

Call for Papers (Workshop and Edited Volume)

Temporalities in/of Crises in Contemporary Anglophone Literatures

According to Arundhati Roy, the Coronavirus has “brought the world to a halt like nothing else could”, forcing “humans to break with the past and imagine their future anew” (2020, n.p.). The current COVID-19 pandemic is only one crisis amongst many which has put conventional notions of time as a more or less linear and smooth succession under considerable pressure. Climate catastrophes (of which the virus is part), the experience of genocide and slavery, war and terrorism, food shortage and financial crashes have had, and continue to have, a deep impact on conceptions of time. Challenging understandings of time as a unit or even entity that can be controlled, sequenced or synchronized, crises force us to rethink time as non-integral, multidirectional, discontinuous, and in Dipesh Chakrabarty’s words, “out of joint with itself” (2000, 16). In moments of crisis, past, present and future appear to collapse into each other and give way to a sense of rupture and discontinuity: While the past extends into the present and exerts a disruptive force, the future appears unavailable and turns into a constant source of anxiety that jeopardizes any sense of continuity. Crises, that is to say, confront individuals and collectivities with the unpredictable and contingent nature of history, yielding temporalities that undo the borders between subjective and public time and that in their spiraling simultaneity appear contradictory and divided.

Literary texts have a crucial role in modelling temporalities that reflect upon and creatively respond to moments of crises. The *long durée* of environmental crisis (Rob Nixon), the ‘always now’ of slavery (Toni Morrison), the ghostly presence of the past (Jacques Derrida), diaspora time, accelerated globalization, digital temporalities, sleepless capitalism and nuclear temporalities (Gabriele Schwab) are some of the terms in which Anglophone literatures conceive time. These non-linear, differential and multi-layered temporalities, which rigorously disrupt neat divisions between past, present and future, do not only articulate a sense of disorientation ensuing from moments of crises. Rather, the sense of an ending that emerges in times of crises frequently also has prophetic implications; it may enable new ways of approaching the present and the future, and highlights the fascination with yet ‘unknown’ time. At the very least, temporalities of crises may expose the constructed and coercive “monoculture of linear time” (de Sousa Santos 2004) and possibly provide resources for resisting narratives of progress and the synchronizing mechanisms of global capitalism.

The proposed volume seeks to critically reflect on temporalities in and of crises and to provide a detailed survey of the multiplicity of literarized temporalities across different places of the Anglophone world in modern times. In discussing such temporalities, the volume will present pluralized and context-sensitive concepts of time, which may challenge politically established concepts of time and historiography, including the social rhythms and privileges they imply. It will further explore the role of narratives and narrative temporalities in (de-)naturalizing established notions of time, simulating novel (post-crises) timescapes and proposing new modalities of temporal sense-making. Highlighting the materially, socially and cognitively mediated patterning of time, the volume encourages new critical discourses in literary and cultural studies.

Possible topics include (but are not limited to) crises of temporalities in connection with pandemics or epidemics; climate change or planetary temporalities; genocide and/or slavery; war and terror; trauma and mourning; migration and asylum; or radical political change, such as Brexit. Papers might also discuss new forms of temporalities arising from crises, including (but, again, not limited to) apocalyptic (and eschatological) temporalities; nuclear temporalities; queer temporalities; racial temporalities; capitalist temporalities; or digital, AI and machine-driven temporalities.

Submissions should include an abstract (350-500 words) and short author bio (150 words) and should be sent to sibylle.baumbach@ilw.uni-stuttgart.de and birgit.neumann@uni-duesseldorf.de by **01 September 2021**.

In preparation of the edited volume, we will be hosting a one-day, online workshop on **10 December 2021**. At this workshop, contributors will present and discuss their draft papers.

References

- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Roy, Arundhati. "The Pandemic is a Portal." *Financial Times*. April, 3, 2020.
- Santos, Boaventura de Sousa, "A Critique of Lazy Reason: Against the Waste of Experience." Ed. Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World- System in the Longue Durée*. London: Paradigm Publishers, 2004. 157-197.