INTRODUCTION

How Soon Is Now?

I take my title from the 1984 song by the legendary Manchester band The Smiths. If you know only one Smiths song, this is probably the one: it's instantly recognizable to anyone who lived through '80s club days or listens now to that soundtrack in the current '80s revival. The song's massive, quivering guitar sound and its length (over six and a half minutes) make it different from the band's other briefer and more melodic songs, but its lyrics and vocals are classic Smiths, featuring the lovelorn, melancholy persona of the lead singer, Morrissey. As so often in the Smiths songbook, he poses a question with a particularly desirous urgency: "When you say it's gonna happen now, / Well, when exactly do you mean?" Evoking the impatience, frustration, and desperation engendered by yet another lonely night at a dance club, Morrissey wails, "See, I've already waited too long, / And all my hope is gone."[1]

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The song's title, "How Soon Is Now?," plays off the shifty meanings of those ordinary words *soon* and *now*. They are deictic, to use the linguists' term: their meanings depend on context; they denote times that are relative to the moment of their utterance.[2] Morrissey addresses a "you" (another deixis) who has tried to give him some advice and assuage his despair: "There's still hope, Morrissey," we infer the friend has said in the imagined backstory of the song; "You're going to meet someone great. It really is going to happen now." But Morrissey won't be appeased, can't be appeased by this flimsy encouragement. The problem with "now" is that it's . . . *now*. Or it's *now*. Or it's right *now*. The denoted moment shifts, it slips, it is deferred, potentially infinitely, along an endless timeline of moments. For the voice in this song this situation is unbearably wearisome, each moment more hopeless than the last, opening onto a future that is nothing but one newly empty *now* after another. The word *soon* only makes things worse, shifty and resistant as it is to fix a definite time.[3]

This is not merely a linguistic issue. It gets at a larger problem concerning the present, one that has dogged all theorists of time and history in the Western tradition, starting perhaps with Aristotle and certainly including Saint Augustine: *now* has no duration, so how can you talk about its being, how can it be said to exist at all? As soon as you fix on it, it's gone, it's a has-been, and we're onto the next *now*. In fact the *now* is never purely there at all: it is a transition, always divided between no longer and not yet; each present *now* is stretched out and spanned by a past *now* and a future *now*.[4] When, WHEN, *when*? Morrissey needs to know because he wants, and he wants *now*: that is, he desires *in* the present moment, and for that reason he desires *the present moment*. And because the present moment never comes—never *is*—longing in or for the present never can be fulfilled. Thwarted desire is inevitable for Morrissey: the chipper reply to his agonized "When?" can never be satisfying because "Now" cannot specify a determinate moment after all.

In "How Soon Is Now?" this temporal conundrum is exasperating and depressing, and Morrissey conjures up a vision of time that emphasizes relentless blankness, forward plodding, and never ending. And further, he's isolated within this temporality: you'd think that "now" is something that everybody understands as the same time, as the same moment, even if everyone has a different way of dating it (depending on each person's situation and interests). But Morrissey seems to doubt that presumption of shared present time, that presumption that *now* is the same moment for

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everyone: "When you say it's gonna happen now, / Well, when exactly do you mean?" *His now* is irremediably estranged from his interlocutor's; his yearning is so acute that the possibility of a common present is ruptured. Instead, he lashes out at the one who would counsel him to wait: "You shut your mouth. / How can you say / I go about things the wrong way?" And he cries alone. Vacuous formalities in an apparently causal sequence threaten to go on endlessly without any effect: you go to a club where "You could meet somebody who really loves you"; you stand there, you go home, you sob hopelessly, you do it all again tomorrow, and then the next day, and the next. The meaningless little cycles succeed one another along an endless timeline into a blank future.[5] This *now* is empty; this *now* is never *now*.

The song presents this whole temporal situation not only verbally but also sonically. The sound reinforces the strangely evanescent, vanishing quality of the present. Johnny Marr's rhythm guitar is heavily processed in a vertiginous tremolo produced with four reverb speakers playing back in sync; the result is a shimmering, oscillating deferral. Laid over that is a slide guitar part—"mesmerizing," as one critic put it—as well as "a separate guitar melody played in harmonics."[6] Because of these formidable—and completely analogue—technicalities, the song was rarely performed live by The Smiths, which seems entirely appropriate to its problematization of when *now* is. And also appropriate is the fact that it has been covered and sampled numerous times, perhaps most memorably in 2002 by the Russian duo t.A.T.u.

The sound of desire in "How Soon Is Now?" is restless, but through this impatience even bigger questions press forth: is there any other way to understand time, or a *life*-time, beyond this vacant sequence of isolated, and isolating, present moments? Is there another way to value waiting, other than as exasperating and without promise? Is there any way to participate in a public, communal present, something shared, something together, *now*? Of course Morrissey hardly intends to pose a philosophical problem or theorize Being and Time: he just wants to meet someone. "Now" actually means "when I meet somebody who really loves me," somebody who is unlikely to be Martin Heidegger. But this practical way of understanding *now* in fact points us to different ways of thinking about time beyond our worst visions of a mechanistic and constricting linearity that leads bleakly, infinitely onward. Time is lived; it is full of attachments and desires, histories and futures; it is not a hollow form (not a "hatful of

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hollow") that is the same always. The desolate image of time conjured by Morrissey is of a succession of moments, free floating and empty; but in contrast and in actuality, his *now* is really not empty at all: it is constituted by his "purposes and activities," needs and attachments.[7] "When I meet somebody who really loves me": this *now* is linked indissoluably to other moments past and future, and thereby to other people, other situations, other worlds; this *now* is impossible to delimit as a single discrete unit, yes, but exactly because it is so complex and vascular, it can prompt us to think and experience time differently. My broadest goal in this book is not only to explore but also to claim the possibility of a fuller, denser, more crowded *now* that all sorts of theorists tell us is extant but that often eludes our temporal grasp. This means fostering temporalities other than the narrowly sequential. This means taking seriously lives lived in other kinds of time.

It is no mere coincidence that a group with a sexually ambiguous aura would release their own version of "How Soon Is Now?"—t.A.T.u. made the song part of its small oeuvre of girl-on-girl performances. The Smiths' original version expressed the feel of the '80s gay club scene, particularly in their hometown, Manchester, England.[8] This voice, wanting and unfulfilled in the *now* as it is conventionally construed, this voice whose desire requires, even demands, another kind of time beyond such linearity, empty and homogeneous, is a queer voice. Queerness, I maintain in this book, has a temporal dimension—as anyone knows whose desire has been branded as "arrested development" or dismissed as "just a phase"—and, concomitantly and crucially, as I hope to show, temporal experiences can render you queer. By "queer" I thus don't mean only "gay" or "homosexual," though this song is about gay clubbing in the first instance. And I don't mean just "odd" or "different," though there's inevitably some of that here, too. In my theorizing of temporality I explore forms of desirous, embodied being that are out of sync with the ordinarily linear measurements of everyday life, that engage heterogeneous temporalities or that precipitate out of time altogether—forms of being that I shall argue are queer by virtue of their particular engagements with time. These forms of being show, in fact, that time itself is wondrous, marvelous, full of queer potential. The interrelations between desire, bodies, and the *now* create a broad framework for my concerns in this book.

Smiths fans know that desire can—and sometimes must—create its own time. How to describe the *now* of a show by the Sweet and Tender Hooligans, a Smiths tribute band, where audience members hug lead singer José

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Maldonado as they would Morrissey? It's not that they actually believe the Hooligans are "the real thing," but rhythm guitarist Jeff Stodel speaks of "this sort of ritual thing" wherein "people will come up and people will do the same things that they would do to Morrissey at a live Morrissey performance if they had the opportunity."[9] This is ritual that conjures Morrissey's enduring persona—in which adolescence is a permanent condition, not a passing stage of life—loved by his fans with a commensurate, unchanging devotion that is the same now as it ever was.[10] Or how to describe the temporality of the personal tribute by Janice Whaley called "The Smiths Project"? This intricate "true labor of love," in which Whaley painstakingly layered her voice to create every sound of each Smiths song, was created in the span of a year in the interstices of her regulated days, "fitting the music time in around parenting, working, commuting, etc.," finding new time, in fact, within the measured, regulated time of paid work and the time-intensive labors of the home.[11] After all, "Work Is a Four-Letter Word," as Morrissey sings; the time outside of those normative spheres is a different kind of time in which one labors, but labors for love. I shall dilate on the idea throughout *How Soon Is Now?* that amateurs—these fans and lovers laboring in the off-hours—take their own sweet time, and operating outside of regimes of detachment governed by uniform, measured temporality, these uses of time are queer. In this sense, the act of taking one's own sweet time asserts a queer force. *Queer*, *amateur*: these are mutually reinforcing terms.

The observation that the present moment of *now* is full and attached rather than empty and free-floating is a general one, and my attendant claim—that desire can reveal a temporally multiple world in the *now* (a queer world, that is)—is also very broad. I offer this theoretical framework and some examples of heterogeneous temporal experiences not as definitive models of queer or alternative temporalities and experiences; I offer them as provocations that will, I hope, help readers of *How Soon Is Now?* to develop other frameworks and find other examples. My own resources for exploring queer ways of being in time and, indeed, the potential queerness of time are medieval: the frame of reference in *How Soon Is Now?* is late medieval English texts and their postmedieval readers, and the specific temporal theme upon which I focus is *asynchrony*: different time frames or temporal systems colliding in a single moment of *now*. Such medieval texts are especially interesting in this regard because there were numerous powerful temporal systems operant in the Middle Ages: agrarian, gene-

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alogical, sacral or biblical, and historical, according to Russian medievalist Aron Gurevich.[12] Medieval Christianity provides the framework for heterogeneous and asynchronous temporalities on the macro scale — in all of world history — as well as on the micro scale, such as in the operations of the individual human mind, as we shall see further on in this introduction. But my interest lies as well in secular temporal conceptualizations and, most particularly, in dissonance between and among all such views. Medieval narratives of people swept into another temporal world reveal with unusual clarity the constant pressure of other kinds of time on the ordinary, everyday image of one-way, sequential temporality: in chapter 1 short "Rip van Winkle" stories from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, stories in which other temporal realms are visited and reveal a keen desire for another kind of time, are the medieval textual focus; in chapter 2 the *Book of John Mandeville*, a fictitious fourteenth-century travel narrative replete with different times and desire for different temporal experiences, is the medieval text under discussion; the multifarious early-fifteenth-century *Book of Margery Kempe*, intimately engaged with earthly and heavenly temporal schemata, is featured in chapter 3; and both the late-fourteenth-century English translation of a philosophical dialogue, called *Boece*, and the early-fifteenth-century Scottish poem that refers to *Boece*, called *The Kingis Quair* (The King's Book) — each intensely preoccupied with the nature and passage of time — are the texts read in chapter 4.

The effects of these representations of medieval temporal worlds on their postmedieval readers form a further, major concern of this book: I argue that exposure to, or contact with, such temporalities can expand our own temporal repertoires to include extensive nonmodern — okay, call them queer — temporal possibilities. The particular readers I discuss in *How Soon Is Now?*, from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries, are in fact already inhabitants of different temporalities: I shall introduce them below, but in a word here, they are all amateur readers — amateur medievalists — who are by definition nonprofessional, non-"scientific," and thus nonmodern in a modern world defined by "scientific" professional expertise. Clearing space for such amateurs, hobbyists, and dabblers is an important goal of this book: I offer this book as a contribution to a broad and heterogeneous knowledge collective that values various ways of knowing that are derived not only from positions of detachment but also — remembering the etymology of *ama*teur — from positions of affect and attachment, from desires to build another kind of world.

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But I get ahead of myself. (Which seems unavoidable in a book dedicated to asynchrony.) My concern in this book is *now*: I look at various examples to ask, with and beyond Morrissey, what is it, when is it, who gets to live in it, and who decides? The present moment is more heterogeneous and asynchronous than the everyday image of *now*—the ordinary view of measured temporal unfolding that panics Morrissey—would allow. Even Aristotle knew this—Aristotle, who is so strongly associated with the image of time that implies a sequence of identical punctual moments, singular and empty *now*s. In this introduction I want first to take up Aristotle's description of time in the *Physics*, for it turns out that even here, as Heidegger saw, linear sequential temporal measurement is dependent on asynchrony, and everyday life is profoundly asynchronous. Saint Augustine's theorization of time has proven as foundational as has Aristotle's in the Western tradition; he "retain[s] in principle the Aristotelian concept of time,"[13] and indeed provides another take on human life as asynchronous. It is to Augustine's analysis—very negative about asynchrony as it turns out—that I shall look next. Finally, having presented these two approaches to time and asynchrony and then briefly reviewing a hypothesis concerning the modernist impediment to our apprehension of such heterogeneous temporalities, I shall introduce the readers of those texts, the nonmoderns, the asynchronous amateurs, whose queer spirit presides over this book. The chapter subheadings bear little messages for Smiths fans.

ASLEEP: ARISTOTLE'S *PHYSICS*

Early on in his scientific explanation of reality, of what time is, in the fourth book of the *Physics*, Aristotle refers to a legendary tale of extraordinary temporality. Aristotle opens his analysis of time in the *Physics*—one of the "four things that are fundamental to the study of nature" along with change, the infinite, and place[14]—with several puzzles about time: can it be said to exist, since it is composed of parts (a past and a future) that do not exist? What relationship does time have to the *now*, which seems *not* to be a part of time?[15] His method in the *Physics*—a text made of accumulated lecture notes, closely reflecting what he actually taught and at times with an unedited and "rag-bag" feel—is dialectical: he begins with "commonsense intuitions, previous opinions of philosophers, and observed facts," as Edward Hussey describes the process, and moves through a rational con-

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sideration of them toward what he determines is an accurate account and definition of the subject.[16]

In pursuing time's definition, Aristotle first briefly dismisses Platonic and Pythagorean opinions about the nature of time, then moves to arguments proving that time is not change itself (or motion, another translation of both *kinesis* and *metabole*, two words Aristotle uses more or less interchangeably in book 4) but is nonetheless related to change: it cannot exist apart from change. "We assume, that is," as Ursula Coope puts it, "there can be no time without change," for if we don't change or perceive that we have changed, we don't perceive the passage of time.[17] Aristotle illustrates this common-sense assumption with a story of magical sleep:

> When we ourselves do not alter in our mind or do not notice that we alter, then it does not seem to us that any time has passed, just as it does not seem so to the fabled sleepers in [the sanctuary of] the heroes in Sardinia, when they wake up; they join up the latter now to the former, and make it one, omitting what is in between because of failure to perceive it. So, just as, if the now were not different but one and the same, there would be no time, in the same way, even when the now *is* different but is not noticed to be different, what is in between does not seem to be any time.[18]

Repeating and looping back several times, the passage then continues with a reference to something like a dream or reverie, making the opposite point, that when we do perceive change, we do sense time: "We perceive change and time together: even if it is dark and we are not acted upon through the body, but there is some change in the soul, it immediately seems to us that some time has passed together with the change."[19] In sum, writes Coope, "there is time *when* there is change and *only when* there is change."[20] Aristotle continues to refer to ordinary experience and assumptions—common expressions (221a31–221b1), an example of dogs and horses (223b5), even a reference to Homer (221b32) and the Trojan War (222a25–222b16)—as he moves forward to his famous definition of time as "a number of change in respect of the before and after" (219b2–3).[21]

But who are these fabled sleepers in Sardinia? Aristotle doesn't elaborate. Typically in the *Physics*, he is brief and allusive: he uses analogy as familiar illustrative material for his students—material not necessarily true (such as the *Iliad*, whose narrative events are also alluded to) but vivid and pointed, perhaps notorious or at least interesting for its supernatural claims. Two Greek commentators on the *Physics*, Philoponus and Sim-

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plicius, help clarify the fable of the sleepers to which Aristotle was referring. Simplicius (writing more than eight hundred years after Aristotle) is particularly useful for his lengthy expatiation. He begins to explain the myth: "For Hercules was said up to the time of Aristotle and perhaps of Alexander the commentator on Aristotle's works to have had nine sons by the daughters of Thespius the son of Thespieus, who died in Sardinia; their bodies were said to continue whole and uncorrupted, and to give an appearance of being asleep. These are the heroes in Sardinia." So they are supernaturally preserved heroes, gods or god-like and asynchronously lying there as if they've just died. Then comes the heart of the legend, with Aristotle's point made clear by Simplicius: "It is likely that people slept long sleeps besid[e] them, for the sake of dreams or through some other need, in imitation of them. These people joined the now at the beginning of sleep to that at the end, making them one now, because they were unconscious of change between the two nows; and they joined their notion of time to this now and obliterated the time, because they were unconscious of the change between."[22] These are the sleepers who—desiring prophetic dreams or a cure—sleep long sleeps, alongside and looking like the heroes themselves. They have no consciousness of time's passing because they are unaware of any change between the beginning of their long dormition and the end: thus Aristotle, according to Simplicius.

Aristotle's use of such a tale of asynchrony here is striking because it reveals ways of thinking beyond what is ordinarily attributed to him, beyond, that is, what Michel Serres calls "classical time" (linear, laminar, measurably constant).[23] And in fact, commentator Simplicius elaborates on the potential for asynchronous experience in the everyday in his observation that when we sleep undisturbed, or when we are engrossed "in intense thought or action . . . we think that no time has intervened, even though often a long time has passed." Conversely, "one can see it also from the opposite case, since people in pain and distress or in need and want, thinking that such a change is great, think that the time also is great." Simplicius exemplifies this latter point with quotations from Aristophanes's comedy *Clouds* ("Will day never come? / For I heard the cock ages ago") and from Theocritus ("Those who yearn grow old in a day").[24] Often, apparently, our experience departs from the metrical clocking of time that measures a succession of moments one after another.

Sleep and sorrow exemplify that our lived sense of time can differ from the measured time of successive linear intervals. As does drunken partying:

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Simplicius refers to Eudemus's earlier, fourth-century commentary on the *Physics*, wherein Eudemus reports in detail a different sepulchral episode of asynchrony. He tells of an occasion in which revelers, very drunk in a deep cave at the religious celebration of Apatouria at Athens, slept soundly through two nights and a day. "'On the following day, when they woke up, they celebrated the Koureotis [the third day's festival] a day later than the other people [who were in the fourth day's celebration], which is how they discovered what had happened.'"[25] The asynchrony of the sleepers—their temporal displacement in relation to the clocked series of *now* moments on a line—results from their *not* having experienced all those moments sequentially. Supernatural sleep, ordinary sleep, absorption in deep thought, intense longing, inebriation—a wide range of conditions in fact brings out life's essential asynchrony. Simplicius embraces Aristotle's mythic example and sees its temporality in ordinary life: he interprets the fable and finds asynchrony in the everyday.[26]

This example in the *Physics* of the nine heroes in Sardinia is very brief, and it is pedagogical, but it is not merely heuristic. It contributes to what Heidegger, in fact, picks up as the doubleness of Aristotle's treatment of time: Aristotle's discussion of time as a measurement of change, a succession of numbers counting t_1, t_2, t_3, on the one hand, and his suggestion, on the other hand, that "our everyday experience of time . . . is not linear at all."[27] The linear, classically scientific concept of time as a series of punctual moments indeed depends on our more complex temporal experience ("lived" time, what Heidegger calls "existential time"), according to Heidegger. This scientific image of time, as William Large explains it, "smuggles in this everyday experience without drawing attention to it, constructs an image of time from it, and then explains our everyday experience with the image of time rather than the other way around," convincing us that experience is false and measurement is true.[28] That's how we have come to think of time as a line, by forgetting experience: "We can ignore the fact that we were measuring in order to carry out practical projects in the world, and come to think of time as a mere timeline," Richard Polt explains.[29] But the important point is, as Heidegger sees, that Aristotle—by defining time as a measurement but also using experience in order to come to that definition—has both closed down *and opened up* the question of temporality.[30] Drawing on that basic Heideggerian understanding that the lived present is constituted of (practical relations to) different times—the past and future—I want in this book to keep open that question and explore the multitemporality of the *now*.

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The medieval Aristotelian interpreter par excellence, Saint Thomas Aquinas, it should be noted, keeps the fable of the nine heroes at arm's length. Aquinas is seven centuries and at least one language barrier further removed from the *Physics* than Simplicius.[31] Aquinas maintains his distance, carefully explaining the mythical culture as something that is, quite literally, foreign. He presumes, even assumes, distance from the legend in his dutiful exposition of "those who are fabled to have slept among the Heroes, or the gods, in Sardos, a city in Asia [*in Sardo, quae est civitas Asiae*]. The souls of the good and the great are called Heroes, and men revered them as gods, such as Hercules and Bacchus and others."[32] Aristotle's heroes are not themselves named by Aquinas as offspring of Hercules; Hercules is mentioned, rather, as an example of a hero, whose soul was revered as a god in this Asian city, Sardos. It's not certain what version of the *Physics* Aquinas was working with—probably a combination of various translations (there were five Latin versions, from both Arabic and Greek)[33]—and this location of the heroes in "Sardos, a city in Asia," doubtless originates in Aquinas's source manuscript. The effect, though, is detachment, which continues alongside a bit of confusion about the legend as Aquinas goes on to explain that "through certain incantations, some were made insensible, and these, they said, slept among the Heroes. For when they had awakened [*excitati*], they said they had seen wonderful things, and they predicted future events. However, when they returned to themselves, they did not perceive the time that had passed while they were so absorbed [*Tales autem ad se redeuntes, non percipiebant tempus quod praeterierat dum ipsi sic absorpti erant*]."[34]

If we press the logic here, it appears that these dreams must have occurred without the sleepers' conscious awareness of them as change. Or do the sleepers recount their visions and predictions without having come back to their senses? This is difficult to interpret, and may have something to do with uncertainty about where Aristotle locates the change (in our own minds, as eminent natural philosopher Galen understood Aristotle to have been saying, or in the events themselves).[35] Aquinas of course derives the correctly Aristotelian point from the example: "Therefore when we do not perceive some mutation, time is not thought of [*ergo tunc accidit non opinari tempus, cum non percipimus aliquam mutationem*]."[36] But the example in Aquinas's hands does not function quite as smoothly, and its temporality is not domesticated as it is in Simplicius's. The tale may be exoticized; is there a hint here of an effort to offshore such magical asynchronies to some other culture, pagan and far away in the East?[37] That is no

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doubt too much to assert about Thomas's very brief engagement with this myth. But traveling east into more heterogeneous temporalities is a powerful medieval and postmedieval theme in *How Soon Is Now?*, a spatiotemporal trope always infused with ideological potency. Such a space-time conceptual maneuver may be hinted at here; at the least, this moment serves to emphasize for us that time and space are inextricably linked, and that temporal disjunctions implicate the disposition of bodies in space. The political ramifications of this spatiotemporal trope I shall discuss in detail in chapter 2 in reference to the *Book of John Mandeville*.

In any case, in the midst of scientific analysis an illustrative tale of asynchrony reinforces how we ordinarily experience time and in so doing heightens our awareness of gaps in temporal consciousness and the everyday fact of asynchrony. Smooth sequential measurement may be the ordinary, default presumption about time when we're asked about it, but as Aristotle's teaching suggests, our temporal consciousness is tied to our experiences, attachments, and surroundings. Time is more heterogeneous than any ordinary image of time allows: Aristotle, father of "classical" scientific time, the measured clock time to which modernity "promoted" a particular "sensitivity" (as T. J. Jackson Lears puts it), in fact affirms what nonmoderns — medieval tales and their postmedieval readers — insistently represent.[38]

STRETCH OUT AND WAIT: AUGUSTINE'S *CONFESSIONS*

When Aristotle introduces the magical or supernatural as analogy in the *Physics*, the commentaries both acknowledge the supernatural as such but also have the effect of naturalizing it in the orderly everyday, the scientifically, natural-philosophically explicable world. But the mention of the gods in this context, with their own extraordinary temporalities, must alert us to the fact that time is not only, or not purely, secular. Aristotle's deepest interest was in the observable world of nature, of course — defined in terms of change or motion — rather than in any eternal invisible world of forms, which was in contrast Plato's ultimate concern. But it was Plato's thought, taken up by the Neoplatonists, that informed Saint Augustine's "profound concern for the world of the spirit," and it was the Christianized Neoplatonic Supreme Good that ultimately created and controlled time in Augustine's view.[39] For Aristotle, the universe itself was infinite; for Augustine, time is created and bounded by the infinite, the eternal, God

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Himself. For Augustine, time is a good, because created by God, but is also associated with life on earth, which is ultimately an exile from the timeless divine realm, eternity. Augustine's unease about being in time is soothed by his belief in eternity: he firmly holds that time, associated with change (thus accepting that element of Aristotle's analysis), is directly regulated by God.[40] Keeping that in mind, I want to turn now to the *Confessions*, to understand Augustine's disquieted view of the profound asynchrony of human life: in this searching exploration his understanding of the relationship between time and eternity was much more ambivalent than that of his earlier writings, where he expressed the view that time is an image of eternity.[41] Augustine's understanding of time will add to our sense of the range of temporal versions beyond classical linearity. He, too, like Simplicius on Aristotle, is a theorist of the essential asynchrony of life; but unlike Simplicius, or Aristotle, he views this as a tragic condition.

If time is an image of eternity there is resemblance between the two but also difference, distance, and it is difference that is felt most keenly in the *Confessions*. Augustine's overall treatment of time in book 11, as Paul Ricoeur points out, gives an experiential, phenomenological response to the ontological question, "What is time?"[42] In this phenomenological emphasis, Augustine's analysis resembles Aristotle's.

Augustine uses ordinary human experience in his argument against the skeptics about the existence of time.[43] Like Aristotle, he accepts as true certain everyday temporal assumptions. With reference to whether time *is* at all, he asserts commonsensically: "We certainly understand what is meant by the word both when we use it ourselves and when we hear it used by others" [*et intellegimus utique cum id loquimur, intellegimus etiam cum alio loquente id audimus*]; moreover, "we are aware of periods of time" [*sentimus intervalla temporum*], and we deploy temporal concepts as we recount past things and predict future things.[44] Indeed, our ordinary experiences of memory and expectation contribute to a sense of the present that is complex and multifold.[45] Augustine determines that "it might be correct to say that there are three times, a present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things [*praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris*]. Some such different times do exist in the mind, but nowhere else that I can see. The present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is direct perception; and the present of future things is expectation [*praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio*]."[46]

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Augustine's present, his *now*, is in fact infused with temporalities: his is a stunningly *now*-oriented understanding of the past and the future as they manifest themselves in the present, in memory and anticipation. As Mary Carruthers comments about the past in particular, Augustine "had no interest" in it "except as it provides him with a way and a ground for understanding his present."[47] His *now* is not only spanned by the past and future but also in this different sense constituted by them.

And, as is adumbrated in that last quotation from the *Confessions*, that *now* is *in us*. Aristotle importantly sees that time is a number that depends on someone's consciousness to count. There is no time, in Aristotle, if there is no soul, and when time is understood to depend on human consciousness, temporal heterogeneity is the inevitable condition of human life. But Augustine goes further in construing the relationship of time and human consciousness: time, Augustine determines, is the activity of the mind as it shifts in the present between those temporal modes of memory, attention, and expectation. It is itself *distentio animi*, the distention of the mind, what Ricoeur calls the "contrast between the three tensions" of memory, attention, and expectation.[48] And it is woefully, existentially painful.

The mind is stretched out in opposite directions: this is time. Augustine provides an example of the complex temporal workings of the mind—the recitation of a song, the *Deus creator omnium* by Saint Ambrose—and here we can sense how tense and dialectical the operation of time is, in his view.[49] Augustine's is a phenomenological account of the *now*, as problematic and paradoxical as the *now* of which Morrissey complains:

> Suppose that I am going to recite a psalm that I know. Before I begin, my faculty of expectation is engaged [*tenditur*] by the whole of it. But once I have begun, as much of the psalm as I have removed from the province of expectation and relegated to the past now engages [*tenditur*] my memory, and the scope of the action [*actionis*] which I am performing is divided [*distenditur*] between the two faculties of memory and expectation, the one looking back to the part which I have already recited, the other looking forward to the part which I have still to recite. But my faculty of attention [*attentio*] is present all the while, and through it passes [*traicitur*] what was the future in the process of becoming the past. As the process continues [*agitur et agitur*], the province of memory is extended in proportion as that of expectation is reduced, until the whole of my expectation is absorbed. This happens when I have finished my recitation and it has all passed into the province of memory.[50]

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What is striking here is Augustine's intense focus on the mind's difference from itself as it shifts from one modality to another: time is distention, and distention is the "noncoincidence" of memory, attention, and expectation.[51] The language Augustine uses to express this lack of coherence is very vivid. *Distentio* is in fact Augustine's own coinage: it denotes a stretching asunder, stretching out—"a stretching out on a rack," as Henry Chadwick translates it.[52] The same word is used a little further on in book 11 of the *Confessions* when Augustine, trying to locate himself in human time, entreats God to "see how my life is a distension in several directions" [*ecce distentio est vita mea*], a wasteful distraction by all this multiplicity: "The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul, until that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together to merge into you" [*tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui*].[53] The very language here—*dilaniantur*, *viscera*—gives a corporeal feel to this process of spiritual (i.e., in the mind, spirit) distention.

Augustine continues to puzzle out the experience of time by providing a description of physical as well as spiritual effects, using yet another example to explain the feeling of time and contrasting this to God's way of knowing. "It [i.e., God's way of knowing] is not like the knowledge of a man who sings words well known to him or listens to another singing a familiar psalm. While he does this, his feelings vary and his senses are divided, because he is partly anticipating words still to come and partly remembering words already sung" [*neque enim sicut nota cantantis notumve canticum audientis expectatione vocum futurarum et memoria praeteritarum variatur affectus sensusque distenditur*].[54] This active experience of the *now*, this mind enlarging, this *distentio* "is a vital activity of the human spirit," Aron Gurevich summarizes. This vital activity, though, consists in a chronic push and pull, a shredding disruption of personal—physical as well as spiritual—integrity more and more disorienting the more Augustine thinks about it.[55]

Human time is radically dissimilar to God's. As opposed to our own sublunar existence, God's eternal being is in a timeless *now* that is without before or after, past or future. Even the six days in which God created the heavens and the earth are not six days as humans would know them but are a "single atemporal instant," as Charlotte Gross puts it, a *modicum* that is in fact eternal.[56] And this fundamental dissimilarity provokes human

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sorrow: "the absence of eternity is . . . a lack that is felt at the heart of temporal experience," Ricoeur observes.[57] As Chadwick puts it, "This psychological experience of the spreading out of the soul in successiveness and in diverse directions is a painful and anxious experience, so that [Augustine] can speak of salvation as deliverance from time."[58] Ricoeur stresses that the framework of eternity in book 11 is necessary "to push as far as possible the reflection on the *distentio animi*."[59] Time, in Augustine's view in the *Confessions*, is an index of human existence as itself, grievously, asynchronous.

While Aristotle's exposure of humankind's experience of time as asynchronous deepens our understanding of the ordinary and can aid in opening up the heterogeneous possibilities in the *now*, the—or at least one—emphasis in Augustine's disquisition on time in the *Confessions* is to direct attention away from the everyday toward the eternal.[60] Asynchrony is a painful and unhappy condition; his desire for a remove from time, indeed for the unity that is eternal and totally out of time, is searing. Augustine's affective response to time informs some versions of temporality in the chapters that follow. Human life is lived in exile from Eden, an inaccessible region where, as we shall see in relation to the *Book of John Mandeville* in chapter 2, Augustine said time began, but where mundane temporality nonetheless touches on eternity. And again according to Augustine, the unique temporality that is Christian scriptural history multiplies the significance of all times past, present, and future in relation to Christ's incarnation; as we shall see, this can be thrilling, as in the accounts of the Holy Land in the *Book of John Mandeville* discussed in chapter 2, or it can cause acute pain, as in Margery Kempe's experiences, recounted in her *Book* and analyzed in chapter 3. Finally, in chapter 4, we shall see a similarly negative view of time in the vastly influential work by Boethius written a century and a quarter later than the *Confessions*, the *Consolation of Philosophy*.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? TIME-AS-MEASUREMENT AND AMATEUR HOUR

Those two theorists of time and asynchrony, Aristotle and Augustine, open the questions and provide powerful nonmodern frameworks for thinking the *now* in this book. They put us, or keep us, in mind of very long traditions in the West of construing time in ways other than as the measurement of discrete and identical forward-moving points on a line. Michel Serres finds in Lucretius a nonlinear, topological theory of time

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rather than a rigidly metrical or geometrical one. As Serres puts it, theories of turbulence in twentieth-century physics allow us to look back at Lucretius and see that "yes, in fact, there is already in Lucretius this kind of thing."[61] And certainly by our present moment in the early-twenty-first century, theories of nonlinear time are the rule, not the exception.

My discussion in *How Soon Is Now?* thus joins powerful intellectual currents. Even a cursory glance across the disciplines will locate relevant and provocative discussions of the *now*: the ongoing philosophical debates, for example, about tense, temporal relations, and presentism — a theory adopted out of the desire (among at least some of its adherents) "to do justice to the feeling that what's in the past is over and done with, and that what's in the future only matters because it will eventually be present"; or the crucial disciplinary conversation among anthropologists about contemporaneity, the *now* of ethnographic encounters — a conversation opened most explicitly by Johannes Fabian in *Time and the Other* and taken up by ethnographers such as Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, who grapples with the "intellectual and political significance" of grammatical tense; or the remarkable dialogue between physicist Martin Land and anthropologist Jonathan Boyarin in *Time and Human Language Now*, which takes up (among other things) Émile Benveniste's theory of enunciation, the linguistic "now," and explores implications in an ethical realm as well as in physics.[62]

Yet Martin Land in that same book notes that "the success of Newtonian physics, and the authority awarded its method by Enlightenment thinkers, continues to exert undue influence on our view of reality and our use of language, imposing unnecessary restrictions on what we consider to be a reasonable interpretation of everyday experience."[63] Time-as-measurement suits a modernist view of the world — suits what Bruno Latour neatly calls the "modernist settlement" — that was always at most partial and indeed is by now discredited, but that nonetheless persistently exerts its shaping force. Let me briefly rehearse Latour's analysis, sketching the contours of this modernism; I shall then note the persistence of the "settlement" even now in the ways we think of historical time. From there I shall mention one trenchant strand of critique of this modernist settlement and the temporal divide it imposes between the premodern and modern periods. And finally I shall steer into my own critical path through this modernist thicket, exploring specifically the nonmodern times of amateurs.

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Latour's "settlement" refers to a Western cultural formation that segmented the world into discrete realms—philosophical, psychological, political, and moral. He explains that it partitioned off an "out there" separate from a knower; an "in there" unconnected to an outside world; a "down there" of an unruly society "stigmatized as inhuman," distinct from a more elite human individual; and an "up there" of human morality cut off from the nonhuman world. What Latour calls, with his usual witty bravado, the Cartesian "brain-in-a-vat" was detached from a world conceived of as "outside."[64] In this Western modernism the observing subject was to be distinguished from the objective world "out there": "the classic relations between subject and object" in fact provided the feature that separated past from future, since more objectivity was always the goal for the future. The subject/object split thus characterized progress, a direction forward—in fact, the direction of time's arrow. "For the moderns," writes Latour, "without the hope of a Science at last extracted from the social world, there is no discernible movement, no progress, no arrow of time, and thus no hope of salvation" from a premodern "matrix of desires and human fantasies."[65] Latour argues that the separation between society and Science (the initial capital indicating a polemical formation), human and nonhuman, subject and object, was a modernist plot that created the image of time as moving relentlessly forward in a constant, measured flow and promoted the related, specious chronology of modernity with its abjected premodernity.[66]

Although time is now as a rule theorized more expansively, vestiges of that modernist settlement remain potent. No historian believes that time moves punctually forward, for example, emptily, evenly, and always progressively toward a single goal. Yet as Dipesh Chakrabarty discerns, in the work of historians some version of an abstract, a priori time still ticks on, time that is independent of, unaffected by, and prior to "any particular events." "The naturalism of historical time lies in the belief that *everything* can be historicized," Chakrabarty asserts. Conventionally trained historians, he writes, proceed in the assumption that "it is always possible to assign people, places, and objects to a naturally existing, continuous flow of historical time" which is "independent of culture or consciousness."[67] Cycles or different varieties of time—economic cycles, domestic time, work time, fast time, slow time—may well be differentiated, but all will nonetheless be temporalized, he maintains, into a natural, continuous historical flow that is also, crucially, secular. Think of those encyclopedic charts that graph world events onto a single timeline: the eighteenth-

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century "Chart of Biography" and "Chart of History" by Joseph Priestley might be the most famous, but even recent work that is fully informed by postmodern critique begins with a timeline—a carefully cross-cultural timeline. So naturalized is this concept of historical time: it is a methodological building block that "aims to function as a supervening general construction mediating between all the particulars on the ground."[68] But this time is not natural at all, argues Chakrabarty; it "stands for a particular formation of the modern subject"—the modern Western subject, Latour's brain-in-a-vat. "Godless, continuous, empty and homogeneous," this historical time cannot allow for "the presence and agency of gods or spirits"—a necessity if non-Western apprehensions of the world are going to be able to enter historical discourse.[69] The classically scientific time of historians, Chakrabarty argues, the time that operates as a "general construction mediating between all the particulars," must yield to the nonlinear, the post-Einsteinian—which Lucretius, if not Aristotle, can tell us about.

Ongoing critiques of such historical time—most trenchant for my purposes here are critiques by medievalists of the premodern/modern divide—intend to enable and put into practice the more radical claims of temporal heterogeneity. These medievalist arguments do not simply push back the modern period boundary; such critiques intend to facilitate—among other far-reaching potential projects—the consideration of diverse temporal regimes operating here and now. Bracing and multifarious, these analyses demonstrate that period boundaries are inadequate in the face of the complexity of temporal and cultural phenomena: among other things, they reveal periodization functioning in the interest of contemporary Western European (or Westernized) concerns—that is, as ideologically and politically interested—and they present arguments that periodization is not only philosophically challenging but may be in fact impossible.[70] Thus one study, for example, irrefutably demonstrates that French critical theory of the mid- to later twentieth century was itself obsessed with the Middle Ages, so that this quintessential avant-garde must always be understood in relation to the medieval.[71] Another scrupulously reveals the dependence of several of "our most basic historical and political assumptions"—namely, about the "'modern' sovereign state and secular politics"—on the Middle Ages viewed as period.[72] Another related, powerful strand focuses on the complex functioning of period concepts of medieval and modern in a global framework, working to understand intricate and various interrelations between medievalism, modernity, racializa-

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tion, and colonialism.[73] The attempt to demarcate "the past as civilizations whole unto themselves" is itself a modernist gesture: "when we draw lines sharply between periods whole unto themselves, *wherever we draw the line*, we are already falling victim to the logic of the revolutionary moment," writes James Simpson. "It's the revolutionary moment that needs the sharp breaks in history to define itself. Wherever we draw the line to create a world whole unto itself, the wholeness of the world demarcated by that line is *already* informed by inevitable consciousness of what's on the other side."[74] Periodization itself is seen as logically impossible: "In an important sense," Kathleen Davis writes, having maintained that periodization is "a fundamental political technique" that undoes its gesture of chronological separation by its own contemporary interestedness, "we cannot periodize the past."[75]

But alongside such acknowledgment of philosophical inadequacies and political liabilities we still periodize—we cannot not, contends Fredric Jameson as he describes this inevitability.[76] And some such version of linearity still exerts a hold in academic institutions, still broadly organized by divisions flowing from this modernist settlement. The "hard" sciences (and "harder" social sciences) continue to be generally cordoned off from other disciplines both intellectually and fiscally. Curricula in humanities classes and departments are still built along the intellectual spine of historical chronology: the curriculum for the English major, Jennifer Summit notes, "is still structured historically, even if it remains unclear what historical vision or objects that structure manifests." And in such an intellectual terrain the gods and spirits of whom Chakrabarty writes can only be treated as "signifier[s] of other times and societies," objectified by the historian's or anthropologist's gaze; real consideration of divinities as active subjects or agents today can only be made in the institutionally far-flung context of theology.[77] Because of such modernist tenacity in the organization and production of knowledge, temporal critiques remain urgent. Such institutional divisions as these restrict possibilities for thinking more broadly—for thinking more democratically, for including a broader range of participants in the common good.

My own route through these temporal dilemmas proceeds by exploring not only nonmodern times in medieval texts but also the nonmodernity of certain readers of those texts. I cut my own queer critical path in *How Soon Is Now?* by invoking the concept of amateurism. For modernist time, time-as-measurement hitched to Western European concepts of progress

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toward a singular goal is also, I maintain, the time of specialization, expertise, professionalization; amateurism is everything the professional leaves behind on the modern train of forward progress.[78] Max Weber argued long ago that a secularization of spiritual asceticism created a modern ethos in which labor became an end in itself and "limitation to specialized work . . . is a condition of any valuable work in the modern world." Modern middle-class life entailed a "renunciation," a "departure from an age of full and beautiful humanity." The secularization thesis is deeply problematic in view of the critiques of periodization just outlined; furthermore, Weber is not referring to exactly the kind of culture of expertise that concerns me.[79] But what still proves generally useful here is Weber's pinpointing of specialized work as the engine of modernity — a vehicle of the modernist settlement — with time as its linchpin, and "beautiful humanity" as its cost.[80]

Professionals are paid for their work, and their expert time can be seen to share characteristics with money: it is abstract, objective, and countable. Professional work time is clock-bound and calendrical, regulated abstractly and independently of individuals, and the lives of professionals conform to this temporality.[81] Measurement — that one side of the Aristotelian temporal problematic — is the essence here. Consider the sequence of school nights and workdays, weeks, weekends and vacations, fiscal quarter following fiscal quarter, semester following semester, year following year. Such time is homogeneous and empty. It is secular: Weber's analysis, for example, contended that the "rational" scheme of monastic hours was the precursor of secularized Protestant time-consciousness.[82] And, like money, it is to be saved, budgeted, and spent.[83] A life regulated in this way is marked by significant milestones: on the quotidian scale, there are deadlines to be made; on the scale of the life course, there are schools, higher education, early apprenticeship, employment with benefits including life insurance, then promotions and eventual retirement, with the shining gold timepiece at the end.

Constitutively disenchanted, fully Enlightened, the modern expert that is my focus is a "scientific" creature.[84] Expertise — any and all modern-day expertise, I maintain, in literature and history as well as in, say, groundwater hydrology — is regarded as such because of the mystique of scientific method: experts' analyses are mystified as objective and disinterested; such analyses are believed to observe a clear and unbroachable separation between the researcher and the objects of study. Their narrow and delim-

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ited foci are understood as part of this objective paradigm, producing falsifiable assertions and replicable results. In this way expertise is understood to build up a "body of knowledge," as Peter Walsh points out, that exists precisely in order to be mastered.[85] Such analyses are part of a larger field, whence their authority derives and to whose specific methods — rules of evidence and analytical protocols — they adhere. These are the rules for "the access to, and the use of [their] base of knowledge" of which Walsh speaks. Thus delineated, the work of specialists is not answerable to nonspecialists; neither is their work necessarily comprehensible to them. Indeed, the opposition between expert and the general public, the one and the mob, as Latour might say, or the "interior" and the "exterior" (in Walsh's terms) is what makes the expert an expert.[86] Specialized languages and other ritualistic markers define the group; Erving Goffman pointed years ago to the performative aspects of professionalism.[87] The intended audience for their work consists of others like them or aspiring to be like them; they themselves have been trained, after all, in the fields that they are now furthering. And finally, a salary cements experts' membership in the group of specialists, rendering them professionals.

If amateurs are not paid — and defined as such they are not remunerated for work — what do they get at the end of their efforts? What, indeed, defines the end of amateurs' labors? Operating on a different time scheme from professional activities, amateurs' activities do not require punching a time clock and do not follow a predestined career path, since they are not wage labor. Amateur temporality starts and stops at will; tinkerers and dabblers can linger at moments of pleasure when the professionals must soldier duly onward.[88] Professionals must bring all elements of an operation into place in order to complete a replicable task — say, the making of a perfect omelet — but amateurs can enjoy the chance irruptions that occur when all is not synched up. Amateur time is not dictated by a mystified scientific method that requires not only a closed system and the elimination of chance but also, and most fundamentally, the separation of subject from object. In fact, not "scientific" detachment but constant *attachment* to the object of attention characterizes amateurism.[89]

Amateurism is personally invested; dilettante activities can be all over the map or minutely focused — or both — depending on particular interests. The modernist brain-in-a-vat was invented out of a fear of mob rule, Latour contends, a threat to Reason putatively posed by the supposedly brutish masses.[90] But amateurism is by definition multiplicitous: so much

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for the "bounded body of knowledge," the rules of access and processing, the expert credentializing.[91] There is more than one way to skin a cat; amateurism is bricolage, bringing whatever can be found, whatever works, to the activity. And even as it acknowledges many possible ways of proceeding rather than just one, it also values particularity over generality; it is sui generis, not intended to replicate itself in other activities, that is, in a field. In all his intimate particularity, as Roland Barthes muses about the possibility of his writing a novel, he "confron[ts] generality, confron[ts] science." Barthes goes on to suggest that in his creative activity he would be "scientific without knowing it"; in producing a novel rather than merely writing about one, "the world no longer comes to me as an object but as a writing, i.e., as a practice. I proceed to another type of knowledge (that of the Amateur), and it is in this that I am methodical." Such is his method: "I venture a hypothesis and I explore . . . I postulate a novel to be written, whereby I can expect to learn more about the novel than by merely considering it as an object already written by others."[92] Ika Willis analyzes how fan fiction—not writing about other fiction but writing fiction in response to fiction—is just such a practice that yields "another type of knowledge (that of the Amateur)": it makes legible "difficult negotiations between subjectivity and textuality," she argues, not only "complicated subject/text/world relations" but also what Barthes in another essay calls "the 'immoral right' to make and circulate meanings."[93]

Lest this description of amateurism seem purely idealizing, let me acknowledge that amateurism is not miraculously free of the shaping institutions of modernity; it may indeed be a kind of ruse of late capitalism. Amateurs might have wealth enough so that they don't need to work; that hardly puts them outside capitalism. Or they may be out of work and so have plenty of time for their hobbies. Amateurs might embody traits that are a neoliberal fantasy: they may be not only creative, but flexible and adaptable, too. They might be especially celebrated in a recessionary economy for being able to convert their passions into pounds sterling—all the while still staying passionate. They might be complicit in a culture and economy of deskilling. While acknowledging that amateurism cannot be celebrated naively—indeed, while wary of enacting the consummate professionalism of the critique of professionalism (than what is more academically rewarded?)—I am at the same time deeply and positively impressed by the increasing impact that amateurism is having on sacred professional arenas, intensely specialist preserves such as, say, archival transcription.[94]

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By shifting the boundaries of knowledge production in this way amateurism shows the potential for shifting the whole system of credentializing, of judging who gets to make knowledge and how. This perception leads to my broad viewpoint in this book: that amateurism's operation outside, or beside, the culture of professionalism provides an opening of potentials otherwise foreclosed. It offers what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney call "the strangely known moment" that disturbs the critical academic and professional activity going on "above" and "without it."[95] It offers glimpses of "another type of knowledge," as Barthes puts it—different ways of knowing and sources of knowledge, and even (an aspiration I share with many others working in this vein, as I shall suggest below) a consequent broadening of the public sphere.

I focus in particular on amateur *reading*, while acknowledging that readers can and do engage in amateur reading at some times and professional reading at other times—scholarly argument by day, say, and fan fiction by night.[96] Amateur reading is not professional reading or criticism *manqué*. Some amateurs do indeed become professionals—André M. Carrington has documented early science fiction fandom in the United States and discusses several well-known fans who became professional editors—but *as* amateurs they can work to impose the opposite trajectory, making the professional mainstream itself more open, more multiple. Amateur literary activities can expose and critique professional literary activities.[97] Amateur readings, participating in nonmodern ways of apprehending time, can help us to contemplate different ways of being, knowing, and world making.

THESE THINGS TAKE TIME: FREDERICK JAMES FURNIVALL AND OTHER AMATEURS

I shall briefly introduce the medievalists to be discussed in *How Soon Is Now?*, but first I want to give some context for such amateurs in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century England and the United States by taking up the story of one famous amateur medievalist: Frederick James Furnivall, the legendarily indefatigable Victorian editor and man of letters whose literary and linguistic activities were prodigious and whose engagement with life enormous. Born in Surrey in 1825 and educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, he left the British Isles only once in his life (to go to France) and died in 1910, until the very end "rowing, walking, chair-

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ing committees, dashing off postcards to everyone, sending his daily package of cuttings to [James] Murray at the *Dictionary*, presiding over his open house at the ABC tearooms [in London], and checking transcriptions every day at the British Museum," as Derek Pearsall chronicles.[98] Furnivall was editor and then one of the principal contributors to the *New English Dictionary* (eventually to become the *Oxford English Dictionary* [*OED*]); his chief accomplishment was, in fact, the founding of the Early English Text Society (EETS) to supply reliable texts for the *Dictionary*'s vast historical lexicographical enterprise. Furnivall also founded the Chaucer Society, the Wyclif Society, the Ballad Society, the New Shakspere Society, the Browning Society, and the Shelley Society;[99] he actively participated in educational and social reform by, among other things, his involvement with the London Working Men's College — not to mention his founding the Girls' Sculling Club, as Derek Brewer notes, "for working girls to enable them and eventually men to scull on the Thames on Sundays."[100] Furnivall edited about a hundred texts himself and oversaw the immense output of the EETS, which is still going strong today.

Furnivall thus vigorously participated in the birth of early English studies, but his role in the emergent field was ambivalent. He never held a university post, and his editing was ridiculed by medievalists more firmly ensconced in the professional establishment: Sir Frederic Madden of the British Museum called him a "jackanapes," saying he should not be allowed "to edit any works," since his writing style was "disgusting" and his ignorance "on a par with his bad taste."[101] In its early years the Chaucer Society, despite its concern with English literature's highly revered and culturally legitimated figure, was almost completely ignored by the "establishment academy," as David Matthews documents.[102] And the rejection was mutual: having had some independent wealth and then having been granted a government pension — in addition to financial aid from his friends — Furnivall for all intents and purposes shunned the profession, disdaining its scholarly elitism.[103]

By the turn of the twentieth century, in England, professional disciplinary historicism — more and more specialized, with historical knowledge increasingly fragmented — had definitively separated itself from amateur antiquarianism, with its untrained, largely upper-class participants, local enthusiasms, soft sentiments, and proclivity for mixing literary with material evidence. Antiquarians, Philippa Levine documents, "were as comfortable editing medieval poetry as they were inspecting Roman re-

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mains."[104] But specialization was required of the professional. Academic history had tentatively arrived "in the ancient universities" by the 1830s and continued to develop into full-fledged disciplinary arenas through the century.[105] From the 1830s, too, on the literary and linguistic side, a specialist approach to English vernacular studies was developing in England and distinguishing itself from antiquarianism, as Haruko Momma chronicles; the Rawlinsonian Chair in Anglo-Saxon studies was restructured as a modern chair at Oxford in 1858, and the chair of comparative philology at Oxford was established in 1868 for Max Müller.[106] I analyze something of the intimate relationship between philology and the British colonial enterprise in South Asia in chapter 2; suffice it here to say that philology was implicated in Orientalist and racialized projects. Philologists trained in this German academic tradition dismissed the editing efforts of Furnivall as mere enthusiasm, irrational and undisciplined, as Richard Utz documents. About some of the editing for the Early English Text Society, Arnold Schröer, professor of English philology at Cologne University, shook his head: "how lamentable it is," he wrote, "that these Englishmen have no strict philological education; they are kind amateurs, often of astonishing versatility and considerable knowledge." Possessing considerable knowledge, but still amateurs—with perhaps even greater intellectual range than the scholars ("astonishing versatility") but not enough distance, Utz argues, from their objects of attention.[107] Before the advent of professional philology, one would be hard-pressed to trace a firm distinction in attitudes between, on the one hand, those editors whose work is regarded now as protoprofessional (Thomas Tyrwhitt, for example, as David Matthews argues) and amateur antiquarian readers and editors (Thomas Percy is Matthews's contrasting example), on the other.[108] But once the historical and linguistic and literary professions emerged, those working in the shadow of professionals would ever be regarded as underdeveloped. The distinction was "value-laden," as Levine demonstrates, and it was also temporal:[109] amateurs, with their passions on their sleeves, had not yet achieved—and never wanted to, so never would—full detachment from the objects of their study, which was the goal and hallmark of the professional.

Of course this term *amateur* has to be used advisedly for Furnivall. For he can certainly be seen in important genealogical relation to the *profession* of medievalist as we know it now. After all, he made possible the field of Middle English Studies, having edited and published such a huge range

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of texts, and his publishing agenda, as John M. Ganim has pointed out, drew on the scientific philological model.[110] But Furnivall just as certainly worked outside the academic system and with distinctly different goals in mind. Subscribing neither to the elitism of the academy nor the elitism of a now-marginalized antiquarianism, and with considerable gusto, Furnivall recruited nonspecialists to work on his editions. The work he oversaw was often shoddy. Yet its purpose was not to elaborate a linguistic science, as would be the goal of the proper philologist (even if his publishing efforts drew on it, he "never cared a bit for philology," Furnivall commented toward the end of his long career); his goal was to make early English texts available for a wide range of readers to enjoy.[111] Those texts had the power, he believed, to transform lives.[112] Furnivall sought to connect Englanders to their past, to their "forefathers," and, looking across the Atlantic, to connect "the Chaucer-lovers of the Old Country and the New."[113] He involved different kinds of people — accordingly, the members of the Early English Text Society were "banded together" — to do this. When he worked in the archive his "high color" distinguished him from the pallid professionals around him and associated him with the laboring masses and colonized others. In the Manuscript Room of the British Museum, as observed by an American scholar, he worked zealously, alertly, eagerly: "His colour was high and his forehead and neck showed evidence of recent sunburn, a contrast to the pale, dull-eyed elderly men about him."[114] A fellow editor wrote to Furnivall, "your 'go-a-head-itiveness' puzzles me sometimes, but it's *an element of success*."[115] This correspondent is pointing to Furnivall's amateur style — pushing forward vigorously with whatever resources he had, bringing people together in order to create even broader attachments, all on his own, sui generis, and in his own time — and wondering at its efficacy.

The prefaces to Furnivall's editions convey a sense of the person behind them, the body that strained under the burden of this enormous entrepreneurial enterprise. He writes in the first person, colloquially. In one preface, he explains that he felt compelled to edit some sixteenth-century Scottish minor works, "notwithstanding a vow to edit no more texts for the Society for a year," he admits, "and thus get a rest for my right eye weakened by long night-work." He just had to edit them because the Scottish works so resembled complaints against the state of England in more or less the same time, and thus gave a sense of the voice of the people.[116] It was such a sense of pleasure borne of connectedness to the people (or just to

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people), not some narrowly chronological urgency, that impelled him to edit — or to take a break from editing.

Thus some editions were delayed. His edition of *Robert Mannyng*, for example, was twenty-two years in the making: "I took all my books to Yorkshire but never opened them," he wrote to the publisher who implored him to get the manuscript in. "Lawn tennis, cricket, walks, picnics, getting up a Concert and Dances, occupied all the holiday. Then since my return, there's been the practice for our Sculling Four Race next Saturday."[117] The edition eventually was finished, but in Furnivall's own time. Also produced in his own time was *Trial-Forewords to My "Parallel-Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems"*; as he wrote at the end of that volume's part 1, "Here for the present I must break off, as I haven't time to study further the rest of the poems just now, and have been for six weeks, and am still, away from almost all my books and literary friends, among bluebells, honeysuckles, laburnums, cuckoos, and nightingales . . . [Chaucer would] have given us all a holiday, I'm sure: so, reader, let me put off Part II . . . for a time. . . ."[118] Intimately attached to his object of study, he nonetheless takes a break, in the comforting knowledge that his author, Chaucer, would want him to. Part 2, indeed, does not seem ever to have been completed (if, in fact, ever started). The Chaucer Society, notes Matthews, for which Furnivall edited part 1, had some early success in bringing about the "enlightened public sphere rather than an academic discipline" that Furnivall so passionately desired — and notably it was American interest in Chaucer that seems to have buoyed up the society, almost from the first in financial straits. But eventually the landscape changed. The "professionalization of literary teaching in the early twentieth century" brought with it a shift away from individuals toward institutional subscribers — and a shift away, too, as Matthews puts it, from "love."[119]

IS IT REALLY SO STRANGE? THE QUEER AMATEURS OF THIS BOOK

As I've already suggested, this binary opposition — amateur versus professional — is all too abstract and schematic. I use it to set up a general framework for more nuanced looks at engagements with medieval texts; many factors (social, political, economic, and psychological) conspire to hold this dualism in place, or make it more complex, or break it down completely. But I start with the premise that the postmedieval engagements of medieval texts featured in *How Soon Is Now?* are all amateur, in some de-

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finitive way. These engagements take a variety of forms — retellings of tales, parodies, editions, and commentaries on medieval texts undertaken outside the academy, nonscholarly accounts of medieval authors and works — and that heterogeneity is part of the point about the nature of amateurism; for convenience only, therefore, I refer to them as "readings," and their agents as "readers." Technically, these readers either lived before the profession of medievalist emerged or never held a university faculty position. (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow — professor of languages at Bowdoin College, then at Harvard University — is the exception that proves the rule, as I shall elaborate below in this introduction and in chapter 1.) But the amateurism of the medievalists in this book goes deeper than any technicality: it bears on their affections, their intimacy with their materials, their desires. These readings clarify that intimate longings — desires for authenticity, for origins, for meaning, for connection — motivate all turnings toward the past, however austerely impersonal the studies eventually become, however much such longings might themselves protect against more threatening psychic dissolution.[120] Amateur medievalist readings bring out or enact temporal multiplicities found in the medieval texts that are the foci of their affections: they make manifest that in the present we have not left the past entirely behind. And they point to or even create completely other kinds of time as well, be they Edenic, for example, or other supernatural temporalities, or the noncontemporaneous contemporaneity of the moment of reading, or the spectral asynchronies of the present.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow read, wrote about, and taught a wide range of medieval literature in English and in Western European languages; I discuss his retelling of a medieval tale in chapter 1. Old languages, he argued, give us a sense of the strength and stature of people from the past. But in the classroom at Harvard this approach was sometimes belittled as decorative and entirely out of style;[121] it was not philological in the Germanic mold and in fact resembled Furnivall's amateurism (enacted at about the same time), which served an interest in connecting people, past and present. Longfellow's was a temporally multiple consciousness, amateur in its absorption into the Middle Ages. In chapter 2, I take up Andrew Lang, a highly educated and well-connected late-Victorian man of letters who was dubbed the "divine amateur" by Oscar Wilde, and who, as we shall see, deployed the language of the Middle Ages in — indeed, as — the legitimation of Empire in a parody of the *Book of John Mandeville*; yet he also, alongside this distanced use of the medieval, expressed affective

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attachment — melancholy for the past, and for Empire's evident passing. Fellow late-Victorian reader M. R. James, eventually an eminent professional medievalist, in a piece of juvenilia created a fake "lost chapter" of the *Book of John Mandeville*; in its merciless parody of a German self-described "amateur" philologist, it underscores the melancholy affect that links the colonial, the amateur, and the philological.

Hope Emily Allen, coeditor of the first modern edition of the *Book of Margery Kempe* (1940) is the reader in chapter 3. Allen was academically trained and highly regarded for her work on the literature of early English spirituality. Independently wealthy — she was a member of the Oneida Community in upstate New York after its dissolution as an organized spiritual community and reconstitution as a business corporation — she pursued her research outside, or at least alongside, the professional academy. Her magnum opus was never finished, because, I shall argue, of her absorption in the object of her study (characteristic of amateurism as I analyze it here), a proliferation of connections to and among past phenomena that finally overwhelmed her. Washington Irving's fictive persona, Geoffrey Crayon, is an American bachelor and amateur antiquarian, enthusiastic reader of early English literature and traveler to England. In chapter 4 I discuss his early-nineteenth-century account of visiting places significant to early English literary culture, analyzing the affective intensity of his medieval reenactment. Finally, in my epilogue, I take up the fictive figure of an amateur medievalist and local historian in *A Canterbury Tale*, the 1944 film by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. Thomas Colpeper, a "loony English squire," loves his ancestral land so much that he not only wants to share its history with others but also believes people should be *forced* to engage the past. His bizarre strategy to compel temporal desire proves in fact to be criminal. The film, quite ambivalent in its depiction of Colpeper, exposes his approach as maniacal and an impediment to vibrant living on, but it also reveals that his amateur attachment to the land infused with the past is — if only momentarily — a medium of positive social connection.

About his partnership with Powell, Pressburger himself reflected once, "I always had the feeling that we were amateurs in a world of professionals. Amateurs stand so much closer to what they are doing, and they are driven by enthusiasm, which is so much more forceful than what professionals are driven by."[122] As I have suggested, amateurs wear their desires on their sleeves. The concepts that typically characterize amateurism — immaturity,

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belatedness or underdevelopment, inadequate separation from objects of love, improper attachment, inappropriate loving—sound just like what a developmental psychologist trained within the paradigm of a normative life course might say about the sexual "deviant."[123] (The normative life course is what José Esteban Muñoz calls "straight time," what Morrissey refers to when he sings of "unruly boys" and "unruly girls.")[124] Amateurism, I want to argue, is itself a bit queer, defined by attachment in a detached world. Amateurism in fact condenses a whole range of abjections from the normative modernist life course, including ethnicity and race, economic class, and sex and gender; any category that draws on distinctions in "work" will engage all such social and cultural dynamics, and I attempt to touch on a range of social and cultural formations. But for starters, I focus on sex, gender, and desire: the amateurism of my readers in *How Soon Is Now?* is explicitly associated with some form of sexual or gender queerness. They are "belated" or "underdeveloped" in relation not only to the profession but also to the reproductive family.

All these readers were of ultimately Western European extraction, middle to upper-middle class, and in this way inside normative social frameworks, but their relations to the reproductive family are compromised in some way. Thomas Colpeper in *A Canterbury Tale* is certainly the most egregious example: his amateurism is almost a sexuality itself. A cheerless misogynist, he lives alone with his mother and desperately seeks out male soldiers to listen to his historical lectures, punishing women for even potentially distracting the men he so desires as audience. (Moreover, Powell and Pressburger's relationship was a queer collaboration if there ever was one, described once by Powell as "like a marriage without sex.")[125] Hope Emily Allen, never married, seems to have been romantically as well as domestically linked to another woman, and her close circle of friends in England—which included an accomplished local historian and antiquarian—was female and marriage resistant, as Deanne Williams observes.[126] Geoffrey Crayon, like his creator Washington Irving, is a committed bachelor, an outsider to normative heterosexual love and family domesticity. M. R. James operated in the exclusively male homosocial environs of British higher education in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, with a particular enthusiasm in his student days for "ragging," one of its more vigorous physical rituals.[127] But even Frederick Furnivall, robustly heterosexual, married out of his social class, shocking others with his amorous liaisons, and I have already suggested as well that his amateur-

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ism associated him with classed and racialized others—further distancing him from the normative family of his times. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's contemporary critics observed gender ambivalence in his work: he had "a fancy for what is large and manly, if not a full sympathy with it," sniped one hostile observer. The gender crossing, the redefinition of sentimental manhood, the homosociality in his poetry all did delicately subversive cultural work, according to recent criticism, in the "feminizing" culture of antebellum America that rapidly became "pathologiz[ed] and belittl[ed]" by modernists.[128] If Longfellow and, further, Andrew Lang were not queer in ways that resemble the sexual or gender queerness of other amateurs in *How Soon Is Now?*, each one in his work expresses a desire that is part and parcel of his amateurism. As amateurs, I argue, these medievalist readers are queered; as queers, I maintain, they are ever and only amateur, not participating in the serious, fully developed social business of family reproduction.

And though I feel I have achieved my fullest incarnation here as professional, writing a book with reams of endnotes, I also feel a kinship with the amateur that I can only call queer. I know, I know: I have been professionally trained as a medievalist, have taught full time for more than thirty years, and have been recognized and well rewarded. So why should I ever feel myself to be an amateur in a world of professionals, ever lacking, ever behind? Because I am a queer—a dyke and only sort of white. Because I am a medievalist, and studying the Middle Ages is, finally, about desire—for another time, for meaning, for life—and desire, moreover, is so particularly marked for queers with lack and shame. These feelings are not simply personal insecurities. Like my queerness, my feelings of amateurism aren't a stage of development, aren't ever going to go away; as in the case of queerness, too, my goal is to contribute to the creation of conditions in which an amateur sensibility might be nurtured and its productivity explored.

It might be protested that it's easy for me to say that I feel like an amateur; I'm not only employed but in fact tenured, and thus I enjoy an increasingly rare form of job security. I take the point, certainly: I don't hereby risk my job. But even given my secure position, it's not so easy for me to say in the current atmosphere of professionalization in the university, on the one hand, and suspicion of a "creeping anti-intellectualism" in the affective turn in medieval studies, on the other.[129] In the hope that my reflections might help in the development of different conditions, I tell the story of my uncertain progress and uneven development as medievalist and

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queer in chapter 2 (parents and childhood home), chapter 3 (college days), chapter 4 (country home in the Catskills), and the epilogue (lecturing on Chaucer), as I explore my too-close, anything-but-disinterested, subjective connections to medieval texts and desirous amateur readers.

Aiding me in this exploration, close to hand as I have worked on this book, have been recent queer temporal critiques. Judith Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) demonstrates that Western European middle-class norms have determined a normative life course but that "once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance"—a modernist framing of the life course—queer time brilliantly erupts, and the "death of the expert" is not far behind. That mortality, indeed, opens up the realm of low theory and popular knowledge featured in Halberstam's book, *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011). Lee Edelman, in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), bracingly rejects the temporality of the normative life course—what he calls "reproductive futurity"—along with its investment in the Child as its guarantor; he dismisses the future as mere "kid stuff," while Kathryn Bond Stockton, in *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009), turns away from the normative vertical line of "growing up" to focus on nonlinear growth, finding "queer temporalities haunting all children" and the peculiar asynchronies of "the ghostly gay child . . . whose identity *is* a deferral . . . and an act of growing sideways."[130] José Esteban Muñoz opposes not only dreary "straight time" with its reproductive mandate but also the queer refusal of futurity: in his *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) Muñoz insists that queerness is "an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future"; queerness engages temporal modes such as waiting, anticipation, and belatedness to open up the potentialities of what Ernst Bloch calls the no-longer-conscious and the not-yet-conscious. Queerness is "primarily about futurity and hope."[131] The contrast between Muñoz's focus in *Cruising Utopia* on queerness as emphatically *not now* and my own focus on the *now* points to a difference between my contention that queerness is potential in the everyday, on the one hand, and Muñoz's argument on the other hand that it cannot be achieved in everyday "straight" time frames; both works, nevertheless, are committed to a temporal politics that would bring about a full and varied temporal realm: Muñoz's by rejecting ordinary time frames; mine by opening them up to the multiplicities within. Elizabeth Freeman's conceptual-

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ization of "temporal drag" in her *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010)—referencing the "classically queer practice of drag performance" and pointing to ways bodies find usable pasts—has stuck with me as I theorize how people play out temporal clashes. The deeply affective dimensions of historical belonging—and not belonging—are explored by Christopher Nealon in *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall* (2001), work that resonates with my own analyses of queer desires for other kinds of time, as does Carla Freccero's intensive engagement with the spectral in the context of desire and identification, past and present, in her *Queer/Early/Modern* (2006). The recent temporal turn in queer studies has been widespread; temporality is problematized significantly even in work whose central object is not explicitly temporal, and I have benefited from the growing range of queer studies that seek to extend possibilities for living *now*.[132]

Though the ultimate intention in my temporal explorations is to extend such possibilities, I do not mean to claim that there is anything inherently positive about the experience or the condition of multiple temporalities. Tim Dean has recently discussed the kinds of anxieties that can attend the experience of "temporal contingency" in the context of HIV/AIDS.[133] As I demonstrate in the course of this book, the condition of being asynchronous or being outside a normative or dominant time-scheme can prevent desired projects from ever coming to fruition; it can threaten to destroy sexual or social reproduction; among classes of people, among races, among nations, it can be deployed as a rationale for political subjugation. I shall examine cases of individual alienation, as well as broader cultural ambivalences and political subjugation; but I shall show, too, that asynchrony, in the form of restless ghosts haunting the present, can be the means of calling for justice for past exclusions and injustice; such a *now* is not only full and various, but it is also more just.

BACK TO THE OLD HOUSE: A FEW WORDS ABOUT NOSTALGIA

Amateur medievalists are routinely derided—by historically minded scholars or even by the general public, under the sway of modernist ideals of historical expertise—as merely nostalgic, naively, uncritically, and irresponsibly yearning for an idealized past as escape from a present felt to be dismal and unpromising. And amateurs are clearly aware of the negativity of such a dismissal: one re-enactor in the Society for Creative Anachronism, for

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example, uses the language of guilty confession as he acknowledges that some people use the society as an escape from a "real life" that "sucks."[134] But I want to join in a "creative rethinking of nostalgia" precisely because it can be a much-needed survival strategy for those for whom a relationship to "home" is disrupted: those displaced from their homelands either literally or figuratively, including queers of all stripes. Rethinking nostalgia will take it beyond a judgment as "'merely' personal, apolitical, trivial, or transitory," as Gayatri Gopinath writes.[135] Recent work on medievalism has undertaken to make nostalgia a subtle and complex instrument of historical and cultural analysis — rather than the punitive bludgeon that it has been — by demonstrating its complexities and not shying away from paradox or conceptual incoherence.

Let me return to the discussion of amateur antiquarian societies for a moment, both because it provides useful context and because it exemplifies a use of the term that I want to trouble a bit. Concerning the growth of these societies, Philippa Levine argues strenuously that "romantic nostalgia played no part" in the veneration of local place that was a major motivation of these organizations. But she nonetheless notes that that localism "was the expression of an overpowering sense of loss" in the face of the urbanization and centralization characterizing British modernization. Levine documents very precisely antiquarian pride in possessions, in property, and in "modern achievements," maintaining that antiquarians did not depend on "the Romantic movement fleeing from utilitarianism."[136] But this does not mean that these antiquarians did not mourn lost past times; it means that their understanding of and desire for the past were not uncomplicated or unconflicted.

"Nostalgia," writes Svetlana Boym about this historical juncture, "was not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into 'local' and 'universal' possible." That new understanding is framed by modernism: in an oft-quoted formulation, she argues that "nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress." And according to Boym it is not always simple; in the tradition she calls "off-modern," "reflection and longing, estrangement and affection go together."[137] Helen Dell has recently emphasized the difficulty and pain of the experience of such contradictions, pointing out that it is "the being pulled apart by the continued, relentless co-presence of oppositional tendencies in the complex of nostalgia which is so hard to bear." The complexity of response of the amateur

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antiquarians suggests something of this ambivalence: they both rejoiced in progressive elements of modern life and also longed for forms of belonging and roots of identity lost in the process of modernization. Dell would encourage us not to ease the tension inherent in "the complex of nostalgia": "perhaps, in fact, it is the instability of nostalgia, its refusal to settle as either singular or plural, simple or complex, that makes it a productive site for discussion."[138]

The presence of affect cannot alone delegitimize an engagement with the past on the grounds of insufficient objectivity. In the context of medievalist practice Aranye Fradenburg has demonstrated over the course of her writings "the importance of passion to rigorous practices of knowledge," and in making this demonstration she specifically has brought together amateur and professional medievalism.[139] Any hierarchy of professional over amateur engagements with the past on the basis of the former's "*dis*-interestedness" must be debunked, and an understanding of the fundamental connectedness of the enterprises embraced.[140] But what is this past era? A further problem with the conventional understanding of nostalgia emerges from the uncomplicated linearity that is implied by the idea that we nostalgically desire to go *back* to a time and place that are no longer. Andrew Lynch points out that a past-oriented insistence on linearity and on the deficiencies of the present smoothes out other varieties of nostalgia.[141] My point is more basic, and it flows from the analysis of time that I have been highlighting: as I argued in relation to Morrissey, the present is ineluctably linked to other times, people, situations, worlds. Thus anything we might as a matter of course call "nostalgic" is inevitably more temporally complex than the usual deployment of the term allows. The reductiveness of the conventional term "confines the past and removes it from any transactional and material relation to the present," anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis writes.[142] But nostalgia rethought has to take account of these heterogeneous temporalities. It may seem contradictory, as Dell suggests, to insist that longing for another kind of time beyond linearity (such as for the return of the past, a longing which implies the past's inaccessibility due to its loss or lack) can coexist with a conviction that there are many possible times in the now, including many possible pasts. This apparent contradictoriness may be evidence of the instability that renders nostalgia, as she puts it, a "productive site for discussion." Indeed, the workings of the relationship between temporal desire and temporal multiplicity are what I seek to explore in this book.

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Temporal desire can be wry, ironic, both mournful and melancholic—melancholic in its enactment of ambivalence, mournful as the work of grief moves the griever forward into the future.[143] And as I hope to show, even the most cloying of affective responses to the past—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's multiplicitous temporal consciousness, "habitually dwelling . . . among vanished generations," in chapter 1, for example, or Geoffrey Crayon's saccharin but estranged celebrations of merrie old England in chapter 4, or Thomas Colpeper's queer attachment to the land of his forefathers in my epilogue—are rarely without their reflective, critical dimensions, not only because of the temperaments of the readers in question but also, and primarily, because of the nature of time itself.[144] Because of their reflective dimensions, these nostalgias so understood can lead us through the narrowly defined "personal" to a broader understanding of the shared, collective possibilities of life *now*.

FRANKLY, MR. SHANKLY: PROFESSIONAL PROBLEMS, AMATEUR SOLUTIONS

The young artists' collective called the Bruce High Quality Foundation burst on the scene in New York several years ago with a brash slogan: "Professional Problems. Amateur Solutions."[145] Echoing their defiant reclamation of the term, I want to argue in this book that amateurs can lead us outside a straitened approach to problems, beyond a rigid dynamic of one problem/one solution, one object/one subject. Modernist temporal regimes are based on a boundary between past and present, which in turn supports the boundary between subject and object, inside and outside; amateurs can lead us beyond such boundary marking. As I shall suggest in chapter 1 and pursue in chapter 4, even the material text and the reader are not fully distinct entities; they are not solid and unitary, founded in a self-identical present, but are rather part of a heterogeneous *now* in which the divide between living and dead, material and immaterial, reality and fiction, text and spirit, present and past is unsettled, where traces of signs, on the one hand, and tracks of the living, on the other, function differentially in displacing final meaning or a transcendent guarantee of meaning. Deconstruction, which I am echoing here, might once have seemed the most arid game of the hyper-professionalized literary critic, but I want to gesture toward its world of play amidst permeable boundaries because I think it suggests something of the radicality of the interconnectedness, the web, the mesh that describes the ideal associational world I am aiming

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for here. Such a world is also more just, as I suggest, following Derrida, in chapter 4.[146]

Progress—along with its twin, development—though I have used it as something of a dirty word throughout this introduction, is not necessarily only modernist and therefore only a villain thwarting my nonmodern hopes and dreams. Bruno Latour points out in his *Politics of Nature* that "progress" is problematically modernist when it refers to movement in only one direction, toward professional, polemically "scientific," Enlightenment detachment of subject from object.

> Whereas the moderns always went from the confused to the clear, from the mixed to the simple, from the archaic to the objective, and since they were thus always climbing the stairway of progress, we too are going to progress, but by always descending along a path that is, however, not the path of decadence: we shall always go from the mixed to the still more mixed, from the complicated to the still more complicated, from the explicit to the implicit. We no longer expect from the future that it will emancipate us from all our attachments; on the contrary, we expect that it will attach us with tighter bonds to more numerous crowds of *aliens* who have become full-fledged members of the collective that is in the process of being formed. "Tomorrow," the moderns cry, "we shall be more detached." "Tomorrow," murmur those who have to be called nonmoderns, "we shall be more attached."[147]

What I want to imagine via *How Soon Is Now?* is inspired by Latour here: a collective bound by ever-denser attachments on the basis of each member's singular knowledge, aspirations, desires, and capacities.[148] And in this book it is amateurs' "affirmation," as John Cochran calls it, that can point the way forward.[149] In *How Soon Is Now?* I acknowledge that there are different knowledge cultures, different ways of knowing and sources of knowledge, and different purposes and goals, and I join in the critique, therefore, of expert knowledge production.[150] I bring amateur and professional reading together in this book *not* to suggest that there is no difference between, say, the invocation of the Canterbury pilgrims by Thomas Colpeper in *A Canterbury Tale*, on the one hand, and my own apprehension of the Chaucerian text and its contexts, on the other; my specific knowledge contributes its own precision to a temporally complex sense of the past. But I do want to help create conditions in which further attachments can be made, between and among people, times, and worlds. To focus on amateurs, to find shared desire in both amateurs and profes-

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sionals, indeed to find the amateur in the professional (such as myself), is to encourage real interaction and dialogue between these two estranged groups; it is to resist the soulless professionalization of the university and to help create a public space for activities that are not now recognized as intellectually consequential. It is to cheer on recent experiments in crowd sourcing in the scholarly world and to applaud new and generative forms of open review.[151] It is to remind professionals of the amateur beginnings of cherished fields of study—say, queer studies (begun in a complex interplay of nonacademic and academic agents, the latter stepping out of their trained specialties),[152] or even medieval studies (as we've seen with Furnivall)—as well as to encourage everyone to recognize the beautiful amateurism of learning new things. I want to glimpse the possibilities, most broadly, of a more just and more attached nonmodernity. "Stay on my arm, you little charmer," croons Morrissey: that is, find this *now*, this moment that is not detached and not disenchanted. I want more life.

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