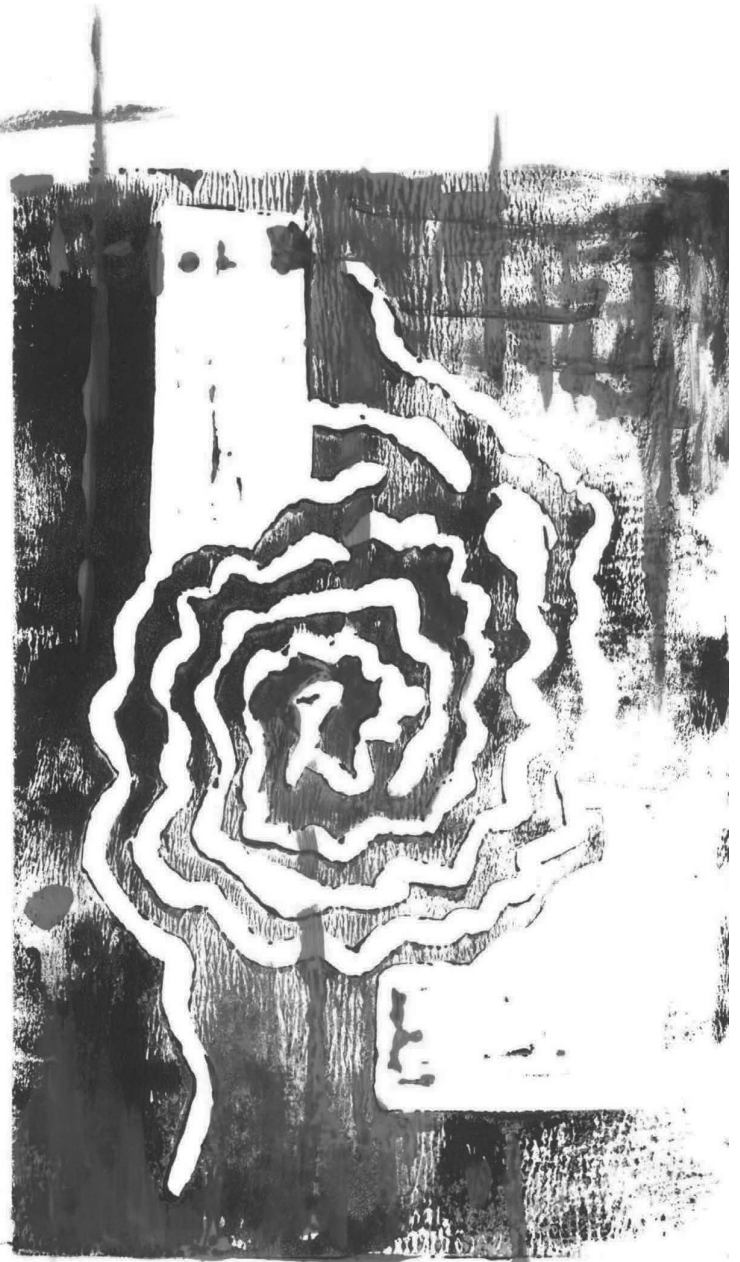
As we are experiencing seemingly ongoing times of crisis, what perspectives can arise from a queer and postcolonial perspective?

The most important thing we can learn from these perspectives is precisely what it means to present problems in terms of "crisis". We live in a political, economic, social order that has violence, exclusion and destruction at its very core: what we are witnessing is not an unintentional side effect, something that has just begun, or a mistaken detour which can be easily readjusted. Problems are labelled as "crisis" when they become visible and inconvenient for those at the centre of this hegemonic order, those who were not supposed to suffer its consequences. Queer and anti-colonial approaches can help us identify the connections and continuities between all those isolated moments and realms that we usually call "crises", exposing their structural nature and the notions of the human that underlie their hierarchization. This means, among other things, adopting notions of temporality as continuous, instead of models that isolate "crisis" as exceptions unrelated to what happens in between them and/or what happens to other subjects. Which social groups are human enough for us to classify their extermination or suffering as a crisis? What structural changes are needed for such harm to finally come to an end for all, not only for hegemonic subjects?

But having a place in the future is not necessarily good, either: subjects can be relegated to the future, their time constantly postponed by a recurrent “not yet” and by patronizing invitations to calm their tone down and wait for their turn.

In the sense of queerness as the not-yet - how can this futurity form agency in the here and now?

I'd say there are two meanings to this idea of the “not yet”: a negative one and a positive one. The negative one, to which I referred just now, is what Dipesh Chakravarty has called the “waiting room of history”: the constant deferral of certain subjects and groups from the good life, which is supposed to be accessible to all but is in fact running on an extensive waiting list. On the positive side, we find the reassurance that something different (something better) is possible, and that we can build it together. In this second sense, the “not yet” is what propels us into critique and to action, what makes us historical agents of change. It reminds us to continue revising our own visions and interventions, identifying when we are complicit with exclusionary practices (including temporal figurations), and helping each other improve and flourish. It is important to recall that the “not yet” is not the “impossible” or the “never”: there is always some part of what we are looking for that already exists in the present. The “not yet” is at the same time something that is already happening (again an unexpected folding of time, in which future and present touch each other), and even something that has already happened: as Ayutla Mixe linguist Yasnaya Aguilar has said, the proof that another future is possible is in the past, because populations that weren't supposed to survive did make it, against all odds, and this means that what now seems tragically doomed to failure might just be possible. We need to learn to recognize the fragments of a different world where they appear around us, and cultivate them collectively.



Maira Pérez (she/her) is a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research, Argentina, and currently a Fellow at the Forschungsinstitut für Philosophie in Hannover, Germany. Her work focuses on the interplay between violence and identity, and brings together contributions of queer theory, anti-colonial thought, and narrativist philosophies of history, among others.