

Filippo Menozzi's *World Literature, Non-Synchronism, and the Politics of Time* develops a theory of non-synchronism, largely for the purpose of expanding global political engagement in the face of the often oppressive forces of global capitalism. Defining non-synchronism as "the emergence of non-contemporaneous remnants" or "the conjuncture of diverging temporalities in the present" (4), Menozzi considers the role of literature in representing inequitable temporalities and asserts that "world literature makes possible an experience of time that registers the complex realities of an age of capitalist globalisation" (10). A key function of literature, then, is to signal through the representation of diverse temporalities that "the hegemony of capitalism has not resulted in a global homogeneity" (15).

The book comprises an introduction that focuses on theories of non-synchronism, five central chapters that each develop a close reading of a selected literary text, and a conclusion that elaborates on additional theoretical concepts, such as anachronism and kairos. The introduction notes that while non-synchronism holds out hope that it might subvert capitalism and other grand narratives, it also involves its own ideologies and can enable, for instance, "fascist mystification of the past" (27). One of the troubling aspects of non-synchronism, Menozzi writes, is the problem of pervasive nostalgia, which arises through visions of a mythical "stable" past in contrast to "a perception of the present as hopeless, unstable, insecure and puzzling"—a temporal stance that results in "anti-immigrant rhetoric in Britain" and the Trump-era fantasy "of making nations great 'again'" (2). Menozzi argues that this persistence of an idealized past is not only a matter of nostalgia but also reveals "a specific kind of unevenness at the core of globalisation itself" (3)—an unevenness that involves diverse, often conflicting accounts of temporal experience.

After a detailed theoretical discussion, Menozzi asserts that studying world literature is important because "the manipulation of time through narrative technique is endowed with wider political and historical significance,

in particular with the task of representing the material condition of peripherality” (34). Narratives that resist the linear flow of time “become true registers of a complex historical experience in which capitalism encounters non-synchronous remnants” (34). Scholars, then, should approach literature with a sensitivity to the interactions between politics and aesthetics and pay close attention not only to time as a theme but to narrative structures and techniques that emphasize diverse and politically oppressed temporal perspectives.

Menozzi chooses four novels and one memoir for close examination. He selects these texts “because they reveal different aspects and modes in which non-synchronism can work as a register of multiple historical experiences, such as the reappearance of pre-colonial tradition in colonial or postcolonial times, the nostalgic return to the past in political mobilisation or the traces of the Not Yet in future past” (36). In order to speak to the contemporary neoliberal age, Menozzi chooses texts written within the past thirty years that focus on areas of Africa and South Asia so as to “express the temporal consciousness of the peripheral condition” (36).

The first book under consideration is Meena Alexander’s *Nampally Road* (1991), which centres on the Indian Emergency in the 1970s. The novel shows how non-synchronism can operate through nostalgia in the service of authoritarian populism but can also activate “social resistance and transformation” (Menozzi 47). The second text, Meena Kandasamy’s *The Gypsy Goddess* (2014), focuses on the Kilvenmani massacre of agricultural labourers on strike in South India in 1968. By subverting linear narrative form, the novel portrays the diversity and complexity of experiences tied to this event while also reflecting on “the imperative of crafting a single story helpful to the continuing tradition of resistance of Dalit labourers in postcolonial India” (Menozzi 75). The third text, M. G. Vassanji’s novel *The Gunny Sack* (1989), “reframes the experience of modernity in East Africa as an uneven and violent process of incomplete synchronisation” (Menozzi 103). Menozzi’s reading considers the narrative techniques of analepsis (flashback), prolepsis (flash-forward), frame narratives, and focalisation.

Next is Toyin Falola’s memoir *Counting the Tiger’s Teeth* (2014), which spotlights the Agbekoya rebellion in Nigeria in 1968–70, a peasant revolt against government policies such as the oppressive taxation of cocoa farmers. As with his other readings, Menozzi finds that the complexity of temporal representation in the book “opposes a deterministic sense of history and shows instead the open-ended and multi-layered temporality typical of postcolonial social formations at the periphery of capitalism” (133). Key to

Menozzi's analysis is the book's repeated use of peripeteia, a sudden reversal of fortune or surprising change in the plot, which allows "multiple temporalities to emerge in their dialectical interplay" (136).

The final book under consideration is Henrietta Rose-Innes' novel *Green Lion* (2015), which is about a breeding program in a Cape Town zoo that attempts to save the black-maned lion from extinction. The narrative becomes a critique not just of ecological destruction but also of conservation projects that paradoxically reinforce the forms of capitalism that destroy nature in the first place. Menozzi's analysis considers the use of ekphrasis as well as forms of temporal reversal, such as the apparent desire of conservation and de-extinction to restore an idealized past.

As with many works of literary scholarship that analyse a few selected texts, Menozzi's book may be somewhat limited in terms of its intended or likely audience, although its focus on non-synchronism also invites readers interested in the global politics of time and capitalism. The introduction provides deeply theoretical commentary; readers should arrive prepared to engage with such concepts as dialectics, Marxist criticism, and materialism, as developed through considerations of ideas from traditional scholars such as Frederic Jameson, Georg Lukács, Johannes Fabian, and Ernst Bloch. Some diversity of theoretical insight comes from a discussion of works by scholars such as Benita Parry, Pheng Cheah, and Keya Ganguly.

The three elements of the book's scope—world literature, non-synchronism, and the politics of time—represent large fields of study in their own right. In this sense, the book opens some enticing doors, and readers will be able to extend Menozzi's discussion into areas he has chosen not to pursue in detail. (Poetry, anyone?) Menozzi's ideas about the troubling politics of nostalgia may also be useful in terms of assessing a variety of other cultural phenomena, such as the often-expressed desire during the COVID-19 pandemic for things to "get back to normal." Aside from the impossibility of time ever going backward, what forms of domination, violence, and ecological destruction are reflected in the envisioned period of normalcy, and what would the reassertion of this past entail?

Menozzi convincingly shows that while capitalism is a world system with a supposedly universalizing tendency, narrative representations of non-synchronism illuminate key forms of difference and resistance. The book thus develops significant insights into the importance of world literature for understanding how diverse experiences of time reveal the power and limits of global capitalism.

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