

The Long Wait: Timely Secrets of the Contemporary Detective Novel

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Rather than pass the time, one must invite it in. To pass the time (to kill time, expel it): the gambler. Time spills from his every pore.—To store time as a battery stores energy: the flâneur. Finally, the third type: he who waits. He takes in the time and renders it up in altered form—that of expectation.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

No Hard-Boiled Feelings

Literary criticism's enduring interest in the figure of the detective is no great mystery. "[T]he detective," in Shoshana Felman's famous account, "is only a detective in his (her) function *as a reader*" (176). To read like a detective is to read in a very particular way: the detective works "to extort the *secret* of the text, to compel the language of the text . . . to confess" (192). In the past decade, however, the language of forced confession has made literary critics increasingly suspicious of such a suspicious stance toward literature. Introducing a special issue of *Representations* on "the way we read now," Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus contend that reading like a detective is not always the right way to read, prone to miss at least as much as it unearths: "[W]hat lies in plain sight is worthy of attention but often eludes observation—especially by deeply suspicious detectives who look past the surface in order to root out what is underneath" (18). In their conclusion to *The Way We Read Now*, Emily Apter and Elaine Freedgood similarly argue that it is necessary to "mov[e] away from 'beneath' and 'behind' (those most beloved tropes of a hermeneutics of suspicion) in favor of 'beside'" (145). To rise from the depths back to the surface—to replace a suspicious investigation of what lies "beneath" with a credulous mapping of what lies "beside"—means renouncing the kind of reader who keeps faith in the existence of buried, disguised, or concealed meanings; the reader who, as these critics see it, acts like a detective.

I want to suggest, however, that there is something more at work in detective work. In detective fiction, the mystery is not simply a projection of hidden depths; it is also an expectation, a promise, which *takes time* to be fulfilled. Secrecy is not just a static structure—a timeless choice between surface and depth—but a temporal dynamic. The temporality of detection complicates the familiar hermeneutic

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dichotomies of surface/depth, beneath/beside, buried/open, absent/present, reminding us that a reader's negotiation of interpretive space always takes place over time. It is thus time to rethink the long-taken-for-granted relation between readers and detectives: if detective fiction tells us anything about the act of reading, what it conveys is not the situation of hermeneutic space but the dawning awareness of durational time.

Although it is often described as a genre concerned with the retrospective narration of the past,¹ detective fiction is built fundamentally on future expectation, a constant looking forward to a well-nigh utopian moment of absolute knowledge. The detective narrative, Franco Moretti concludes, is nothing but a means to an end: "Detective fiction's ending is its end indeed: its solution in the true sense. The *fabula* narrated by the detective in his reconstruction of the facts brings us back to the beginning; that is, it abolishes narration. Between the beginning and the end of the narration—between the absence and the presence of the *fabula*—there is no 'voyage,' only a long *wait*" (148). Detective fiction fulfills the promise of resolution by publicly reinstating the law and order of total explicability—the triumphant event of epistemological closure. Yet in Moretti's view, the detective novel is also strangely self-cancelling: the solution to the mystery retroactively negates the narrative leading up to it. So "what happens," Tzvetan Todorov asks, in the narrative of detection? "Not much. The characters of this second story, the story of the investigation, do not act, they learn. Nothing can happen to them" (44). At the very last moment, the detective deciphers, narrates, names names. Before that, there is nothing to do but wait.

The wait, these accounts imply, is simply a waste; that is why, once closed, the detective's case (or, in this case, the book) has no need of being reopened. The wasted time of the detective narrative is demonstrated to Moretti's satisfaction by what he assumes are the reading habits encouraged by the genre: "[W]ho, in fact, ever 're-reads' a detective story?" (150). In fact, plenty of people reread detective stories. One such person is Fredric Jameson, who coyly admits, "Inveterate readers of Chandler will know that it is no longer for the solution to the mystery that they reread him, if indeed the solutions ever solved anything in the first place" ("Synoptic Chandler" 33). While Moretti imagines that the satisfaction of the solution is the only possible point to reading a mystery ("only the name of the murderer counts," he says [150]), Jameson raises a more troubling possibility: What if it is in the nature of ends to never really solve anything, to perpetually disappoint us? What if we know full well that the end will never be as satisfying as we expect? The point is persuasively made by Robert A. Rushing, who notes that scholars of detective fiction mistakenly "believe that the genre delivers satisfaction through

¹ In Tzvetan Todorov's famous description, the detective novel "contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. . . . We might further characterize these two stories by saying that the first—the story of the crime—tells 'what really happened,' whereas the second—the story of the investigation—explains 'how the reader (or the narrator) has come to know about it'" (44, 45). Peter Brooks sees the classic detective's relation to retropection "as an inevitable product not only of the nineteenth century's concern with criminal deviance, but also, more simply, of its pervasive historicism, its privileging of narrative explanation, accounting for what we are through the reconstruction of how we got that way" (270).

the solution of the mystery when, in fact, *no one is satisfied by the solution*" (*Resisting* 9). What is most unsatisfying about solutions is that they tend to reveal the reader's own blindness—mysteries, we inevitably discover, are not solved by logic and deduction but by some capricious, unforeseeable interpretive leap.² In the last instance, the solution turns out to be nothing more than a repetition of the reader's inability to see it from the beginning. In this way, Poe's "Purloined Letter" is still the most exemplary of detective stories: its solution has been literally hiding "in plain sight," both in the form of the letter lying casually upon the minister's table and in Dupin's blithe announcement of the solution on the very first page of the story—"Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain. . . . A little *too* self-evident" (440).³

It is thus far from self-evident that classic detective fiction is organized around the uncomplicated pleasures of the end (what Dennis Porter, in another well-known account of the genre, calls the "reward" of reading [254]). On the contrary, writers as different as Agatha Christie and Raymond Chandler capitalize on a more unsettling dialectic between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, showing how it may be a letdown to get even what we think we want. Moretti is right about one thing, though: the popular detective novel offers at least the appearance of closure, even if it often turns out to be less than rewarding. Responding to the essentially closed or completed form of the detective narrative, various high modernist and postmodernist rewritings of detective fiction are marked by one central transformation: even the patina of closure disappears. In writers from William Faulkner and Alain Robbe-Grillet to Thomas Pynchon and Roberto Bolaño, the ostensible pleasure of detection collapses into the frustrating indeterminacy of what Porter terms "antidetection," where "what is missing in the end is the satisfaction of desire that comes from 'knowledge'" (251). But of course, as I have tried to suggest, "satisfaction" has always played a vexed role in detection, which means that antidetection is not so much a radical reinvention of the detective narrative as its logical extreme. Modernist and postmodernist detective fiction replaces displeasure

² Slavoj Žižek describes the unavoidable disappointments that accompany the detective's triumph: "We are immensely disappointed if the denouement is brought about by a pure scientific procedure. . . . But it is even more disappointing if, at the end, after naming the assassin, the detective claims that 'he was guided from the very beginning by some unmistakable instinct'" (49). Rushing ("Traveling Detectives") further glosses this disappointment by explaining that the classic

vision of how and why mystery novel readers read is strongly influenced by the 'Van Dine principle,' a presumed normative pact between the author and the reader: at the point in the novel in which the detective announces the solution, the reader must be able, in principle, to solve the mystery. If the reader has been sufficiently astute and careful, he or she will have amassed the necessary clues and followed the detective's logic to its proper end. The problem with the Van Dine principle is that, despite its seductiveness, it virtually never describes the real compact between author and reader. On the contrary, even a cursory glance through detective fiction will show that the mystery's solution almost invariably involves subtle but important facts that were concealed from the reader, or depends on esoteric knowledge that the reader is almost certain not to possess. (89–90)

³ Here, of course, it is the prefect's laughter that stands in for our own refusal to believe that things could ever be so obvious: "Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!" (440).

with irresolution, making good on the threat of the unsatisfying solution by leaving readers with the most unsatisfying end there is: a solution that never appears at all. In both its popular and its literary form, in other words, the detective novel is haunted by disappointment: either that of the unsatisfying answer or that of the answer that has disappeared altogether.⁴

The genre of the detective novel is thus shaped not by the assurance of the end but by the uncertain distance between expectation and fulfillment, the persistent gap that makes waiting—and reading—take place. This sense of the wait, I want to suggest, is the real point of detective fiction. In the lag between reading and revelation, one feels not only the anticipation of narrative fulfillment but also the anguish of unfolding time. To understand this alternate temporality of detective fiction, however, it is necessary to break the spell cast by its ending. The genealogies of detection and antidetection that I have just sketched are equally fixated on the embattled status of the end, the solution's precarious position between pleasure and disappointment, presence and absence. But to assume that the meaning of the detective story lies in its end (whether pleasurable, disappointing, or mysteriously absent) is to miss the central way in which detection, built on the affects of anticipation and the specter of interminable delay, situates meaning in time. In

⁴ This satisfyingly two-tiered literary history may also be somewhat misleading, insofar as it smooths over the ways in which detective fiction has increasingly blurred the lines between highbrow and lowbrow culture. In the decades since writers like Pynchon, Ishmael Reed, and Paul Auster reworked the materials of the detective story with the tools of high postmodernism, the actual pulp writers of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s have themselves entered the American canon, with the Library of America publishing Raymond Chandler's complete works in 1995, followed by two volumes of "American noir" authors in 1997 and the complete works of Dashiell Hammett in 1999. Which is simply to say that the famous "erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture" by which Jameson defined postmodernism works both ways ("Postmodernism" 112). So even as detective stories remain a fertile reference point for literary fiction—as recent novels by Colson Whitehead, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Julian Barnes attest—a more experimental prose style has in turn been reappropriated by "genre" writers like Richard Price and David Peace. And such crossings of high and low are hardly confined to the novel. Television shows like *Dexter* and *Bored to Death* along with graphic texts like Frank Miller's *Sin City* series (later adapted as a film) blur the lines between lowbrow entertainment and canny highbrow pastiche. The distinction between satisfaction and dissatisfaction has become similarly fuzzy, as television serials like *Damages* and films like *Memento* (dir. Christopher Nolan) and *Zodiac* (dir. David Fincher) experiment with different forms of ambiguity, open-endedness, and irresolution. (To this list, we could even add a more definitively lowbrow procedural like *CSI*: at the end of each episode, the show cleanly wraps up its mystery, yet it does so by staging a reenactment of the crime that it subtly confesses [by way of a blurry, shaky camera style visually set off from the central diegesis] is not so much a definitive solution as a speculative—and perhaps even a wholly fictionalized—reconstruction.) The division between detection and antidetection thus risks oversimplifying a much more heterogeneous cultural field. Why, then, continue to use it at all? We would do well to think of detection and antidetection not as two discrete instances of the genre (closed versus open, popular versus literary) but as the two poles of expectation that every detective narrative is equally compelled to negotiate. In the pages that follow, I focus on a pair of ostensibly highbrow, or "literary," detective novels not because I think they winkingly deconstruct or transcend popular forms of detection but rather because they bring to the surface the tensions that shape the genre as a whole: between lowbrow and highbrow, anticipation and anticlimax, satisfaction and disappointment.

this essay, I want to focus on a different kind of detective novel, one that, moving beyond both the popular problem of dissatisfaction and the literary infatuation with irresolution, reveals the interplay of expectation, deferral, and disappointment that corresponds to the genre's secret structure of waiting.

Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* and Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* adapt the classic mystery plot to the more timely demands of religious fundamentalism, terrorist threat, and apocalyptic anxiety. In doing so, they make waiting not only the formal counterpoint to detection's mode of secular revelation but also the grounds for the everyday experience of the detectives themselves.⁵ In Chabon's and Chandra's novels, mysteries are solved, murderers named, conspiracies, if not thwarted, at least brought to light—and yet, despite the determinacy of the solutions to their cases, detective Sartaj Singh and detective Meyer Landsman are, at the ends of their narratives, left waiting. Their waits are a direct result of the nature of the crimes they are investigating, crimes that leave things, quite literally, open-ended: by preventing apocalypse, each detective transforms the end of his narrative into a nonevent, the perfect absence of any climax. And in the absence of a determinate climax, the threat of nuclear annihilation persists: forestalling the apocalypse, Landsman and Sartaj realize, does nothing to resolve the political and religious tensions that gave rise to the threat in the first place. Chabon and Chandra both use the temporality of apocalypse to offer a stark riposte to the standard reading of the detective novel: the wait is not a desire for or a drive toward the solution but a countermovement against it, an expectation that, when satisfied (the total destruction of the earth prevented), simply reproduces itself. The end of one wait, for these detectives, is only the beginning of another.

In these texts, we see the friction between form and content that has structured the genre of detective fiction from the beginning: the generic laws of detection (according to which the mystery must be solved, the secret unveiled) inevitably run up against the unanswerable demands of expectation (such that the end we get is never the end we were hoping for). While the detective narrative promises to tell us what we want to know, its true function is to remind us again and again that, as readers embedded in time, we do not know everything yet. The detective story's solution, ever unsatisfying, is never what one is really waiting for. Thus do *Sacred Games* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* compel reader and detective alike to confront what Anne-Lise François calls the “oddly satisfying reprieve or ‘letdown’ from teleological expectations” (xxi): the surprising sense of possibility present in the endless prospect of waiting.

In the pages that follow, I argue that the detective novel's wait requires us to rethink both the meaning of the genre and its model of reading. Reading like a detective need not imply a stance of suspicion or a law of revelation; it is, rather,

⁵ In addition to Chabon's and Chandra's texts, a number of other “literary” detective novels have in the past decade turned markedly away from the issues of indeterminacy that preoccupied their modernist and postmodernist forebears. Novels like Whitehead's *The Intuitionist* (1999), Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* (2000), Barnes's *Arthur and George* (2005), and Pynchon's *Inherent Vice* (2009) offer a different perspective on the dialectic of expectation and disappointment, restaging the dilemma of resolution through the problems of utopian deferral, bureaucratic delay, and historical lag.

a process that illuminates what it means to be subject to time. In Chabon's and Chandra's novels, disappointment inheres in the very structure of the solution, the inevitable postponement of the end—yet the experience of the wait holds out hope for something else. This something else is not a different or better end but, I will suggest, a different way of reading the middle. By shifting our critical focus from the endpoint of the detective story to its “meantime,” I show how disappointment demands a new understanding of narrative secrecy: the secrets of these texts are not projections of hidden knowledge but already-broken promises, whose continual letdown makes us aware of the time it takes to read them. Ultimately, I claim, the secret of waiting shapes not only the way we read or why we read but *when* we read. Transforming reading from a search for answers into an awareness of the wait, what I have perhaps prematurely but not unself-consciously called, in my title, “the contemporary detective novel” returns us to the question of how it is possible to construct a sense of the contemporary in the first place—the question of how to read this mysterious category we call the present. Reading *Sacred Games* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* shows us how the act of reading is not only embedded in but also reflective of the times that make up our present time.

End Times

The detective, neither a public servant nor a private individual, is traditionally expected to mediate these two spheres of social life. Mysteries are perpetrated by private citizens and bungled by the police; they can be solved only by the detective, who occupies both positions at once. In *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* and *Sacred Games*, however, the divide between private and public returns to haunt and ultimately to undo the successful social mediation promised by detection. The unbridgeable gap between the individual perspective of the detective and the social totality implied by apocalypse disillusion Landsman and Sartaj and muddles the ostensible satisfactions of the detective story. The mysteries in both novels provide the occasion for constantly discovering the political beneath the personal—the specter of mass violence implied by the materiality of a single corpse. The dead body that begins *Sacred Games* is that of Mumbai crime boss Ganesh Gaitonde, who has killed himself (along with his platonic love interest, Jojo) while taking refuge, for unknown reasons, in a bomb shelter. In his attempt to reconstruct what happened to Ganesh, Sartaj discovers a more urgent and still unfolding plot: Ganesh had been working for a powerful Hindu guru, and right before Ganesh died, he unwittingly assisted Guru-ji in smuggling a nuclear bomb into Mumbai. Guru-ji plans to detonate the weapon in the middle of the city and blame it on a fake Islamic fundamentalist group, the Hizbuddeen (Army of the Final Day), in order to incite a war between India and Pakistan. “Every golden age,” Guru-ji tells Ganesh, “must be preceded by an apocalypse. It has always been so, and it will be so again. . . . Every great religious tradition predicts this burning, Ganesh. We all know it's coming” (838). The spiritual distinction between hero and villains—Sartaj is a Sikh who no longer believes in God, Ganesh a recent convert to Hinduism and a devout disciple of Guru-ji—is in fact a disagreement over the present's relation to the future. Guru-ji's aim is to bring about the end of the world

in order to replace the fallen present with a redeemed future, while Sartaj, striving to save the present from the future, must prevent the end from ever arriving.

The body that Landsman finds at the beginning of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* belongs to Mendel Shpilman, the disowned son of the most powerful rabbi in Sitka, Alaska. But this body, too, contains conspiratorial multitudes: the local investigation into Mendel's murder reveals a globe-trotting plot—organized by Sitka's Orthodox Jews and supported by the United States government—to bomb the Islamic shrine in Jerusalem (which, in Chabon's counterfactual globe, is part of Palestine),⁶ rebuild the Jewish temple there, and thus “hasten the coming of Messiah” (344). As in *Sacred Games*, the prospect of religious violence that hangs over *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is tied directly to the frustration of prophecy's unfulfilled promise. Tired of the endless deferral of messianic redemption, Rabbi Shpilman, just like Guru-ji, conspires to realize the dream of the distant future in the immediate present, to “basically force Messiah to come” (295). Indeed, the problem with the religious extremists who populate both books is precisely that they are unwilling to wait: “[T]heirs was not,” Chabon's narrator points out, “by definition an endeavor that attracted men with the talent for waiting” (339).

In the face of such historical impatience, the mysteries of the dead bodies fade into the background, replaced by more intractable—perhaps irresolvable—political conflicts. Realizing this, Sartaj laments, “In this Gaitonde affair, there would be no justice, no redemption. There was only a hope for some partial explanation of what had happened” (557). Landsman says pretty much the same thing: “So the killer of Mendel Shpilman, whoever it was, is walking around free. So, so what?” (397). What is strange, however, is that these pronouncements of resignation are entirely premature. For there is, in fact, a full “explanation” of the “Gaitonde affair” and justice, too: Guru-ji's plot is foiled, his men apprehended, their nuclear weapon confiscated. Likewise, just a few pages after Landsman's shrugging abnegation, Mendel's killer is neither anonymous nor free: the killer turns out to be Landsman's Uncle Hertz, who has confessed to the crime and is “already under arrest” (405). So why, on the verge of successfully solving their cases, do Sartaj and Landsman avow the impossibility, the utter hopelessness, of a complete solution? Here is the first hint of a more radical discontinuity between mystery and answer. In the end, the ungraspable complexity of apocalyptic conspiracy provides a retort to the oversimplified closure of the individual case. The political context of both novels hovers above the specificity of the crimes, instilling even the successful solution with an unmistakable air of disappointment.⁷

⁶ Chabon's novel is both a detective story and a historical counterfactual: it takes place in an alternate present in which the state of Israel does not exist and the Jews have been temporarily settled in Sitka, Alaska. The story is set in the months before “Reversion,” when Sitka's sixty-year “interim status’ as a federal district” (29) is poised to expire, at which point the land will revert to the US government and the Jews will once again be diasporically scattered across the globe.

⁷ It must be noted that in Chabon's novel disappointment is a built-in element of religious belief itself. As Chabon describes it (in terms that will be familiar to readers of Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida), Jewish messianism is defined by deferral: “[D]o you really feel like you're

In *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, disappointment arises out of the difference between two kinds of mysteries that are not open to the same manner of resolution. Although both the name of the murderer and those of the participants in the conspiracy have been unmasked, only the case of the murder, an event fully consigned to the past, is capable of being closed. The terrorist conspiracy, on the other hand, is still unfolding, and naming the men in charge of it has done nothing to prevent their actions. The bombing of Qubbat As-Sakhrah has, at the end of the novel, still taken place. The final scene of Uncle Hertz's confession is set directly against the everyday aftermath of the bombing; the epistemological order putatively restored by the naming of the murderer is juxtaposed to the political chaos of a world teetering on the brink of apocalyptic conflict: "All these people rioting on the television in Syria, Baghdad, Egypt? In London? Burning cars. Setting fire to embassies. . . . That's the kind of shit we have to look forward to now. Burning cars and homicidal dancing" (406). Answering the question of who killed Mendel is but a momentary distraction from the disappointing discovery of how utterly lacking the detective is in political agency. Solving the case has only revealed how far Landsman is from resolving the political instability roiling all around him.

Approaching the same problem from the opposite direction, *Sacred Games* asks: why is even the successful prevention of terrorism disappointing? Here, the solution is not merely a screen covering over a larger disappointment—now disappointment is part of the structure of the solution itself. In the climactic scene of Chandra's novel, the disappointment of the solution is registered explicitly in terms of the wait. Sartaj has tracked Guru-ji and his stolen nuclear weapon to a safe house in Mumbai. On the verge of apprehending the villains and averting apocalypse, Sartaj's partner, Kamble, is "rigid with excitement and anticipation" (875), while "[i]nside the command post, there was an expectant silence . . . filled with waiting" (876). The anticipation, however, leads to nothing: despite both the expectations of the police force and the implicit promise of the text's omniscient narration, the successful raid on Guru-ji's hideout takes place entirely off-screen, beyond the purview of the narrative. Sartaj and Kamble are forced to wait in a command post some distance from the action: "Nothing changed in the room, but then, from far away, came a series of pops, and then another, phap-phap-phap, phap-phap-phap-phap. And then a last little boom. A moment passed, and then from the front of the room, a cheer grew and spread. Anjali Mathur came running through the clapping crowd. 'We're safe,' she said. 'We're safe'" (876). The climactic confrontation between good and evil is reduced to a series of meaningless onomatopoeic sounds. Sartaj reflects on the paradox of a resolution that has not resolved the feeling of waiting: "So, with those little banging sounds far away, apparently the

waiting for Messiah? Berko shrugs. . . . 'It's Messiah,' he says. 'What else can you do but wait?'" (127). And it is the wait, rather than an imagined arrival, that defines Jewish faith—"the principle, thinks Landsman, that every Jew has a personal Messiah who never comes" (331). Jameson provides a nuanced explanation of this easily misunderstood issue: "[W]e must," he writes, "be very subtle in the way in which, particularly those of us who are not believing Jews and are very far from such kinds of beliefs, we understand the coming of the Messiah. The non-Jews imagine that Jews think of Messiah as a promise and a future certainty: nothing could be farther from the truth" ("Marx's" 62).

world had been saved. Sartaj didn't feel any safer. Inside him, even now, there was that burning fuse, that ticking fear" (877). The emphasis on the smallness and the distance of the sounds (coupled, already, with their nonrepresentational quality) suggests that action and intervention always take place someplace else, while in the room itself "[n]othing changed." The gap between expectation and event is in the very nature of apocalyptic anxiety. Forestalling nuclear apocalypse has not quelled Sartaj's "ticking fear" of it: so long as the apocalypse does *not* arrive, the "fuse" of Sartaj's dread will continue, paradoxically unextinguished, to burn.

Sartaj "trie[s]"—and fails—"to feel satisfaction" (877). Why is the outcome so disappointing? Because it is the opposite of an end: it is persistence without progression, "survival" without change ("We have survived another day. But the thought did not make him feel any better" [871]). Not unlike Guru-ji's metaphysical assurance of historical change, detection has promised Sartaj a solution that will change everything, a transformation of the unsolved, uncertain present into a knowable, fearless future. But the solution is simply the same old present, the future is still out there, and the wait is all that remains: "Sartaj stayed outside. He listened to the flapping of the flag on the temple, and watched the water. He had the sense that something was about to change. He was waiting. But he wasn't sure it ever would" (880). Waiting, then, is neither a happening nor a nonhappening: it is the postponement of change and at the same time the unceasing promise of it. To wait is to feel not only the disappointment of the deferred future but also the unsettling potential of the present, whose transformation—whether catastrophic or redemptive—is forever believed to lie right around the next corner.

In both novels, the answers we have been waiting for turn out to be nothing but a disappointment; as Landsman complains, "The exaltation of understanding; then understanding's bottomless regret" (400). In *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, the names we learn do nothing to prevent political violence, while in *Sacred Games*, prevention is its own disappointment, as the survival of the present can only entail the anxious continuation of the wait. Solutions are either arbitrary—"Detection made detectives look clever, but often solutions were gifts from fools" (Chandra 644)—or self-evident: "Landsman wrestles with the perennial detective problem of being obliged to state the obvious" (Chabon 390). They are either impossible to logically deduce or not worth the trouble of doing so. The climaxes of both novels suggest that it is not the absence of an answer that is disappointing but the answer's anticlimactic presence, which is never exactly what we expect it to be and thus leaves us perpetually waiting for something else.

Moretti suggests that "detective fiction's ending" is also its "end," which is to say that its ending is its whole point: the moment at which the genre becomes most fully itself. Yet something strange happens at the ends of *Sacred Games* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. If these detective novels are defined not by the pleasure of the solution but by the disappointment of an unending wait, then we should not be surprised to learn that satisfaction is available only by way of a different genre altogether. In the final pages of both novels, Landsman and Sartaj, having confronted the letdown of their successful detective work, do find something to be happy about—but it is the happy ending of the marriage plot, generic staple not of the detective story but of the romance. No longer invested in the teleology of

detection, Landsman can only embrace the happily-ever-after (the satisfying status quo) of the romantic relationship that has been there all along:

For days Landsman has been thinking that he missed his chance with Mendel Shpilman, that in their exile at the Hotel Zamenhof, without even realizing, he blew his one shot at something like redemption. But there is no Messiah of Sitka. Landsman has no home, no future, no fate but Bina. The land that he and she were promised was bounded only by the fringes of their wedding canopy, by the dog-eared corners of their cards of membership in an international fraternity whose members carry their patrimony in a tote bag, their world on the tip of the tongue. (410–11)

With “no home” and “no future” (of either a political reclamation of Sitka or a messianic return to Israel), Landsman possesses nothing “but Bina.” Landsman uses his love for Bina to shield himself from the apocalyptic uncertainty of the future. Even the gesture toward a broader sense of collective ethnic identity only emerges out of Landsman’s and Bina’s marriage: they “were promised” not an “international” Jewish community-in-exile but a “land . . . bounded only by the fringes of their wedding canopy.” Landsman may have “lost his belief in fate and promises,” but at the very last moment he affirms the worldliest of promissory structures: the wedding vow (410).

Sartaj does pretty much the same thing: “[H]ere with Mary . . . he was not afraid of either the happiness or the heartbreak that lay ahead. He was newly alive, as if he had been freed of something. He did not understand why this should be so, but he was satisfied with not understanding completely. To be alive was enough” (945). Earlier, at the raid on Guru-ji’s hideout, the simplicity of survival was *not* enough (“the thought did not make him feel any better”). Why is it enough now? If Sartaj is “satisfied” simply with “be[ing] alive,” it can only be because he is no longer held by the expectations of the detective genre. Sartaj finds himself “freed” from the temporality of detection, “alive” according to the criteria of an entirely different genre: the “burning fuse” of endless anticipation has been transformed into a romantic acceptance (the heteronormative codification) of whatever “lay ahead.”

If the solution to the mystery of the detective novel is already freighted with disappointment, Chabon’s and Chandra’s novels turn the letdown of the solution into the ultimate disappointment of readerly expectations: a violation of the laws of genre. By forgoing the detective’s classic stance of analytic solitude or hard-boiled isolation and affirming instead bourgeois monogamy, Landsman and Sartaj openly flout what we expect the genre to be (detective narratives rarely culminate in a marriage or romantic coupling—the asexuality of the classic analytic detective is matched by the self-destructive sexuality of the hard-boiled femme fatale). Yet there is clearly something fishy about the incongruously romantic endings of *Sacred Games* and *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, which makes sense once we recall that the detective novel’s ending is merely its most insistent red herring. The problem with these off-kilter endings is not that they dispel the fantasy of generic purity (which is, of course, only ever a fantasy); it is, rather, that this ostensible breach of the detective genre paradoxically sums up detection’s compromised relation to closure. The romantic ending is at once happier than anything the detective

novel could offer—bound as the latter is to the temporality of the wait—and, precisely because it is not seen as a natural outgrowth of the genre, more disappointing. These endings, in other words, are simply an extreme version of the classic solution that does not proceed from rules, laws, or logic but instead appears out of nowhere, resolving everything so perfectly (Sartaj and Landsman being suddenly unbothered by the cases that had relentlessly haunted them) that its perfection is precisely what seems out of joint. If there is something unsatisfying, even vulgar, about these happy or romantic endings, it is not because they are happy, but because they uncannily capture the displeasure of disjuncture that characterizes the end of the detective novel as such. The generic incongruity of the novels' endings is merely a stand-in for the disappointment of all endings—all moments of revelation, unveiling, or happily-ever-after—that interrupt the interminable time of the detective's wait.

Middle Grounds

Is the wait, then, simply an absence of events, an erasure of agency? Looking at the ends of the two novels, it might seem so. But that is only because we are looking for the meaning of the wait in the wrong place. Capitalizing on a genre built from the beginning around the long wait, *Sacred Games* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* suggest that the significance (the "end") of the detective narrative lies not in the secret of its ending but in the anticipation leading up to it—where, it will turn out, much more than Todorov's "not much" happens. What, these novels ask, does it mean to read for what Peter Fenves calls "a secret for which there is no corresponding revelation" (124)? Refusing the fantasy of revelation or the illusion of end times, these two texts articulate a logic of the meantime, the time between expectation and fulfillment, between ungrounded suspicion and unerring knowledge: the drawn-out time—rather than the implied space—of the secret.

D. A. Miller remarks that "secrecy" is above all a "spiritual exercise," a promise of knowledge that, because it might never be fulfilled, is really a matter of faith (207). It is tempting to think of the standard detective narrative as an arc aimed at banishing the spiritual, replacing superstition with science, recasting the mystical as a matter of secular explanation. Yet the strange endings to Chabon's and Chandra's novels suggest that the genre may be unable to eradicate the "spirit" of the secret. The end of the detective story retains a kernel of the mystery that is its condition of possibility in the first place. For Miller, the purpose of the secret lies not in its capacity to be revealed but in its insistence on being kept: "[T]he self is most itself at the moment when its defining inwardness is most secret" (200). As a result, the self continues to be itself *only as long as its secret is kept*—the hidden depths promised by the secret are merely an alibi for the way secrecy installs subjects in time. The same may be said for the detective novel: a genre shaped by secrecy must be most itself when its secrets remain secret. The significance of the secret, then, is not what it hides but *how long* one has to wait for it to be revealed. If the endings of *Sacred Games* and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* are able to commit a strange act of generic betrayal, it is because the end is not really what makes these

books detective novels. The secret of the detective genre is not to be found at the end of these stories at all, but in their middles.

At the center of both novels lies a different kind of secret—one that, because it protects the unbearable truth of each text's narration, cannot afford to be revealed. The secret of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* concerns Mendel Shpilman. Mendel is the Tzaddik Ha-Dor, the potential Messiah of his generation. But his potential is never realized, a basic structural condition of Jewish messianism: "Every generation loses the messiah it has failed to deserve" (197). Neither worldly nor holy, Mendel performs a series of small miracles but cracks under the expectations they carry, descending into drug addiction and thus retroactively casting his miracles entirely into doubt. As Rabbi Shpilman tells Landsman, "Miracles prove nothing except to those whose faith is bought very cheap" (141). If it is not proof of the divine, what exactly does the miracle do? If Mendel is not the Messiah—he dies a destitute junky rather than a redeemer of the world—what are his miraculous acts an index of? In fact, Mendel's inexplicable acts of healing, comfort, and foreknowledge are the perfect demonstration of the secret that has "no corresponding revelation." They are not direct evidence of the will of God, just holes in the fabric of secular knowledge—mysteries that frustrate every desire to explain them. Alter Litvak is one instance of a secular, skeptical Jew who, upon meeting Mendel, has his skepticism brought to the brink (but, as we will see, only the brink) of the otherworldly. Here is Mendel producing Litvak's lost lighter from his own pocket, and then, even more miraculously, encouraging Litvak to light the *yahrzeit* candle he has always secretly refused to burn:

There was a click, and a scrape, and then Litvak leaned wonderingly forward and poked the end of the cigar into the flame of his own Zippo lighter. He felt the momentary shock of a miracle. Then he grinned and nodded his thanks, feeling a kind of giddy relief at the belated arrival of a logical explanation: He must have left the lighter back in Sitka, where Gold or Turteltoyb had found it and brought it along on the flight to Peril Strait. Shpilman had borrowed it and, with his junkie instincts, pocketed it after lighting a papiros. Yes, good. . . .

"Go, Reb Litvak. Light the candle. There's no prayer you say. There's nothing you have to do or feel. You just light it. Go on."

As logic drained away from the world, never entirely to return, Shpilman reached into Litvak's jacket pocket and took out the glass and the wax and the wick. For this trick, Litvak could make himself no explanation. (354)

The lack of explanation (how does Mendel know about Litvak's private ritual?) is not cause for conversion. The passage depicts not the onset of Litvak's belief but the absolute limits of his nonbelief: the "shock" of the miracle causes cynical reason (the hallmark not only of the nonbelieving Jew but also of the successful detective) to confront the limits of its perception, the lacuna of its power. There is no choice in the passage between a secular and a religious explanation or a materialist and a metaphysical one. The miracle, rather, is permanently suspended between the two, making the desire for "logical explanation" inseparable from the frightening

possibility of there being “no explanation” at all. The miracle turns the “belated arrival of . . . explanation” into an indefinite wait.

The “miraculous” distance between logical explanation and the inexplicable secret is also lodged at the level of Chabon’s prose. While the normal function of free indirect discourse is to blur the difference between the narrator’s authority and a character’s consciousness—to fuse the exterior world with the interior experience of it—in *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* it does precisely the opposite. Rather than fluidly insinuate us into Landsman’s thoughts, Chabon’s free indirect style opens a gap between reader and detective. Immersed in the language of Landsman’s inner life, one expects to watch the detective think in a straight line toward epiphany. Yet at the climactic moment where Landsman finally solves the “puzzle” of Mendel’s murder scene, the narrative abruptly zooms out, providing not an explanation of the puzzle but instead an explanation of the internal attempt at explanation. Bypassing the direct object of Landsman’s thought, the narrative makes thought itself its object:

He unfolds [the chessboard] and contemplates it and thinks, I missed something in the room. No, he didn’t miss anything; but if he missed something, it’s gone by now. Only he didn’t miss anything in the room. But he must have missed something.

His thoughts are a tattoo needle inking the spade on an ace. They are a tornado going back and forth over the same damn pancaked trailer. (397)

The back-and-forth of the first paragraph is clearly Landsman’s own thought process, beginning with a first-person thought (“I missed something”) that is mirrored by the third-person of free indirect style (“he missed something”). But Landsman’s thoughts are interrupted by two apparently incongruous metaphors professing to describe *the process of thinking* itself. The metaphors—with their unmistakable suggestions of classic hard-boiled style⁸—demystify the magic of free indirect discourse: they record the exact moment where the narrative ceases to inhabit Landsman’s consciousness and instead stands outside it, describing it from a distance. And looked at from afar, thought turns out to be essentially circular, not a linear progression toward revelation but a wayward, unpredictable unfolding: the tattoo needle’s constant retracing, the tornado’s unknowing repetition. At this moment, the detective’s putative control of his narrative is doubly undermined: by the errant movement of his thoughts and by the omniscient perspective of a narrator who alone is able to describe them. In the gap between perception

⁸ Chabon’s novel is filled with the peculiarly mixed metaphors distinctive of classic hard-boiled detective fiction—what Jameson calls “[t]he practice of the outrageous simile” (“Synoptic Chandler” 37). But the authors most famously associated with hard-boiled style (Chandler, Hammett, James M. Cain) generally used first-person narrators, linking the stylized worldview of the prose directly to the consciousness of the detective. Chabon’s novel, on the other hand, is narrated in the third person, which means that these (at least partly self-referential) metaphors actually distance the detective from the generic authority of his narrative. Rather than giving rhetorical form to the detective’s “outrageous” way of interpreting the world, Chabon’s metaphors instead stand for everything that lies outside Landsman’s consciousness, the entirety of the world beyond his experience—which extends, of course, to the world of genre itself.

and introspection, consciousness and self-consciousness, the narrator intervenes to insist that no matter what mysteries the detective is able to solve, there is one thing he will never be able to read—himself. This climactic passage suggests that the detective's drive to understand everything does not lead directly to explanation but only to a self-reflexive, infinitely regressing explanation of explanation. Like Mendel's miracles, the irreducible gap between Landsman's consciousness and the critical distance of the narrator undoes the possibility of revelation. By describing the interior processes of detection from afar, inhabiting a position of observation that the detective cannot, by definition, inhabit himself, the narrator's metaphorical depiction points to everything—self-consciousness, narrative omniscience, generic reference—that eludes detection. For Chabon, reading detective fiction is not a matter of transforming readers into detectives but of exposing the vast distance of narrative perspective that cannot help but separate them.

Sacred Games similarly leaves one aspect of its narrative form mysteriously inexplicable: the status of Ganesh's narration. For while Ganesh performs the duties of first-person narrator for more than half the novel, he has also, all the way back on page 46, managed to kill himself. The novel treats the event as the straightforward engine to a purely secular mystery; the entire narrative arc of *Sacred Games* is structured around the question of why Ganesh Gaitonde killed himself. When Sartaj laments that there can only be a "partial explanation" of "this Gaitonde affair," he is referring in part to the mysteries that subtend any suicide; one can never know all the reasons. But if the novel offers a much more than partial explanation, it is able to do so because it includes five hundred pages of Ganesh himself explaining it. The mystery of Ganesh's suicide is thus displaced onto a more fundamental and resolutely formal problem, which the novel neither answers nor even treats as a question: how in the world is Ganesh able to narrate in the first place?

Because none of the other characters is able to register the problem, *Sacred Games* leaves the reader alone to deal with the impossibility of believing the matter plainly before his or her eyes: the intrusion, into the logical world of detection, of a confessing corpse. As the novel begins, Sartaj has followed an anonymous tip to Kailashpada, where Ganesh has sealed himself in his nuclear shelter. While they are waiting for the bulldozers to arrive to break down the doors, Ganesh talks to Sartaj through the speaker system, beginning the lengthy story of how he became a gangster. When the police burst in, Ganesh shoots himself, and Sartaj, unsettled but more or less uncurious, goes home. The chapter ends: "But what did it matter, any of it? Gaitonde was dead. Sartaj turned over, thumped his pillows determinedly, arranged them, and lay down his head and slept" (50). If Gaitonde is simply "dead," then that should be the end of it. There is nothing to do but handle the tangible objects of the material world ("thump" and "arrange" the pillows) and go to sleep.

But with the first words of the very next chapter, the comforting dream of a decipherable, secular world is interrupted, ensuring that we will not sleep so soundly again: "So, Sardar-ji, are you listening still? Are you somewhere in this world with me? I can feel you. What happened next, and what happened next, you want to know. I was walking under the whirling sky riven by clouds" (51). Ganesh begins with a strange reversal: it is not he, the haunting ghost, who is spectrally present

in Sartaj's world; it is rather Sartaj who is "in this world with" Ganesh—the *other* world, one can only imagine, of the dead, or of spirits, or of the divine.⁹ Why does Ganesh assume Sartaj is "with [him]" in this other world? Because Ganesh understands his reader. In Kailashpada, Ganesh had begun telling Sartaj the story of his life but did not have time to finish it, and he knows that Sartaj—who is, in Felman's terms, *only a detective in his function as a reader*—will naturally want to know how it ends. Reading is precisely the durational desire for knowledge, the drive "to know," in Ganesh's apt repetition, "what happened next, and what happened next." Yet the anticipatory stance of reading, Ganesh recognizes, is as much about deferral as it is about fulfillment, and so it carries Sartaj not to a state of total understanding but paradoxically into "this" other "world," a world of ghosts or gods that is defined precisely by its inability to be rationally explained. Explanation is reduced to a chain of movements ("what happened next . . . what happened next"), such that answers are no longer endpoints but only momentary interruptions of the endless process of questioning. The urge to "want to know" is simply the urge to read, and the ostensible finality of a detective's decipherment is but a single, tenuous moment in the temporality of the longer, perhaps interminable process of reading. The drive to explain the world does not stop until it runs up against the hard surface of the inexplicable, which is, in perfectly circular fashion, the condition of possibility of what we are reading: the formal secret of the novel's narration. Literally set outside the living world of logic, this secret represents not the object of hermeneutic suspicion but its intractable limit—the discovery, by readers as well as detectives, that what detection ultimately makes known is its own incessantly fated shortfall.

To read like Chandra and Chabon's detectives is to confront secrets that are suspended between the secular and the divine, the logical and the mystical, the banal and the revelatory; it is to wait for an explanation that, like Landsman's Messiah, "never comes" (331). But waiting need not mark a withdrawal from expectation, a refusal of all hopes for the future. As Walter Benjamin writes in the last of his "Theses," "We know that the Jews were prohibited from investigating the future. . . . This does not imply, however, that for the Jews the future turned into homogeneous, empty time" (264). Set uncertainly between present and future, the detective work of Sartaj and Landsman may put off the satisfaction of knowing the future (the ideological "magic, to which all those succumb who turn to the soothsayers for enlightenment" [ibid.]), but it also allows them to see something

⁹ As the police are about to force their way into Ganesh's shelter, he asks Sartaj one last question: "As [Sartaj] walked away, he thought that under the engine's roar he heard a last fragment, a question: 'Sartaj Singh, do you believe in God?'" (44). In his debriefing with the Intelligence Bureau, Sartaj does not relate this last question: "[H]e did not tell them, or Katekar or Parulkar, about the question he thought Gaitonde had asked, at the last. He wasn't sure he had heard it, anyway" (50). Indeed, he may *not* have heard it. But we, at any rate, on the very next page, do hear Ganesh's voice, and the parallel between Ganesh's question and ours—from *where is Ganesh narrating?*—does not seem incidental. It is the problem of situating the miracle within the rational world, of the logical detective's impossible confrontation with the theological beyond, and our question, demanding an answer we would prefer not to know, is thus one—like Ganesh's—that it is perhaps better to pretend we have not heard.

different in their present. In this way, detection gives new meaning to the long wait, which does not promise any specific future but instead illuminates those elements of the present (the possibility of the miracle, the persistence of the dead) that, stubbornly remaining secret, keep us waiting in order to compel us to keep reading.

Timely Meditations

In the last line of their afterword to *The Way We Read Now*, Apter and Freedgood, in a tone at once conciliatory and celebratory, observe that any conversation about how we read is bound to be undercut or overtaken by the problem of when that “we” is situated: “In the meantime, *now* is *then*, and the ways we read and can read have already changed their methods and modes, and they cannot, happily, be enumerated” (145). The play between “now” and “then” points simultaneously to the inexorability of change and the lag with which it is registered. By the time a dominant method has been recognized as dominant, it will already have been displaced. For Apter and Freedgood, the now is precisely what cannot be accounted for, what “cannot . . . be enumerated.” The ability to describe one’s present implies that it has already become part of the past. Reading, then, is intimately bound up with the present: first, because the way we read is subject to change in (and to the change of) the present; but also, more significantly, because the present represents the absolute limit of what we are able to read. Because “now” is constantly slipping back into “then,” present time can never be directly read or accessed. Yet Apter and Freedgood’s reference to “the meantime” provides a different way of approaching the problem. The meantime, I have argued, is the time of the wait, not an absence or a void but the crucial moment when the times of “now,” “then,” and “later” become uncannily intertwined, when the easy identification of beginnings and ends is unceremoniously undone. Neither proleptic nor periodizable, the present is this wait.

What I call in my title the “timeliness” of the detective novel’s secrets may thus far have seemed only a light pun, an initial index of the argument that detective fiction is as much about time as it is about space. Yet the “timely” secret may finally be understood as that secret that is most relevant or timely to us *now*, precisely because it concerns the mystery of the now, of timeliness—the secret place of the present in history. The wait is not an empty space of disappointment but the temporal form of our inchoate, unfolding present. This, in fact, is exactly what Sartaj discovers on the final page of *Sacred Games*. Here waiting—which previously felt like the failure of epochal change—gives him a different way to measure present time. Having successfully averted nuclear annihilation and now on his way to another day of work, Sartaj is stuck in a traffic jam. However, the gridlock has been caused not by an accident or an obstruction but by the sheer act of waiting itself: “A party of Municipal men were working on a hole in the road. They weren’t actually working, they were standing around the hole looking at it, and apparently waiting for something to happen” (945). The traffic jam, in turn, becomes not a response to the workers’ wait but an extension of it: “Meanwhile, a vast funnel of traffic pressed up against the bottleneck. Sartaj was . . . hemmed in by a BEST bus

and two autos, and there was nowhere for anyone to go, so they all waited companionably" (945–46). The traffic jam is perhaps our most iconic symbol of wasted time—time in which there is nothing to do but watch time pass. Yet here waste is transformed into a “companionabl[e]” wait. What makes this wait so social, so sociable, so unexpectedly “happy” (946)?

Forced, finally, to slow down, Sartaj is no longer waiting *for* something. The experience of the traffic jam instead hints that the wait is the basic condition of everyday life—the time that governs each passing day. In the novel’s very last lines, the link between the time of the wait and the unit of the individual day is made explicit: “He patted his cheeks, and ran a forefinger and thumb along his moustache. He was sure it was magnificent. He was ready. He went in and began another day” (947). The relentless forward thrust of the detective narrative has finally collapsed into its obverse: a constant, open-ended sense of anticipation; a state of “readiness” that has no specific object. Sartaj is “ready,” perhaps for anything, but he is not ready for anything in particular. Nevertheless, this is not the indeterminate end of Porter’s antidetective novel. Rather, the absence of the solution is replaced by the presence of the “day.” The very end of *Sacred Games* thus reimagines the “end time” of the standard detective novel, turning the end of the narrative into the end of a day, which is always the beginning of “another day.” The day, perhaps our most elemental unit for measuring the present,¹⁰ installs us in a time that, neither repetitive nor teleological, can only be described as a wait—as the strange sense of undirected anticipation that both separates one day from the next and ties the days together. The wait is what makes the present continuous, and it is also what makes the present continue, inexorably, to pass.

Reading, everyone knows, takes time.¹¹ This essay has sought to understand how reading may also give us time back—making us aware of the time we spend waiting, urging us to think of it not as time wasted but as time regained, rendered visible, read differently. To see reading as a long wait rather than an inevitable revelation is to hold off the false promise of the future in order to linger in the time of the present. The present, of course, is the open secret that everyone is in on. It is the absent cause of everyday life, the force that shapes us without our knowing how. Ostensibly resistant to being read, invisible to those who live within it, the present

¹⁰ I am thinking in particular of Kevis Goodman’s reading of the daylong lifespan of the newspaper, through which she reframes Benedict Anderson’s well-known account of the newspaper and the nation as a relation between everydayness and history: “There are really two issues intertwined in Anderson’s description: where the first concerns the openness of this outward-oriented subjectivity engaged by the daily paper, the second is the altered perception of history invited by the rapid obsolescence of editions or installments of news. The newspaper’s speeding up of communication renders ongoing history as a process in flux; time contracts such that ‘now’ is always on the verge of expiring into ‘then’” (70). This last remark brings us back to Apter and Freedgood’s account of “the way we read now,” in which they suggest that “now” is *already* “then.” For Goodman, on the other hand, the “now” is only “on the verge” of passing away. The daily-ness of the daily paper thus provides a model of time that recognizes the fleetingness of the present but is able, if only for an instant (if not for a day), to fix it in place.

¹¹ “Another open secret that everyone knows and no one wants to: the immense amount of day-dreaming that accompanies the ordinary reading of a novel” (Miller 215).

is most often felt as a mysterious burden—a “deadening weight,” Antonis Balasopoulos calls it, “that usurps time.” The present, however, may not be the thief but the victim: not what steals time, but what time is stolen from.¹² If the present is the instant of history whose time most escapes us, then the challenge of articulating contemporary life is to *take back* usurped time. The contemporary detective novel, I have argued, gives us one way to do this: making us wait, it “renders [time] up,” as Benjamin puts it in the epigraph to this essay, in the “altered form of . . . expectation” (*Arcades* 107). But the point, as well as the power, of expectation does not reside in its expected end. On the contrary, expectation “alter[s]” time precisely by slowing it down, stretching it out: by forcing us, in other words, to take our time. Taking back the purloined time of the present means transforming the present’s invisible burden into an indefinite unfolding—its “weight” into a wait. The secret of the present, then, is not just another clue to be deciphered. It is, rather, the fall into time that occurs when decipherment falters; the constant reminder—if not the sneaking suspicion—that there is more to our world than can be detected within it.

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¹² In his exemplary book of metahistory, *Futures Past*, the historian Reinhart Koselleck argues that the “self-accelerating temporality” of modernity “robs the present of the possibility of being experienced as the present” (22).

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