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# Reprise Editor's Introduction

## On Dates, Calendars, and Time Lags in Transnationalist Thought

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In his 1983 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson described the nation as *imagined* because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members,” and as a *community* because “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”<sup>1</sup> In Anderson’s discussion, the idea of a common calendar became crucial, with the newspaper emerging as a major feature of citizens’ integration into a shared national identity. Remarking on national subjects’ sense of “simultaneity” and “calendrical coincidence,” Anderson explained, “The date at the top of the newspaper, the single most important emblem on it, provides the essential connection—the steady onward clocking of homogeneous, empty time,” such that what Anderson terms *print capitalism* “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.”<sup>2</sup> Hence, the newspaper’s timestamp helped citizens imagine themselves synchronically in relation to each other, and the succession of dated newspapers—perceived as moving steadily from past to present to future—helped citizens imagine themselves diachronically, as fellow travelers *through* time. As Anderson told it: To the newspaper add the novel, and behold, nationalism, the imagination of an inherently “limited” community to the degree that “no nation imagines itself as conterminous with mankind.”<sup>3</sup>

As for *transnationalism*? No account that I am aware of has attained the definitive status that Anderson’s work has achieved vis-à-vis nationalism. Instead, at least within American studies, we see a cobbled-together notion of transnationalism, with American studies scholars drawing inspiration from such works as Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein’s

“Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System” (1992), and Antonio Benítez Rojo’s *La isla que se repite: El Caribe y la perspectiva posmoderna* (1989).<sup>4</sup> Each of these works, and many others I could mention, pushes against nationalism as inadequate, seeking to (if we may let Gilroy’s words stand as a thumbnail sketch of many different nuanced positions) “break the dogmatic focus on discrete *national* dynamics which has characterized so much modern Euro-American thought.”<sup>5</sup> Such a stance resonates with numerous works in Americanist scholarship that have taken inspiration from Anzaldúa, Gilroy, Quijano and Wallerstein, Benítez Rojo, and others.<sup>6</sup>

Yet as the nation has fallen on hard times as not only *limited* (Anderson’s term) but as too epistemologically *limiting* (as we see repeatedly in transnationalist scholarship’s zeitgeist),<sup>7</sup> what has become of temporality, especially the temporal unities Anderson outlined as precipitated by a synchrony of dates and a diachrony of movement through calendrical time? If dates and calendrical time have been crucial to the canonical scholarly account of nationalism, what are their roles in transnationalist scholarship and transnational sensibilities more generally? This is the central question of *Reprise 2024*, as we republish four items relevant to thinking through these categories’ place in transnational American studies. First among *Reprise*’s republished items, we see the literary scholar Sandra M. Gustafson’s “What’s in a Date? Temporalities of Early American Literature,” originally published in *PMLA* in 2013.<sup>8</sup> Second is the American studies scholar Karín Aguilar-San Juan’s “What Vietnam did for Susan Sontag in 1968,” which first appeared in *World History Bulletin* in 2018.<sup>9</sup> Third is the anthropologist Stephen Edward Nash’s “Archaeological Tree-Ring Dating: Origins and Principles,” the introductory chapter to his 1999 book *Time, Trees, and Prehistory: Tree-Ring Dating and the Development of North American Archaeology, 1914–1950*.<sup>10</sup> Finally, *Reprise* is republishing the full text of a play titled *Voodoo: A Drama in Four Acts*, originally published in London in 1914 by the African American playwright Henry Francis Downing.<sup>11</sup> The remainder of my introduction reflects on the place of dates and calendrical time in transnational American studies and contemplates relevant insights offered by these four readings. In this way *Reprise 2024* gives further consideration to themes I discussed in the introduction to *Reprise 2021*, “On Temporal Transnationalisms.”<sup>12</sup>

Without a doubt, Americanist transnationalism has leaned on some prominent dates. Take 1848. Shelley Streeby’s chapter “Joaquín Murrieta and the American 1848,” published in the watershed collection *Post-Nationalist American Studies* in 2000, drew on Michael Rogin and Eric Lott’s use of the phrase “the American 1848,” thereby integrating the story of US Manifest Destiny into synchrony with Mexico (via the US-Mexican War) and Europe (via the revolutions of 1848).<sup>13</sup> The American 1848 later became the temporal crux of Streeby’s 2003 book *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture*, which examined “U.S. racial formations ... which were powerfully affected by the Gold Rush, the U.S.-Mexican War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and imperial projects in the Caribbean.”<sup>14</sup> Thus the date of 1848 blooms

into transnational connections. Writing for another watershed Americanist essay collection of the early American transnationalist years, Amy Kaplan did much to integrate the 1898 Spanish-American War into the Americanist timeline, as she discussed that war and date in her essay “Black and Blue on San Juan Hill” in the 1993 *Cultures of United States Imperialism*.<sup>15</sup> The date of 1898 (with its attendant war and the US Supreme Court’s ensuing Insular Cases) remained prominent in her 2002 book *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, as discussions of Puerto Rico’s 1898 status in relation to the United States required the Supreme Court to contemplate the US interface with locales that “ranged across the globe to other contemporary locations of U.S. empire from Cuba to the Philippines, Guam and Samoa, Alaska and Hawaii.”<sup>16</sup> Kaplan’s work on 1898 and broader cultures of US imperialism restructured American studies, paving the way for the field’s integration of the cultures of 1898, as reflected in such studies as Allan Punzalan Isaac’s *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America* (2006), Lanny Thompson’s 2010 *Imperial Archipelago: Representation and Rule in the Insular Territories under U.S. Dominion after 1898*, and Hsuan L. Hsu’s special forum *Circa 1898: Overseas Empire and Transnational American Studies* (2011).<sup>17</sup>

I could list other dates that have done the work of integrating spatially disparate locales in American studies, but 1848 and 1898 function as strong case studies for transnational thought’s enduring reliance on what Anderson marked up as the integrative power of the date per se as it functions laterally within nations and nationalisms. Within transnationalist approaches to expressive cultures and historical archives, we have Americanist scholars identifying and contemplating synchronies or other date-facilitated homologies while seeking to imagine and analyze far-flung locales and communities in tandem with each other, such that propinquity upon common material ground (as one might see in local or national analyses) is supplanted by a common calendrical date that cuts across borders. In reflecting on this mode of transnational analysis, we might riff on Anzaldúa’s anti-border dictum that “The sea cannot be fenced / *el mar* does not stop at borders” by suggesting that *the calendar cannot be fenced / el calendario does not stop at borders*.<sup>18</sup> Calendrical time’s transnationalisms surface as scholars knit locales across borders and as transnationalist scholars, collaborating across national lines, further imagine themselves into transnational communities.<sup>19</sup>

No doubt attentiveness to simultaneities that are facilitated by dates has arisen organically in many circumstances, as Americanist transnationalism is one heir among the multitudes descending from Frederic Jameson’s emphatically punctuated imperative to “always historicize!”<sup>20</sup> But the delineation of transnational connection through synchrony has also been self-reflexive. Take for instance the notion of “countertopography,” advanced by Cindi Katz, long-time codirector of the Futures of American Studies Institute at Dartmouth College. The heuristic of countertopography, as Katz describes it, takes the metaphor of the topographical map’s elevation lines and engages in a “tracing [of] the contour lines ... to other sites” that “might encourage and enable the formation of new political-economic alliances that transcend both place

and identity and foster a more effective cultural politics to counter the imperial, patriarchal, and racist integument of globalization.”<sup>21</sup> Countertopography is meant to “draw out the structural similarities between two places,” permitting a view of each place from the “parallax” of the other, with the study of countertopographies emerging as “a way of making good on simultaneity, of making visible what is too easily ignored or hidden by space.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly concerned with simultaneity and parallax, some of Paul Giles’s work in Americanist transnationalism has described the project of investigating not contact zones (which require copresence within a certain space) but “parallax zones,” which “might help us most effectively remap American literature within a global compass.”<sup>23</sup> Giles uses a date to underscore the utility of a parallax approach to integrating two far-flung sites via their simultaneity within calendrical time: “1787 saw both the adoption of the US Constitution in Philadelphia and the departure of the first convict ships to sail from London to Botany Bay, and Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century was at the apex of a triangle that held America and Australia, the old colony and the new colony, as its alternate points.”<sup>24</sup> A transnationalist interest in countertopographies and parallax zones resembles, at the scholarly level (in which the scholar often sees from above as if at the apex of a triangle), Anderson’s account of the citizen’s self-perception within the nation: “He has no idea of what [his hundreds of thousands or hundreds of millions of fellow-citizens] are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity.”<sup>25</sup>

Apart from the sense of simultaneity afforded by the individual date, Anderson was interested in the way communities imagined themselves together “moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time,” as the nation conceived of itself “as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history.”<sup>26</sup> Nationalism, then, hinged not only on the shared date but a shared and perpetually unfolding timeline. From the literary wing of American studies, we have seen one of the field’s most significant recent discussions of the timeline per se in Cody Marrs and Christopher Hager’s 2019 edited collection *Timelines of American Literature*.<sup>27</sup> Marrs and Hager’s introduction presents American literary studies as having arrived at a point of exhaustion regarding periodization, a temporal analog perhaps to the field’s sense of spatial exhaustion regarding borders. And, analogous to the way border-oriented spatial exhaustion has found an answer in transnationalism, Marrs and Hager seek to answer the traditional and neatly plotted “succession of eras” (ranging from colonial American literature to modernism to the present) by instigating “a scholarly conversation featuring multiple, interpenetrating periodizing efforts,” with our “ideas about where, and when, and how American literary history takes place ... radically transformed by recent work on transnationalism, print culture, media studies, and ecology.”<sup>28</sup> Within such a project, it would seem that the very notion of ongoing calendrical time might be on the chopping block, but the collection’s introduction acknowledges “we need timelines” and directs readers favorably toward “synchronoptic timelines,” which “place multiple histories on a single chart, revealing surprising overlaps and divergences. Elastic yet anchored

in the unyielding logic of the line, they render vast, overlapping swaths of time *imaginable*.<sup>29</sup> Thus, as in Anderson's vision of nationalism, the chaotic and unattached and disparate within time may be tamed by common integration into an ongoing calendrical timeline, with correspondences and variations among discrete periodizations rendered domesticated and *imaginable* by the synchronoptic timeline's ability to evoke a retrospective sense of fellow-traveler status, as movements and authors share status as contemporaries by virtue of passing through the same dates. Again, we see a continued reliance on Anderson's diachrony and synchrony of national imagining.

This is definitely not to look at contemporary American studies and suggest that, even as the nation has in many cases fallen by the wayside as the primary unit of analysis, we have been somehow benighted in continuing to rely on the temporal categories that Anderson suggested were crucial to national imagining. It does seem to me that an early American timeline, for instance, would generally be enriched by becoming more synchronoptic, with, as Jared Hickman suggests in his contribution to *Timelines of American Literature*, the development of a heightened sense of simultaneity between the American Renaissance's 1830 and Joseph Smith's 1830.<sup>30</sup> Or could we make the heuristic of a date link still-further-flung countertopographies and parallax zones? What would it look like for Tom Paine's 1776 and Gerald Horne's "counter-revolution of 1776" to attain, via scholarship's retrospective view, a sense of simultaneity with Atanasio Domínguez and Silvestre Vélez de Escalante's 1776, as well as with the 1776 of one of Hawai'i's final precontact years?<sup>31</sup> No doubt the heuristic of the shared date remains a deservedly crucial transnationalist approach.

And yet Sandra M. Gustafson's article "What's in a Date? Temporalities of Early American Literature" usefully complicates the question of a date. Originally published in *PMLA* in 2013 and subsequently republished as the prologue for Marrs and Hager's *Timelines of American Literature*, Gustafson's article begins by announcing, "It's time for a pop quiz. You have ten minutes. (Is your heart racing? Take a deep breath.)" The quiz: "What major events in American literature and American history took place in and around the following years?" The dates: 1789, 1800, 1820, and 1830. Momentarily (has it really already been ten minutes?), Gustafson tells us, "Time's up," and then offers some of her own answers to the question, surveying important events and trends on and around the given dates.<sup>32</sup> After the survey, she quips, "So how'd you do on the quiz? Have a cookie."<sup>33</sup> Gustafson's initial adrenaline shot ("Is your heart racing?") seems calculated to ask *PMLA*'s generally graduate-educated readers to equate the memorization or fetishization of dates with high school or perhaps undergraduate days. But her offer of a cookie? Dates now conjure images of grade school. We might ask if the fetishization of any given date is as facile and juvenile as the date we hear in the rhyme *Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492* (a rhyme I learned in kindergarten at 'Aikahi Elementary School on the island of Oahu in the early 1980s).

The opening of Gustafson's essay implies that dates may be useful as starting points, but once we finish the pop quiz she goes on to remind us that they offer no solid or common ground. Her article takes as its case study the date(s) that may be

regarded as the endpoint of “the early period in American literary history.”<sup>34</sup> Is 1800 the cut-off date? Or 1820? 1830? 1850? Gustafson’s commentary reminds us that the date that conjoins any given set of countertopographies or parallax zones will precipitate sometimes intentional and sometimes unintentional waxings and wanings: “breaking at 1820 foregrounds a shift in representational energy from the Atlantic rim toward the continental interior,” while “cleaving the field around 1830 ... tends to amplify the novelty of the American Renaissance writers.”<sup>35</sup> Inevitably, each date “highlights some literary movements, authors, and works while diminishing others.”<sup>36</sup> Movements and authors must fly with time’s arrow through what may be called calendrical time, but they are not flying through time in the same way, and a date that means a great deal in one topography or zone, when traced to its countertopography or zone of parallax, may be unintelligible. Or it may be an affront. Frederick Douglass delivered a powerful and complementary assessment in his famous question and lecture: “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”<sup>37</sup> And in the lead-up to the 1992 quinentennial of 1492, the scholar and novelist José Barreiro (member of the Taíno Nation of the Antilles) was posing an analogous question: “For several years now, I have asked American Indian peoples about their reactions and concerns regarding the 500th Anniversary of Columbus’s arrival.”<sup>38</sup> Barreiro offered a glimpse of the answers he found in *View from the Shore: American Indian Perspectives on the Quincentenary*, a special issue of *Northeast Indian Quarterly* that he edited.<sup>39</sup>

Another prominent point on the calendar has been 1968, which I knew from middle school was the year Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, but which I first learned was a *resonant* date in 2003 during the first semester of my English PhD program at the University of Virginia, while I was enrolled in a course titled “Introduction to Modern Literary Theory.” I see from my class notes, which out of curiosity I’ve dug out of a cardboard box stored on a high shelf, that the May 1968 student uprising in Paris first appeared on my own timeline on October 28, 2003, as our professor introduced us to Julia Kristeva. The May 1968 that transformed Kristeva has also, over the years, become a synecdoche for both the turbulence of the larger decade of the Euro-American 1960s and the global protests that erupted in many places throughout the world around this date, the “Global 1968” having emerged as an important research topic since the 1990s.<sup>40</sup> We glimpse one instantiation of what some might term the global 1968 in Karín Aguilar-San Juan’s 2018 article “What Vietnam Did for Susan Sontag in 1968.” As Aguilar-San Juan recounts, the US intellectual Susan Sontag spent ten days of May 1968 in Hanoi, at the invitation of the North Vietnamese. She took notes in a journal, and in June–July 1968 wrote an essay titled “Trip to Hanoi: Notes from the Enemy Camp.” Notably, although Aguilar-San Juan invokes the resonant date in her article’s title, and although Sontag’s essay itself concludes by using Paris’s May 1968 as a lens for thinking about her own thoughts and feelings on Vietnam, Aguilar-San Juan does not overtly reference Paris’s May 1968.<sup>41</sup> Rather, the article in its silence implicitly sidelines the protests that are baked into the mythologies of poststructuralist theory, and hence baked (by means of enduring deference to a certain version of “theory”)

into Americanist thought. Rather than mentioning 1968's Parisian resonances, Aguilar-San Juan underscores the relevance to transnational American studies of the Sontag essay (as it reflects on "the continuing legacies of U.S. imperialism both at home and abroad") and further underscores the date's resonances with Asian American studies: "'Vietnam/1968' is an Asian American subject as well as an historical one."<sup>42</sup>

In my reading, the 2018 article also offers something of a parable for the superiority complex of Paris's May 1968 within the global 1968. Aguilar-San Juan remarks: "In one passage [of her essay, Sontag's] thoughts indulge a superiority complex that closely resembles racism: 'The truth is: I feel I *can* in fact understand [the Vietnamese] ... They may be nobler, more heroic, more generous than I am, but I have more on my mind than they do.' More on her mind! What in heaven's name was she thinking? ... For Sontag to believe even for a nanosecond that she had more on her mind than the besieged Vietnamese had on theirs is immensely difficult to fathom."<sup>43</sup> Aguilar-San Juan goes on to report that when she in 2013 interviewed the Vietnamese translator who in 1973 had planned to create a Vietnamese translation of Sontag's essay, she asked him why he had not followed through with the project. The translator's response: "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I did not have time. We were being bombed ... ." Aguilar-San Juan then remarks: "He did not say he refused to translate it because it was excessive or irrelevant. But it is not difficult to imagine how boring, self-indulgent, and wasteful Sontag's intimate ponderings might have appeared to him, or to any Vietnamese reader, at the time."<sup>44</sup> Might we also wonder about the utility of viewing Paris as 1968's global figurehead, or about the enfranchisements and disenfranchisements that will sometimes stem from the question of which site is taken as topography and which site as countertopography?<sup>45</sup>

Newspapers, as pulped and flattened trees with the date printed at the top, have been one way of imagining the nation's synchrony and diachrony. But in the second chapter of *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), Aldo Leopold goes back to the genuine article, the tree, using a lightning-killed oak tree to do the job of temporal imagining. His felling of the tree becomes an occasion to imagine time: "[O]ur saw was biting its way, stroke by stroke, decade by decade, into the chronology of a lifetime, written in concentric annual rings of good oak."<sup>46</sup> Guiding readers down through some eighty rings, the Midwestern Virgil tells a story of his farm, his county, his state, and his nation in reverse, as his saw cuts toward the trunk's core and thus further back in time. We see him cut through the "dust-bowl drouths of 1936, 1934, 1933, and 1930," back through "the Babbittian decade" of the 1920s, back to 1912 and the creation of a law protecting female deer from hunters, back to the gay 1890s' turn toward the city, back to 1874 when "the first factory-made barbed wire was stapled to oak trees," to 1866 and the killing of Wisconsin's last native elk, and finally back to 1865 and "the end of the Civil War."<sup>47</sup> Leopold's tree ring-facilitated timeline was local and regional and national, and it was also singular—that is, unlike the synchroptic timelines mentioned by Marrs and Hager, it tended to affix only one event to a single date. And yet Leopold was writing during an era that had seen trees and tree-rings—working in



conjunction with scientists—open the chronology, and chronologies, of the past in ways that had remade North American archaeology and world archaeology, permitting the emergence of ancient synchroptic timelines across regions, across present-day borders, and over the course of the rises and falls of human communities and societies. Republished here, the opening chapter of Stephen Edward Nash’s *Time, Trees, and Prehistory: Tree-Ring Dating and the Development of North American Archaeology, 1914–1950* offers a primer on the history and methods of—and the histories made possible by—the science of dendrochronology as it emerged from what some would call the US Southwest, what some would call Greater Mexico, and what Anzaldúa once called “Indian always.”<sup>48</sup>

Nash begins his chapter by introducing readers to a landmark publication by the astronomer Andrew Ellicott Douglass of the University of Arizona, who in the December 1929 issue of *National Geographic* “published common-era calendar dates for some 40 previously undated prehistoric sites in the American Southwest. He dated the sites using a revolutionary new technique he developed called *dendrochronology*, literally, the study of tree-time.”<sup>49</sup> Nash’s chapter offers an overview of US archaeologists’ shift from exhibiting an “astonishing lack of interest in time” (prior to cracking tree-time’s code) to developing “a body of theory ... over the last seven decades for the proper interpretation of archaeological tree-ring dates” (and the chapter points readers toward the book’s larger contents for a fuller story).<sup>50</sup> As Nash’s first chapter makes clear, this science of tree-time is not simply the counting of tree-rings in a single oak or even the counting of tree-rings in multiple trees. Rather, it requires the collation of tree-ring samples drawn from large numbers of trees of the same species that have grown in the same region over the course of hundreds and even thousands of years, so that their ring patterns may be matched, crossdated, and chronologically linked to the present through their overlap with patterns found in trees growing in the present. Since its development as a science in the Four Corners region, dendrochronology has aided archaeologists and others throughout the world to integrate previously unintegrated time swaths in multiple places into the calendrical time of the Common Era, with dendrochronologies going back more than 12,300 years in Germany; more than 9,000 years in the European Alps; more than 8,800 years in California; more than 7,500 years in Finland; more than 7,200 years in Ireland; and more than 4,000 years in Siberia, New Zealand, and Tasmania.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, as Nash observes, no other dating technique (including radiocarbon dating, obsidian-hydration dating, and luminescence dating) “can match the level of resolution offered by tree-ring data. Indeed, tree-ring dates and chronologies are used to calibrate the data offered by many other absolute dating techniques.”<sup>52</sup> Hence, dendrochronology, though its timelines are confined to a maximum of about a dozen thousand years, has been key to calibrating radiocarbon dating’s approximately sixty thousand-year window, helping to evoke a sense of animals (including humans), vegetables, and minerals moving through deep time as fellow travelers, bound in simultaneities across specific dates as they have ticked through tens of thousands of years.<sup>53</sup> Within longer timelines like this, which are

indebted to radiocarbon and other longer-term dating techniques, caves in what is now Spain and caves on what is now the Indonesian island of Sulawesi become parallax zones and countertopographies of one another, as showcased in a landmark *Nature* article of 2014, which “show[ed] that rock art traditions on this Indonesian island are at least compatible in age with the oldest European art,” with “humans ... producing rock art by ~40 kyr ago at opposite ends of the Pleistocene Eurasian world.”<sup>54</sup>

Revisiting Nash’s work, I hope, draws attention to questions of dates, and ways they may and may not be useful, in such deep-temporal projects as have emerged in recent years in American studies and the humanities more generally, ranging from Wai Chee Dimock’s *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006) to Christopher Collins’s *Paleopoetics: The Evolution of the Preliterate Imagination* (2013).<sup>55</sup> And the more specific question of dendrochronology is also relevant to American studies in the world and across the world, as the field has increasingly intersected with planetary questions of the environment. No doubt the dendrochronologists’ foundational metaphor of “Talkative Tree Rings” (as it appeared in the title of Douglass’s 1929 *National Geographic* article) may be taken as a case study for Bruno Latour’s description of scientists’ achievement of “having invented this extraordinary equipment that allows you to give voice to mute things as if they were in the position to speak.”<sup>56</sup> And as for dendrochronologists’ collaborations with the ring-recorded memories of trees, Eduardo Kohn’s *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (2013) seems like a worthy interlocutor.<sup>57</sup> Attentive to the importance of tree-time in the present, two recent articles pertinent to American studies have made specific recourse to dendrochronology. Jason C. Hogue’s “Ariel’s Anguish: Doing (Arboreal) Time in *The Tempest*” repeatedly references time as perceived by dendrochronologists, while Matthew Simmons’s “The Novel’s Changing Climate: Richard Powers’s *The Overstory* as an Anthropocene Novel” has drawn readers’ attention to “tree time,” citing several moments in the novel as “dendrochronological markers estranging the present by recasting temporarily from the perspective of a tree.”<sup>58</sup>

Perspective—this is the central issue at hand in Giles’s notion of parallax zones, parallax being an astronomy-related term referencing the “difference or change in apparent position or direction of an object as seen from two different points.”<sup>59</sup> Parallax can help astronomers measure the distance to the stars.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the template of astronomy is present in the language Giles uses to figure the parallax relation between America and Australia as mediated through Britain: “Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century was at the apex of a triangle that held America and Australia, the old colony and the new colony, as its alternate points.” Perhaps due to a common relation to astronomy or perhaps as a self-conscious echo, Giles’s language resembles Henry David Thoreau’s stargazing comment in *Walden*: “The stars are the apexes of what wonderful triangles! What distant and different beings in the various mansions of the universe are contemplating the same one at the same moment!”<sup>61</sup>

When Giles’s parallax metaphor is brought back to its native realm of astronomy, we bump into a fundamental problem with time, namely its link to the speed of

light. On a planetary scale, the speed of light is of negligible everyday concern—it moves more or less instantaneously. But across larger distances, the speed of light presents a problem. Sunlight takes eight minutes and twenty seconds to travel to the Earth, and radio waves take twenty-two and a half hours to reach the space probe Voyager 1, humankind’s farthest-flung spacefaring emissary. As for looking at the stars? We can experience no temporal simultaneity with any of them, much less simultaneity with any being elsewhere in the universe who may also look at the same star. The light we see from Proxima Centauri (the closest star to our solar system) has left that star 4.25 years prior to its visibility on Earth, so that to look at the star is to peer 4.25 years into its past. Alternately, to look at the pulsar that hosts the first exoplanets known to humankind (discovered in 1994) is to peer nearly two thousand years into the past.<sup>62</sup> We can experience no simultaneity with the stars, much less with Thoreau’s hypothesized off-Earth beings who may be viewing the same star from a parallax zone in another quarter of the universe. We may see light from Proxima Centauri 4.25 years after it emanated from the star, but, depending on their distance from the same star, the off-Earth beings may not see the same moment’s light until five hundred or six thousand years after we have died. We bump into the problem of how slowly a star’s present travels toward us (and how slowly our present travels toward it), even as its present travels at light speed through the vacuum of space. Earth’s present and Proxima Centauri’s present and the present of the first-discovered exoplanets cannot meet up, cannot be brought into simultaneity, can share no meaningful synchroptic timeline, and will inevitably be characterized by the absolute lag imposed by the speed of light.

Of course, the galactically scaled time lags that must accompany parallax observations of Thoreau’s stars have not seemed meaningful to Earthbound Americanists working during transnationalism’s rise during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. During our slice of time, lightspeed communication has been the norm, and on a planetary scale it has been virtually instantaneous. It has permitted scholars and humans more generally to imagine ourselves as fellow travelers existing synchronically in relation to each other. We may live in different places, but we aren’t temporal strangers. We are *contemporaries*. As James Baldwin described it, back when lightspeed communication was still new enough that people needed a reminder that it was the new norm: “[O]ne can no longer assume that when any of our politicians make speeches that only America is listening. Vast countries just below our borders and the continents overseas are also listening. The world has become very small.”<sup>63</sup>

When juxtaposed against the Earth’s sense of simultaneity during the age of lightspeed communication, Henry Francis Downing’s 1914 play *Voodoo: A Drama in Four Acts* reminds us that our early twenty-first-century temporal experience has been eccentric, and that relations between different places on the planet have more often been characterized by time lag, by the irreconcilability of different times in different places, analogous to the lag that (during an era of telescope-facilitated exoplanet

discovery, deep-field galaxy imaging, and Cixin Liu's popular *Three-Body* trilogy) we are more accustomed to thinking about when we consider the stars.<sup>64</sup>

Downing was born in mid-nineteenth century Manhattan but traveled to and lived in many places throughout his life. During the US Civil War, he enlisted in the Union Navy and went on to spend three years in Liberia before returning to the United States and reentering the Navy in the 1870s. By the 1880s he had become a prominent Black Democrat, leading President Grover Cleveland to appoint him US consul to Luanda, Angola, where he worked in 1887 and 1888. After returning to the United States, Downing relocated in 1895 to London, where he lived for some twenty-two years, speaking at the 1900 Pan-African Conference, managing a company interested in growing cotton in Africa, and writing several dramas (publishing a one-act and seven full-length plays in 1913 and 1914). In 1917 he published a novel, *The American Cavalryman*, and returned to the United States, settling in Harlem.<sup>65</sup> Although Downing was one of the most prolific African American playwrights of the era, and although it has been said that he was "probably the first person of African descent to have a play of his or her own written and published in Britain," he has received relatively little scholarly or popular attention.<sup>66</sup> Downing's relative anonymity today has been exacerbated by the general inaccessibility of his dramatic oeuvre. Only one of his plays, the one-act he coauthored with his wife, has been digitized and made widely available.<sup>67</sup> And a search of *WorldCat Discovery* shows that none of his eight plays is held by more than seven or eight libraries worldwide, while five of his plays are held by three or fewer. *WorldCat* reports that *Voodoo* is held by three libraries, and its inclusion in *Reprise* represents the first time any of Downing's full-length plays has been made widely available, whether digitally or in physical form.<sup>68</sup>

*Voodoo*'s republication in 2024—in the face of its general nonintegration into timelines of US, British, African American, or Black diasporan literary and dramatic history—is a reminder of the way a present that transpired in 1914 may have few or no fellow travelers during its 110-years of nonteleological wanderings toward 2024's present, though many other versions of 1914 have long since found incorporation into the versions of history that 2024 has inherited. Further, the action and tension within the play hinge on the existence of multiple nonintegrated presents. Downing set his historical drama in England (Act I is set in the Royal Garden at Whitehall, the criminal sanctuary of Alsatia, and a quay at Bristol Port) and in Barbados (Acts II and III occur in Bridgetown and a nearby forest). As for when the drama is set? Act I happens in autumn 1688 while Acts II and III occur in spring 1689, so that between the first act and the final two acts, the Glorious Revolution has transpired in England, with James II fleeing to France on December 23, 1688, and with William of Orange and Mary (James II's daughter) assuming the monarchy on February 13, 1689.<sup>69</sup>

In the play's set-up (mostly in Act I), we see several characters grappling with orders and decrees issued by James II. James orders Geoffry Blount, as punishment for an ill-considered swordfight, to live in exile in Barbados.<sup>70</sup> And after James commands Lady Bettie Dare to marry the courtier Lord Courtney, Lady Bettie escapes James's

command by traveling incognito on the same Barbados-bound ship as Blount; to do this she disguises herself as a woman named Lucy Grant, whom James has ordered to be sold in Barbados.<sup>71</sup> Once Courtney realizes that Bettie has escaped to the Indies, he procures an order from James to travel by ship to Barbados and bring her back to England; Courtney's ship arrives in Barbados a month after Blount and Bettie's ship.<sup>72</sup> In Barbados, against the backdrop of a maroon rebellion that includes a scene portraying Black characters using the play's titular voodoo,<sup>73</sup> we have the three characters using various subterfuges and dodges to execute or avoid James's orders. This culminates in Blount and Bettie marrying, with the result that the governor of Barbados declares that Bettie cannot be separated from her husband without an annulment issued by James, but, because Courtney would need to undertake two transatlantic journeys by ship in order to procure the annulment and bring it back to Barbados, "months must pass before that can occur."<sup>74</sup> Finally, just as the maroon rebellion is about to overtake the gunpowder-depleted Bridgetown, a *deus ex machina* arrives from England, a ship bearing reinforcements and bearing Bettie's father, the Earl of Dare, who himself bears news, an announcement: "Persuaded by his fears King James has deserted his people—has fled to England's arch enemy the infamous French King. The English Lords and Commons have recognized the great deserving of William of Orange, and his consort Mary, and have had them crowned King and Queen of the Kingdoms."<sup>75</sup> James, whose orders have predicated the play's action, is no longer king.

If they haven't already, readers or hypothetical viewers who are attuned to twentieth- and twenty-first century simultaneity will now have a sense that almost all of the drama's action has hinged on executing and dodging royal commands and orders that have been moot since at least three months prior. The typical *deus ex machina* brings improbable rescue, but this *deus ex machina* also brings Bridgetown's time up to date with England's time, or so it will seem to readers driven toward notions of simultaneity. But readers who step outside of current temporal assumptions will see that we do not have the integration of two simultaneous presents—rather, we see the integration of England's December 1688 with Bridgetown's spring 1689, and it would perhaps take until England's summer 1688 for Bridgetown to acknowledge that it has integrated England's December 1688 into its spring 1689. It is only an early twenty-first century synchronic exceptionalism, combined with history's retrospective synchronoptic timeline, that offers us the illusion that the Barbados and England of the seventeenth century can ever be brought up to date in relation to each other. On the ground, and across the water, as we see in Downing's play, it is pure time lag between irreconcilable bubbles of time. And in this we are reminded that the rise of nationalism involved not only fellow feeling evoked by a sense of simultaneity within the same bubble (as in Anderson's model) but also a real sense of irreconcilable temporal disjunction from places beyond the protonationalist bubble, as we see in Thomas Paine's 1776 commentary from what would shortly become the United States of America: "As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice .... To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting

four or five months for an answer, which when obtained requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness—There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.”<sup>76</sup>

These bubbles of time are the temporal materialities that helped give rise to nations and nationalisms, every bit as much as the geographical *thereness* of mountains and rivers and archipelagoes and oceans has played a role. And just as we need versions of transnationalism that do not paper over but rather see and incorporate the materiality of space and geography, we need versions of transnationalism that weave themselves into the varied material textures of irreconcilable times as they have been experienced on their own terms and in lagging relation to each other.<sup>77</sup> The four items published in *Reprise* 2024 offer insight into how such temporally attuned transnationalisms may arise.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; revised edition, Verso, 1991), 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 33, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Harvard University Press, 1993); Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, “Americanness as a Concept, or, The Americas in the Modern World-System,” *International Social Science Journal* 44, no. 4 (1992): 549–57; and Antonio Benítez Rojo, *La isla que se repite: El Caribe y la perspectiva posmoderna* (Ediciones del Norte, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease, eds., *American Studies as Transnational Practice: Turning toward the Transpacific* (Dartmouth College Press, 2015); Sandhya Shukla and Heidi Tinsman, eds., *Imagining Our Americas: Toward a Transnational Frame* (Duke University Press, 2007); and Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> I have considered this zeitgeist in Brian Russell Roberts, *Borderwaters: Amid the Archipelagic States of America* (Duke University Press, 2021), 85–86.

<sup>8</sup> Sandra M. Gustafson, “What’s in a Date? Temporalities of Early American Literature,” *PMLA* 128, no. 4 (Oct. 2013): 961–67.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23489168>

- <sup>9</sup> Karín Aguilar-San Juan, “What Vietnam Did for Susan Sontag in 1968,” *World History Bulletin* 34, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Fall 2018): 14–17.
- <sup>10</sup> Stephen Edward Nash, *Time, Trees, and Prehistory: Tree-Ring Dating and the Development of North American Archaeology, 1914–1950* (University of Utah Press, 1999), 1–18.
- <sup>11</sup> Henry Francis Downing, *Voodoo: A Drama in Four Acts* (Francis Griffiths, 1914).
- <sup>12</sup> Brian Russell Roberts, “Reprise Editor’s Introduction: On Temporal Transnationalisms—The Exonational, the Decolonial Cosmogonic, the Unexceptional Human Fossil, and the Non-Earthbound,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 12, no. 2 (2021): 419–38. <https://doi.org/10.5070/T812255972>
- <sup>13</sup> Shelley Streeby, “Joaquín Murrieta and the American 1848,” in *Post-Nationalist American Studies*, ed. John Carlos Rowe (University of California Press, 2000): 166–68, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pp2x2.11>. For background on Europe’s 1848, see John Breuilly, “The Revolutions of 1848,” in *Revolutions and the Revolutionary Tradition: In the West, 1560–1991*, ed. David Parker (2000; reprint, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2002), 109–31.
- <sup>14</sup> Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (University of California Press, 2002), xi.
- <sup>15</sup> Amy Kaplan, “Black and Blue on San Juan Hill,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Duke University Press, 1993), 219–36.
- <sup>16</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2002), 4.
- <sup>17</sup> Allan Punzalan Isaac, *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006); and Lanny Thompson, *Imperial Archipelago: Representation and Rule in the Insular Territories under U.S. Dominion after 1898* (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010). See the introduction to Hsu’s special forum; Hsuan L. Hsu, “Circa 1898: Overseas Empire and Transnational American Studies,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 3, no. 2 (2011): 6 pages, <https://doi.org/10.5070/T832011616>
- <sup>18</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 3.
- <sup>19</sup> Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Collaboration in Transnational American Studies,” in *The Routledge Companion to Transnational American Studies*, ed. Nina Morgan, Alfred Hornung, and Takayaki Tatsumi (Routledge, 2019), 9–27.

- <sup>20</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Cornell University Press, 1981), 9.
- <sup>21</sup> Cindi Katz, "On the Grounds of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 4 (2001): 1216, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3175362>
- <sup>22</sup> Cindi Katz, *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xiv; Cindi Katz, "Accumulation, Excess, Childhood: Toward a Countertopography of Risk and Waste," *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* 57, no. 1 (2011): 58, <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/dag.806>
- <sup>23</sup> Paul Giles, "Antipodean American Literature: Franklin, Twain, and the Sphere of Subalternity," *American Literary History* 20, nos. 1–2 (2008): 23–24, <https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajmo41>
- <sup>24</sup> Giles, "Antipodean American Literature," 23.
- <sup>25</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 26.
- <sup>26</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 26.
- <sup>27</sup> Cody Marris and Christopher Hager, introduction to *Timelines of American Literature*, ed. Cody Marris and Christopher Hager (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 1–8.
- <sup>28</sup> Marris and Hager, introduction, 2, 4, 2.
- <sup>29</sup> Marris and Hager, introduction, 1. My italics.
- <sup>30</sup> Jared Hickman, "600 BCE–1830 CE: *The Book of Mormon* and the Lived Eschatology of Settler Colonialism," in *Timelines of American Literature*, ed. Cody Marris and Christopher Hager (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 67–84.
- <sup>31</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense and Related Writings*, ed. Thomas P. Slaughter (Bedford, 2001); Gerald Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America* (New York University Press, 2014); Frank Beckwith Sr., "Escalante in Millard County," *Trek* (Topaz, Utah) Feb. 1943: 17–20, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/trek-vol-1-no-2-17496>. The Kanaka Maoli historian David Malo, born some seventeen years after Cook's arrival in 1778, offered useful commentary on Hawaiian history and genealogies, reflecting on problems and difficulties in integrating Hawaiian, Christian, and Common Era timelines; David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities (Moolelo Hawaii)*, 2nd edition, transl. Nathaniel Emerson (Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1951), 1–3.
- <sup>32</sup> Gustafson, "What's in a Date?", 961. All citations of Gustafson draw on the PMLA version.



- 33 Gustafson, “What’s in a Date?,” 963.
- 34 Gustafson, “What’s in a Date?,” 963.
- 35 Gustafson, “What’s in a Date?,” 963.
- 36 Gustafson, “What’s in a Date?,” 967.
- 37 Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?: An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, on 5 July 1852,” in *The Frederick Douglass Papers; Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Volume 2: 1847–54*, ed. John W. Blassingame (Yale University Press, 1982), 359–88.
- 38 José Barreiro, “View from the Shore: Toward an Indian Voice in 1992,” *Northeast Indian Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 5. For Barreiro’s affiliation I draw on the biographical information at the end of José Barreiro, “Indigenous Cuba: Hidden in Plain Sight,” *American Indian: Magazine of Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2017), <https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/indigenous-cuba-hidden-plain-sight>
- 39 José Barreiro, ed., *View from the Shore: American Indian Perspectives on the Quincentenary*, special issue of *Northeast Indian Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1990).
- 40 For an overview of approaches to 1968 see Philipp Gassert and Martin Klimke, “Introduction: 1968 from Revolt to Research,” in *1968: On the Edge of World Revolution*, ed. Philipp Gassert and Martin Klimke (Black Rose Books, 2018), 5–24. On the emergence of the Global 1968 as a scholarly topic, and the enduring synecdochal power of Paris’s May 1968, see Gassert and Klimke, “Introduction,” 11 and 12.
- 41 Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will* (1969; reprint, Picador USA, 2002), 273–74.
- 42 Aguilar-San Juan, “What Vietnam Did for Susan Sontag in 1968,” 15.
- 43 Aguilar-San Juan, “What Vietnam Did for Susan Sontag in 1968,” 15.
- 44 Aguilar-San Juan, “What Vietnam Did for Susan Sontag in 1968,” 16.
- 45 For instance, the resonance of 1968 and a dedication to tracing global simultaneities associated with that date may diminish the significance of Indonesia in the 1960s (Indonesia has no chapter in the county-by-country line-up in Gassert and Klimke’s *1968: On the Edge of World Revolution*). Choosing a different date, of say 1965, would result in an alternative world history, such as we see in Vincent Bevins, *The Jakarta Method: Washington’s Anticommunist Crusade & the Mass Murder Program that Shaped Our World* (PublicAffairs, 2020).

- 46 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (1949; reprint, Oxford University Press, 1968), 9.
- 47 Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 6.
- 48 José Limón, *American Encounters: Greater Mexico, the United States, and the Erotics of Culture* (Beacon, 1998); Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 3.
- 49 Nash, *Time, Trees, and Prehistory*, 1.
- 50 Nash, *Time, Trees, and Prehistory*, 2, 16.
- 51 Charlotte L. Peterson et al., “Dendrochronology and Radiocarbon Dating,” *Radiocarbon* 64, no. 3 (2022): 572, <https://doi.org/10.1017/RDC.2021.97>
- 52 Nash, *Time, Trees, and Prehistory*, 7. Here, Nash cites a study from 1973. For more recent work on this topic, see Peterson et al., “Dendrochronology and Radiocarbon Dating,” 569–88.
- 53 On radiocarbon dating’s window of accuracy, see Steve Koppes and Louise Lerner, “Carbon- 14 Dating, Explained,” *uchicago news*: <https://news.uchicago.edu/explainer/what-is-carbon-14-dating#:~:text=Radiocarbon%20dating%2C%20or%20carbon%2D14,of%20the%20carb on%2D14%20isotope>
- 54 M. Aubert et al., “Pleistocene Cave Art from Sulawesi, Indonesia,” *Nature* 514 (Oct. 9, 2014): 223, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature13422>
- 55 Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton University Press, 2006); Christopher Collins, *Paleopoetics: The Evolution of the Preliterate Imagination* (Columbia University Press, 2013).
- 56 Andrew Ellicott Douglass, “The Secret of the Southwest Solved by Talkative Tree Rings: Horizons of American History Are Carried Back to A.D. 700 and a Calendar for 1,200 Years Established by National Geographic Society Expeditions,” *National Geographic Magazine* 56, no. 6 (Dec. 1929): 736–70, <https://sheppard.ltrr.arizona.edu/tour/BridgingTheGap1929-12.pdf>; Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, transl. Catherine Porter (Polity, 2017), 32.
- 57 Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (University of California Press, 2013).
- 58 Jason C. Hogue, “Ariel’s Anguish: Doing (Arboreal) Time in *The Tempest*,” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2021): 1484–85, 1489, 1500, 1502n10; <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isaa102>. Readings of *The Tempest* have been pertinent to American studies as a field since at least 1964, when Leo Marx published his chapter on *The Tempest-as-parable*; Leo Marx, *The*

*Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964; reprint, Oxford University Press, 1967), 34–72. Matthew Simmons, “The Novel’s Changing Climate: Richard Powers’s *The Overstory* as an Anthropocene Novel,” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 80, no. 2 (Summer 2024): 97, 104n31. The US-American speculative fiction writer Ted Chiang, in his 2019 story “Omphalos,” offers some glimpses of the problems and affordances of attempting to integrate dendrochronological time and cosmogonic times; Ted Chiang, *Exhalation* (Knopf, 2019), 237–69. For one Diné archaeologist’s incorporation of dendrochronology into Navajo history, see Wade Campbell, “*Na’nilkad bee na’niltin* – Learning from Herding: An Ethnoarchaeological Study of Historic Pastoralism on the Navajo Nation,” *Kiva: Journal of Southwestern Anthropology and History* 87, no. 3 (2021): 295–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00231940.2021.1893456>

59 “parallax” 1.a., *Oxford English Dictionary Online*:

[https://www.oed.com/dictionary/parallax\\_n?tab=meaning\\_and\\_use#31878243](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/parallax_n?tab=meaning_and_use#31878243)

60 Jim Lucas and Tereza Pultarova, “What Is Parallax?” *Space.com*, Jan. 11, 2022:

<https://www.space.com/30417-parallax.html>

61 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854; reprint, Grosset & Dunlap, 1910), 11.

62 For overviews of these stars, distances, and related planets, see NASA’s entries: “Proxima Centauri b,” NASA: <https://science.nasa.gov/exoplanet-catalog/proxima-centauri-b/>; “PSR B1257+12 b,” NASA: <https://science.nasa.gov/exoplanet-catalog/psr-b125712-b/>

63 “Mrs. Eaton, James Baldwin Challenge Civil Libertarians,” *Rights* (February–March 1964): 19, [https://www.crmvet.org/docs/nor/eclc/640300\\_eclc\\_baldwin.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/docs/nor/eclc/640300_eclc_baldwin.pdf)

64 First in the trilogy is Cixin Liu, *The Three-Body Problem*, transl. Ken Liu (Tor, 2014).

65 Brian Russell Roberts, “Downing, Henry Francis,” in *African American National Biography*, vol. 3, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Harvard University Press, 2008), 56–57, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.35602>

66 For the quotation, see Colin Chambers, *Black and Asian Theatre in Britain: A History* (Routledge, 2011), 63, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203016541>. Some of the limited scholarship on Downing includes: Chambers, *Black and Asian Theatre in Britain*, 63–66; John Cullen Gruesser, *Black on Black: Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa* (University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 80–85; Brian Russell Roberts, “Lost Theaters of African American Internationalism: Diplomacy and Henry Francis Downing in Luanda and London,” *African American Review* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 269–86, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40301211>; and Brian Russell Roberts, “A London Legacy of Ira Aldridge: Henry Francis Downing and the

- Paratheatrical Poetics of Plot and Cast(e),” *Modern Drama* 55, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 386–406, <https://doi.org/10.3138/md.55.3.38>
- <sup>67</sup> Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Downing, “Placing Paul’s Play: A Miniature Comedy” (Francis Griffiths, 1913), [https://books.google.com/books?id=1fQoAAAAMAAJ&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=o&dq=%22placing%20paul's%20play%22&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q=%22placing%20paul's%20play%22&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=1fQoAAAAMAAJ&newbks=1&newbks_redir=o&dq=%22placing%20paul's%20play%22&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q=%22placing%20paul's%20play%22&f=false)
- <sup>68</sup> According to *WorldCat*, *Voodoo* is held by the New York Public Library, Rowan University’s Campbell Library, and Brigham Young University’s Harold B. Lee Library. Gratitude to BYU’s Faculty Publishing Service for helping prepare the PDF of *Voodoo* for publication.
- <sup>69</sup> For background on the Glorious Revolution, see W. A. Speck, “1688: A Political Revolution,” in *Revolutions and the Revolutionary Tradition: In the West, 1560–1991*, ed. David Parker (2000; reprint, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2002), 54–67.
- <sup>70</sup> Downing, *Voodoo*, 33.
- <sup>71</sup> Downing, *Voodoo*, 15, 44.
- <sup>72</sup> Downing, *Voodoo*, 51, 55, 69.
- <sup>73</sup> For the quotation, see Downing, *Voodoo*, 78. For references to and representations of voodoo, see Downing, *Voodoo* 81, 86, 90–99. Among the few mentions of *Voodoo* in scholarship, two studies have observed that the play is significant for offering an early portrayal of a voodoo chant, but these studies also note the drama’s tendency toward “caricatures” and “exoticism”; Gary D. Rhodes, *White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror Film* (McFarland, 2001), 77; Kyle William Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture* (McFarland, 2010), 62. Other aspects of the play’s racial politics strike a dissonant note compared to much of the African American literature that has been recovered over the years.
- <sup>74</sup> Downing, *Voodoo*, 78.
- <sup>75</sup> Downing, *Voodoo*, 112.
- <sup>76</sup> Paine, *Common Sense*, 92–93. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur’s narrator felt a similar tension, though without Paine’s conviction regarding independence: “If I attach myself to the mother country, which is 3,000 miles from me, I become what is called an enemy to my own region”; J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Other Essays*, ed. Dennis D. Moore (1782; reprint, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 152. Writing in the 1760s, John Dickinson voiced similar frustrations; John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in*

*Pennsylvania, to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies* (1767–1768; reprint, Outlook, 1903), 95. Thanks to Zach Hutchins for pointing out the relevant discussions in *Letters from an American Farmer* and *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*.

- <sup>77</sup> Giles, whose notion of parallax zones I have engaged with in this essay, has done important work on the materiality of time; Paul Giles, *Backgazing: Reverse Time in Modernist Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2019); Paul Giles, *The Planetary Clock: Antipodean Time and Spherical Postmodern Fictions* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

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