


No Time to Queer. The Reception of Queer Temporalities in Germany

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Abstract: Queer Temporality Studies have been one of the most productive fields within US-American queer theory over the last two decades. In Germany, the temporal turn in criticism has also led to a lot of academic discussion around the topics of time and temporality. This paper tries to investigate the reception of Queer Temporality Studies into these temporal discussions within German academia as a case study for describing the institutionalisation of queer theory, as well as ascertaining the influence queer theoretical impulses have on a broader German research landscape. Branching out from a systematic search for instances of reception of Queer Temporality Studies in publications of three disciplines (*Germanistik*, English and American Studies, and Gender Studies), the paper discusses the processes of this reception and relates these observations to Edward W. Said's concept of *travelling theory*.

Keywords: Gender Studies, Queer Temporality Studies, Queer Theory, Time

Submitted: 17 September 2024

Accepted: 03 June 2025

Published: 28 July 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17169/ogj.2025.317>

Research support: Funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) – project number: 504643526

This article was edited by Eva Sängers and Dirk Schulz.

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Introduction

Queer theory's standing within German academia has been repeatedly be-moaned over the last decades. Andreas Kraß, for example, has remarked on several occasions that "Queer Studies, which have been canonised in the United States for a decade and a half, still struggle to gain traction at German universities" (Kraß 2009, 7).¹ In this paper, using the discourse around *queer temporalities* as a case study, I want to revisit Kraß's observation and consider the extent to which queer theory has influenced discussions in German academia in the 15 years since.

Queer Temporality Studies have been one of the most productive subfields of queer theory since the turn of the millennium. Starting with early texts such as Carolyn Dinshaw's "Getting medieval" (1999), continued later in seminal works such as those by Jack Halberstam (2005a) and Elizabeth Freeman (2010) as well as the fruitful discussions sparked by Lee Edelman's polemic "No future" (2004), with prominent reactions by José Esteban Muñoz (2009) and Halberstam (2011), the topics of time and temporality have been central to the field of queer theory.² Some critics go so far as to interpret these extensive discussions of time and temporality as a "temporal turn in queer theory" (Frackman/Malakaj 2022c, 303). The core proposition of Queer Temporality Studies is that queer life exists outside the temporal structures that govern heteronormative societies. Muñoz (2009, 17) calls these structures "straight time", whereas Freeman (2010, 3) coins the term "chrononormativity": a subject's life only becomes legible within the naturalised logics of this normativity (Freeman 2010, 4). Queer life, falling outside these temporal regimes, becomes illegible and is, consequently, pathologised (Halberstam 2005a, 4). Thus, queer temporalities provide an analytic framework for both describing straight and queer time as well as critiquing normative Western temporality. Furthermore, queer temporality scholars present affirmative interpretations of this queer temporal deviation. In rejecting chrononormativity, they posit a liberating momentum, potentially leading to *jouissance* (Edelman 2004) or queer utopia (Muñoz 2009). They highlight the affective potential of connecting

1 Where not otherwise indicated, all translations from German are my own.

2 An overview of central perspectives on queer temporalities can be found in the roundtable discussion of the "GLQ" special issue "Queer temporalities" (Dinshaw et al. 2007), edited by the late Elizabeth Freeman.

bodies through time (e.g., Dinshaw 1999) and engaging with the archive in an identificatory and anachronistic manner (e.g., Freccero 2006).

The discourse around queer temporalities can be located within a broader *temporal turn* in criticism (Kilian 2023), which has spurred a lot of scholarly activity also within German academia. These parallel surges in interest regarding time and temporality, thus, constitute a clearly defined field for discerning the influence of queer theory on German critical discourse and for analysing mechanisms of academic queer knowledge production in Germany. It also provides an opportunity to potentially observe how a discourse already well established within one context (the discourse on time and temporality in German academia) is influenced by the reception and transformation of a discourse from another context (the US-American discourse of queer temporalities). Consequently, I explore the following questions: To what degree and how do German academic discourses around time and temporality engage with discourses around queer temporalities? In which academic media does this reception take place? Are there certain texts which are received more broadly or engaged with more deeply than others? Furthermore, I will attempt to outline changes to theories of queer time that are to be expected when reading them as *travelling theories* (Said 1983; 2000 [1994]).

Methodology

It would be impossible to give a complete overview of the entirety of relevant discussions in German academia. The Literary and Cultural Studies landscape is far too diverse, and Queer Studies scholars in Germany are too scattered across different disciplines. In order to still provide an overview that is, at least to some degree, representative of the current situation while still maintaining methodological rigour, I focus on three areas more closely: *Germanistik*³, English and American Studies in Germany, and the more interdisciplinary field of Gender Studies. I chose these areas deliberately and for various reasons: Queer Temporality Studies have developed mainly through the analysis and discussion of literary and cultural texts. This, as well as the aforementioned temporal turn in literary and cultural criticism promise to make the analysis of disciplines such as *Germanistik* and English and American Studies rather fruitful. Furthermore, including *Germanistik* in my analysis will show to what degree engagement with queer temporalities has bridged the linguistic di-

3 I use the German term *Germanistik* deliberately instead of the English term German Studies. For a discussion of the differences between the two terms and the merits of not conflating them, see Jan Süselbeck (2024).

vide. Gender Studies, like Queer Studies, follow an epistemological project of questioning supposedly natural categories. Therefore, Gender Studies might be more inclined to engage with queer theoretical discourses than other disciplines. Additionally, through their interdisciplinarity, Gender Studies may provide a broader picture of the research landscape beyond literary and cultural studies.

To gain a broad view of the reception I aimed to analyse, I opted for a two-fold approach: First, I conducted a systematic analysis of prominent journals from each selected discipline. For *Germanistik*, these were: “Mitteilungen des Deutschen Germanistenverbandes”, “Zeitschrift für Germanistik”, “Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie”, and “Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur” (IASL). For English and American Studies, I selected journals from either English or American Studies as well as journals encompassing both: “Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik”, “Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik”, “Anglistik. International Journal for English Studies”, “Journal for the Study of British Cultures” (JSBC), and “Amerikastudien/American Studies”. For Gender Studies, I looked at “feministische studien”, “Freiburger Zeitschrift für GeschlechterStudien”, and “GENDER. Zeitschrift für Geschlecht, Kultur und Gesellschaft”. Each journal was analysed from either the year 2000 or (if it was founded later) the first issue to the most recent issue. I chose this time frame because no mention of queer temporalities can be expected before 2000, as the discourse itself only began in the US after the turn of the millennium. In addition to these journals, I also analysed a selection of introductory works for literary theory⁴ and for Gender Studies⁵. These should provide an idea of the degree to which queer theoretical discourses might have already “gained traction” (Kraß) in academia, thus indicating a degree of institutionalisation. The second part of my approach was to search for individual monographs and collected volumes in which the authors work with theories of queer temporalities.

With this methodology, I hope to show the degree to which Queer Temporality Studies have already made their way into the “mainstream” of these disciplines and also identify notable spaces of reception beyond this “mainstream”. However, in the following sections, I do not intend to present a comprehensive listing of the results from this systematic search. I do not think a mere quantitative “taking stock” is sufficient to answer my guiding questions – nor would it make for an interesting paper. Rather, I want to identify and explore certain trends and mechanisms of the reception of Queer Temporality Studies in Ger-

4 Sexl (2004), Schöbler (2004), Klawitter/Ostheimer (2008), Geisenhanslüke (2013), Berensmeyer (2016), and Morgenroth (2016).

5 Degele (2008), Schöbler (2008), Bergmann/Schöbler/Schreck (2012), Babka/Posselt (2016), Funk (2018), and Schöbler/Wille (2022).

man academic contexts. This will also further the understanding of the mechanisms of queer knowledge production in German academia more generally.

Lack of reception in *Germanistik*

The first genuine point of surprise I want to consider is the general lack of any meaningful engagement with or reception of Queer Temporality Studies within *Germanistik*. As the introductory quote by Kraß, a *Germanistik* scholar himself, suggests, queer theory in general has had a difficult stance within German academia, especially in *Germanistik*. Over the course of my search, I found very little engagement with queer theory in general and even less with queer temporalities specifically. Most mainstream *Germanistik* journals do not include any reference to queer temporalities at all; only “IASL”, in a special section on “Literary Studies and Gender Studies”, includes one article by Eveline Kilian (2023) on gender-queer perspectives of time and space constellations in Virginia Woolf’s “Orlando”.

This makes for two separate observations. First, Kilian herself is not a *Germanistik* scholar but rather an English Studies scholar, writing her paper on an English novel. Therefore, despite the text being published in a *Germanistik* journal, its engagement with queer temporalities comes from a different discipline. Second, this instance reflects a broader tendency to relegate queer theory to Gender Studies – something I could observe in various cases. Especially when looking at the selected “Introductions to Literary Theory”, queer theory – if mentioned at all⁶ – is presented as a subchapter of “Gender Studies”. In fact, it is within the field of Gender Studies (as I will discuss below) that I observed the most engagement with Queer Temporality Studies in the German context.

I also noticed a general lack of reviews of seminal texts of Queer Temporality Studies⁷ in *Germanistik* – with the exception of Sylvia Mieszkowski’s (2006) review of Edelman’s “No future”. I do not want to suggest here that a lack of reviews means that these texts are not read at all. Yet, I would argue that it indicates a comparatively low interest in the particular field or discourse of queer temporalities. Further supporting this interpretation is the fact that there are very few German translations of seminal texts. None have been translated in full and only a few have been translated into excerpts (e.g., Eva Cescutti’s translation of Dinshaw 2003; Zacharias Wackwitz’s translation of Edelman 2023). Of course, *Germanistik* scholars generally read English too, but especially for academic instruction, German texts may be preferred and the absence of transla-

6 Some introductory books, such as the ones by Achim Geisenhanslüke (2013) and Claas Morgenroth (2016), do not mention queer theory at all.

7 See the introduction for a selection.

tions might be perceived as a hindrance for implementing these texts and the theories they discuss into courses.

This general lack of engagement or reception seems noteworthy for three main reasons: First, the lack of reception appears to be a Germany-specific issue. This is also why I chose the term *Germanistik* over the English term *German Studies* for the purposes of this paper. As Jan Süselbeck (2024) explains in a recent commentary, the term German Studies comprises the study of German literature and language all over the world, whereas *Germanistik* refers to what is done specifically in Germany. Süselbeck argues that in recent years, and especially in the anglophone world, German Studies have been concerned with topics such as postcolonial theory and queer theory to a degree unmatched in *Germanistik* – an observation I would like to illustrate with the following example: In contrast to the general lack of engagement with queer temporalities in *Germanistik*, two prestigious German Studies journals from the US have, in recent years, published special issues on the topic. The “Monatshefte” special issue from 2022 was titled “Slowness, untimeliness, rupture. Queer time and history in German Studies” (Frackman/Malakaj 2022a), whereas a “Germanic Review” issue of the same year was more specifically about “Queer time in contemporary German cinema” (Frackman/Malakaj 2022b). These publications highlight the productivity of applying queer temporal frameworks in the analysis of German texts, for example by providing new perspectives on canonical works of literature and film. However, none of the contributors to either of the special issues were, at the time, working at a research institution in Germany. Therefore, the lack of reception seems to be highly localised, that is, limited to Germany, within literary and cultural scholarship concerned with German cultural texts.

Second, this local specificity does not apply to other parts of German academia where engagement with queer temporalities does take place, albeit less than I had initially expected (see below). It thus appears that *Germanistik* does not only take up a singular position with regard to its (lack of) engagement with queer temporalities in the study of German literary and cultural texts but also within Literary and Cultural Studies in Germany more generally.

Third, this lack of engagement is certainly not due to a general disinterest in the topics of time and temporality in *Germanistik*. On the contrary, these topics have been almost omnipresent in the field over the past two decades, as witnessed by the fact that the 26th *Deutscher Germanistentag* in 2019 was simply titled “Time”. However, there is no reference to any panel or paper on queer temporalities in the entire programme of the three-day conference (N.N. 2019) and none of the publications resulting from the conference appear to engage with the

topic. Additionally, the DFG priority programme of “Aesthetische Eigenzeiten” (2013–2021), with its 16 sub-projects, investigated the pluralisation of temporalities since 1800. Drawing heavily on Helga Nowotny’s use of the term *Eigenzeit*⁸ (“own time/proper time”) the programme focused on, among other things, different forms of hierarchical structuring of *Eigenzeiten*. Michael Gamper and Helmut Hühn (2014, 17) expressly discuss “Eigenzeit as a marker of difference against superior, hegemonic orders of time and temporality”. Yet, they do not characterise the nature of this hegemony – and neither do the other contributions to this discussion. Given the decidedly gendered and feminist connotation of Nowotny’s term (Nowotny 1982; 1989), this omission of any characterisation of the observed hegemony does strike me as noteworthy. Here, theories of queer temporalities might be able to contribute new perspectives to a discussion that describes but does not properly identify the gendered and heteronormative character of temporal hegemonies. However, this omission might also be a first indication of what I will explore later as possible reasons for the lack of reception of queer temporalities in German academia: the effort to uphold a certain notion of “apoliticalness”.

The described “lack of reception” of Queer Temporality Studies in *Germanistik* appears to be of a highly localised, discipline-specific nature. In the following sections, I will discuss cases where reception has taken place – mainly in the other disciplines analysed. Here, I turn to the peculiarities that characterise the reception of this subfield of queer theory in German academia.

Trends of reception

‘Early-career researchers’ at the forefront of reception

There seems to be a gradual increase in the reception of queer temporalities over time. This is especially true for English and American Studies in Germany, where, in recent years, one can observe a growing number of monographs dealing with the topic, most of them being published PhD theses. For example, Maria Wiedlack’s (2015) “Anti-social history” of queer punk in Northern America or Linda Hess’s skilful queering of Age Studies in “Queer aging in North American fiction” (2019) draw heavily on theories of queer time.⁹ Judging by the list of current PhD projects to be found in the “Annual Review of English and American Studies” (AREAS), more projects on this topic are currently being worked on and thus more book-length publications can be expected in the

8 For a detailed discussion of the origin of the term *Eigenzeit* and its use in literary scholarship, see Michael Bies (2020).

9 See also Maria Alexopoulos’s unpublished thesis (2017), which does not only use queer temporal theories but also discusses in detail the relationship between feminist and queer theory.

coming years. Recently, some *Habilitationen* (postdoctoral publications required for advanced scholarship in Germany) concerned with queer temporalities have been published, too, such as Gero Bauer's (2024), who, in discussing theories of queer temporalities, explores the affirmative emphasis on the present rather than the future in contemporary fiction. Further, in a very recent first for *Germanistik*, in the coda to her published PhD thesis on "Lesbische* Eigenzeiten", Janin Afken (2024) considers the similarities of Eigenzeit to queer temporalities. It remains to be seen whether this will spark deeper conversations on the topic in *Germanistik*.

This increase of reception over time may suggest that queer theoretical discussions around temporality arrive in Germany with marked delay. Reasons for this delay are difficult to pinpoint, given that the temporal turn in literary criticism itself was not similarly delayed in Germany. However, the results of my analysis of the introductions to Literary Criticism (see footnote 4) might suggest a possible explanation: In these works, queer theory is, where mentioned, often reduced to a small number select names, with Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as the most central ones. Incidentally, these "household names" of queer theory can only be located at the margins of discussions of queer temporalities.¹⁰ It is difficult to determine whether this selective uptake of queer theory has been a hindrance for broader reception or must rather be interpreted as a result of a limited reception. Most likely, the two processes are mutually dependent.

Furthermore, I want to interpret this gradual increase in reception in another way: The growing popularity of these theories with early-career researchers might be the beginning of a deeper engagement with queer temporalities in Germany, as other scholars might notice and take up these comprehensive theoretical discussions and start to incorporate them into their own work.

A preference for Edelman

One remarkable aspect of the German reception of queer temporalities is its general preference for Edelman's "No future". Out of all the seminal texts, this work is the only one cited with some frequency. On the surface, this might not appear too surprising: "No future" is one of the few seminal texts in queer temporalities that has been translated (even if only in part) into German.¹¹

¹⁰ Butler's theory of gender performativity certainly does include a temporal element, especially through its "paradigm of incremental social change" (Ruti 2017, 40), a fact also acknowledged by Freeman (2010, 4). However, Butler is generally not regarded as a key figure in the subfield of queer temporalities.

¹¹ Edelman (2012) by Bettina Schreck in Bergmann/Schößler/Schreck (2012) and, more recently,

I mentioned the aspect of language barriers earlier; however, I do not think that the availability of translations is a sufficient explanation for Edelman's disproportionately high level of reception. For comparison, Carolyn Dinshaw's "Getting medieval" was partially translated into German in 2003 already (by Eva Cescutti) yet has received virtually no reception in German contexts since. Especially with regard to Edelman's reception in English and American Studies in Germany, the argument of translation seems irrelevant. Therefore, other explanations might be more productive: Edelman's text is also one of the most discussed texts within the US-American discourse on queer temporalities. "No future" (2004) might even be regarded as a catalyst for this discussion, as many other works seem to have been written in response to it – expressly Muñoz (2009) and, less so, Halberstam (2011). Its polemic nature, radical critique of reproductive futurism, and resistance to mainstream societal narratives invites opposition, spurs discussions within queer theory to this day, and might make it a catalyst for more engagement with queer temporalities in Germany too.

However, the German reception of Edelman is not one of opposition but rather one of cursory application. It mainly focuses on his reading of the "Child" as the "emblem of futurity" (Edelman 2004, 3) and the queer refusal to participate in this reproductive futurism (see Heinze 2019 as an example of this application). Perhaps it is also Edelman's foundation in Lacanian psychoanalysis that makes him attractive for German contexts. He seems to be working with a "respectable" theoretical foundation that has always claimed universality.¹² Using a more established theoretical basis that is, in the words of Sedgwick, "less precarious and dangerous" has the advantage of drawing from a "considerably more developed [...] much more broadly usable set of tools" for the "furtherance" of one's own academic as well as political objectives (Sedgwick 1990, 16). Thus, working with Edelman's psychoanalytically informed theory might make it easier to include queer theoretical perspectives into an academic discussion that is otherwise hesitant or even sceptical to employ these approaches.

In addition to this general affinity, another interesting development of Edelman's reception within German academia, specifically in ecocriticism, is worth noting: In a 2023 special issue of JSBC on "Ahuman futures", Edelman is frequently cited with regard to antinatalist responses to the crises of the Anthropocene, referring to the choice to forego parenthood in order to save the planet and prevent the suffering of children in a catastrophic world (see, e.g., Grimbeek 2023).¹³ This "trend" appears to read Edelman's theory of resisting

Edelman (2023) by Zacharias Wackwitz in Laufenberg/Trott (2023a).

12 This claim of universality, however, has been refuted both generally (Rogers 2017) and more specifically with regard to Lacanian psychoanalysis and Edelman's reception thereof (Ruti 2017).

13 On an interesting side note: A 2017 special issue of JSBC on "British temporalities: The

reproductive futurism a lot more literally than seems justified. In “No future”, Edelman goes to great lengths to make clear that he, in fact, is not talking about literal children but rather “Children” (“the image of the Child, not to be confused with the lived experiences of any historical children”; Edelman 2004, 11). The authors reading Edelman in the context of the Anthropocene do not consider this distinction, as indicated also by the omission of Edelman’s capitalisation (“Child”) in most of these articles (Grimbeek 2023; Hüttemann/Richter 2023). These readings appear to use Edelman’s rejection of reproductive futurism for the sake of saving the future. This strikes me as peculiar, as those readings (inadvertently) reproduce the very logic Edelman disavows. However, reading Edelman’s theory of queer negativity and his call to resist the futurity embedded in the symbolic order of the Child in this way is certainly novel and a genuine change in theory through reception.

When trying to understand the reception of any theory outside of its original context as well as the accompanying changes to the theory this entails, the concept of *travelling theory* seems to provide the most relevant framework for conceptualising this process. The term was coined by Edward Said in his eponymous essay (Said 1983), further developed in “Traveling theory reconsidered” (Said 2000 [1994]), and includes two main components: First, travelling theory always includes a geographical change; and second, it is usually accompanied by a change in the relevant theory. This change can take two forms, which Said considers separately. Initially, his thesis was that such travelling always results in a less radical theory (Said 1983); however, in his later essay, he acknowledges the fact that a theory can also become more radical through travelling (Said 2000 [1994]).

The described reception of Edelman within ecocriticism supports Said’s original conceptualisation of a theory becoming less radical during the process of its travelling (Said 1983). Focussing on the Anthropocene as a collective experience of crisis (albeit one that is more pressing for some than others) might be understood as a mechanism for making Edelman’s theory more “palatable”.¹⁴ The fact that queer temporalities make their way into the mainstream of a discipline through their application to a somewhat universal phenomenon, that is, detached from the marginalised queer experience from which they originated, seems to be paradigmatic. Mike Laufenberg and Ben Trott (2023b, 32) discuss queer theory’s main problem in gaining traction in German academia

times of culture and the culture of times” did not include any mention of queer temporalities, underscoring my general observation that this subfield of queer theory has not yet been taken up in a significant way in German academia.

¹⁴ This mechanism is also exhibited by Florian Zitzelsberger (2022), who uses theories of queer (and crip) temporalities for analysing temporality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

as being perceived as too “ideological” and too closely connected with activism. Especially the philological disciplines in Germany, however, put a great deal of effort in maintaining their claim of being “apolitical”, something also shown by the omission of a characterisation of temporal hegemonies in discussions of *Eigenzeiten* as mentioned above. Under these circumstances, universalising Edelman’s ideas, and thus depoliticising them, might make them more acceptable for German contexts.

In this universalising reception, changing contexts is less geographical than it is academic. In general, it appears that scholars in English and American Studies who work outside the anglophone world are not as easily accounted for in Said’s concept. Although these scholars work *in* another geographical and cultural context than the theorists whose theories they use, the fact that they still work *on* the same context in which these theories were conceived muddies the water. This might also account for the fact that, except in the discussed eco-critical contexts, the cursory application of Edelman as described above is not accompanied by a change in theory – something underscored by the few other instances of reception of other queer temporalities theorists situated within English and American Studies in my corpus.

Gender Studies as the place for queer theory reception

Gender Studies appears to be the context in which German academics engage most thoroughly with queer theory. I already alluded to the fact that Queer Studies and queer theory both are often subsumed under Gender Studies. Analysing introductory works for Gender Studies (see footnote 5), I could observe a similar inclusion. While only two of the books mention “queer” explicitly in their title, all of them engage with it. The relationship between Gender Studies and Queer Studies is, however, most often not discussed in detail. This gives rise to the ill-advised notion that queer theory – by virtue of its later “conception” – is somewhat of a teleological endpoint combining Women’s Studies/Gender Studies with Gay and Lesbian Studies. Only Nina Degele (2008, 9pp.) discusses the differences and similarities between Gender Studies and Queer Studies, but ultimately advocates in favour of focussing on the similarities and against trying to keep up a division between the two, which, in her view, is getting more and more artificial over time. Both fields, she claims, are *Verunsicherungswissenschaften* (“disciplines of unsettling”) which unsettle normative assumptions about gender and sexuality.

Queer Temporality Studies, however, are only mentioned in three of the analysed books. Degele (2008) contains a chapter “Applications” in which scholars of

various fields show the merits of working with gender and queer theory in their respective fields. Here, Kilian (2008) contributes an analysis of “Boys don’t cry”, drawing on Halberstam’s ideas from “In a queer time and place”. The most recent of the six, Franziska Schöblier and Lisa Wille (2022, 97) – the second edition of Schöblier (2008) – contains a brief mention of Edelman’s “No future” but does so in the context of Critical Masculinities Studies – a connection less common in discussions of Edelman’s work.

Only Franziska Bergmann, Schöblier, and Schreck (2012) explicitly engage with queer temporalities in a way that seems relevant to the purposes of this paper. Their book is an anthology of “central texts of feminist theory and Gender Studies” (12) aimed primarily at students who want an introduction to seminal works in the field. The included texts were chosen to both reflect the canonisation within the field as well as broaden the horizon of German engagement with it by including translated excerpts of some (US-American) texts previously not available in German. The reader contains a whole section on “Gender and Queer Studies” with excerpts from texts by Michel Foucault (“History of sexuality I”, translated by Ulrich Raulff and Walter Seitter), Butler (“Gender trouble”, translated by Kathrina Menke), Raewyn Connell (“Masculinities”, translated by Christian Stahl), Halberstam (“Female masculinities”, translated by Schreck), and Edelman (“No future”, translated by Schreck). In her introduction to this section, Bergmann (2012, 125) elaborates on the importance of Edelman’s text not only in the context of antisocial theory but also in regard to “queer concepts of time”. She highlights the central role of the topics of time and temporality within the queer theoretical discourse, mentioning Halberstam (2005a), Love (2009), Freeman (2010), and the “GLQ” special issue (see footnote 2), concluding her remarks by pondering whether this trend can be described as a “temporal turn” in queer theory (Bergmann 2012, 126).

After my analysis of mainstream journals from Gender Studies, my overall impression remains the same: each of these journals includes queer theoretical topics; however, Queer Temporality Studies do not appear to be universally recognised as a central part of the queer theoretical canon. For example, while a 2016 special issue of “GENDER” on “Deconstructing normality. Queer perspectives” aims to outline important contemporary discourses in queer theory, Queer Temporality Studies are not mentioned next to the sex-gender-desire triad, Queer Disability Studies, queer critiques of capitalism, and Queer Migration Studies/intersectionality (Bauschke-Urban/Conrads/Tuider 2016, 7pp.). This strikes me as noteworthy, given the productivity of this subfield of queer theory and the supposed temporal turn in queer theory as discussed above.

A different picture presents itself only in “feministische studien”, which has always been at the forefront of discussions of temporality and gender in Germany. Its 1982 founding issue was spearheaded by Helga Nowotny’s essay on “feministische Eigenzeiten” (Nowotny 1982), an influential paper on the gendered hegemony of temporal regimes in Western societies.¹⁵ “feministische studien” is the venue for the most thorough engagement with Queer Temporality Studies in my corpus. In their 2012 special issue entitled “The queerness of things not queer”, the editors aim to challenge certainties developed over 20 years of queer theoretical knowledge production and go beyond the topics of sexuality and gender (Michaelis/Dietze/Haschemi Yekani 2012, 186). In addition to providing an outline of the genealogy of queer temporalities and spatialities in its introduction, the issue also includes articles dealing with temporal topics (Adusei-Poku 2012; Engelmann 2012). Furthermore, this special issue includes one of the most comprehensive bibliographies of “Queer Theory and New Material Feminism (since 2002)” in any German publication to date (N.N. 2012) and a review of Halberstam’s “The queer art of failure” (Gunkel 2012).

“feministische studien” also offers another insightful set of special issues: volume 41 (2023) was devoted entirely to “Feminist remembering”. Articles in the two issues (such as Degeling/Horn 2023; Vogler 2023) engage with the more archival strand of Queer Temporality Studies (especially Cvetkovich 2003; Freccero 2013). They do so by contextualising these texts within queer-feminist theories of remembering/remembrance, especially the archival turn. Thus, they discuss theoretical texts that are cited even less often than the other texts of queer temporality studies. They are the only instances of reception of these concepts within my corpus.

To summarise, Gender Studies appears as the main context in which German academics engage with queer theory, operating as a gathering place for all scholars wishing to publish on these topics. For example, the mentioned 2012 special issue of “feministische studien” was edited by a *Germanistik* scholar, an English and American Studies scholar, and a Cultural Studies scholar. The interdisciplinary nature of Gender Studies seems to allow scholars to “escape” the confines of their own discipline and engage with theories that are not part of their discipline’s canon. This leads to productive discussions in this area of scholarship. However, bearing in mind the few instances of reception outside of Gender Studies, I wonder whether this relegation of queer theoretical discussions to Gender Studies might constitute a hindrance to these discourses becoming

15 Nowotny’s work was also central for the concept of “Aesthetische Eigenzeiten” as used in *Germanistik* (as discussed above).

part of the broader discussions in other disciplines, such as the two philologies discussed above.

The importance of coming together

Conference proceedings appear as one form of publication in which queer temporalities are discussed in German contexts with comparative frequency. From quite early on, discussions of queer theoretical and queer temporal ideas have taken place in the distinct context of conferences and lecture series, resulting in collected volumes reflecting these contributions. They constitute veritable clusters of engagement with Queer Temporality Studies. For example, Jack Halberstam's (2005b) contribution to a lecture series in Freiburg in 2003/2004, published as a translation by Franziska Bergmann and Jennifer Moos in "Freiburger Zeitschrift für GeschlechterStudien", was hailed in the foreword to the volume as "the very first text of the American queer theorist in German" (Penkwitt 2005, 11). Citing his own book "In a queer time and place" published the same year, Halberstam poses the original question of queer temporalities: whether it is possible to develop alternative models of generationality, temporality, and political action for queer culture and feminism (Halberstam 2005b, 42). The incorporation of Halberstam's essay into the collection and its mention in the foreword were additionally accompanied by a review of "In a queer time and place" (Jäger 2005), one of the few reviews of Halberstam's text (or any other seminal text in Queer Temporality Studies other than Edelman) in a German publication.

Halberstam (2005c) is another example of the relevance of collected volumes. Resulting from a conference at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, the publication "Quer durch die Geisteswissenschaften" (Haschemi Yekani/Michaelis 2005) not only includes the Halberstam essay, in which he presents the general idea of "In a queer time and place", but also a paper by the Queer of Color critic Karen Tongson engaging with Halberstam's idea of "metronormativity" (Tongson 2005).¹⁶ In a similar case, Muñoz and Halberstam attended a conference in Berlin in 2010 resulting in the publication of "Queer futures" (Kilian/Haschemi Yekani/Michaelis 2013). Muñoz's (2013) contribution revisits the relationship between queerness and politics in light of his assertion that queerness is not (yet) here; Halberstam (2013) engages with Edelman's idea of negativity.

16 As metronormativity refers to the privileged position of urban spaces within the queer community, it does not strictly fall within the scope of this paper. However, Halberstam develops this idea in "In a queer time and place" and argues for conceptualising queer time and space together. So Tongson, through her engagement with a seminal text of Queer Spatiality Studies, also happens to engage with one of the seminal texts of Queer Temporality Studies.

Conferences for which US-American queer theorists come to Germany to share their research seem to be catalysts for engagement with Queer Temporality Studies. Especially the 2010 conference in Berlin and the subsequent conference proceedings represent some of the most notable moments of discussion of this strand of queer theory, standing out in the German research landscape as sketched above. These publications also appear to be more likely to receive broader attention such as in the form of reviews, as Moos's (2006) review of "Quer durch die Geisteswissenschaften" suggests.

These observations give rise to two conclusions: The first highlights the importance of physically travelling for travelling theory. As mentioned earlier, travelling theory as coined by Said (1983; 2000 [1994]) certainly includes a geographical element. However, Said intended this to mean that the theory itself is read in different places, less with respect to the international mobility of scholars, such as critics physically travelling to another geographical context to present their work. Yet, this form of travelling theory, although it spurs clusters of engagement in Germany, rarely results in any kind of adaptation of the theory into German contexts. Rather, US-American theorists come to Germany and present their results, which have, naturally, been developed in US-American contexts and the applicability of which to German contexts is rarely ever reflected upon.

The second conclusion highlights the importance of conferences and lecture series for engaging with queer theory outside (as well as inside) its contexts of production. It indicates the importance of coming and working together for the queer academic community and queer knowledge production. This mirrors the outstanding role of communities in the lives of queer people more generally, now and throughout the history of queer(ness).

Conclusion

This paper set out as an exploration of the reception of Queer Temporality Studies in German academia. I had hoped that surveying the influence of theories of queer time would also reveal the degree of institutionalisation of queer theory as well as mechanisms of academic queer knowledge production in Germany more generally. To achieve this, I examined a corpus of publications from three disciplines within German academia – *Germanistik*, English and American Studies, and Gender Studies – searching for and then analysing instances of engagement with queer temporalities. In the end, I found a lot less than initially expected, given the central role this topic has played in US-American queer theory over the past two decades. Throughout the entire corpus, the picture of queer theory in German academic discourses appears to be

rather limited, often reducing this diverse field to only a few “household names” (above all, Butler and Sedgwick). Especially in *Germanistik*, which offers a prolific and very productive discourse around temporality, ideas of queer time have not (yet) gained any meaningful traction. However, some interesting observations remain: Reception has increased over time – a development to which especially early-career researchers in English and American Studies are contributing. Additionally, there appears to be a preference for the works of Edelman, which are also applied to new and broader contexts. Furthermore, Gender Studies appear to be the central place for engaging with queer temporal, and (more broadly) queer theoretical discourses in Germany. Their interdisciplinary nature seems to invite scholars to escape the confines of their own discipline and engage with theories not yet established in their field.

Initially, I had chosen Said’s concept of travelling theory in order to situate potential findings in a broader context. My analysis, however, ended up providing observations that contributed directly to this concept: Overall, when German scholars do engage with theories of queer temporalities, they do so most often at the level of application to texts from the same cultural and geographical context from which the theory itself has emerged. Thus, there are rarely any instances where the fact that the context in which these theories were developed might differ from the present context of application is expressly reflected upon. This observation constitutes a case of travelling theory not accounted for in Said’s initial concept. Additionally, the importance of physically travelling and coming together becomes apparent in the role of conference-related publications as clusters of engagement with queer theory. The significance of this literal meaning of “travelling” might constitute a factor in the study of travelling theory (that has branched out from Said’s initial essays¹⁷) underestimated so far, which might merit further investigation.

The quote with which I began this paper speaks of the difficulties that queer theory had in gaining traction in German academia (Kraß 2009, 7). 15 years later, this seems to have changed – at least to a certain extent. As indicated by my results, there seems to be a canon of queer theory within German academic discourse. It is, however, somewhat limited. My results pose the question whether focussing on the aforementioned “household names” and mainly relying on their work as an established theoretical basis for further inquiries may prevent other parts of queer theory from establishing themselves as a part of the discussion. I therefore want to conclude this paper by repeating a warning and invitation brought forward by Therese Garstenbauer (2006, 236) with regard to Women’s and Gender Studies: “Since an academic subject is very likely to develop a

17 See, for example, Bal (2002) and Neumann/Nünning (2012).

canon of classics, stars, foremothers and -fathers and required reading, one could just as well face the facts. But one must never stop to question the lists.”

Data Availability Statement

All research material analysed as part of this study is included in this article and/or referenced in the reference list.

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