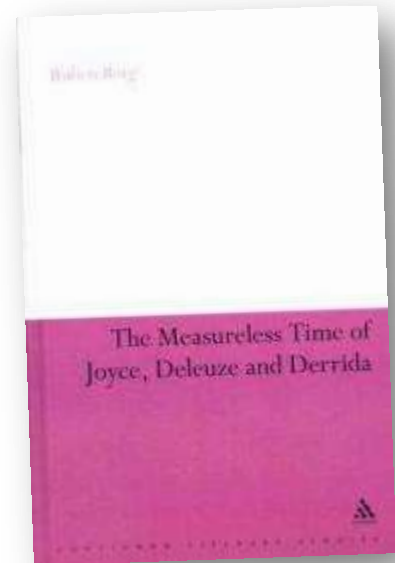


The Measureless Time of Joyce, Deleuze and Derrida

Description

In the *Physics* Aristotle describes time as something that either does not exist or exists barely and in an obscure manner. Ruben Borg argues that an attempt to grapple with this problem informs the narrative structure, imagery and complex rhetorical strategies of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. By examining the relation between time and processes of figuration in Joyce's fiction, this study engages with the challenges of grasping time as a multiplicity that resists representation and objective measurement. Joyce's lexical and rhetorical inventions are viewed as an attempt to describe time's characteristic movement in terms of waste, measureless excess or fading.



Review Excerpts

If, as Ruben Borg masterfully shows, Joyce's ambition was to write a history of time with *Finnegans Wake*, it could not be a "short history of time," something like a universal history, nor even a very long and dark and tangled story about an Irish family. It would have to be an almost infinite and unimaginable experience, a radical attempt to make us relive the origins of language. With a rare blend of literary and philosophical expertise, Borg unfolds hitherto unexplored dimensions of the *Wake* and inscribes it definitively in a discursive tradition marked by the clash of warring brothers (like Shem and Shaun): Bruno and Vico, Bergson and Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze.

Jean-Michel Rabaté, University of Pennsylvania

That time is an obscure if not impossible object for thought is, in Borg's analysis, the central problematic that structures *Finnegans Wake*. He argues that it is Joyce's attempt to present the "unthinkable form of time" that motivated many of the *Wake*'s formal innovations. In making this claim, Borg deftly balances lucid formal analysis with a mastery of relevant and quite extensive philosophical history, showing how literary innovation yields conceptual insights that have eluded more conventional discourses. Linking *Finnegans Wake* to post-structuralist theories of temporality and subjectivity enables Borg to rethink recent theoretical articulations of what it means to be "posthuman" — a category whose importance continues to be felt across many fields.

Borg's book prompts us to think through the theological tradition that historically precedes and grounds the somewhat recent conception of the "posthuman," and this may be the most provocative of the many contributions made by *The Measureless Time of Joyce, Deleuze and Derrida*. [...] In addition, the study is unique for deftly adapting Katherine Hayles's more recent category of the "posthuman" to questions of time and narratology. Borg's elegant prose integrates a masterful understanding of the *Wake* with an equally impressive command

of the relevant history of philosophy. He makes a compelling case for reading *Finnegans Wake* as a unique site in which the unthinkable structure of time itself can be thought.

Andrew Gaedtke, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The rational scheme on which the book is organised will facilitate a deeper understanding of the basic epistemological questions at stake within deconstructionism itself (in spite of the complexity usually associated with the works of Derrida and Deleuze), accentuating how powerful their thought is when applied to literary critique. At the same time, it also provides Joycean scholars and enthusiasts with innovative interpretative tools which resourcefully combine the contributions of renowned critics, such as Eco (1989), Attridge (1988, 1995), Lewis (1957) and Paris (1967), among others, with insightful personal philosophical declinations by the author himself.

The volume is divided into three chapters, each one centred on a different perspective on how 'time' develops within the narrative style of *Finnegans Wake*, trying to abstract general stylistic choices from seemingly paradoxical extracts of the text itself.

The very nature of the practice of reading is questioned by Borg, who aims at stressing the performative aspects of the eccentricity of the creative fluid structure of Joyce's latest masterpiece, where human language, as Derrida wrote in his 'Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce' (1988), is committed to complete equivocity.

Overall, this book is an outstanding post-structuralist work that shows how self-knowledge, which is in many points of view the very first task of philosophy, necessarily entails a compromise with rhetorics, as well as with a supplement of materiality.

Beatrice Boatto, Ca' Foscari University of Venice