



INTRODUCTION

Clocks for Seeing

Cinema, the Fantastic, and the Critique of Homogeneous Time

For our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present—no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances. And as the past grows without ceasing, so also there is no limit to its preservation. HENRI BERGSON, *Creative Evolution*

We are too accustomed to thinking in terms of the “present.” We believe that a present is only past when it is replaced by another present. Nevertheless, let us stop and reflect for a moment: How would a new present come about if the old present did not pass at the same time that it is present? How would any present whatsoever pass, if it were not past at the same time as present? The past would never be constituted if it had not been constituted first of all, at the same time that it was present. There is here, as it were, a fundamental position of time and also the most profound paradox of memory: The past is “contemporaneous” with the present that it has been. GILLES DELEUZE, *Bergsonism*

Fantastic cinema incites us to think in dis-accustomed terms about time. Gilles Deleuze, drawing on the philosophy of Henri Bergson, describes the paradoxical countenance of a nonidentical temporality.¹ Overturning the

presentism of the contemporary, Bergson rejects the notion of pure contemporaneity—“there is for us nothing that is instantaneous”—since in every seeming instant of the present there is already a “continuous thread of memory,” a durative “depth of time.”² If the past is not dead, but instead paradoxically coexists alongside the present, then the very notion of contemporaneousness—as a single, self-consistent meanwhile—starts to fray.

This book espouses a form of temporal critique that takes seriously two linked issues: first, the persistence of supernaturalism, of occult modes of thinking encoded in fantastic narratives; and second, the existence of multiple times that fail to coincide with the measured, uniform intervals quantified by clock and calendar. The supernatural is often rationalized as a figure for history or disparaged as an anachronistic vestige of primitive, superstitious thought. But from an alternate perspective it discloses the limits of historical time, the frisson of secular historiography’s encounter with temporalities emphatically at odds with and not fully miscible to itself. Confronted with radical peasant supernaturalisms in the modern-day Philippines, for example, historian Reynaldo Ileto warns that to dismiss such instances as aberrations in a fully secularized national-historical past would be to deny that *that* world—derided as fanatical, millenarian, or superstitious—coexists alongside our own. We should not assume that a profoundly discordant view of time and agency, such as may be found in a peasant idiom of unrest (a world in which specters provoke rebellions, a time in which the dead return), is meaningless except for its articulation within the disenchanted present of modern homogeneous time.³

The fantastic unraveling of a unified present comes through powerfully in a ghost film directed by Mike de Leon, a major figure in the Philippine New Cinema of the 1970s and 1980s.⁴ *Itim* [Black/Rites of May, 1976] opens with a provincial homecoming: Jun, a Manila-based photojournalist, returns to his ancestral home to visit his paralyzed father and to photograph Holy Week rites in the town of San Ildefonso, Bulacan (fig. 1). In the Christian liturgical year, Holy Week refers to the last days of Lent, a period when the devout contemplate the Christian Passion or *pasyon* and a season in which the mundane time of everyday life intersects with a biblical temporality of sin, repentance, and redemption.

Among Filipino/a Catholics, Holy Week is commemorated through the procession of *santos* (holy images or statues of biblical characters asso-



1. In *Itim* [Black/Rites of May, dir. Mike de Leon, 1976], Jun, a photojournalist, visits his ailing father during Lent. Courtesy of Mike de Leon.

ciated with the stages of the pasyon narrative), which are publicly paraded in well-adorned floats or carriages. According to Victor S. Venida, the social institution of *santo* ownership, which continues to this day, appears to have its origins in the mid-nineteenth-century rise of a large municipal native and mestizo elite.⁵ In a context in which the inherited social obligation of *santo* ownership confers social distinction on Filipino families who lend the saintly images for Lenten rites, then, two brief scenes in *Itim* become particularly meaningful. The first is an uncanny nightmare sequence in which the protagonist dreams he is being attacked by a roomful of *santos* come to life (fig. 2); the second is when he questions the long-standing expectation that his family contribute several holy images to the town's procession. These small but significant scenes indicate the urbanized hero's disaffection and alienation from the social practices that express and cement the social distinction of the rural aristocracy. This aspect of the film resonates with the director's stated interest in scrutinizing a social world with which he was intimately familiar—Filipino “landed gentry” with a pronounced involvement in film.⁶

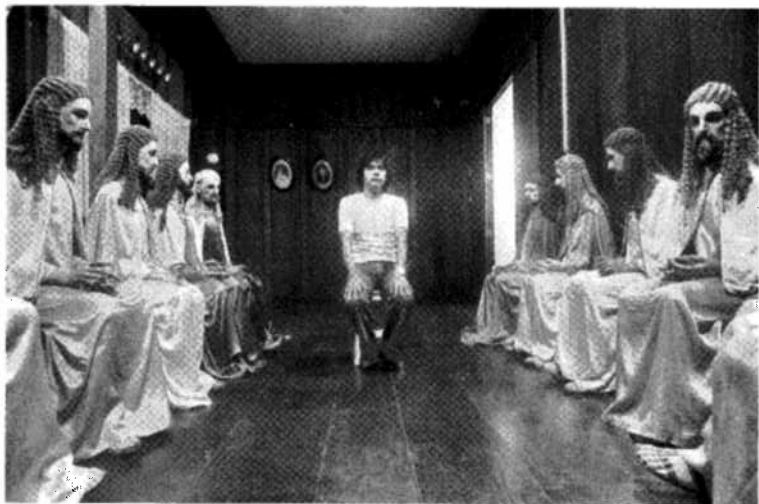
In the Catholic pasyon, darkness (*dilim*) and light (*liwanag*)—the self-same words that haunt the urban protagonist of *Itim* from the first evening

on which he attends a *pabasa*, a collective oral reading of the *pasyon*—are visual metaphors for polarities of death and resurrection and of a mystical passage from mortal suffering to heavenly radiance. The language of darkness and light (condensed in the film's title, *Itim*, or "black") was prominent in the idiom of anticolonial peasant dissent that fueled popular Filipino resistance movements from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth. The Christian vocabulary introduced by Spanish evangelical imperialism was appropriated by a host of peasant groups who mounted armed resistance against Spanish authorities. Ileto relates images of light and darkness to two distinct temporal orders or "dimensions of time" that, during the Holy Week and other *pasyon*-related rituals throughout the year, converged: "a blurring of distinctions between the 'everyday world' and the 'pasyon world.'"⁷

Itim deftly mobilizes this doubled temporal logic, embedding quotidian events (a son visiting his father, a boy meeting a girl) in the otherworldly temporality of the Holy Week's *pasyon* rites. Set in a provincial Tagalog town, *Itim*'s narrative unfolds over the course of Holy Monday to midnight on Good Friday, a day given over to the contemplation of human mortality and frailty in Catholic dogma. Circularity and doubling structure the film: the father, a physician, has an affair with a young novitiate. When he discovers that she is pregnant, he murders her (fig. 3).

Years later, his son, Jun, a professional photographer, takes a snapshot of the novitiate's sister, now possessed by the dead girl's restless spirit. The slow revelation of the father's murderous act proceeds through two séances that bookend the film. In the first, a spiritist (*spiritista*) correctly predicts that the dead novitiate's spirit will return on Good Friday; in the second séance, at the close of the film, the murdered young woman's restless spirit speaks through the body of her surviving sister, exposing the murderer, Jun's father (figs. 4–6). Fleeing from the ghost's accusations, the father falls down the stairs to his death. By ending on Good Friday, the day of mortality, the plot's temporal reach stops short of the promise of redemption signified by Easter Sunday. De Leon's film closes on the darkness of death, remorse, and frailty named in its title.

The film's title, *Itim*, can be understood, then, as a multivalent reference to, first, the visual metaphors of darkness and light that pervade the *pasyon* narrative; second, the film's low-key light design, its rich chiaroscuro palette for the ancestral home's state of somber disrepair; and last,



2. Against the backdrop of Catholic Lenten rites, the secular protagonist of *Itim* has a nightmare that a roomful of holy images has come to life. Courtesy of Mike de Leon.



3. The father's brutal killing of a young novitiate in years past slowly comes to light in *Itim*. Lobby card courtesy of Mike de Leon.



4-6. *Itim* opens and closes with two séances; in the climactic séance, the murdered girl speaks through her sister to expose her killer. Courtesy of Mike de Leon.



7. Photographic traces of an enduring, bloodstained past come to light in the son's darkroom in *Itim*. Courtesy of Mike de Leon.

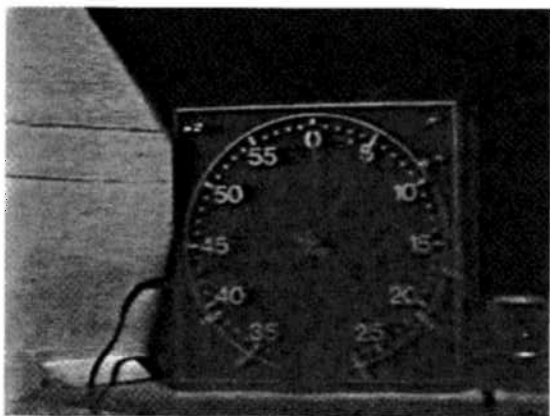
the darkroom studio in which photographic traces of an enduring, bloodstained past come to light.

On Jun's first night home, he prints photographs while his ailing father sleeps (fig. 7). The scene makes extensive use of parallel editing, alternating between the old patriarch asleep in a moonlit bedroom and the son at work in a darkroom. The sequence opens with a clock on the father's bedside table that is later graphically rhymed by the darkroom timer that regulates Jun's work (figs. 8 and 9). To audiences familiar with the well-worn conventions of continuity editing, such crosscutting between bedroom and darkroom is an immediately legible cinematic device that gives the spectator spatiotemporal omniscience: we understand the two distinct events unfolding in separate spaces to be occurring in the same "meanwhile." At the end of the scene, however, something unexpected happens: when the son completes a photographic enlargement of a striking young woman he caught on film, his father inexplicably wakes, alarmed.

On the surface, it would seem that the scene is about three characters at one time: Jun, his father, and the freshly printed image of a girl are all juxtaposed in a single simultaneous present, 5:00 in the morning on the last Tuesday of Lent. But *Itim* is a possession film, and the

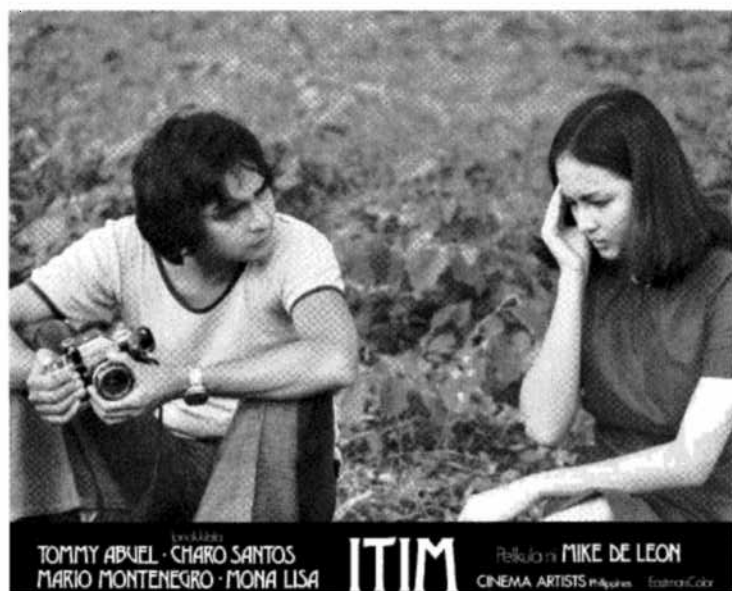


8, 9. A sequence in *Itim* crosscuts between the father's bedroom and the son's darkroom. Shots of a bedside clock and a darkroom timer evoke the simultaneity codified by parallel editing and its dependence on chronological time.



young girl whose photograph Jun snapped is inhabited by the spirit of her older sister, a woman whom his own father brutally murdered several years before. The duality of romantic involvements (father and son grow enamored of two sisters who are the same dead woman) coincides with a doubled temporal logic (figs. 10 and 11): on the one hand, a modern homogeneous time measured by darkroom timer and bedside clock; on the other, a spectral time of haunting and return, one in which the dead are alive and the past, fully preserved, “lean[s] over the present” and “gnaws” at the future.⁸ The two temporal orders are immiscible and fail to coincide. In *Itim*, fantastic cinema, like the aperture of Jun’s camera, opens to more than one time.

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes calls the camera a “clock for seeing,” binding time to sound and vision and writing lovingly of the “noise of Time,”



10, 11. Dual romantic involvements in *Itim*: father and son become involved with two sisters; later, romances and identities are conflated when the surviving sister is possessed by the spirit of her murdered sibling. Lobby cards courtesy of Mike de Leon.

of the sound of the camera shutter as reminiscent of a clock's auditory time signal.⁹ Clocks, one learns from Bergson, are translation machines, instruments for time measurement and time-discipline that render duration (*durée*) as linear succession, converting heterogeneous temporalities into a series of equidistant, uniform intervals: the seconds, minutes, and hours that make up calendrical days and years.¹⁰ From the thirteenth century on, the tolling of public time, of church or civic work bells, has been experienced and resisted by workers as a form of time-discipline, a means of controlling and standardizing the regularity, intensity, and length of periods of labor and intervals of leisure. This temporal discipline is perhaps most keenly felt as the pressure of speed.¹¹

In brief, the clock is the exemplar of "homogeneous, empty time," the critique of which, for Walter Benjamin, is the necessary point of departure for dismantling the concept of progress: "The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself."¹² Under the rule of the clock, the question "what time is it?" always yields an answer rooted in a standard, instantaneous present ("It's 5 a.m."). The clock graphically represents time as spatial and measurable: a number line is grafted onto its radial face so that the *progress in space* of the clock hand, moving across its circular trajectory, coincides with the *passage of time*. If I go by the clock on my bedside, then yesterday evening—the past—has elapsed and thus has ceased to exist. The future yawns before me, and for everyone else, as a predictable, empty, uniform series of recurring, measured intervals, waiting to be filled with experience. The clock will sound at 5:00 a.m. again tomorrow; Monday will come again next week; next year in February it is likely to be cold. But for the critics of empty, homogeneous time, or what I am calling modern time consciousness, clock time does not tell the truth of duration but exemplifies a socially objectivated temporality, one that remains "indispensable but inadequate"—a necessary illusion that must be exposed.¹³

The emergence of the mechanical clock in late thirteenth-century Europe signals the inception of modern homogeneous time, gradually replacing traditional, unequal hourly divisions handed down since antiquity with abstract, uniform periods severed from the relative length or brevity of daylight, specificities of use, or differences in custom or locale.¹⁴ Since the

worldwide adoption of standard time zones by the International Meridian Conference in 1884, modern homogeneous time has come to seem increasingly natural and incontrovertible, assuming the guise of a ready-made temporality. Yet despite the indispensable advantages of synchronizing people, information, and markets in a simultaneous global present, critics point out that modern homogeneous time is an enduring theme of social conflict.¹⁵ Modern time consciousness is a means of exercising social, political, and economic control over periods of work and leisure; it obscures the ceaselessly changing plurality of our existence in time; and it underwrites a linear, developmental notion of progress that gives rise to ethical problems with regard to cultural and racial difference.

Barthes is not alone in construing the camera as a clock for seeing. The cinema and its photographic base have been repeatedly compared to a clock, since both machines represent time and movement as measurable and divisible into uniform intervals. A consummate elaboration of this analogy can be found in Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, in which the cinematograph stands condemned as a figure for the temporal misprisions of our own psychic mechanism. The cinema, like habitual perception, reduces time to the homogeneity of measurable space. Both in filming and projection, the cinema is a kind of clockwork mechanism, exposing and projecting immobile photograms at regular, equidistant intervals—say, sixteen or twenty-four frames per second—producing a convincing illusion for spectators, for whom the frozen frames, in rapid succession, appear to move. Yet the way in which cinema is a clock for seeing, an apparatus that links vision to rationalized time, is only one aspect of the cinema's relationship to temporality. Paradoxically, and often very pleasurably, I argue, the cinema can also provoke a critical reassessment of modern time consciousness.

On the one hand, the cinema as clockwork apparatus belongs to the regime of modern homogeneous time; on the other, fantastic narratives strain against the logic of clock and calendar, unhinging the unicity of the present by insisting on the survival of the past or the jarring coexistence of other times. This tension plays out in that scene from *Itim*: darkroom timer and bedside clock presume a single measurable time, and juxtaposed events unfold in a seemingly unproblematic simultaneity. But the return of the injured dead disjoins contemporaneity: the girl's photograph, and the dark romances evoked, are both then *and* now, exceeding a rational,

chronological time. In this fantastic film, the temporal unruliness of haunting is only partially managed by being recast—that is, translated—into a single cinematic meanwhile.

In order to glimpse an “outside” to the regime of modern homogeneous time, one that we might seize as a starting point for more ethical temporal imaginings, this book approaches fantastic cinema as a kind of temporal translation: a translation of thorny and disreputable supernaturalisms into the terms of a modern, homogeneous, disenchanted time. Fantastic narratives, I argue, have a propensity toward temporal critique, a tendency to reveal that homogeneous time translates disparate, noncoinciding temporalities into its own secular code, because the persistence of supernaturalism often insinuates the limits of disenchanted chronology. I refer to traces of untranslatable temporal otherness in the fantastic as *immiscible times*—multiple times that never quite dissolve into the code of modern time consciousness, discrete temporalities incapable of attaining homogeneity with or full incorporation into a uniform chronological present.

Modes and Topoi of Temporal Critique

To argue this theory of immiscible times, I draw on a twofold critical reservoir that is fully explored in the first chapter. First, I look to the work of Henri Bergson, who argues that the cinema is implicated in homogeneous time but also demonstrates that a critique of homogeneous time must, perforce, contend with the cinema. Second, I consider how colonialism and its aftermath underpin modern *historical time* and how, in turn, a view of time as homogeneous, epitomized by the ideology of progress, served as a temporal justification for imperialist expansion. The first mode of temporal critique, Bergsonism, links temporal critique to visibility and the cinema; the second mode, postcolonial thought, binds modern homogeneous time to temporal exclusions—of the primitive, of anachronistic, “superstitious” folk—that found the notion of progress. My critique of homogeneous time, routed through the cinema, is fed by both streams. As I demonstrate in chapter 1, this book does not seek to obviate Bergson’s temporal critique but rather to interweave historical and postcolonial analyses of homogeneous time to his visualist ontology. Considered proximately, the two modes of temporal critique—*visual-ontological* and *historical-postcolonial*—illuminate the modernity that grounds Bergson’s approach to time and the

cinematograph, a historical specificity that belies the unmarked, universal subject presumed by his project. More important, the historical and post-colonial approaches I seek to fold into Bergson's philosophical critique reveal the conditions of emergence of homogeneous time to be shaped not by the limits of "natural" human consciousness and perception but by global historical processes, that is, to the world-historical project of modernity that hinged on colonialism. Apart from underscoring the historically modern aspects of Bergsonism's philosophy of time, a critique of homogeneous time that attends to historical and cultural difference develops and complicates some of the themes already raised in Bergson's philosophy.

By collocating these two modes of temporal critique, respecting their differences while remaining attentive to their crucial points of convergence, I hope to throw into relief three topoi for the critique of homogeneous time: the upholding of plural times (Bergson's "multiple temporal rhythms," Dipesh Chakrabarty's "heterotemporality"), the refusal of anachronisms, and the recognition of untranslatability, that is, the avowal of *immiscible temporalities*.¹⁶

Temporal Multiplicities

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson considers time to be, as Deleuze puts it, a "radical plurality of durations," coexisting cacophonously at different rhythms.¹⁷ In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson offers a penetrating analysis of the way in which temporal heterogeneity is spatialized and made linear in a deterministic understanding of time in which "all is given."¹⁸ The teleological time Bergson seeks to unseat—which conceives of "the future and the past as calculable functions of the present"¹⁹—has a profound affinity to both the temporal logic of colonialism, a linear, evolutionary view of history that spatialized time and cultural difference, and to the preemptive workings of contemporary capitalist governance, which dreams of foreclosing futurity.²⁰

Imperialist discourse depended on a temporal strategy in which radical cultural differences brought to light by colonial contact were framed as primitive or anachronistic. Imperialist discourse—whose "discovery" of new worlds was "never in fact inaugural or originary"—framed territories as empty and discoverable by denying their inhabitants were there, "symbolically displac[ing]" the indigene into what Anne McClintock calls "anachronistic space": "According to this trope, colonized people—like women

and the working class in the metropolis—do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency—the living embodiment of the archaic ‘primitive.’”²¹ Such a temporal strategy presumes empty, homogeneous time to be culture-neutral and universal, hence able to encompass even peoples whose form of time consciousness contravenes notions of linear, uniform, and abstract time. This linear, evolutionary concept of time would, in Bergsonian terms, be considered deterministic and teleological. It is important to note at the outset that Bergson’s thinking avoids the pitfalls of a modern historical consciousness that is evolutionary, in the sense of Chakrabarty’s discussion of historicism.²² Bergson’s emphatically nonteleological concept of “creative evolution” denotes absolutely unforeseeable becoming, not the uniform, predictable, developmental temporal process denoted by the concept of progress.²³ The colonial trope of time-as-space, of the *globe as a kind of clock*—with the metropolitan center marking the path to progress, while the colonized other remains primitive and superseded—is a version of what Bergson exposes as the “all is given” logic of homogeneous time. To maintain that the future holds the same thing for everyone, that the future is already known (the achievement of progress, secular disenchantment, and rationality), and hence to anticipate that the primitive will one day be like the modern observer (“their” future can be extrapolated from “our” past), would, in Bergsonian terms, amount to a fundamentally timeless view of time.²⁴

The Survival of the Past, or the Refusal of Anachronisms

The survival of the past demands serious engagement in any project that hopes to forge a more ethical, less distorting temporal view of otherness. The copresence of older modes of being is often translated as a relic or vestige of a prior developmental stage, something that has been superseded but stubbornly returns. Seen in this way, the survival of the past tends only to shore up the cachet of progress rather than to critique it. But there are other ways to conceive of the survival of the past: for Bergson, the past *is*, alongside the present; for Chakrabarty, the fiction of a single present is a containment of heterotemporalities.

For Bergson, duration is not a process by which the current moment deposes one that came before, for if that were the case, then all we would

have is the present. Rather, duration is the “survival of the past,” an ever-accumulating ontological memory that is wholly, automatically, and ceaselessly preserved: “Memory, as we have tried to prove, is not a faculty of putting away recollections in a drawer or of inscribing them in a register. There is no register, no drawer; there is not even, properly speaking, a faculty, for a faculty works intermittently, when it will or when it can, whilst the piling up of the past upon the past goes on without relaxation. In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought, and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present that is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside.”²⁵

In Bergson’s buccal figure, it is because the past never subsides that we feel the “bite of time.”²⁶ Deleuze writes: “one of the most profound, but perhaps also one of the least understood, aspects of Bergsonism [is] the theory of memory. . . . We have great difficulty in understanding a survival of the past in itself because we believe that the past is no longer, that it has ceased to be. We have thus confused Being with being-present.”²⁷ The Bergsonian survival of the past requires that we desist from our habit of “thinking in terms of the present.” We believe that the present is all that exists and that the past has elapsed and is gone. Resisting such presentism, Bergson insists that the past *is*: it has not elapsed; it is not over and done with. Rather, it coexists alongside the present as the latter’s absolute condition for existing.²⁸ The past survives regardless of human consciousness or memory, regardless of how much or how little we remember it, since pure recollection, the open register on which duration is inscribed without interruption, is not an individual or subjective psychological faculty but an “immemorial or ontological memory,” a “Being-memory” that belongs to matter itself, to everything and no one.²⁹

Bergsonism’s paradoxical view of temporality — “the past is contemporaneous with the present it has been” — resonates with Chakrabarty’s insistence that older modes of being are never entirely surmounted. Bergson, on the one hand, argues that the illusion of an instantaneous present occludes the very real survival of the past, and hence, the truly heterogeneous character of duration. Chakrabarty, on the other hand, reveals that the charge of anachronism — the claim that something out of kilter with the present really belongs to a superseded past — is a gesture of temporal exclusion. Bergson’s argument is ontological (a Being-memory); Chakra-

barty's critique is likewise ontological (heterotemporalities characterize human existence), but it is also historical and disciplinary. While Bergson insists on the coexistence of the past and the present, refusing the idea of the past as simply left behind, Chakrabarty and Johannes Fabian, in their anticolonial critiques of historiography and anthropology, contest the rhetoric of anachronism as the antipode to progress.

In a temporal move that Johannes Fabian calls a "denial of coevalness," nineteenth-century anthropology refused to recognize the ethnographically subject as the modern observer's contemporary (to wit: this other is a savage, a living anachronism, a throwback to a prior stage of human evolution).³⁰ Postcolonial thinkers have called our attention to those processes by which ways of being in the world that were profoundly different from those of European colonizers were represented as anachronisms—pre-modern, primitive, and superstitious. Worlds that contained spirits and other enchanted beings remained untranslatable to colonial discourse and modern time consciousness: this impasse of untranslatability was resolved temporally, through, as Vicente Rafael puts it, "wishful mistranslations."³¹ In sixteenth-century colonial missionary accounts, nineteenth-century anthropology, ethnographic cinema, and modern historiography, one repeatedly encounters examples in which intractable differences are *temporally managed* by being positioned as already known and surmounted precursors, not something disturbing that persists alongside and within the modern but as relics of superseded chronological antecedents.

For both modes of temporal critique, to presume pure contemporaneity and an entirely surmounted past would be to deny the copresence of multiple but noncoinciding temporalities. Bergsonism and postcolonial temporal critique both share a refusal of anachronism, of a past left behind; they impel us to think in terms other than the present in order to see beyond seeming obsolescence. This requires going "beyond the turn," further than the practical convenience of living our lives by clock and calendar, as though the past were finished, the present uniform, and the future given or ready-made.³²

Untranslatability

In short, the word with well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element

in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness. To maintain the struggle on equal terms, the latter ought to express themselves in precise words; but these words, as soon as they were formed, would turn against the sensation which gave birth to them, and, invented to show that the sensation is unstable, they would impose on it their own stability. BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*

For Bergson, all attempts to articulate pure duration are betrayed by language. Articulations of temporal heterogeneity invariably strain against what he calls “the language of common sense,” since this language naturalizes the misconstrual of time as space.³³ The “rough and ready word” reduces sensation to the lowest common denominator of known experience, making the ineffable into something stable and resulting in a colorless, degraded experience of life.³⁴ Multiple temporal rhythms, newness of becoming, and the experiences and emotions registered in the depths of the self, are all objectified and made equivalent by language. These intertwined themes of reification and untranslatability are given poignant expression by Bergson: “We fail to translate completely what our soul experiences: there is no common measure between mind and language.”³⁵ In *Time and Free Will*, he frames the misconstrual of heterogeneous time as homogeneous space—which leaves us unable to recognize our own freedom and duration—as a problem of translation, the difficulty of trying “to express the idea of freedom in a language into which it is obviously untranslatable.”³⁶ Language—whether that of mathematics, science, or everyday usage—can only express time insofar as it is past, accomplished, and objectified (time flown, not time flowing).³⁷

Bergson repeatedly posits heterogeneous temporalities as fundamentally untranslatable, betrayed by language, since the “rough and ready word” works via abstraction.³⁸ From another critical perspective, Chakrabarty, drawing on the work of Vicente Rafael and Gayatri Spivak, likewise discerns in homogeneous time the problem of translating radically different times and ways of inhabiting the world into the language of secular historiography. Questions of temporal translation are a particularly fraught issue for subaltern historians, who often have to translate the lived experience of different temporal worlds into the code of a secular, disenchanted, historical time. Both ontological and postcolonial critiques of homogeneous

time, then, alert us to the consequences of taming and translating plural times into homogeneous chronology.

The Language of Disenchanted Time

The moment we think of the world as disenchanted, however, we set limits to the ways the past can be narrated. CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe*

As becoming shocks the habits of thought and fits ill into the molds of language, they declared it unreal. BERGSON, *Creative Evolution*

This picture of empty homogeneous time—as spatialized, abstract, chronological, measurable, and premised on a logic of temporal exclusion—is nearly complete. Chakrabarty adds a last, crucial dimension to this book's consideration of modern historical time. The title of his essay "The Time of History and the Times of Gods" indicates that homogeneous historical time is secular and disenchanted; it follows that ways of being in the world that admit of supernatural agency will present a problem of translation for homogeneous time.³⁹

Modern homogeneous time is a language ("a dialect backed up by an army," as Chakrabarty ironically puts it) whose hegemony is naturalized as universality.⁴⁰ It rests on the assumption that its own conception of time—as "godless, continuous, empty and homogeneous"—is a natural "structure of generality." This explains why even the nonsecular and the nonmodern can be relegated to a position in this history. "The naturalism of historical time lies in the belief that everything can be historicized. So while the nonnaturalness of history, the discipline, is granted, the assumed universal applicability of its method entails a further assumption: that it is always possible to assign people, places, and objects to a naturally existing, continuous flow of historical time." It becomes feasible to retrospectively position peoples and cultures who do not share this time consciousness as forerunners to modernity in a universal, linear narrative of human history. Modern time is thus projected in every direction to include even what exists outside of or prior to its minting as a concept, entertaining an "ideal of objectivity," a belief that its conception of history is the "overarching language," the universal narrative to which all specific instances can be subsumed. Like the time of Newtonian science, the time of history is one in which heterogeneity is translated into homogeneity in order to govern

unsettling, radical difference. Such temporal translations are naturalized—so that we forget that we are even translating very different temporalities into the modern one—yet they belie a “radical untranslatability.” Secular historiography claims to mediate and translate supernatural or ghostly accounts, but ghosts and gods cannot be seen within a horizon of sameness when they “belong to a field of differences.”⁴¹

As Chakrabarty brilliantly demonstrates, recasting the nonmodern as a precursor to modernity involves an *act of translation*. However necessary and expedient this translation is to the way we live our lives according to the stable past, present, and future of modern calendars, Chakrabarty exhorts us not to forget that translation is at work whenever we speak of supernaturalism or precapitalist worlds in relation to modern time:

The prefix *pre* in “precapital” . . . is not a reference to what is simply chronologically prior on an ordinal, homogeneous scale of time. “Precapitalist” speaks of a particular relationship to capital marked by the tension of difference in the horizons of time. The “precapitalist,” on the basis of this argument, can only be imagined as something that exists within the temporal horizon of capital and that at the same time disrupts the continuity of this time by suggesting another time that is not on the same, secular, homogeneous calendar (which is why what is precapital is not chronologically prior to capital; that is to say, one cannot assign it to a point on the same continuous time line). This is another time that, theoretically, could be entirely immeasurable in terms of the units of the godless, spiritless time of what we call “history,” an idea already assumed in the secular concepts of “capital” and “abstract labor.”

. . . Subaltern histories are therefore constructed within a particular kind of historicized memory, one that remembers History itself as a violation, an imperious code that accompanied the civilizing process that the European Enlightenment inaugurated in the eighteenth century as a world-historical task. It is not enough to historicize “history,” the discipline, for that only uncritically keeps in place the very understanding of time that enables us to historicize in the first place. The point is to ask how this seemingly imperious, all-pervasive code might be deployed or thought about so that we have at least a glimpse of its own finitude, a vision of what might constitute an outside to it.⁴²

Although it remains a practical necessity to translate different worlds and temporalities into the terms of modern time consciousness, Chakrabarty asks those who work on subaltern pasts to keep the “finitude” of

secular time constantly in mind. It is necessary to retain a sense of “scandal in every translation” so that the requisite paraphrasing of other worlds and temporalities as premodern and precapitalist—when these were not so much prior to as outside of, other than, and unassimilable to modern time—never goes entirely unchallenged.⁴³

Chakrabarty describes himself as a historian of labor in modern South Asia who has repeatedly come up against the problem of having to translate nonsecular worlds into the codes of secular historiography. The disciplinary limits of sociology and history, for example, structure the expectation that a historian will demystify peasants’ claims that their gods called on them to revolt.⁴⁴ The discrepancy between these nonsecular worlds and the codes of disenchanted historiography prompts Chakrabarty to pose the following question: “How do we conduct these translations in such a manner as to make visible all the problems of translating such diverse and enchanted worlds into the universal and disenchanted language of sociology?” He responds by calling for a scandalous uncanniness: “An ambiguity must mark the translation of the tool-worshipping jute worker’s labor into the universal category ‘labor’: it must be enough like the secular category ‘labor’ to make sense, yet the presence and plurality of gods and spirits in it must also make it ‘enough unlike to shock.’ There remains something of a ‘scandal’—of the shocking—in every translation, and it is only through a relationship of intimacy to both languages that we are aware of the degree of this scandal.”⁴⁵

As is clear from the discussion thus far, Chakrabarty’s work has pivotal significance for this study of cinema and the fantastic, though he writes from a different set of disciplinary concerns, those of sociology and history. I would characterize one focus of his book *Provincializing Europe* and of an essay that preceded it, “The Time of History and the Times of Gods,” as a redemptive critique of the supernaturalism of peasant and subaltern worlds. From the perspective of the “single, homogeneous, and secular historical time” of modernity, “a peasant-but-modern political sphere . . . not bereft of the agency of gods, spirits, and other supernatural beings” can only be an anachronism.⁴⁶ The refusal to see worlds in which ghosts and other supernatural forces exist as coeval or contemporaneous with the modern at once excludes the peasant (and a whole host of frequently feminized “superstitious” others) while naturalizing modern historical time as universal.⁴⁷ As Chakrabarty wryly notes: “One empirically knows of no so-

ciety in which humans have existed without gods and spirits accompanying them. Although the God of monotheism may have taken a few knocks—if not actually ‘died’—in the nineteenth-century European story of ‘the disenchantment of the world,’ the gods and other agents inhabiting practices of so-called ‘superstition’ have never died anywhere. I take gods and spirits to be existentially coeval with the human, and think from the assumption that the question of being human involves the question of being with gods and spirits.”⁴⁸

So fierce and finely accomplished a critique of modern time consciousness, from the perspective of a postcoloniality alive to ghosts, was an invaluable resource for my thinking about fantastic cinema. His forceful, but never dismissive, critiques of homogeneous, modern time as “indispensable but inadequate”—indispensable to our daily lives and to emancipatory projects of political and intellectual modernity, yet inadequate to diverse ways of being in the world—led me to think of the fantastic as a form of temporal translation: narratives that represent enchanted worlds within the framework of secular modern homogeneous time but intimate a sense of discrepant temporality. The ethical, political, and scholarly stakes of a temporal critique of the fantastic are much like the problems posed by gods and spirits to the writing of history: the real issue is not so much belief but rather ways of recognizing and translating a plurality of worlds and times, while resisting the tendency to refuse supernaturalisms, or their supposedly superstitious adherents, contemporaneity.

The superstitious primitive is the foil that sets off the modern to best advantage. This is why, in Max Weber’s famous 1917 lecture, “Science as a Vocation,” savages—the “Red Indian or a Hottentot”—are invoked to reveal the true meaning of “scientific progress”:

Let us first of all clarify what this intellectual rationalization through science and scientific technology actually means in practice. Does it perhaps mean that today we—for example, everybody who is sitting in this room—have a greater understanding of the conditions under which we live than a Red Indian or a Hottentot? Hardly. Not one of us who travels on trams has any idea of how trams come to move unless he is a physicist. . . . It means something else—the knowledge or the belief that, *if one only wanted to*, one *could* find out any time; that there are in principle *no mysterious, incalculable powers at work*, but rather that one could in principle master everything through *calculation*. But that means the disenchantment of the world. One need no longer have recourse

to magic in order to control or implore the spirits, as did the savage for whom such powers existed. Technology and calculation achieve that, and this more than anything else means intellectualization as such.⁴⁹

Though Weber is not the first in German intellectual history to employ the notion of *Entzauberung*, or disenchantment, it is in Weber's characterization of modernity as a process of disenchantment that "the term gains definitional status."⁵⁰ Disenchantment refers to the ways in which enchantment—the felt mysteriousness and fundamental unknowability of the world—has given way to calculative knowledge. The rational mastery and progress exemplified by science displaces the magical means of "the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed." The sphere of modern disenchantment is thus demarcated by contrast to the racialized imaginary of "Red Indian" and "Hottentot" worlds.⁵¹ The colonial encounter—framing the other *in terms* of the primitive, encountering the indigene as an anachronism—is constitutive of the Weberian disenchantment thesis. To do its work, the disenchantment thesis as a historical enframing must always call up the specter of the savage.

There are compelling reasons to regard the disenchantment thesis less as an accurate characterization of modernity than as an exclusionary temporal gesture and a mechanism for social stratification that began to attain decisive historical ascendancy in the eighteenth century. Who is fenced out by the disenchantment thesis? For Chakrabarty, it is the superstitious third world peasant; for Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, it is the vulgar European populace.

According to historians of the early modern, the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth constitute a "period that can be called with justice an age of wonder," as "books of marvels poured off the printing presses of Europe."⁵² The "vogue for the marvelous" gripped European culture across nations and spheres of activity—literature, visual arts, music, drama, theology, natural sciences, philosophy—in the late-Renaissance and Baroque periods. Etymologically, wonder and marvel were linked: in Italian *meraviglia*, in French *merveille*, in German *wunder*. Marvels and wonders included "fabulous creatures of folklore, supernatural phenomena with apocalyptic associations, and the miraculous powers of holy relics or religious images," as well as the "fabulous human races" of the New World.⁵³ Thus "the Age of the Marvelous" looks forward to modernity: from Marco Polo's late thirteenth-century accounts of exotic lands to the voyages of

Columbus, Magellan, and Vespucci, in the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth, these travels to the Orient, the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa yielded much-coveted exotica for cabinets of curiosities or *wunderkammern*. The marvelous thus referred not only to objects but to native peoples in the wonder-tinged, racialized imaginary forged by the voyages of colonial expansion. As Joy Kenseth points out: "of all the wonders to be found in the New World . . . the native inhabitants aroused the greatest curiosity."⁵⁴

But by the eighteenth century, one writer declared that "the marvelous is not made for us," signaling that though wonders persisted in fairgrounds, in cabinets of curiosity, and in popular publications, for the urban-oriented intellectual vanguard of eighteenth-century Europe, "the star of the marvelous had indeed waned." Daston's and Park's illuminating discussion of this period discounts the scholarly commonplace that the rise of rational science swept the marvelous away. Rather, they trace a historical shift whereby the marvelous becomes a merely popular entertainment, banished from elite intellectual discourse, derided as the vulgar preoccupation of uneducated folk.⁵⁵ According to Daston and Park, the vulgar were those most "susceptible" to being deceived by marvels: "Women, the very young, the very old, primitive peoples, and the uneducated masses, [formed] a motley group collectively designated as 'the vulgar.' In the works of the learned, the vulgar stood as the antonym of the enlightenment; they were barbarous, ignorant, and unruly. When, in the early eighteenth century, the 'love of the marvelous' also came to be seen as a hallmark of the vulgar, it was a sure sign that enlightenment and the marvelous were no longer compatible."⁵⁶

The hierarchy between reason and the marvelous corresponds not just to a cultural valuation but to the stratification of the socially powerful vis-à-vis the socially marginal; the Enlightenment aversion to marvels was also an exclusion of vulgar classes and popular cultural forms, a discourse of both "metaphysics and snobbery."⁵⁷

Daston and Park characterize Weberian disenchantment as a variant of what they call "the wistful counter-Enlightenment" tradition, the argument that science and post-seventeenth-century rationalism are responsible for the demise of the marvelous. In contrast, Daston and Park suggest that elite discreditation and disparagement of the marvelous—not a scientific debunking of wonders—is what put an end to the age of wonders by the eighteenth century.

The wistful counter-Enlightenment tradition is simultaneously patronizing and nostalgic for the lost world of the marvelous. "Its nostalgia for an age of wonders, supposedly snuffed out by an age of reason, is rooted in an image of Enlightenment as the cultural and intellectual analogue of the transition from childhood to adulthood." This disenchantment paradigm, mingling condescension and nostalgia in equal parts, is also based on a teleological rhetoric of anachronism. Casting the Enlightenment as a cultural adulthood for the human race, the marvelous is seen to belong to a premodern childhood, something to be "outgrown" as well as yearned for once we moderns "mature into rationality." The marvelous comes to be defined "by the negative and anachronistic criterion that no educated adult now credits them. To outgrow wonders is to mature into rationality, a process that is, for this tradition of cultural criticism, as sadly irreversible as adulthood." In their trenchant critique of the disenchantment narrative, Daston and Park point out that in the early modern period, marvels were not trifles for children but matters of scholarly debate for natural and preternatural philosophy; marvelous prodigies and miracles were capable of inciting civil unrest, leading both lay and religious figures in the late seventeenth century to denounce superstition and regulate miracles. Thus, instead of rehearsing the conventional story of empirical science's dramatic ascendancy in an increasingly demystified world, Daston and Park offer a compelling, alternative historical account whereby elite disparagement from the eighteenth century onward discredits the marvelous, a marvelous that is not superseded but continues to thrive vigorously in popular culture.⁵⁸

What one learns from their provocative counterhistoriography is that disenchantment as a world-historical process is not so much the unequivocal triumph of rationality as it is a trajectory of *temporal elitism* (the marvelous is cast as a premodern childhood of vulgar superstition), *popularization*, and *exclusion* (monsters survive, but they are consumed by culturally disparaged audiences). Far from dispelling enchantment, moderns have merely devalorized it. The social and cultural history of the supernatural in our age is not the heroic tale of a truer, rational, skeptical schema's triumph over premodern superstition; rather, it is a story of temporal elitism and temporal exclusion, of how supernaturalism came to be fenced out from highbrow, urbane, and educated thinking. Marvels persist in our own day; their generic home, however, is no longer learned philosophical treatises but horror, science fiction, tabloids, and a host of other disreputable

genres. Indeed, popular culture, from freak shows to what one critic calls "occult TV," remains the undisputed stomping ground of the marvelous in our own age.⁵⁹ The Enlightenment is defined in contradistinction to supernaturalism not because the world has been completely disenchanted but because enchantment is now derided as a state of cultural provincialism.

In *Provincializing Europe*, Chakrabarty briefly and intriguingly mentions an alternative to translating radically different worlds into the language of disenchanted, homogeneous time: an "antisociological" mode of narrating supernaturalism that is best suited to fiction and the cinema: "It is obvious that this nonsociological mode of translation lends itself more easily to fiction, particularly of the nonrealist or magic-realist variety practiced today, than to the secular and realist prose of sociology or history. In these fictive narratives, gods and spirits can indeed be agents."⁶⁰ Or again: "this mode of translation is antisociology and for that reason has no obligation to be secular. The past is pure narration, no matter who has agency in it. Fiction and films, as I have said, are the best modern media for handling this mode."⁶¹ Though he does not further clarify what he means by "pure narration," I remain fascinated by his suggestion that film as well as certain genres—fiction in a "nonrealist or magic-realist mode"—that is, cinema and the fantastic, hold out the possibility of a scandalous, nonsociological translation of plural, enchanted worlds. Fantastic cinema, I argue in the next section, can productively be conceptualized as a mode of translation that retains, in Spivak's apt phrase, an uncanny quality of "contained alterity,"⁶² an intimation of otherness that exceeds the confines of secular, homogeneous time.

"History cannot represent, except through a process of translation and consequent loss of status and signification for the translated, the heterotemporality of that world."⁶³ What Chakrabarty refers to as heterotemporality is precisely what remains recalcitrant to translation by historical time. But, as I suggest below, it is precisely this trace of untranslatability, of *immiscible temporalities*, that fantastic narratives, in contrast to secular historiography, might be best able to explore.

A Modal Approach to Genre

An interest in the fantastic leads into the thickets of a double disreputability: on the one hand, genre criticism has, as Fredric Jameson points

out, been undervalued by a particular variant of the "ideology of modernism" that stresses originality and invention over convention and repetition.⁶⁴ On the other hand, as Robert Scholes remarks in his foreword to Tzvetan Todorov's canonical book on the subject, the fantastic is one of the "humbler literary genres."⁶⁵ S. S. Prawer notes, with understated wit: "An interest in the uncanny does lead us into some bad or indifferent company."⁶⁶

Despite the pervasive devaluation of both genre study in general and the fantastic in particular, I propose an understanding of the fantastic that underscores the important contribution both can make to our ways of thinking and unthinking time. The fantastic can disclose a starting point for temporal critique, one that is enmeshed in the very idiom of homogeneous time yet strains against it, producing a quality of uncanniness.

Cinema's temporal critique is not possible only through the fantastic; neither is the fantastic confined to film. The supernatural worlds so often thematized by fantastic cinema are frequently articulated through both media specificity and media convergence.⁶⁷ The critique of homogeneous time is reducible to neither the cinema nor the fantastic; compelling temporal critique has been elaborated in anthropology, historiography, philosophy, experimental video, and elsewhere. This book does argue, though, that the fantastic has a *propensity* toward temporal critique, a tendency to reveal that homogeneous time is not "reality" but rather a translation, because the persistence of supernaturalism tends to insinuate the limits of disenchantment.

Jameson demarcates two approaches to the study of genre: the structural or syntactic approach, which constructs a textual model, and the semantic approach, which regards genre as a mode.⁶⁸ Todorov's influential structuralist theory of the fantastic, which I will discuss in depth in chapter 2, belongs to the first method. In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Todorov erects a textual paradigm for the mechanisms at work in a fantastic narrative, providing a precise formula for the production of an implicit reader's hesitation in the face of an anomalous event: the presence of two worlds (natural and supernatural), discursive ambiguity, and the banning of allegorical or poetic readings.⁶⁹

The approach to genre I adopt in this book belongs to the second variant: a semantics of the fantastic that explores its "form of being-in-the-world," the "generalized existential experience" the fantastic encodes.⁷⁰ In

an extremely incisive essay on film genre theory, Christine Gledhill defines "generic verisimilitude" as "what is expected of a particular kind of *fictional* world."⁷¹ In keeping with her formulation, one may say that the generic verisimilitude of the fantastic brings *worldness* into sharp relief.

Jameson argues that magical narratives contemplate being-in-the-world. For Jameson, magical narratives are a literary form in which "the *worldness* of *world* reveals itself. . . . *World* in the technical sense of the transcendental horizon of my experience becomes precisely visible as something like an innerworldly object in its own right, taking on the shape of *world* in the popular sense of nature, landscape, and so forth."⁷²

What does it mean to say that the "world-ness of world reveals itself" in the fantastic? For Martin Heidegger, the world is not a tangible space in which things are "objectively present" (e.g., a chair that is in a classroom in a school on Earth) where things are both "in" space and "at" a location. The chair, the classroom, the school, that "world-space," and all material things construed to be objectively present "in" the world are entities that can only be encountered insofar as they have been disclosed by that overarching interpretive fore-conception that is the world.⁷³ If we discover things, it is in the ontological context of their involvement with human possibility, their place in the set of assignations we ourselves construct. We are not objects that can be found within the world; rather it is human understanding that constitutes the world as a totality of relevances or involvements that we apprehend in relation to our own possibilities. What we can know or perceive is thus subject to the world we are familiar with, to that dwelling-in or worlding the world that is the very precondition for our encountering things like chairs and books in their readiness-to-hand. Though we frequently misinterpret ourselves as entities within the world, the world is rather something that we ourselves disclose. Our worlding is the precondition for our knowing about things within it; the world is thus not a thing outside us but that horizon in which we move.⁷⁴

For Jameson, what makes the magical narrative a special type of generic world is that world, in the Heideggerian sense, is concretely represented as an actual place, a physical setting. Adapting Jameson's conceptualization of the magical narrative to fantastic cinema, I suggest that competing epistemological frameworks—secular and enchanted worlds, for example—have, in the fantastic, become "objects of representation," *concretized in the mise-en-scène*. In most genres (with the exception, perhaps,

of the emphatically antiquotidian world of the film musical), world as “that supreme category which permits all experience or perception in the first place,” as Jameson notes, “cannot normally be an object of perception in its own right.”⁷⁵ This is because “conventional narrative realism” portrays the world as an objectively existing environment in which people act and events occur, rather than as an experiential horizon.⁷⁶ In contrast to realist narratives, the fantastic is precisely that genre in which antithetical forms of worlding are concretely figured as physical setting, as *mise-en-scène*: enchanted forests and haunted houses are diegetic objectifications of experiential fore-structures that admit of supernatural agency.

I adopt from Jameson and Gledhill a modal view of genre; in the broadest terms (which I refine below), this study conceptualizes the fantastic as a narrative that juxtaposes two (or more) radically different worlds.⁷⁷ The encounter with a forked world is registered within the narrative as an experience of limits, whether these be limits of epistemological certainty, cultural transparency, or historical understanding. Because the unfamiliar world most often takes the form of a supernatural realm in which the linear chronological time of clock and calendar does not hold, the fantastic has a propensity to foreground a sense of temporal discrepancy that cannot be entirely translated into the terms of modern homogeneous time.⁷⁸

Mode has a particular relationship to a historical consideration of genre. Jameson clarifies that mode is “not bound to the conventions of a given age, nor indissolubly linked to a given type of verbal artifact, but rather persists as a temptation and a mode of expression across a whole range of historical periods, seeming to offer itself, if only intermittently, as a formal possibility which can be revived and renewed.”⁷⁹ Mode, then, is a transhistorical category: a modal approach to the fantastic does not confine the genre to a particular national tradition nor to a particular historical period (that is, it does not begin and end, as Todorov and others assert, with late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century European fantastic literature). Nevertheless, a modal approach to the fantastic enables historical understanding by tracking how its forms of expression and aesthetic possibilities are spoken by particular works in specific circumstances. That is, historical specificity is actualized through the transhistorical possibilities offered by a mode. Though mode may appear at first glance to offer an ahistorical method, in modal genre criticism the question of history is asked in a particular, and to my mind, productive, manner: how does the

historical instance speak through a given aesthetic lexicon, a discursive universe of possibles? The fantastic is thus a reservoir of formal, affective, and semantic possibilities; but the ways that each work articulates, transforms, or renews those possibilities are contingent on specific junctures of emergence, reception, and circulation. This means that fantastic narratives are not always the same thing to every public: they may cause Todorovian hesitation, for example, or they might not.⁸⁰ As I demonstrate in the coming chapters, modal criticism opens up genre scholarship to the crosscurrents of historical transformation and shifting horizons of transnational reception.

Immiscible Times: The Fantastic as Temporal Translation

The translation of supernaturalisms into homogeneous time, a translation that must contend with generic conventions, is where my chief interest in the fantastic lies. Every temporal reinscription is an inextricably generic act; it must engage the horizon of expectations codified by genre. For a historian like Chakrabarty, the temporal translation of the “times of the gods” is subject to the conventions and expectations that underpin the genre of secular historiography. In contrast, fantastic cinema’s temporal translation of supernaturalism occurs within a generic mold centrally concerned with the epistemological crisis posed by an inexplicable event, since, in a purportedly disenchanted world, the possible existence of the supernatural transgresses against received knowledge.

Todorov’s enormously influential theory of the fantastic identifies three things at the “heart” of the genre: (1) an “apparently supernatural event,” one that appears to confound all explanations that accord with the laws of “our familiar world”; (2) an affective response: hesitation. The inexplicable event causes the reader (and sometimes, the fictional characters) to become doubtful or hesitant as to the right way to perceive the event and, by extension, the world; and (3) the temporality of affect: the fantastic as “the duration of this uncertainty,” the duration of hesitation.⁸¹

For Todorov, the fantastic is a drama of disbelief in which we waver between two competing perspectives: either the world is charged with wondrous events that the laws of nature are inadequate to explain (the marvelous), or the impossible event is an illusion that scientific explanation

can dispel (the uncanny). In Todorov's spatialized and temporalized definition, the fantastic is flanked by two adjacent genres: the uncanny (the supernatural demystified by rational explanation) and the marvelous (the supernatural accepted, repudiating the laws of nature). Todorov provides the following diagram. The neighboring genres, poles antithetical to the pure fantastic, are given to the extreme left and right (uncanny and marvelous). The subgenres closest to the fantastic (fantastic-uncanny and fantastic-marvelous), characterized by a hesitation resolved in favor of either pole, are represented as interior terms. Strikingly, the fantastic has no territorial span, and it appears in Todorov's map only as the borderline between the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvelous:

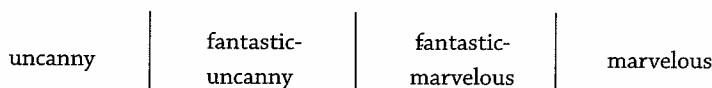


DIAGRAM 1. In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov maps the relationship of the fantastic as pure borderline to neighboring genres and subgenres.

Explaining this diagram, Todorov writes: "The fantastic in its pure state is represented here by the median line separating the fantastic-uncanny from the fantastic-marvelous. This line corresponds perfectly to the nature of the fantastic, a frontier between two adjacent realms."⁸² Todorov's emphasis on perceptual hesitation spatializes the fantastic as an "evanescent" dividing line between a hesitant dismissal of the supernatural and a grudging acceptance of it.⁸³ As the term *evanescence* and his spatial illustration suggest, for Todorov the fantastic is a genre whose purity—unalloyed hesitation, never resolved in favor of skepticism or credulity—results in a transient, imperiled state: "The fantastic . . . lasts only as long as a certain hesitation. . . . [It] leads a life full of dangers, and may evaporate at any moment. It seems to be located on the frontier of two genres, the marvelous and the uncanny, rather than to be an autonomous genre."⁸⁴ The fantastic as pure boundary line is a result of Todorov's emphasis on generic purity, to the point that most texts are fantastic only for a certain duration of reading, while the reader is still in the grips of uncertainty.

Todorov is the great contemporary cartographer of the fantastic, staking out the perimeters of contiguous but discrete genres. His approach to

the fantastic exemplifies Gledhill's keen insight into the engine of genre studies as a preoccupation with borders: "Genre is first and foremost a boundary phenomenon. Like cartographers, early genre critics sought to define fictional territories and the borders which divided, for example, western from gangster film, thriller from horror film, romantic comedy from the musical. . . . Not surprisingly, the process of establishing territories leads to border disputes."⁸⁵

A cartographic approach to genre is driven by the linked desires for generic purity and scholarly mastery, the desire for genre study to yield a definitive, historically invariable answer to a question posed in the singular: What is the fantastic? In this book, I suggest that the value of genre scholarship might be related less to questions of purity and historical stasis than to the question of generic transformation. Jameson asks, for example, "What happens when plot falls into history?"⁸⁶ In a similar vein, Gledhill compellingly argues that the productivity of genre studies lies in tracing "the life of films in the social."⁸⁷

Considered from the perspective of the fantastic as a mode of temporal translation, Todorov appears as a grammarian-cartographer of the fantastic, one who made explicit its rules, erected a taxonomy, and, from within the genre's presumption of the normativity of homogeneous time, conceptualized the fantastic's thematizing of difference. As I argue in chapter 2, ensuing critics who grafted Todorov's synchronic model onto a diachronic line (the marvelous corresponds to the pre-Enlightenment, the uncanny to the post-Enlightenment) accurately described the workings of this genre from within the hegemony of homogeneous time. What one perhaps misses in these accounts is a recognition of the genre's capacity to point outside temporal normativity, to intimate the breakdown of chronological historical time as such, to allude to the heterogeneity of times in excess of the uniform intervals measured by clock and calendar.

This book argues that the fantastic as temporal translation is a kind of *mistranslation* operating between two asymmetrically ranked codes; this is translation in the politicized context of hierarchy. One temporal code (the homogeneous time of Newtonian science and modern historical consciousness) is positioned as universal, while others (the heterogeneous times of the supernatural, the folkloric, and the popular) are devalued as merely local and archaic.⁸⁸ Although fantastic translation enables the communicative breaching of a gap, a fording of differences, it does so at the

cost of misapproximation, with a host of power effects that may prop up a particular social order or signal elements of resistance, counterappropriation, or evasion.

The fantastic as a mistranslation of heterogeneous temporalities into the universalizing code of homogeneous time nonetheless hints at the violence of this translation. The fantastic narrative translates the plural times of worlds that affirm the existence of the supernatural into the secularism of modern homogeneous time. But this is, in Gayatri Spivak's parlance, "wholesale translation," a betrayal obedient to "the law of the strongest,"⁸⁹ that standard time that emerged victorious at the end of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, this mistranslation of supernaturalism's temporal otherness into the logic of homogeneous time preserves a hint of untranslatability. The fantastic as temporal translation can, at its most uncanny, allude to the "always possible menace of a space outside language," of a world outside our familiar time. The uncanny here is that eeriness that Spivak describes in a translation that provokes a sense of "contained alterity," of a world unlike our own narrated for ourselves, in *this* time.⁹⁰ That uncanny hint of untranslatable times, that trace of containment and excess, is what I am calling *immiscible temporality*.

The adjective *immiscible*, from the Latin *miscibilis* ("that can be mixed"), means "incapable of mixing or attaining homogeneity." The immiscible pertains to the commingling of oil and water, for instance, which can never yield a true solution. Immiscibility—which, I am arguing, is both an epistemological problem disclosed by translation and an ontological property of plural times—belongs to the ontology of cinema as well. As Akira Mizuta Lippit points out, the enabling material-chemical condition of photography, the *photographic emulsion*, is by definition an immiscible mixture: "By fixing visible light and other forms of radiation on chemically treated photosensitive plates—in the first instances with a silver compound held in suspension in collodion or gelatin—the photograph holds the image between surface and atmosphere, film and air . . . Suspended between two dimensions and arrested in time, the photograph appears as an effect of the interstice opened by the immiscible mixture."⁹¹ Chakrabarty speaks briefly of immiscibility when he calls for a recognition of untranslatability in the writing of postcolonial histories, urging us "to work out the ways these immiscible forms of recalling the past get juxtaposed in our negotiations of modern institutions."⁹² Spivak also gestures at immiscibility when she

writes evocatively of a translation in which the seams show, where the "selvedges of the language-textile" come partly undone, so that the translation shows signs of "fraying."⁹³ She is writing about a loving translation open to unraveling, a translation that cares for the source, that does not engulf it. The fantastic as temporal translation of heterogeneity into homogeneity, in contrast, is an act of containment and ideological legitimation, preserving the cachet of homogeneous time by translating alterity as anachronism. Nonetheless, the fantastic, a genre defined by its encounter with anomaly and limit, does expose the seams of temporal translation. Under the selvedge, one catches sight of a kind of fraying, an undoing of the universalizing terms of the translation.

To glimpse temporal immiscibility means to ask how the fantastic, in the seams and selvedges of its translation, gestures at temporal differences that cannot be fully homogenized. How does the fantastic disclose the untranslatability at the heart of its temporal translation, the uncanny excess lurking behind reassuring chronology, a nonincorporative remainder able to interrupt our complacency toward homogeneous time?

This book is not asking: How does the fantastic dramatize the return of surmounted modes of thought? How does this genre shore up our sense of modernity by foregrounding skepticism toward the vestiges of premodern supernaturalism?⁹⁴ Those questions remain within the purview of homogeneous time; they are premised on the belief that there are no really intransigent temporal differences in ways of inhabiting the world. To such a view, everyone, and all ways of being, shorn of unruliness, can be positioned in a single, linear unfolding toward progress. Modern time, despite being so recently invented, is so universal and so empty that it can contain all apparent differences, because in translating them, it transcends them. In contrast, if one writes from the position of temporal critique, then another view of genre appears. This study discerns in the fantastic traces of worlding immiscible to homogeneous time. Its line of inquiry insistently mines the genre for traces of temporal alterity, for refractory difference. Temporal critique does not begin by asking how the genre dramatizes the return of or encounter with surmounted modes of thought but rather: how does this genre allow immiscible worlds and times to rise to my notice? The trace of immiscibility is that kernel of protest lodged in the heart of narratives that thematize the supernatural but presume the ascendancy of homogeneous time.

Organizing Logics and Chapter Analyses

The form of temporal critique I am describing sits uneasily within established frames of reference in film and media studies. To take one example: national cinema is a productive analytical lens frequently employed in this book—as in the third chapter’s discussion of spectral figures in the Philippine New Cinema and what I call the “national cinema effect” of the Hong Kong New Wave—but it cannot found the book’s organizing logic. This is because national cinema, however enabling in some respects as a regulatory discursive fiction, depends on imagined coherences that are at once cultural and temporal. The fiction of a homogeneous national culture, as Andrew Higson points out, underpins the idea that a national cinema is somehow expressive of the uniqueness of the national character. (One familiar variant of this theme discovers in national cinema traditional values assailed by modernization.) Apart from the premise that a national cinema is necessarily coextensive with the territorial span of the nation-state in which certain film industries and markets are geographically located,⁹⁵ the imagined unity of a national cinema also crucially presumes a temporal unity. The fiction of a homogeneous national culture is founded on the ascendancy of homogeneous time. “Nation” depends on the fiction of calendrical coincidence, a shared, simultaneous present in which all citizens live and move, even as it is haunted by stubborn temporal paradoxes: the modernity of the nation as a political form vis-à-vis claims that the nation has always existed, merely conferring a new name for a community rooted in immemorial antiquity.⁹⁶ For these reasons, temporal critique attentive to immiscible times in cinema cannot treat “nation” and “national cinema” as unproblematic organizing categories, since, as I discuss in chapters 2 and 3, a linear national present is precisely what splinters when *aswang* and ghosts return.

Neither can this study adopt accepted definitions of genres like horror and the fantastic or assume their interchangeability. As I elaborate in chapter 2, distinctions between the natural and the supernatural, and a particular story of how the world became secular and rational (the disenchantment thesis), underpin prevailing definitions of the fantastic, but the historicity of the concepts of nature and the supernatural have been repressed in such accounts. As I explore in some detail in the coming chapters, the Todorovian fantastic, national cinema, and Asian horror—each

productive analytical rubrics to a certain extent—would be of limited use as overarching organizing principles for temporal critique precisely because the coherence of each category—national, regional, or generic—starts to come apart once the self-evidence of homogeneous time erodes.

The term *genre*, as Rick Altman has shown, is really shorthand for an intersection of interests that may agree or be at cross-purposes with one another: formal conventions, audience expectations, formulas for production and marketing, and critical and historical perspectives (which are often at odds with film-industrial classifications).⁹⁷ The two genres foregrounded in this book, horror and the fantastic, are often regarded as adjacent, but their areas of convergence are perhaps less interesting than the tensions between them. The fantastic receives its fullest and most influential elaboration in European literary theory, in reference to nineteenth-century gothic texts. Horror, in contrast, shares some of the terrain of both gothic and fantastic literature but is also an immediately legible contemporary category for transnational film production and distribution (used in everything from pitching scripts to labeling films for ancillary markets), able to bring certain types of audiences to theaters and drive international adaptation and exchange. In the final chapter, I explore the way in which fantastic cinema, for all its propensity for temporal critique, has also become enmeshed in highly profitable global practices of adaptation and decimation (to wit, from 2001 to 2005, Hollywood remade “Asian horror” at a very brisk rate). Temporal critique of and through the cinema must come to grips with the temporality—the sheer speed—of such forms of transnational generic borrowing and exchange. But this study can only undertake such a consideration precisely insofar as it does not take globalist-regionalist marketing labels such as “Asian horror cinema” at face value.

This book is not about a genre in a national cinema at a historical period (although it draws heavily on my core field of specialization, contemporary Philippine cinema, and my research and teaching on various Asian national cinemas). Rather, the various chapters and the book’s overall argument unfold as an explication of the book’s method, the modes and topoi of temporal critique.

I want to emphasize from the outset that critiques of homogeneous time provoked by immiscible temporal worlds are not the sole province of colonial or postcolonial histories of modernity. If I concentrate on filmic examples and historical circumstances from the Philippines, and to a lesser

extent, genre films from other Asian national cinemas, it is because my relative intimacy with these screen texts and cultural coordinates enables that cognizance of translation entailed by the consideration of the fantastic as a form of temporal critique. The book's focus on the specters that suffuse Asian screen texts is emphatically not an exceptionalist claim regarding the way in which these films, and their cultural and historical contexts of emergence and circulation, are the sole, or privileged, sites of plural temporalities. As I explain in greater depth in the final chapter, claims of exceptionalism (succinctly conveyed by a *New York Times* article entitled "Why Asian Ghost Stories Are the Best") are suspect, since the differences being espoused are never differences that arise from specificity but are very often fantasies of cultural essence that serve only too well the logic of global capitalism.

One very welcome development in film and media scholarship is the small but growing area of inquiry into cinematic temporality, a body of work that rigorously engages Bergsonian duration. Books as diverse and accomplished as Marta Braun's *Picturing Time* (1992), David N. Rodowick's *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (1997), and Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (2002) are emblematic of an upsurge of scholarship exploring the vital stakes of temporality for film and video studies, influenced in no small measure by Deleuze's long-standing Bergsonism.

It is not that temporal critique *of and through* the cinema is obligated to grapple with Bergson's discussion of perception as cinematographic. What motivates my own return to Bergson is the fascination exerted by a critique of homogeneous time cast in unmistakably visual terms. The first chapter of this book attempts to answer the following question: *How can the cinema undertake a critique of homogeneous time when it is arguably an instantiation of it?* The first chapter contextualizes Bergson's condemnation of the cinema and his suspicion of spectatorship in light of the medium's own unforeseeable becoming. Bergson's critique of the cinematograph, published in 1907, equates cinematic temporality with the spatialized time of the apparatus itself. A century later, the cinema—a media-convergent global industry, a vast social network of film workers and spectators—comprises temporalities that can no longer be reduced to the mechanisms of camera and projector.

Each chapter attempts to wrestle with multiple analytical concerns. The first chapter, for example, delineates the dual character of the book's tem-

poral critique: on the one hand, Bergsonism's ontological, visualist appraisal of cinema as enmeshed in homogeneous time; and on the other, a historical and postcolonial consideration of the emergence of modern time consciousness. The productive dovetailing of both modes—the ways in which cinema can both uphold and contest the racialized rhetoric of anachronism—is illustrated by a case study that closes the first chapter. Fatimah Tobing Rony's 1994 experimental video, *On Cannibalism*, a metacommentary on the fantastic premises of Merian Cooper's and Ernest Schoedsack's *King Kong* (1933), offers a powerful rejoinder to the time machine of early ethnographic cinema.

The second chapter elaborates the role of genre as a lens for temporal critique by likewise juxtaposing twinned concerns: first, a counterreading of Todorov's structuralist model of the fantastic, premised on the disenchantment thesis, and of his theory's reliance on an ideal reader immanent to the text; and second, a close look at the ways in which fantastic texts encounter noncontemporaneous audiences. If the first chapter explores an expanded understanding of *the time of cinematic production* as heterogeneous and irreducible to the cinematographic apparatus, then the second chapter insists on the *multiple temporalities of reception*, especially with regard to fantastic films that adapt supernatural narratives of centuries-old provenance.

To insist on the survival of the past—as translated by the fantastic—requires a temporally nuanced consideration of reception: the question of the *noncontemporaneous audience*. On the one hand, extraordinarily long-lived texts encounter new readers, listeners, and spectators; on the other, the “contemporary” filmgoing audience is also temporally disjoint, belonging to more than one time. Immiscible temporalities surfaced conspicuously when supernatural sightings of a winged nocturnal monster—an *aswang* in the slums of Manila, preying on the urban poor—disrupted the 1992 Philippine presidential elections. The second chapter looks closely at a Filipino horror film cycle that sought to exploit the tremendous popular currency of the *aswang* in the early 1990s. Though newspapers reported the proliferation of *aswang* accounts “during” the 1992 elections, the presumed calendrical coincidence of these two worlds—those to which *aswang* and modern political processes belong—came undone. The media-convergent nature of the *aswang* event drew on reserves of colonial and neocolonial translations of fantastic accounts, ranging from sixteenth-century Span-

ish missionary ethnologies of “native superstitions,” to the discourse of twentieth-century anthropology, to a cynical American CIA operative’s implantation of aswang rumors in a “psy-war” ruse against Filipino/a Communist guerillas in the 1950s.

The first two chapters uncover two sets of analytical problems for a temporal critique of film genre. First, *cinematic time*: the Bergsonian account of the temporality of the cinematographic apparatus, as well as the film-historical contexts subtending Bergson’s encounter with the new medium in the period of its emergence. Second, the *times of reception and rearticulation* of a cross-generic, media-convergent event: the aswang as a condensation of conflicted times, worlds, and interests, colonial and neocolonial involvements as well as peasant idioms of protest.

The third chapter, on ghost films, looks at the spectral time of haunting and the affective temporality of nostalgic allegory. Through a close analysis of spectral figures in the New Cinema movements of Hong Kong and the Philippines, the chapter underscores the tensions and paradoxes that arise when ghosts become the linchpin of a historical allegory: allegory’s capacity to vivify a nearly forgotten past is coupled with ghost narratives that obstinately allude to nonhistorical temporalities. In chapter 3, I consider Stanley Kwan’s *Rouge* (1987) alongside Antonio “Butch” Perez’s *Haplos* [Caress, 1982]. Both films invite consideration in relation to the film culture fields that constitute the New Cinema movements of Hong Kong and the Philippines. New Hong Kong Cinema and the Hong Kong New Wave are two near-synonymous film-historical namings, though periodization and the inclusion of canonical directors varies with the critic. Kwan’s ghost film, *Rouge*, has been repeatedly approached through the same interpretive paradigms that founded the naming of the Hong Kong New Wave: auteurism, localism, urbanism, and a reflectionist reading of Hong Kong art cinema in relation to the 1997 handover. While *Rouge* has received wide international distribution and is consequently familiar to North American film scholars, *Haplos*, a work belonging to what has been called the Second Golden Age of Filipino cinema, has enjoyed neither national nor international commercial release on DVD formats (it was briefly available on commercial VHS release locally) and is consequently best known only among Filipino/a cinephiles with access to film archives or to limited releases in film retrospectives and on local television. Yet despite such asymmetries, these two ghost films, drawn from two roughly contemporaneous New

Cinema movements in Southeast Asia, both work to disrupt the rubric of national cinema that subtends scholarly analyses of these film movements. Specters are strongly contrarian to cultural, historical, and national homogenization; the ghost film partly undermines the culture-binding function of auteurist film movements by foregrounding spatiotemporal discrepancy. While the first two chapters consider cinematic temporality and the times of reception, the third chapter looks at fantastic disruptions of *national time* alongside the use of a sexualized politics of nostalgia that reins in the more unsettling aspects of spectral temporality. Like aswang, ghosts bring out the contours of a third issue for temporal critique: the fantastic unsettles the fantasy of a single calendrical present shared by all citizens through an *occult splintering of the national meanwhile*.

The third chapter also complicates Bergsonism's critique of homogeneous time-as-space by closely considering the question of *heterogeneous space*. In his later writing, Bergson maintained that quantifiable, detemporalized, uniform extensity is not the true character of space. Homogeneous space, like homogeneous time, is an abstraction, a necessary illusion well suited to the demands of social life and to a consideration of our possible action upon things. The ghost film, however, diverges strikingly from homogeneous space. Places have long memories; space is neither static nor solid but vibrates with both permanence and becoming. In narratives focalized through a specter's gaze on the world, space is revealed to be crosshatched with various temporal rhythms. The durative plurality of space in ghost films recalls the Bergsonian image of a kaleidoscopic, vibrational universe, one that changes ceaselessly, while the past abides.

In the fourth chapter, this study of time, cinema, and genre comes full circle by shifting methodological gears, directly addressing what scholars have called the inevitable mismatch between theoretical and industrial genres. For all its potency as a lens for temporal critique, the fantastic, unlike a proximate and sometimes overlapping genre, horror, is not a film-industrial category. In this final chapter, I identify a fourth set of analytical problems: the *times of transnational generic exchange*. Through a consideration of Takashi Shimizu's *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2003), remade as *The Grudge* (2004), and Kim Jee-woon's *A Tale of Two Sisters* (*Janghwa, Hongryeon*, 2003), whose DreamWorks remake, *The Uninvited*, was released in 2009, the chapter retraces the remarkable celerity of transnational practices of film (re-)production, distribution, and circulation. By tracking a recent film

cycle—global Hollywood’s remakes of “Asian horror films” (a regionalist appellation referring primarily to films originating in Japanese, South Korean, and Hong Kong film industries)—I examine both the multiple temporal rhythms of generic repetition (the practice of “remaking” films) and the *speed* with which Hollywood studios appropriate and deracinate the cinematic signatures of rival national cinemas.

In 1907, Bergson’s critique of homogeneous time figuratively engaged an emergent technology, the cinematographic apparatus. A century later, temporal critique thought through the cinema is obliged to confront the reticulated character of transnational genres and global film industries, markets, and audiences. The various moments of this study move from considerations of modern time in the service of capital and empire to the velocity of global Hollywood’s deracinating strategies of cultural appropriation; that is, from homogenizing temporal misprisions to cinematic translations that attempt to blunt the hard edges of cultural difference.

Political and historical film genre criticism—by which I mean, in the best sense, scholarship attuned to racial, sexual, cultural, and historical difference—has been disparaged by detractors as mere “ideological criticism” whose ultimate goal is to decide on the progressive or conservative bent of screen texts.⁹⁸ Yet temporal critique offers another way to look at the politics of genre, that is, to conduct genre studies in a manner that is attuned to complex, historically overdetermined differentials of power among diverse, noncontemporaneous audiences, without pigeonholing screen texts into either-or pronouncements of ideological persuasion.

For Jameson, genre is a *combinatoire* of three “reciprocally permutational” elements: the individual text, its intertextual horizon, and its historical conditions of emergence. This modal *combinatoire* enables a historical consideration of genres that avoids the pitfalls of reflectionist accounts (the problematic positing of social or historical change as directly causing, or being mirrored by, cultural texts). In contrast, to regard genre as *combinatoire* is to consider how contexts of emergence and circulation function as “limiting situations” or “conditions of possibility” that constrain the manner in which formal and semantic elements can be deployed and transformed.⁹⁹

The temporal critique of the fantastic I pursue in the pages that follow can be broadly understood as tracing a *combinatoire* that engages temporalities of production (not just the temporality of the apparatus but also

historically changing definitions of what counts as cinema), reception (the encounter with temporally fractured audiences), and distribution (genre cinemas and global capitalism), as well as fragmented fantasies of a singular national time. Throughout the work, I presume that the fantastic is not equivalent to horror, but neither is horror merely "as conservative as a Republican in a three-piece suit," a genre in which monstrosity only ever upholds the status quo.¹⁰⁰ Supernatural narratives, I argue, are not one thing or another, neither eclipsed nor overcome by modern homogeneous time. Rather, they stage immiscible encounters that play out in fascinating ways, as temporal polarities fail to conciliate or dissolve. The tensions that pervade this method of temporal critique echo the contradictions of the fantastic as well: a historical approach, no matter how carefully pitched, sees its limits, its necessary acknowledging of the possibility of error, in a genre that fervently contemplates an outside to historical time.¹⁰¹ Throughout this book, genre is construed as a mode of cinematic repetition and return, a ghostly revenant through whose eyes we might glimpse not only vexed histories of contestation and containment but also the fantastic's recalcitrance toward homogeneous time and, perhaps, the beginnings of more ethical temporal imaginings.