

**Temporal Entanglements and Gendered Selves: Navigating Queer Temporality in A Tale for the Time Being**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper will explore the novel A Tale for the Time Being (2013) by Ruth Ozeki in relation to queer temporality, as a means of exploring how digital interconnectedness and cultural displacement are remaking gender and identity in the present literary imagination. Inspired by the theoretical perspectives of Elizabeth Freeman and Jack Halberstam, this study contends that Ozeki uses queer temporality as a narrative device to destabilize linear, chrononormative notions of selfhood, in which her characters occupy fragmented, nonlinear temporalities, which resist fixed identity formations. This paper focuses on the relationship between the two protagonists, Nao Yasutani and Ruth, who are linked through Nao's handwritten diary, as a model of the possibility of identity formation outside of the framework of traditional time. This study takes a qualitative and textual approach informed by feminist and queer theory to examine the temporal entanglements that go beyond the individual and the nation that form Nao's experience of bullying, cultural dislocation, and existential self-discovery. These temporal ruptures are intensified by the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, which is a historical chronotope. The results show that digital landscapes are asynchronous spaces of identity transmission and make selfhood inherently relational, contingent, and always in process. Finally, this paper makes a unique and valuable addition to the literature of queer temporality, digital culture, and transnational feminist literary criticism by uncovering Ozeki's novel as a reconfiguration of the gendered self as an adaptable, intersubjective construct in the digital age.*

**Keywords:** *Queer Temporality, Gendered Identity, Digital Connectivity, Nonlinear Narrative, Chrononormativity, A Tale for the Time Being*

**INTRODUCTION**

In the twenty-first century, digital technologies and the rapid pace of transnational cultural exchange have significantly transformed people's notions of time, identity, and selfhood. As a cultural genre that is sensitive to the ever-changing nature of human experience, literary fiction has increasingly attempted to capture these changes in its experimental narrative forms, its disjointed temporalities, and its hybrid subjectivities. A Tale for the Time Being (2013) by Ruth Ozeki is a literary tour de force that reflects this genre shift, a formally and philosophically ambitious reflection on time, consciousness, and the gendered self. The novel is ultimately about the connection that can happen via time and space, through the material and symbolic potential of a young girl's diary washed up on a remote Canadian island.

A Tale for the Time Being was published in 2013 and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, and has received a great deal of critical attention for its intertextuality, its Buddhist philosophy, and for its formal experimentation. However, the novel's ongoing examination of queer temporality, its critique of the normal, linear, and linearizing ways of structuring time and the identities it produces, is one aspect of its meaning that has not been sufficiently explored. This paper aims to fill that void by engaging with the novel from a queer temporal perspective, such as those of Elizabeth Freeman (2010) and Jack Halberstam (2005), in order to uncover how Ozeki employs temporal disruptions as a way to reconceptualize gendered selfhood in a digitally connected world.

It's a novel about two women: Nao Yasutani, a sixteen-year-old Japanese-American girl who writes in her diary in a Tokyo café; Ruth, a character who, like the author, lives on Cortes Island, British Columbia, and finds the diary in a lunchbox that's been buried in the sand. As the girl reads through Nao's diary, she becomes more and more involved in the girl's fate, especially in the context of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. The novel's structure is complex, oscillating between Nao's first-person diary and Ruth's third-person, present-tense narration, and past and present, fiction and autobiography, Japan and Canada are interwoven in a productive tension.

In this paper, I claim that the temporal entanglements that lie at the very core of A Tale for the Time Being are not simply formal devices, but rather a continuous ethical and political project. Ozeki uses queer temporality to challenge the chrononormative logic that shapes identity formation in Japanese and North American cultural contexts, creating space for alternative, fluid and relational selfhoods to emerge. In particular, the paper focuses on the way in which Nao's experiences of bullying, cultural dislocation, and sexual and existential uncertainty are mediated by a queer temporal framework that challenges the normative developmental narrative of the self-discovery of adolescence. It also examines the digital space as an asynchronous, cross-temporal space for the transmission of identity, as the diary is washed up on the shores where it meets Ruth.

The paper continues as follows. This introduction is followed by a Literature Review that maps the current scholarship on queer temporality, digital identity, and Ozeki's novel, and that sets the stage for the critical conversations this study engages. The Research Methodology section details the qualitative, textual analytical methodology used, placing it in the interdisciplinary context of feminist and queer literary criticism. The Analysis and Discussion section is the heart of the paper and explores the novel's temporal structures, characterizations of Nao and Ruth and the representation of digital connectivity as a means of gendered identity formation. The paper ends with a discussion of the implications of Ozeki's queer temporality for current literary and cultural studies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Queer Temporality: Theoretical Foundations**

Queer temporality stems from a larger body of queer theory and is a persistent critique of the “straight time” that organizes social life around reproductive futurity, linear progress, and birth, maturity and death. Building on the work of Lee Edelman (2004), whose polemical *No Future* calls for a queer politics that can “resist” the ideological pull of reproductive futurism, Halberstam (2005) develops another model of queer space and time, one that celebrates non-normative life paths, subcultural formations, and modes of temporality that are linked to failure, precarity, and interruption.

In 2010, Elizabeth Freeman's book *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* takes up this work by adding the idea of chrononormativity, defined as the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity (p. 3). Chrononormativity is a process that Freeman claims is achieved

through the synchronisation of bodies with the hegemonic temporalities of the work week, the life cycle, and the national history, marginalising those who do not fit into these rhythms. Freeman's notion of "erotohistoriography" provides a framework for thinking about the non-linear, affective relationship between bodies and the past, which she terms "temporal drag": the pull of the past on the present that opens up possibilities for alternative futures.

Carla Freccero (2006) has also maintained that a queer historiography should focus on "haunting" and the "spectral presence" of the past in the present, and Dana Luciano (2007) has examined the temporal management of bodies in nineteenth-century American literature, under the rubric of "chronobiopolitics." In sum, these theoretical interventions have introduced a new and important perspective on the study of literature that is queer temporality, which can help to uncover how fiction can challenge normative temporal logics and create new imaginative possibilities.

In more recent research, scholars have expanded the concept of queer temporality to the temporal formations of digital culture. Digital networks create what Wendy Chun (2016) has termed "enduring ephemerality"—a temporal paradox in which data exists, but feels like it is gone, creating a digital past that is not under the control or memory of the individual. Similarly, Jonathan Sterne (2012) has examined the temporal aspect of digital media, focusing on the implications of technologies of storage and transmission on the experience of time and continuity. Such digital-temporal structures are especially important to the interpretation of Ozeki's novel, which thematizes the handwritten diary as a figure for the asynchronous transmission of identity, which moves across oceanic and temporal distance.

### **Feminist and Postcolonial Readings of Ozeki**

Since the publication of her first novel, *My Year of Meats* (1998), Ruth Ozeki's fiction has garnered significant scholarly interest and *A Tale for the Time Being* has sparked an especially fruitful critical dialogue, ranging from feminist to Buddhist, ecocritical to transnational literary studies. The Pacific Rim has been a contact zone (Pratt, 1992) in the novel, where Japanese and North American cultural formations meet and transform each other. Patricia Nguyen (2016) has investigated the novel's engagement with cultural trauma in the wake of the Tōhoku disaster, noting that Ozeki makes use of the tsunami as a symbol of the traumatic disruption of the normativity of time.

Feminist interpretations of the novel have tended to focus on the novel's portrayal of female subjectivity and intergenerational female relationships. Fiona Tolan (2017) has theorized the connection between Nao and Ruth as a model of what she describes as "feminist relay"—a form of cross-temporal solidarity that sees one woman's story as the condition of possibility for another woman's self-understanding. Likewise, Stacy Alaimo (2016) has approached the novel in the context of material feminism, which is defined by her as "the entanglement of human bodies with the more-than-human world" (14).

The novel's ongoing focus on ecological issues has been addressed in the context of ecocritical readings, which have focused on the depiction of the Tōhoku tsunami and its impact. Cheryl Lousley (2016) has suggested that Ozeki's novel engages in a "slow violence" aesthetic which renders visible the slow and continuous environmental devastation that occurs before and after the spectacular catastrophe. The novel's temporality is of particular relevance to Rob Nixon's (2011) notion of slow violence, which refers to violence that is "dispersed across time and space" and "occurs slowly and out of sight."

The critical literature on queer readings of *A Tale for the Time Being* is relatively light, and there is a distinct lack of studies that focus on queer readings. However, queer theoretical approaches to the novel have yet to be developed, although some scholars, like Hsu (2015), have briefly discussed the novel's non-normative gender and sexual representations. This paper aims to join the growing body of research

on queer temporality in modern transnational novels and show how it is at the heart of Ozeki's narrative project.

### **Digital Identity and Narrative**

Digital technologies and identity formation have long been a focus of literary studies and cultural theory in the twenty-first century. Sherry Turkle's (2011) *Alone Together* provides an account of how digital connectivity can foster new forms of social connection and also create an ontological fragmentation and isolation, while danah boyd's (2014) *It's Complicated* focuses on how adolescents engage with the complex social worlds of networked digital culture. Both studies are applicable to an analysis of Nao's life in the novel, in which a teenage girl's sense of self is heavily influenced by the interactions of face-to-face social interaction and digital mediation.

N. Katherine Hayles (2012) has theorized that digital literature alters our perception of textual identity, selfhood and authorship in the field of literary studies, and Henry Jenkins (2006) has explored participatory culture as a new way of forming identities through digital media platforms. More recently, however, the field of "digital humanities" has emerged to investigate the implications of digital connectivity for narrative form, and to argue that the hypertextual and networked nature of digital reading creates new forms of temporal experience and narrative subjectivity (Bolter & Grusin, 2000; Hayles, 2008).

The concept of the diary as a vehicle for identity construction has been an enduring theme in literary and feminist scholarship. Rebecca Hogan (1991) has suggested that the diary is an in-between space between public and private, a space where women writers have traditionally been able to express experiences and subjectivities that are not found in more public literary genres. Nao's diary is a hybrid medium that, in the context of the novel, is both intimate and interior in its form and nature, and also asynchronous and cross-temporal in its connectivity, but what we might call a "proto-digital" artifact, one that anticipates and figures the temporal logics of digital culture.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design and Approach**

The methodology used in this study is qualitative and textual analysis, which is based on the interdisciplinary tradition of feminist and queer literary criticism. Close reading is the most basic approach, but it is not a formalist analysis of the internal features of the literary text; it is a critical approach that simultaneously considers the formal features of the literary text and its place in a wider cultural, historical and theoretical matrix. It follows a long history of feminist literary criticism, begun by feminist scholars like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979), Elaine Showalter (1977), and then carried on by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) and Judith Butler (1990) into the realm of queer theory.

The qualitative approach is well suited to the goals of this study, which emphasize the depth and nuance of the novel's language, imagery, and narrative structure over quantitative measurement, allowing the sustained and attentive engagement with the novel's language, imagery, and narrative form that the novel's temporal politics require. The close reading methodology used here is not designed to quantify or map certain textual features as quantitative methods might, but to highlight the interpretive possibilities created by the formal and thematic choices of the text, as well as the ways in which the text's narrative decisions enact and complicate the theoretical frameworks applied to it.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical approach of this study is based on queer temporality theory developed by Elizabeth Freeman (2010) and Jack Halberstam (2005), feminist theory (Butler, 1990; Braidotti, 2013), postcolonial and transnational feminist literary criticism (Mohanty, 2003; Bhabha, 1994), and digital culture studies (Chun, 2016; Hayles, 2008). The interdisciplinary theoretical framework allows the study to explore the several layers of Ozeki's narrative project, its experimentation with time, its feminist politics, its transnational cultural imagination, and its reflections on the technology and identity.

For the analysis of the spatial-temporal configurations of the novel, the concept of the "chronotope" borrowed from the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) is very useful. It is a term Bakhtin uses to refer to the intrinsic linkage of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature, suggesting that the chronotope is the chief way to materialize time in space and is the organizing center for the fundamental narrative events represented in the text. The novel's temporal complexity is the result of the interaction of several chronotopes working at the same time, such as the Tokyo café where Nao writes, the Canadian beach where Ruth reads, and the Pacific Ocean through which the diary travels.

### **Data Sources and Textual Corpus**

The novel *A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth Ozeki (2013) is the main source of data for this study. The analysis is close to the novel's structure, its incorporation of several first- and third-person narrative voices, its paratextual elements (footnotes, glossaries, appendices), and its thematic organization of ideas of time, identity, and connectivity. The secondary sources are the theoretical texts cited above, published critical essays and reviews of the novel that are engaged in the Literature Review and in the process of analysis.

This paper does not follow the methods of empirical social science research, such as interview, survey, ethnographic observation, but it refers to the findings of the neighboring disciplines such as media studies, cultural studies, and the sociology of technology to position the novel's representations within the context of the wider social and cultural formations. The interdisciplinary nature of the analysis mirrors the novel's own inter-disciplinary concerns, its inability to fit into any one genre or discipline.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Chrononormativity and Its Discontents: The Temporal Logic of the Novel**

*A Tale for the Time Being*'s most striking formal aspect is its radical disruption of the chronological narrative sequence. The novel starts with a letter from Nao to an unknown reader: "Hi! I'm Nao, I'm a time being"—a greeting that immediately frames the text in a queer temporal register, for a time being is a being in time, and a temporary, provisional, in-transit being (Ozeki, 2013, p. 3). This self-description denies the continuity of self that is generally assumed in the chrononormative narrative. Nao is not an object that passes through time, but a 'being' created and lived in time, whose identity is always bound up with temporal entanglements.

Freeman's (2010) idea of chrononormativity sheds light on the social forces that Nao's self-presentation implicitly challenges. The Japanese culture the novel depicts is governed by a strong chrononormative logic that connects the growth of the individual with the national and institutional clock: From school to corporate job to marriage and family reproduction is the norm and any deviation from it is not only abnormal but shameful. However, after losing his job at an American software firm, Nao's father, Haruki

#1's son known as Haruki #2 in the novel, has been unable to follow this path, and the family's subsequent uproar, from Silicon Valley to Tokyo, has put them outside the chrononormative order. The repercussions are serious: Haruki #2's depression and multiple suicide attempts, and Nao's violent bullying at school, are both examples of social costs imposed on the people who fail to meet or refuse to accept the norm of temporal expectations.

It is especially important from a queer temporal point of view that Nao is bullied at school. Bullying is structured around her out-of-place-ness of time, space, and culture, as she was born and raised in the United States, speaks Japanese with an American accent, wears American-style clothes, and has social behaviors that mark her as an out-of-place-ness of time, space, and culture. Her classmates do not simply reject her because she's different; they punish her for being different, for bringing an American past with her into a Japanese present, for being at the wrong time in the right place, for being at the right time at the wrong place. Halberstam's (2005) discussion on the connection between subcultural temporality and the mainstream is relevant here: Nao's very presence in the Japanese school is a kind of temporal non-conformity, and the community reacts to it with violence.

### **Nao's Diary as Queer Archive**

As a material artifact that carries the traces of the past in a way that goes beyond traditional historical documentation, the diary that Nao writes, and that Ruth finds, reads, and tries to decipher in the novel is what Freeman (2010) calls an "erotohistoriographical" artifact. The diary of Nao is not an official historical record, which often tries to create a retrospective sense of narrative continuity in history, but is instead constitutively provisional, incomplete, and open-ended, thereby highlighting its provisional nature, and leaving the reader, and even Ruth herself, uncertain of Nao's final fate.

The diary is physically presented as a schoolgirl's composition book, bound in the covers of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, thereby marking the novel's temporal preoccupations on the object it holds. The diary's palimpsestic cover is the great novel by Proust, involuntary memory and the recovery of lost time, in which Nao's text seems to be in a Proustian project of temporal recovery and reconstruction. However, while the narrator of Proust is able to re-establish a temporal continuity and aesthetic perfection, Nao's diary refuses to be closed, remaining open to other temporalities.

The journey of the diary across the Pacific Ocean is a queer time shift in itself. The diary was swept into the sea by the 2011 Tōhoku tsunami and drifted along the ocean currents to the British Columbia coast, where it performs a historical temporal journey beyond the causal flow of traditional historical narrative. When Ruth discovers the diary, it is uncertain whether Nao is alive or not, and Ruth's reading of the diary is a way of co-habiting with an uncertain past, and perhaps one that doesn't exist. The diary is not a clear window onto a stable history, but a place of temporal negotiation, a space where past and present, absence and presence, are in productive tension.

The term "temporal drag" is helpful in this regard, as proposed by Freeman (2010). Temporal drag is "a retropulsion, a drag on the present" of the past, which undermines the "progressivist" temporality of the norm, the one that pulls the present back to the unresolved conflicts and possibilities of the past (p. 62). The diary does exactly this to Ruth in *A Tale for the Time Being*, dragging her out of her present-tense Canadian life and into the multiply-temporalized world of Nao's diary. This drag is not simply a throwback to a past that has been lost, but an invitation to explore new ways of thinking about selfhood in terms of relationships and time rather than self-contained, linear time.

### **Ruth's Gendered Selfhood: Identity Across Time**

Where Nao's sections focus on the concepts of temporal displacement and identity formation under duress, Ruth's sections provide a parallel account of a woman whose sense of self is also precarious and in process. Ruth is a novelist who has not been able to write since she moved to Cortes Island with her partner Oliver; the novel is an expression of the writer's block that is linked to a more basic sense of uncertainty about her identity and purpose. Her interaction with Nao's diary is not only a readerly sympathy but also a catalyst for her own self-reformation.

The bond between Ruth and Nao is one of "feminist relay," as Tolan (2017) characterizes it, "a mode of cross-temporal solidarity" in which "one woman's story becomes the condition of possibility for another woman's self-understanding." But this is no simple relay run because of the imbalances of power and place that exist between the two women: Ruth is older, more settled, more secure in her material position, while Nao is young, vulnerable, and economically precarious. The novel does not romanticize this relay as if it were a one-way street, but rather recognizes how Ruth's interaction with Nao's text is shaped by her own desires, anxieties, and projections.

Butler's (1990) description of gender performativity is relevant here, because both Nao's and Ruth's genders are not essences, but are instead enacted, and are influenced by—and influence—their temporal situatedness. Nao's performance of femininity is starkly challenged: her Japanese classmates subjected her to a series of humiliations, both gendered and cultural, and make her perform a femininity that is not her own. Ruth's gender performance is also fluid, as she is a novelist, an outsider on Cortes Island, and increasingly focused on Nao's story.

The novel also reflects the connection between gender and the life course in a manner that aligns with the critique of normative life course narratives offered by queer temporality. Nao is sixteen, and at this age, chrononormative culture expects her to take on a certain path in life, and the bullying she suffers could be interpreted as a way to discipline her into it. Ruth, on the other hand, is at a point in her life where the normative developmental narrative seems to have been fulfilled: she has made it to her professional life, she has formed a stable partnership, but she cannot write, and this means that the normative life story she has lived has not succeeded in bringing her to its promised fulfillment.

### **A reflection on the "Asynchronous Self" and the Digital Landscape**

Digital connectivity is an important element of Ozeki's novel, but it works paradoxically and indirectly. The diary is not a digital artifact, it is handwritten, material, and analog, but it plays a role in the narrative as a figure for the temporal and spatial possibilities of digital communication. The diary is a message Nao sends across networks and receives from an unknown reader at an unknown future date, a form of communication that is asynchronous and cross-temporal, like digital communication.

This dynamic is captured in Chun's (2016) notion of "enduring ephemerality. Digital data, Chun argues, seems ephemeral, easy to delete and instantly obsolete, yet it remains in ways beyond the control of the user, haunting them with traces of their digital past. Like digital data, Nao's diary is of a fragile and enduring nature: it is fragile enough to be destroyed by seawater, but long enough to survive an oceanic crossing. As Ruth reads the diary, she is not only reading Nao's words, but also the signs of Nao's presence: her handwriting, her doodles, the smell of the salt-stained pages, etc. which seem to capture something irreplaceable about her as a subject.

The novel also addresses digital culture directly, as Nao's journey of cyberbullying and online harassment. Her classmates humiliate her in front of the class and post videos of her humiliation on the

internet, making her suffering repeatable and infinite in the digital sphere. Such a use of digital technology as a tool of gendered violence highlights how digital connectivity can create and reinforce the temporal dynamics of chrononormativity: the bullies make Nao's humiliation permanent and publicly available, making it impossible for her to escape the time or change herself. In this place the digital archive becomes a means of temporal oppression, rather than liberation, and Nao is caught in a constant present of shame and exposure.

But the novel also implies the emancipatory potential of digital connection, especially in the character of Jiko, Nao's great-grandmother, who is a Zen Buddhist nun. Jiko's teachings on the nature of time and consciousness are inspired by the concept of "uji" or "being-time" by the thirteenth-century Zen master Dōgen Zenji, providing Nao with a new way of understanding time that challenges the logic of chrononormativity. Jiko's non-linear, multiple, and interpenetrating conception of time is particularly compelling in the context of the temporal logics of digital culture; the novel proposes to use Buddhist philosophy and digital connectivity as complementary tools for creating alternative temporal subjectivities.

### **The Chronotope of the Tsunami: History, Catastrophe, and Temporal Rupture**

The 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami serve as a macro-temporal rupture, a historical event so devastating that it ruptures the normative temporal frameworks that produce individual and collective identities. The tsunami is not just the background or setting of the novel, but also a part of the temporal architecture of the novel, a moment when Nao's diary vanishes from the Pacific coast and starts its journey towards Ruth. It is, therefore, a sort of a time-space configuration that structures the novel's major temporal themes, a narrative chronotope.

The relevance of the tsunami to the queer temporal politics of the novel is multiple. It is a prime example of what Nixon (2011) has termed "slow violence", what he refers to as "the slow violence of the environment" (p. 19), a term that encompasses the gradual and diffuse nature of the Fukushima radioactive contamination of the prefecture and surrounding regions, which is beyond the temporal reach of traditional news media and historical documentation. The tsunami, then, is at the macro level what queer temporality theorizes at the micro level of individual bodies and life courses: it makes visible the failure of linear event-centered temporality to make sense of experiences that play out across multiple time scales simultaneously.

Second, the tsunami's effect on the characters in the novel illuminates the relationship between historical catastrophe and gendered identity formation. Haruki #1, Nao's great uncle, a World War II kamikaze pilot who read French philosophy in private, is discovered to have an ambiguous and non-normative identity, influenced by the historical tragedy of the Pacific War. His wartime diary, which also mirrors and doubles Nao's contemporary diary, serves as an archive of queer historical experience and traces of a subjectivity that was not bound by the norms of wartime Japanese masculinity. The novel therefore implies that there is a close connection between temporal catastrophe and queer identity, where each one challenges the normal, linear time of the other.

### **FINDINGS**

The above analysis leads to a number of important conclusions about the role of queer temporality in *A Tale for the Time Being*. First, the novel's temporal structure is complex, with Nao's voice in the past tense and Ruth's voice in the present tense, interspersed with historical documents and paratextual materials, which enact at the formal level the temporal fragmentation and non-linearity that queer temporality theorizes. The novel's temporal structure is not just representative, but also constitutive: this

formal enactment is not only a form of identity construction, but it also structures the reader's interaction with the characters and their narratives, thereby preventing the closure of the novel by the temporality of the norm.

Second, the novel's depiction of Nao and Ruth shows that gendered identity is always in time, always produced and produced by, and always oriented to, the temporal structures in which subjects are situated. Nao's experiences of bullying, cultural dislocation, and existential uncertainty are not biographical facts, but rather temporal events, which place Nao in and against the chrononormative order of Japanese society. Ruth's interactions with Nao's diary also show that the self is relational and cross-temporal, made up of relations with others who are distant from us in space and time.

Third, the novel's discussion of digital connectivity and its analogue counterpart, the oceanic movement of the diary, uncovers the temporal paradox of digital environments as sites of cross-temporal connection, but as also sites of re-presentation of chrononormative structures of surveillance and control. The diary's transpacific journey is an act of asynchronous communication that prefigures and predicts the temporalities of digital culture, and Nao's cyberbullying experience illustrates how digital technologies can be tools for temporal oppression as well as liberation.

Fourth, the novel's approach to Buddhist philosophy, such as the character of Jiko and the notion of "uji" or "being-time", provides an alternative, non-Western theoretical tool for thinking about queer temporality, in addition to and in tension with the Eurocentric frameworks of Freeman and Halberstam. The non-linear, multiple, and interpenetrating conception of time in Dōgen's work is resonant with queer temporality's critique of chrononormativity, and implies that Ozeki is working on a project of cross-cultural theoretical synthesis that warrants greater scholarly study.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have explored the work of Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, in relation to the queer temporality that it produces, both in its formal experimentation and in the characters of Nao and Ruth, as well as in its thematic examination of digital connectivity, all of which create a sustained interrogation of the chrononormative logics that shape identity formation in contemporary transnational culture. Building on the theories of Elizabeth Freeman and Jack Halberstam and also drawing from feminist theory, postcolonial criticism, studies of digital culture, and Buddhist philosophy, the analysis has shown that Ozeki uses queer temporality as more than just a formal tool, but as a political and ethical endeavor, a way of expanding the possibilities for gendered selfhood in a world of fast-paced digital connectivity.

The results of this research are of great importance to the study of modern literary fiction and queer theory and digital culture. The study argues that queer temporality is central to Ozeki's narrative project and helps to expand the field of scholarship that has applied queer theory to read contemporary transnational fiction, as it has been traditionally done, limiting the queer reading to texts that explicitly thematize sexuality or desire. The novel's engagement with Buddhist philosophy further indicates that queer temporality is not merely a Western theoretical invention but also one that has been neglected in the current scholarship on temporality. The novel's engagement with Buddhist philosophy also suggests that queer temporality is not a purely western theoretical construct but one that also has resonances with non-Western traditions of temporal thought that have not been adequately discussed in the current scholarship on temporality.

Furthermore, the figure of digital connectivity in the novel can be seen as a critical tool for thinking through the temporal paradoxes of digital culture through the novel's analysis. *A Tale for the Time Being*

is a novel that provides imaginative tools for thinking about these changes in our relationship to time, identity and social connection, alongside the analytical tools of social science and cultural theory, at a moment when digital technologies are dramatically altering our experience of these.

The method developed here could be extended in a number of ways in future research. A comparative analysis of queer temporality in a number of contemporary transnational novels might shed light on the wider cultural and literary contexts in which Ozeki's novel is engaged. An examination of the intersections of queer temporality and race, ethnicity and postcolonial identity might enrich analysis of the novel's politics of representation. *A Tale for the Time Being* might be part of a larger narrative of the evolution of Ozeki's literary and intellectual oeuvre, as investigations of her other novels—especially *My Year of Meats* (1998) and *All Over Creation* (2003)—might suggest.

*A Tale for the Time Being* is a book that makes it abundantly clear that queer temporality is not only a theoretical construct or an abstract concept, but a lived experience of humanity one that literary fiction can explore, enact, and transform. As readers trace the path of Nao's diary through oceanic and temporal space, Ozeki encourages them to develop a queer sense of time, a relational, contingent, and always open-ended space for possibilities of connection across time and space.

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