

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-44255-9 - Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society

Sue Zemka

Table of Contents

[More information](#)TIME AND THE MOMENT IN VICTORIAN
LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Sudden changes, opportunities, or revelations have always carried a special significance in Western culture, from the Greek and later the Christian *kairos* to Evangelical experiences of conversion. This fascinating book explores the ways in which England, under the influence of industrializing forces and increased precision in assessing the passing of time, attached importance to moments, events that compress great significance into small units of time. Sue Zemka questions the importance that modernity invests in momentary events, from religion to aesthetics and philosophy. She argues for a strain in Victorian and early modern novels critical of the values the age invested in moments of time, and suggests that such novels also offer a correction to contemporary culture and criticism, with its emphasis on the momentary event as an agency of change.

SUE ZEMKA is Professor of English at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-44255-9 - Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society

Sue Zemka

Table of Contents

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
LITERATURE AND CULTURE

General editor

Gillian Beer, *University of Cambridge*

Editorial board

Isobel Armstrong, *Birkbeck, University of London*

Kate Flint, *Rutgers University*

Catherine Gallagher, *University of California, Berkeley*

D. A. Miller, *University of California, Berkeley*

J. Hillis Miller, *University of California, Irvine*

Daniel Pick, *Birkbeck, University of London*

Mary Poovey, *New York University*

Sally Shuttleworth, *University of Oxford*

Herbert Tucker, *University of Virginia*

Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work that intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-44255-9 - Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society

Sue Zemka

Table of Contents

[More information](#)

TIME AND THE MOMENT IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

SUE ZEMKA



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107442559

© Sue Zemka 2012

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2012

First paperback edition 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Zemka, Sue, 1958–

Time and the moment in Victorian literature and society / Sue Zemka.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in nineteenth-century literature and culture ; 77)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-00742-0 (hardback)

1. English fiction–19th century–History and criticism. 2. Time in literature.
3. Time perception in literature. 4. Dickens, Charles, 1812–1870–Criticism and interpretation. 5. Eliot, George, 1819–1880–Criticism and interpretation.
6. Conrad, Joseph, 1857–1924–Criticism and interpretation. 7. Literature and society–England–History–19th century. 8. Literature and technology–England–History–19th century. I. Title. II. Series.

PR878.T5Z46 2011

823'.809384–dc23

2011031543

ISBN 978-1-107-00742-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-44255-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> vi
Introduction	i
1 A brief history of the moment	15
2 The economic mediation of time	70
3 Pie'd	92
4 Dickens's peripatetic novels	102
5 <i>Adam Bede</i> and the redemption of time	122
6 <i>Daniel Deronda</i> : Eliot's anti-epiphanic novel	147
7 Panic in <i>Lord Jim</i>	174
Conclusion: Lost duration	200
<i>Notes</i>	228
<i>References</i>	263
<i>Index</i>	279

Acknowledgements

This book has been a long time in the making and has drawn on the advice and support of many friends and colleagues along the way. David Simpson and Elizabeth Robertson read early drafts of sections and were inexplicably willing to read later drafts as well. Jeffrey Robinson and Terry Toulouse contributed suggestions and encouragement through the difficult second and third revisions. James Kincaid read a penultimate draft of the whole thing in record-breaking time and gave needed moral support for what felt to me like nerve-wracking decisions. Jim Bogen offered cold, hard knowledge on things and people I understood insufficiently well; parts of the book have benefited from his generous intelligence. Julie Carr subjected several chapters to a hard line of questioning; I am thankful for her energetic collegiality, which survives our fundamental disagreement about the moment. Kenneth Johnston also read sections pertinent to his expertise and drew my attention to new connections. Janice Ho read a version of the Conrad chapter and gently pointed out some shortcomings there. At an early stage, Jay Fliegelman helped me see an argument where there was only murky data, and did so with his typically off-the-cuff brilliance and good humor. Over the years of working on this book, Daniel Kirkpatrick taught me much about friendship, love, and walking in London. I can't imagine writing a book without him. Linda Bree ushered the project from partial fragments to publication with a deft combination of patience, high standards, and encouragement, and the entire editorial staff at Cambridge University Press have been consummate professionals at every stage. The readers who assessed drafts of this book did so with remarkable care; they helped refine its arguments and offered helpful suggestions for improving its elusive structure.

My work on this project has been aided by many excellent colleagues at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and Emory University: Jeff Cox, Kelly Hurley, Kate E. Brown, Karen Jacobs, Jane Garrity, Valerie

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-44255-9 - Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society

Sue Zemka

Table of Contents

[More information](#)*Acknowledgements*

vii

Forman, Nan Goodman, Katherine Eggert, and John-Michael Rivera. Brodie Austen and Nicole McManus were industrious research assistants and worked harder than they needed to. It's been so long now since they helped me with this project that they probably don't even remember what they did, but I do, and remain grateful. The graduate students in a seminar at the University of Colorado, Boulder, on time and literature made a deep impact on this book and consistently pushed me to clarify the arguments and update the secondary sources.

A faculty fellowship at the Center for the Humanities and Arts at the University of Colorado, Boulder, gave me needed course relief and, more importantly, a year of eye-opening interdisciplinary exchanges under Michael Zimmerman's direction. I am especially thankful to the skeptical but copious feedback from David Gross in Philosophy, Gabriel Finkelstein in History, and Emmanuel David in Sociology. Earlier work on this book was made possible by a faculty fellowship from the American Philosophical Society and sabbatical leave from Emory University and the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Deeper and enduring debts are due to a long line of excellent teachers I have had the good fortune to study with: Walter Ong, Ian Watt, Robert Polhemus, and Regenia Gagnier. Their words and ideas resonate on practically every page of this book, not with perfect accuracy, I fear, but always with honest intentions. Debts of a different order are due to my teachers at the Yoga Workshop in Boulder, Colorado, especially Richard Freeman and Mary Taylor, who opened up for me a different route of access into the topic. And debts of yet a different kind are due to the Trident Cafe for years of good coffee and rent-free office space, and to Zoe Kline for blithely assuming I would finish the book and taking our dog Joe on many hikes in the interim.

Finally, I owe the greatest debt to Tad Kline. He's made these past years joyous and rich, in spite of the research project that was our constant and not always welcome companion. This book is dedicated to him.