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Post-historicism, Post-territorialism, and the Problem of Scale: A Metacritical Appraisal of the Literary-Theoretical Paradigm of 'Planetary Time'

Abstract: Wai Chee Dimock's literary-theoretical paradigm of 'planetary time' neatly fits the epithet 'post-historicist/post-territorialist' for its simultaneous repudiation of historicist and nationalist approaches to literary critical practice. Opposed to the absolute jurisdiction of temporal periods and spatial territories as literary analytic units, the 'post-historicist/post-territorialist' paradigm seeks to tap into the spatiotemporal entanglements of literary criticism to produce analyses of literature that trace the transtemporal and extraterritorial linkages forged by literary processes and their attendant actors. The article primarily focuses on Wai Chee Dimock's literary analytic scale of 'planetary time', an extended temporal scale that, according to Dimock, is intrinsically coupled to a spatial scale of planetary dimensions. While subjecting Dimock's literary-theoretical approach to a sustained metacritique, the article also intermittently engages with closely related paradigms that could shed more light on the nuances of literary analytic scales. Two analytic scales appropriated from the field of historiography – Fernand Braudel's extended *longue durée* and Carlo Ginzburg's episodic (micro)history – will not only lend an interdisciplinary perspective to this metacritical study, but also underscore the spatiotemporal implications of scale in literary criticism. These insights could help recalibrate literary critical practice by introducing greater self-reflexivity in its deployment of scale.

Keywords: *planetary time; Wai Chee Dimock; longue durée; literary microhistory; actor-network theory; literary post-historicism.*



EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN BUCUREȘTI



BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY PRESS

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series <https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.14.1.6>

<https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/>

ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)

Volume 14 | Issue 1 | 2024 |

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Stretching the Spatial and Temporal Limits of Literary Analytic Frames

In the *Limits of Critique*, Rita Felski laments the lack of a coherent “posthistoricist school” of literary studies but also enthuses about the “multitude of minor mutinies and small-scale revolts” against the injunction to historicize literary texts (155). Literary historicism, Felski goes on to elaborate, posits an array of literary historical periods, and then proceeds to bind the literary text with correlational or causal bonds to its corresponding period of composition. Post-historicism, in Felski’s view, enjoins scholars to resist encasing texts within contemporaneous contexts, urging them to pay “greater attention to transtemporal affinities and connections” forged by literary works (161). Felski’s formulation of post-historicism liberally draws upon Wai Chee Dimock’s objection to the “semantic synchronism” of the historicist enterprise, in which “the meaning of the text is assumed to be the property of the historical period in which it originated; coextensive with that period, ... undisturbed by anything beyond” (“A Theory of Resonance” 1060-1061). According to Dimock, the emphasis on the originary context in historicist readings of texts must make way for a markedly diachronic (post)historicism in which texts are seen as transtemporal entities that, during their travels across time, “run into new semantic networks” or “new ways of imputing meaning” (1061). Although post-historicism mainly engages with questions of temporality, Dimock, Felski, and a few other advocates of literary post-historicism have acknowledged the impossibility of severing such temporal considerations from their spatial counterparts. For them, a literary critical post-historicist agenda has a post-territorialist corollary.

To be sure, Mikhail Bakhtin’s insistence on the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84) has, by now, been gleaned to the point of superabundance by literary critics engaged in the study of *literary representations*. However, its metacritical correlate, the question of entangled spatial and temporal units of *literary criticism*, has hardly received sustained scholarly attention. The sporadic engagements with this question have emanated mainly from the cohort of post-historicist/ post-territorialist literary-theoretical discourses. Although Rita Felski and Wai Chee Dimock are arguably two of the most prominent voices within this cohort, a few other scholars can be discounted only at the peril of homogenizing a complex body of discourse. For instance, Jonathan Gil Harris analogically links periodization schemes in literary historicist scholarship to nationally localized frames of reference. According to Harris, any work of historicist literary scholarship adheres to what he calls “the national sovereignty model of temporality” (2). In this model, each period (or ‘moment’ in Harris’ parlance) is placed within a series of other periods and is granted “a determining authority reminiscent of a nation-state’s” (Harris 2). Echoing Harris, Jeffrey Insko claims that literary historicism’s “respect for historical difference has its analogue in the imperative to respect cultural difference” in literary and cultural theory post the 1960s (107). However, there remains a question that neither Harris nor Insko explicitly addresses: Is the link between spatial and temporal units of literary

analysis merely analogical, or do other modes of spatiotemporal entanglement exist in literary critical frameworks? The answer to this question must be sought once again in the works of Wai Chee Dimock.

The inseparability of spatial and temporal units of analysis in literary studies forms the focal point of a sizable proportion of Dimock's literary-theoretical corpus. To begin with, Dimock incisively critiques a purely mathematical view of time prevalent in literary studies – a conception of temporality she labels as 'Newtonian.' Newtonian temporality regards time as a numerical constant that "flows everywhere at the same pace, in the same direction, and everywhere yields the same number" ("Non-Newtonian Time" 915). Along the same lines, Newtonian space, too, is a purely mathematical formulation and assigns a set of numerical coordinates to each location in space. The periodization and territorialisation of literary texts are symptomatic of this Newtonian predisposition since these paradigms assigns a temporal or spatial address to literary texts, which are then deemed the most suitable reference points for their interpretation. As a counterpoint to the Newtonian spatiotemporal formulation, Dimock proposes a non-Newtonian spacetime for literary studies – one that is not amenable to a purely unequivocal mathematical description (918). Dimock's classic literary-theoretical analogue of the Einsteinian spacetime continuum at once refutes both literary historicism with its slice-of-time periodizations on one hand and literary territorialism (or nationalism) with its spatially delimited units of analysis on the other (Dimock, "Literature for the Planet" 174).¹ In other words, for Dimock, any literary post-historicist enterprise invariably entails a commitment to literary extraterritoriality. Her paradigm is best described by the label 'post-historicist/ post-territorialist.'

In "Deep Time: American Literature and World History", Dimock breaks new ground by floating the idea that stretching the temporal scale of literary interpretation to planetary dimensions yields a collateral benefit of denationalizing literature, a proposition curtly summed up by the aphorism: "Deep time is denationalized space" (760). Dimock goes on to explain that such a colossal temporal scale extension suggests a corresponding world map that does not limit itself to the short time span of any nation and, therefore, clears up a denationalized space for literary analysis. It is worth noting that the relationship between 'deep time' and 'denationalized space' that Dimock postulates savours of the same mathematical precision that she inveighs against in her article on non-Newtonian time. If Dimock insists on a nonmathematical conception of spacetime in literary interpretation, it seems out of place to cast the spatiotemporality of literary critical scales in quasi-mathematical terms. How viable is Dimock's implied claim that temporal

¹ Dimock alludes to Einsteinian spacetime to emphasize the inseparability of spatiality from temporality in literary critical frameworks, much like Bakhtin did while introducing his concept of the 'chronotope'. Nevertheless, Dimock is well aware that Einstein's special theory of relativity, too, is a mathematical formulation. Dimock's preference for the term 'non-Newtonian time' as opposed to 'Einsteinian time' underscores the nonmathematical aspect of spacetime in her literary critical practice.

and spatial analytic scales in the study of literature vary concomitantly and predictably? Is a temporal scale enlargement, as Dimock suggests, a sufficient, or even necessary, precondition for the denationalization of literary analysis? In addressing the questions above, this study will attempt to illustrate how the dynamics of spacetime interaction in literary critical practice are so nuanced that a straightforward mathematical implication could end up oversimplifying it. Focusing mainly on Dimock's scale of an extended spacetime, but occasionally delving into closely related methodological alternatives in literary studies, this article will unpack the complex spatiotemporal implications of deploying scale in the study of literature.

The panoramic view of the *longue durée* and its literary theoretical appropriations

The '*longue durée*', a Francophone loanword referring to an extended time scale of the order of several centuries, was almost unheard of in literary critical circles until the turn of the present century. The term derives most directly from the work of Fernand Braudel, the Annales School historian, who advanced this temporal analytic scale in response to what he perceived was a major disciplinary crisis faced by historiography in the mid-twentieth century (Guldi and Armitage 16). As an alternative to his contemporaries' predisposition towards working with periods up to a few decades long, Braudel urged historians to be mindful of the "multiplicity of temporalities" in historiography while, at the same time, recognizing "the exceptional importance of the long term" (Braudel and Wallerstein 173). Braudel's near boundless *longue durée*, far surpassing the temporal span of any individual, event, or sociopolitical entity, has become the springboard for post-historicist forays into the study of world literature. Given the inseparability of a temporal frame from its spatial counterpart, such an immense upscaling of the diachronic axis in literary studies holds out a reasonable prospect of drawing literary works out of a restricted set of spatial coordinates against which they have been persistently contextualized. Recognizing this potentiality, Wai Chee Dimock exudes optimism that taking recourse to an "extended and nonstandardized duration" as the basis for literary analysis entails, as a necessary epistemological consequence, the decline of territorial sovereignty in literary critical paradigms ("Deep Time" 758). Literary scholarship, thereby liberated from the dominion of both the nation and the temporal period, could become spontaneously capable of tracing transnational and transtemporal affinities previously obscured by its nationalist and historicist proclivities.

Fernand Braudel concedes that to admit the *longue durée* into historiographic inquiry is in itself a daunting task, not tantamount to "a mere enlargement of [sic] field of study and exotic interests" (Braudel and Wallerstein 181). The process, Braudel goes on to add, is not a straightforward supersession of pre-existing scales of analysis by the *longue durée*; instead, it necessitates a closer engagement with other coexisting temporalities. This methodical approach, which Braudel deems essential for adopting the *longue durée* within its most compatible discipline, would also have to include the

additional question of transferability during its transdisciplinary transfer to literary studies. Concerns regarding the transferability of the *longue durée* to literary criticism have been raised by Susan Gillman, who notes that the recontextualized adaptations of the *longue durée* in literary studies have contributed to methodological vagueness, turning the term into a half-empty gesture “that formulaically extends conventional chronological divisions without asking new questions about them or their assumed primacy” (331). Along similar lines, Stephen Sawyer notes that the “renewed interest in the *longue durée* among historians and literary scholars alike” warrants a “more serious reconsideration of the social scientific foundations of the *longue durée* in its previous manifestations and an acknowledgment of the limitations of these earlier formulations for thinking about longer time scales and beyond national boundaries today” (3). In light of these concerns, it is imperative that contemporary literary critical appropriations of the *longue durée*, particularly within the domain of world (and comparative) literature studies, be subjected to metacritical reflections on interdisciplinary transfer.

The concerns of Gillman and Sawyer are not unfounded after all, given the disparate ends to which the extended temporal scale has been deployed. The *longue durée* in literary studies has hardly been the sole provenance of Wai Chee Dimock. Published the year before Dimock’s seminal article on deep time, Franco Moretti’s article “The Slaughterhouse of Literature” dedicates a segment to Braudel’s conception of the *longue durée*. Moretti extols the distinctive receptiveness of the *longue durée* to questions of form. According to Moretti, “form is precisely the repeatable element of literature: what returns fundamentally unchanged over many cases and many years” (225). Here, Moretti latches onto a specific aspect of the Braudelian *longue durée*, its characteristically slow tempo, that unmasks the “regularities and continuities of systems” (Braudel and Wallerstein 180), turning it into a rationale for his distant reading project. Unlike Dimock (and even Rita Felski), the challenge that Moretti’s distant reading poses to conventional literary historicism is a re-inscription of the universalist aesthetic pronouncements of formalism. Moreover, one could easily lapse into a territorialized, if not nationalized, view of literature despite performing distant readings of texts spread over an immense diachronic extent. An appropriate case in point is Ted Underwood and John Sellers’ attempt to extend the diachronic spread of their distant reading project that explores the shifting standards governing literary prestige. The project, despite its conscious extension of temporal coverage, remains limited to literary works produced in the Anglosphere and often goes to the extent of entrenching national frames of reference (Underwood and Sellers 338). Evidently, a temporal scale manoeuvre by itself does not guarantee hermeneutic freedom from territorial delimitations.

Wai Chee Dimock’s concept of “planetary time” as a spatiotemporal analytic frame repudiates both literary historicism and its nationalist correlative, but from a non-formalist vantage point. Dimock insists that ‘planetary time’, a term that amalgamates a temporal span with a spatial extent, calls into question neatly divided segments of time and space while simultaneously bringing into focus the potential of a literary text to surmount spatial and temporal bounds imposed on it by analytic frames (Dimock,

“Planetary Time and Global Translation” 492). Taking the field of American literary studies as a representative case, Dimock explains how deploying the *longue durée*, which she uses interchangeably with the Anglicized “deep time”, engenders a corresponding spatial scale enlargement:

I propose a more extended duration for American literary studies, planetary in scope. I call this deep time. This produces a map that, thanks to its receding horizons and its backward extension into far-flung temporal and spatial coordinates, must depart significantly from a map predicated on the short life of the US. For the force of historical depth is such as to suggest a world that predates the adjective America. (“Deep Time” 759)

For Dimock, a literary-critical paradigm predicated on the notion of “deep time” is necessarily post-American. Measuring time on the scale of the human species is coextensive with a world map in which the malleability of national (territorial) boundaries is rendered salient. Indeed, “planetary” seems to be a fitting epithet for the spatial as well as temporal coverage of Dimock’s framework. Nevertheless, the intricacies of Dimock’s operationalization of the *longue durée* in literary studies reveal the complexities that accompany any literary critical deployment of scale, a revelation that could have profound consequences for post-historicist and post-territorial studies in literature and culture.

The intricate spatiotemporal dynamics of literary episodic (micro)history

Now, to return to a question posed in the introductory section, it is well worth considering whether the deployment of the *longue durée* *uniquely entitles* literary-critical practice to a view of literature that at once defies both periodization and territorialization. A response to this question will necessarily invoke other possible methodological alternatives to long-term history, particularly its obverse, episodic (micro)history. For Fernand Braudel, episodic history lies at the antipodal extreme of the *longue durée* in a continuum of temporal scales. Nearly synonymous with short-term history, it focuses on individual events it considers worthy of explication. Braudel’s rationale for conflating episodic history with short-term microhistory is that the events it thematizes do not “last long, disappearing as soon as one sees its flame” (Braudel and Wallerstein 174). Episodic history, Braudel contends, relies on the sensational and the dramatic, in sharp contrast to the regularities and continuities of *longue durée*. However, Braudel immediately undercuts his assertion by observing that any historical event is “infinitely stretchable” and “becomes linked, by design or by chance, to a whole chain of events, of underlying realities that then become impossible, it seems, to disentangle, one from the other” (Braudel and Wallerstein 174). Although mentioned on a seemingly tangential note, this observation calls into question the all too easily assumed provincialization of space that a short-term temporal scale supposedly engenders. In other words, a temporal scale

compression does not necessarily constrict the associated spatial frame, at least from a historiographic perspective. This observation, if at all it can be extrapolated to literary studies, could have interesting consequences for a post-historicist and post-territorialist recalibration of the discipline.

Perhaps the most well-known work of episodic microhistory relevant to literary studies is Carlo Ginzburg's book *The Cheese and the Worms* (1976), which, although written by a historian, could be placed under the subdisciplinary (and interdisciplinary) rubric of literary microhistory. Ginzburg's work attempts to reconstruct the sources from which his protagonist, the sixteenth-century Friulian miller Menocchio, concocted a strikingly unconventional cosmogony that the entire universe originated from putrefying cheese, a claim that eventually led to his trial and subsequent execution by the Roman Inquisition. Given Menocchio's heavy reliance on the vernacular and his limited knowledge of Latin, the miller's sources, though remarkably eclectic, are predominantly localized (Ginzburg 30). Menocchio's reading of a largely provincialized corpus, filtered through the local oral tradition, is a far cry from literary extraterritoriality. A similar, perhaps more purposive, spatial circumscription of analytic frames can be seen in the fledgling literary microhistorical tradition that took root in Canada at the turn of the current century. Heather Murray, a pioneer of literary microhistory in Canadian literary studies, vouches for a turn to the small scale in literary history on the grounds that it could facilitate the reclamation of the "national scale as a meaningful context for author and text studies" (413). In line with this claim, the microhistories included in the History of the Book in Canada project (in which Murray plays a prominent role) are mired in nationalist and often provincialist perspectives. These examples, however, hardly comprise an adequate sample to draw conclusive inferences about the spatial coverage of microhistorical analyses. In fact, it turns out that literary microhistory could indeed, if appropriately leveraged, tend toward extraterritoriality. Paradoxically enough, it is Wai Chee Dimock's espousal of an extended 'planetary time' that brings this possibility to the fore.

While illustrating literature's transtemporal and transnational tendencies, Dimock uses expository vignettes that, quite surprisingly, gravitate towards episodic microhistory. These vignettes have hardly anything to do with the continuities and regularities underscored by long-scale temporal analyses. The views they offer are more intricate than panoramic. Each of Dimock's vignettes zooms in on a specific (and idiosyncratic) act of reading: William Blake reading (and resurrecting) John Milton, Ralph Waldo Emerson reading the Persian poet Hafiz, and Osip Mandelstam reading Dante, to list a few. Through these protracted reflections on author-reader dyads formed across spatial and temporal gulfs, Dimock foregrounds the unique potential of reading to warp conventional spatial and temporal analytic units, stretching them out or shrinking them beyond measure. In "Literature for the Planet", Dimock expatiates on the spatiotemporal effects of reading in no unequivocal terms:

Two thousand years and two thousand miles can sometimes register as near simultaneity; ten years and ten miles can sometimes pose an unpassable gulf. Thanks to this elasticity, the now experienced by any reader is idiosyncratic, unlike anyone else's. It has its particular radii, particular genealogies and coevals. Its relational fabric is separately cut, stretching and bulging in odd places. It is not synchronized with numerical now on any standard calendar. (174)

For Dimock, the literary text forms transtemporal and extraterritorial affinities by virtue of its directedness towards reading. Elsewhere, Dimock mentions that a literary text, by itself, is a half-formed entity in space and time; it attains a provisional completeness each time a reader concretizes it ("A Theory of Resonance" 1064). The act of reading, if made the focal point of literary scholarship, thwarts any semblance of spatiotemporal predictability. Dimock could scarcely have found a more propitious literary process for thinking through and beyond analytic periods and territories.

Although Dimock's literary-critical apparatus foregrounds idiosyncratic readings à la Carlo Ginzburg, the former's readers are hardly marginalized figures like the Friulian miller. Dimock's readers might find themselves at odds with the established political regime, as in the case of Osip Madelstam, but they are closer to institutional reading practices and their attendant privileges. It is the linguistic competence of these readers that enables microhistories focusing on them to leapfrog the temporal and spatial barriers imposed on them by historicist and territorialist frameworks. As Dimock points out, Madelstam's interest in Dante goaded him on to learn Italian in collaboration with his fellow poet and admirer of Dante, Anna Akhmatova ("Literature for the Planet" 176). If the Russian poet's broad linguistic repertoire entitles him to a simultaneously transtemporal and transnational view of literature, the same applies to another polyglot, Ralph Waldo Emerson. In "Deep Time: American Literature and World History", Dimock observes that Emerson's linguistic hybridity was a part of "his own making as a reader" (765).

Well-versed in the classical languages as well as in French, German, and Italian, Emerson encounters Hafiz through the German translations of the Persian poet by Joseph von Hammer and poetic homages paid to him by Goethe (767). Emerson's circuitous reception of Hafiz makes it impossible for the latter to be contained within a set of spatial or temporal coordinates, hybridizing his works immeasurably. The linguistic competence of Dimock's readers throws into sharp relief Carlo Ginzburg's linguistically insular lay reader, whose readings, though remarkably subversive in their own right, cannot aspire towards an extraterritorial spatiality. In short, Ginzburg's inclination towards subalternity tends to provincialize his microhistory. The implication is clear - the actors who serve as the focal points of literary criticism play as much of an active role as the critical framework/scale in shaping the spatiotemporal dynamics of a study. This argument will be taken up once again in the next section.

Bruno Latour's actor-network theory and the need for reflexivity in the deployment of scale

At this juncture, it is increasingly evident that any effort by literary scholars to select temporal scales 'off the shelf' to produce specific and predictable spatial effects will invariably fail, mainly because any deployment of scale in literary criticism generates unpredictable spatiotemporal effects. Although the spatial and temporal dimensions of literary critical frameworks cannot be objectively decoupled, their concomitant variation eludes mathematical predictability, mainly because considerations of scale are, in turn, entangled with the authors, texts, readers, or other actors in the literary process that serve as the focal points of analysis.² Dimock's assertion that "deep time is denationalized space" now appears to be an increasingly reductivist aphorism that reduces the complexities of spatiotemporal scale effects in literary criticism to a straightforward logical implication. Despite turning the question of scale into a problem for metacritical reflection, Dimock's 'planetary time' subscribes, at least in theory, if not in practice, to the idea of leveraging pre-existing scales for literary criticism. One of Dimock's articles on spatiotemporal scale in literary studies, "Planetary Time and Global Translation", begins with the question: "What is the appropriate scale for the study of culture and, in particular, the study of literature?" (488). The rest of the article is a protracted answer to this slightly misplaced question, predicated on the epistemological premise that there exists a pre-existing scale appropriate for literary/cultural scholarship that demands judicious deployment by the discerning researcher, keeping in view the specific objective of the project.

In this regard, Dimock's articulation of 'planetary time', and the discipline of literary studies in general, would do well to take heed of Bruno Latour's injunction that the analyst (in Latour's case, the sociologist) should desist from imposing an absolute scale on an object of analysis since "absolute frames of reference generate only horrible deformations ..." (*Reassembling the Social* 184). According to Latour, any discipline's difficulties in getting beyond the imperative to choose the 'right scale' from among a set of pre-existing scales can be attributed to the fact that "we tend to think of scale – macro, meso, micro – as a well-ordered zoom" (185). What needs to be taken into account is that there cannot be a zoom without a camera; instead of taking the zoom effects of scale for granted, the very act of imposing a scale on the object of investigation should be turned into a problem for metacritical inquiry. As previously indicated, Dimock's 'planetary time' paradigm is drawn into the allure of a disembodied objective vantage point, performing what Donna Haraway calls a "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (581). The notion that an "immensity of time and space is the scale appropriate to literary

² As Rita Felski points out in *The Limits of Critique*, even literary texts could be viewed as nonhuman actors that actively shape the outcomes of literary processes. Henceforth, taking a cue from Felski's appropriation of actor-network theory for literary studies, the phrase 'literary actors' will also include texts.

studies” posits a god’s eye view of literature, a zoom without a camera, a view that objectively guarantees a subversion of temporal and spatial analytic limits (Dimock, “Planetary Time and Global Translation” 507). Bruno Latour would balk at such a suggestion, for he insists that the idea of a ‘big picture’ of things is misleading. The big picture, as Latour points out, does not, as many would believe, contain within it all the smaller ones “with just fewer details” (“Anti-Zoom” 94). Instead, each scale constitutes an entirely new narrative that is recalcitrant to hierarchical integration.

Furthermore, as illustrated earlier in this article, Dimock’s paradigm subverts its own premise. To demonstrate the potential of literature to tunnel across temporal and spatial boundaries of analysis, Dimock sets out to adapt Fernand Braudel’s *longue durée* to literary studies – a telescopic view that, she affirms, will liberate literary criticism from spatiotemporal confinement. However, her approach soon diverges considerably from the Braudelian quest for regularities and continuities, veering towards the histrionics of episodic microhistory. Dimock’s expository approach, ill-served by both the extended *longue durée* or the short-term microhistorical paradigm, is best described as a hybrid *mélange* of spatiotemporal scales. Part of this hybridization of scale could be attributed to Dimock’s somewhat idiosyncratic appropriation of Braudel’s *longue durée*. Instead of consistently striving for a bird’s eye view of literary processes, Dimock frequently zooms in on the actors under study, shuttling back and forth between scales, or, to use Latour’s metaphor, zoom effects. On the other hand, as illustrated in the previous section, the actors focalized by Dimock, as in the case of Ginzburg or even Moretti, also contribute their own spatiotemporal effects. Although Dimock shows hardly any metacritical awareness of this epiphenomenon of scaling, it is clear that her illustration of literature’s transtemporal and transnational tendencies relies heavily on her choice of erudite polyglots with a cosmopolitan bent of mind as her readers. Nothing could better validate Bruno Latour’s claim that “scale is “what actors achieve by scaling, spacing, and contextualizing each other” (*Reassembling the Social* 184). To flesh out Latour’s statement, the unilateral imposition of scale by the researcher, be it the historian, the sociologist, or even the literary critic, is resisted by the objects, or better yet, the actors under study. The latter possess an agency of their own by which they participate in the scaling process, contributing to its spatiotemporal effects.

To revisit the reference that set this article in motion, Rita Felski’s *The Limits of Critique* offers a glimpse into the altered landscape of literary and cultural studies, or, for that matter, any discipline recalibrated along the lines of Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory. Setting aside the penchant for panoramic views of society, literature, or culture, Felski waxes eloquent about the importance of tracing the affinities and networks established by actors participating in literary (or social) processes:

We are no longer afforded a panoramic vision ...: to do actor-network theory is not to soar like an eagle, gazing down critically or dispassionately at the distant multitudes below, but to trudge along like an ANT, marvelling at the intricate ecologies and diverse microorganisms that lie hidden among thick blades of grass.

It is to slow down at each step, to forgo theoretical shortcuts and to attend to the words of our fellow actors rather than overriding them—and overwriting them—with our own. (Felski 158)

Instead of overriding literary processes with premeditated spatial/temporal scales as Dimock prescribes (but never implements in full earnest), actor-network theory proposes a more accommodative methodological stance that renders salient the spatial/temporal fluidity of literary texts, their attendant actors, and processes. Any post-historicist and post-territorial view of literature demands a constant openness to the unpredictable spatiotemporal dynamics of scale. Moreover, it enjoins literary critics to a reflexive awareness of the co-production of scale by both the analyzer and the analyzed. The key is to shun the idea of a big picture or a panoramic view. The microscopic focus could prove to be equally, if not more, effective in foregrounding literature's transtemporal and extraterritorial networks. The putative correlation between deep time and denationalized space is not a straightforward mathematical entailment; it is mediated by a happy coincidence of aptly chosen actors and self-reflexive scale shifts.

Conclusion

The picture could not be any clearer. Neither the 'big picture' nor the 'microscopic view' provides an infallible methodological bulwark against historicist periodization or territorialism in literary criticism. Dimock's post-historicist/post-territorialist paradigm, which begins as a manifesto for literary *longue durée*, eventually turns out to be a statement in support of scale entanglement in literary studies. It is this crisscrossing between spatiotemporal scales that explains Dimock's success in coursing the transtemporal and extraterritorial movements of literary works. Therefore, to a large extent, Dimock's defense of the *longue durée* ends up undermining itself. It is also undermined by Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, which draws attention to Dimock's problematic assumption of scale as a pre-existing analytic frame to be used off the shelf. As Latour argues, the spatiotemporal implications of scale can be attributed not just to the analyst but also to the specific actors focalized in the study. Scale is not unilaterally imposed by the literary critic; it undergoes a process of nonvolitional hybridization, with its spatiotemporal effects being co-generated by the analyst and the analyzed. Nevertheless, this article does not propose a Latourian 'method' as an alternative to Dimock's 'planetary time.' In fact, associating the word 'method' with Latour's actor-network theory would be oxymoronic. The transposition of actor-network theory to literary studies yields more of a heuristic than a method. Any attempt to post-historicize and post-territorialize literary studies must self-reflexively resist its own methodization, tending instead towards a more pliable heuristic. It is time to think beyond scale as a theoretical shortcut to achieving specific literary critical ends.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Citation: Pahari, S. & Modak, A. Post-historicism, Post-territorialism, and the Problem of Scale: A Metacritical Appraisal of the Literary-Theoretical Paradigm of 'Planetary Time'. *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series* 14 (1), 2024: 87-99. <https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.14.1.6>

Received: July 9, 2024 | **Accepted:** September 28, 2024 | **Published:** October 1, 2024