

Chapter Two

TEMPORAL LABOR AND THE TAXICAB

Maintaining the Time of Others

The front seat of a taxicab offers a rare glimpse into the taxi driver's relationship to time. The taxi driver in most major metropolitan cities in North America is almost always newly immigrated and waiting for accreditation papers. Many drivers are seeking asylum. The taxi driver straddles multiple temporalities, both personally (the offset clocks of time zones that dictate phone calls home, the slow progress of work-visa applications, the movement of their children through the U.S. school system) and professionally (the tempos of those they must transport, the slow traffic, night and day, the ticking of the clock and the running meter).

The front seat is a private space for the taxi driver. Rarely are fares invited to sit in the front when there is room in the back. It is where drivers keep their personal belongings that help them get through the day. There are coffee mugs, packages of khat, cigarettes, pillows, eye masks, blankets, cell phones, water, hand sanitizer, and half-eaten meals. Overhead on the

visor, there are pictures of family members, CDs, business cards, and picture postcards of elsewhere. Hailing a cab with a large group of people, when everyone won't fit in the backseat, often results in frenetic scurrying. The driver quickly pushes the belongings to the floor, stuffs things into the glove compartment and the sides of the doors, or collects it all in a pile to dump in the trunk.

But these scattered front-seat objects are hardly just things. Together they compose the taxi driver's daily rituals of time management. Unlike the jet-lagged traveler in the previous chapter, whose life unfolds within an elaborate temporal architecture, the taxi driver navigates an entirely different infrastructure of time. In the front seat of the taxi there are stimulants for staying awake and negotiating stress (coffee, music, khat, and cigarettes). There is also a range of items for breaking from work in order to sleep, rest, and eat (the eye mask, pillows, and blankets). The pictures and postcards on the visor can be likened to the screen savers or minimized Facebook windows of desk workers—reminders of life outside of work.

The taxi driver is connected to a central unit via the radio, camera, the meter, and a GPS. Their routes and paths are never uniform or known in advance. Nor are the hours they will spend working each day determined from the outset. The absence of a precise and knowable parameter of the day indicates some freedom in time—the ability to control the length of the working day. But the taxi driver does not just submit to the ebb and flow of time. Instead, his or her daily life is structured by the constant tension of being out of time while responding to and maintaining the time of others.

Unlike the frequent business traveler, the taxi driver is not a subject of great economic value whose temporal well-being is a site of growing investment. And the market (the companies that drivers work for) and the people the drivers service do not provide ways to enhance their productive capacities. Taxi drivers must create their own strategies of survival in order to stay in time. But the lack of investment is also entirely biopolitical. As the expendable bodies of a labor force that can easily be replenished, there is no need for the structures of capital to endow the taxi driver's time with importance. Biopower rears its head through divestment as well as regulation. Biopower is made incarnate through the police, tow-truck drivers, parking officers, fares, dispatchers, and fleet owners. These different entities hover over taxi drivers' long days. Police and tow-truck drivers chase taxi drivers out of parking spots when they break to use restrooms.

They are yelled at and treated like second-class citizens by both fares and dispatchers. They are disciplined verbally, or abused for that matter, for missing fares, getting lost, not answering immediately, or taking allegedly wrong routes. They are subject to racist tirades, acts of violence, backseat interrogations, and bad directions.¹ In the midst of all of this, their labor is confounded by an intense competition to catch fares.

Speed theorists configure the politics of temporal difference through the binary of fast classes and slow classes. A biopolitical perspective offers a more complex, and politicized, framework for understanding social differences as they relate to time. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Giorgio Agamben argues that bare life is a form of contemporary subjectivity, and we must learn to recognize its many forms.² Bare life accounts for those lives abandoned by the institutions of modern power and forced to live as outliers in the very order their existence works to maintain.³ Agamben is useful for thinking about the contemporary biopolitics of time. The taxi driver is much more akin to life in the state of temporal exception, closer to bare life, than the protected and much valued temporality of the jet-lagged.

An exploration of the politics of temporal labor provides a more complex understanding of temporal difference and is a means for understanding contemporary theoretical debates that revolve around labor and biopower. I use the term *temporal labor* to account for the experience of laboring within a temporal infrastructure while being cast outside it.⁴ The taxi driver is constituted in time in a way that is structurally related to the time of the business traveler. There are different struggles over time that occur when one's labor entails directly synchronizing to the time demands of other populations' temporalities.

I begin with accounts of three taxi drivers and their reflections on the "speed of life" and their experiences of time. The case studies are followed by a deeper look at the taxi driver's infrastructure of time maintenance. What becomes most evident is that there is a temporal order against which cab drivers measure their time. The order is alluded to in their choice of words to explain their labor and their time practices. Their attempts to stay in time, and the processes and struggles that this entails, are just as significant as whether they succeed. Taxi drivers' time is tied to many of the busy and tired populations' temporalities, produced by contemporary capital, but how taxi drivers experience being out of time is by no means analogous.

Itineraries: The Taxi Drivers

ABRAHAM: SIX YEARS

When I meet Abraham for our interview on a cold winter evening at a Tim Hortons coffee shop on Bloor Street in downtown Toronto, he has been driving cabs in Toronto for six years. As soon as I walk through the door, Abraham greets me frantically and explains that we have to leave right away. He can't find a parking space anywhere and is parked illegally and worried about getting fined. This is a usual predicament for Abraham when he wants a cup of coffee or needs to use the restroom—there is nowhere to park his cab unless he wants to pay. Leaving his car for even a minute could result in a fine. "Cabs are an especially easy target for the police," he explains. He tells me of another place around the corner, a "coffee shop for taxi drivers that has a parking lot and is open twenty-four hours a day." He doesn't know the name of it and thought I wouldn't have known how to find it on my own, as "only other taxi drivers, homeless, and prostitutes go there." I get in the taxi with Abraham and we drive around the block to the "coffee shop for taxi drivers." He's right, there appears to be no name for the shop—the sign is blurry and the awning has the remnants of at least three other previous establishments' emblems. The parking lot is full of taxicabs, and the drivers are all sitting outside drinking their coffees. Some are smoking. Most are conversing eagerly with each other. The sound of dispatchers and the static from the radios of the parked taxis fill the air. Abraham moved to Toronto ten years ago from Eritrea, seeking asylum. His father had come to Toronto years before him under the same conditions of civil unrest to try and "set up for the family." Abraham's father started driving a taxi within months of arriving in Canada. After years of being unable to create adequate conditions in which to support his wife and children, he encouraged Abraham to seek asylum and join him in Toronto. They thought that together the two of them could save up enough money to send back to support his family in Eritrea. Abraham arrived in the city for what he thought would be a "very temporary thing," but six years after his arrival, Abraham's father died of a heart attack. His mother remains in Eritrea with his youngest brother.

Abraham is a shift worker, which means he rents his cab from a taxi-fleet owner on a daily basis. He might drive the same car, but he shares it with other drivers, and he must pay for the rental time. He typically works 4:30 p.m. to 4:30 a.m., except for Sunday. He arrives home from work on

Sunday at 4:30 a.m. and starts again Monday at 4:30 p.m. On Sundays he cooks a big “healthy type of meal” for himself, goes to church, and does laundry. For Abraham, what is good about driving is that “you get to choose when you want to work.” Abraham has not taken a holiday or an extra day off except for four years ago, when he visited Eritrea for four months. He expresses his desire to take the same kind of trip very soon. In fact, what keeps him going every day is his “dream of going back home and not having to work.” But Abraham doesn’t expect that to happen for another few years: “Maybe in two or three years I can afford to go home for a visit and take a break from this.” He started going to a trade school to become a mechanic but “gave up because it would take too long to start over” and “make enough to live and go to school.” Between taking time off and changing careers, Abraham feels better off just getting by in the instant. The difficulty lies in the fact that after a twelve-hour shift Abraham hardly makes close to minimum wage, which at the time of our discussion is seven dollars and seventy-five cents in Canadian dollars. He is “just living” and “putting a few away here and there to visit [his] mother.”

An excellent day for Abraham is when minimum wage is met, but an average day is more likely to result in a net of five dollars an hour. At the end of a typical shift, he gets home after gassing up and parking the car around five in the morning. He shares the car with a “day driver,” who lives in the same block of flats in the northern part of Toronto. Prior to this arrangement, when Abraham first started driving and was living with a group of newly emigrated people from Eritrea, he struggled to get home every night after parking his cab in the garage. Driving the cab home would mean that Abraham was paying rent for his cab even though he wasn’t driving it. Instead, he would park the car downtown and would sleep on a cot in a friend’s house in the garage. Abraham would pay his friend up to fifty dollars any given week to stay. After a year of this “homeless feeling,” he befriended another driver, and they now live in the same apartment building and share a cab. He chuckles and says, they “might as well share the apartment, too.”

Abraham typically falls asleep with the television set on at six or seven in the morning after “winding down.” He wakes up at one or two in the afternoon, eats, showers, and gets back on the road. He begins his shift in the heart of the city, usually a main train station or bus terminal. He says, “I always think it is temporary—I think all of us think it is temporary—but people end up doing this for thirty years.”

Thirty years is exactly how long Judy, a fifty-four-year-old single mother, has been driving a cab in Toronto. Judy moved to Toronto from Trinidad thirty years ago and has been driving a cab ever since. When I set up a meeting time and place with Judy, she offers to pick me up from my apartment since she lives close by. She requests that we meet well before three in the afternoon so that she “can still be out there for the rush hour.” Judy picks me up and we settle into a café in the neighborhood we both share. As soon as we are sitting down, Judy informs me that she is “one of probably about only twelve women cab drivers in a city of eight thousand cab drivers.” Thirty years ago, when she first arrived in Toronto, she enrolled in a community college, taking classes to become an accountant. She took a part-time retail job to cover tuition and the costs of raising a son on her own. After a few months of “waiting for paychecks,” Judy took the advice of her friend, another one of the twelve women cab drivers in Toronto, and started driving cabs to make “instant cash.” While accounting continues to be her “dream job,” the struggle to raise her son, work part-time, and be in school part-time proved too difficult. Judy left school altogether and began driving full-time. She continues to drive, she explains, because of the “flexibility and not having to deal with the anxiety of waiting for a paycheck since there aren’t any savings.”

Judy has been an “ambassador” driver in the city for the past three years. The ambassador program allows Toronto taxi drivers to own their own cars and plates after taking a forty-hour course on customer service and safe driving. Ambassadors give 10 percent of their meter earnings to the leasing company for insurance and are not expected to pay for their own repairs as other cab drivers who own their cars do, like Billie (who we will meet next), or shift drivers who rent from a lease owner, like Abraham. Judy’s cab had been in the shop for two days, and although she didn’t have to pay for the repairs, she lost serious wages. After she drops me off, she will drive through the night until “six in the morning or so, even though it is a Tuesday.”

Judy works “about five days a week for fourteen hours a day between 10 a.m. and 12 a.m. She gets home after her day on the road and typically falls asleep at 2 or 3 a.m. and is up again at 7 a.m. In the mornings she does a Pilates DVD, makes a big lunch, and prepares food to eat after her shift. Judy explains that she doesn’t take “real” breaks. Her breaks are when she’s “just

sitting in [her] cab reading [her] newspaper waiting for a fare.” On Friday and Saturday nights Judy is “on the road until 4 a.m., starting at three in the afternoon.” She takes off Mondays and Tuesdays because they are the “slow days.” There are not as many fares, and those are “the good days for banks, doctors, dentist” and when places such as the “Laundromat and grocery store aren’t busy.”

BILLIE: THIRTEEN YEARS

One driver’s slow day is another driver’s opportunity. Billie, a fifty-five-year-old father of three who lives in a suburb north of Toronto, owns his own cab and treats it like a limousine service. Billie and I arrange a meeting at his home in North Toronto. His youngest son picks me up from the subway station. When we arrive at the family home, the taxi is sitting in the driveway. He mentions that there are other taxi drivers in the neighborhood, but many of them take the taxi signs off of the car when it is in the driveway.

Like Abraham, Billie moved to Toronto with an asylum program eighteen years ago. An engineer in Iran, he entered Canada under a professional placement program for immigrants. It is clear from talking to Billie that, first and foremost, he is still an engineer; he is “an engineer that drives a taxi.” In discussing his life in Iran before moving to Canada, Billie fondly reminisces about his past affiliations with the Left literati and socialist movements in Iran. He laments that he has little time now for local politics in the city because of the hours and nature of his work as a full-time taxi driver.

Unable to find work after the internship, and no longer “patient [enough to wait for better work], with three children to support,” Billie started working as a delivery person for a chain restaurant. After a few months, he felt limited by a job where his hours were “dictated by someone else’s hours.” He really needed to be working more to make ends meet. He began driving cabs on top of keeping the delivery job. He worked as a cab driver from 4:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and would deliver food at the restaurant between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. Billie reflects on those early years, during which he balanced two jobs, six days a week, “without sleep and never seeing the family.” It took approximately six years for Billie to save up and buy his own taxi plate in order to begin his own taxi business. Billie prefers to drive “mostly the business crowd around.”

Billie now works six days a week on what he terms the “business hours.”

This includes Friday and Saturday “until two or four in the morning, if it is busy enough.” He will occasionally work into the night on a weekday if one of the “children needs money for school or the house needs some repairing.” He has not taken a break of more than one day for the past five years. Billie is less forthcoming about talking about his wages. He says, “There is no way to really say how much money I make. At the end of the year it is always the same. On a daily and weekly basis it is not even. And, I just have to keep going thinking that in the end of the year it will be the same as the year before.” He goes on to say, “You just have to work more when it doesn’t even out. And if you keep working, it will even out. But you need new strategies and have to drive the right people.” The taxi belongs to Billie. He doesn’t rely on a central dispatcher. Instead, Billie keeps a cell phone, gives out business cards, and relies on a network of business people who frequent the city. This, he imagines, gives him control over his workday. His usual route during “the usual business hours” moves between hotels, the financial district, industrial parks, and the airport. Billie’s taxi, except for the night revelers on Friday and Saturday, is in the service of businesspeople. He goes out every day with the intention of establishing connections to ensure that his taxi circulates within this larger flow. He quite often is booked days in advance or will meet a “person in town for business” and set up a few days of transportation arrangements. If he hasn’t already established a fare to start his day, he drives for approximately twenty-five minutes to the city center and waits outside the hotels where businesspeople are most likely to stay. On a bad day he could be waiting “up to one hour for a first customer.” This waiting is also Billie’s “break time.”

As with the other two drivers I’ve described, Billie has hope that this job is still temporary. He is open to trying something else, ideally working as an engineer or a job closely related to engineering. One of the reasons he prefers to drive businesspeople is that it could lead to making a business connection beyond his taxi business. Billie takes the element of chance that the taxi provides seriously: “You never know who you might pick up and how they might be able to help.”

Speed Takes the Backseat

The notion that the world is getting faster has little to do with the taxi driver’s experience of time. Drivers fully recognize that certain populations live in their own fast worlds. The taxi driver’s experience of time is

recognized as one lived on the margins of a temporality. The fact that taxi drivers are always trying to keep up with the time of others structures the drivers' horizon of possibility on a daily basis; this affects how they understand time in terms of their lifetimes. When I asked if a change in tempo or speed of life was noticed, all three took some time answering the question. In various ways, they responded that they had not experienced acceleration. In fact, the common thread running through the interviews was that if there was any transformation in tempo, it was slowing down.

In the past decade, the city of Toronto has been flooded with cabs, their numbers doubling in five years from three thousand to six thousand, and the city plans to have ten thousand on the road within the next few years. Couple this with the economic crisis, and these are slow times for cab drivers. Abraham laments, "Life is slow, business is slow, things have never been this slow before, and it is only going to get slower for us; it is harder to make money than ever." Judy and Billie explain how business is so slow and uncertain that they no longer take breaks because they spend so much time parking and waiting. Billie, who prefers to start his day from a hotel in the financial district, exclaims: "I spend sometimes an hour outside a hotel waiting for a fare at the beginning of every shift in the morning." These breaks are fraught with anxiety, as Abraham explains: "You're just waiting and you're looking everywhere for someone to pick up. Sometimes you drive around aimlessly and when you see someone you speed up to them." The drivers' first reflections on changes of tempo were related to their own labor. When probed further, I found that their perceptions of speed were relative to the tempos and demands of their fares.

Speed has always frequented the cab. It comes dressed in suits, talking on cell phones, late for appointments, or about to miss a flight. Abraham says, "People in the day are always in a hurry. They take cabs because they are late. And I feel so stressed when they do this." Billie maintains the same level of frustration regarding "day people" and their temporal demands:

They think the taxi is going to make magic, like a magic carpet flying over the city. They have a job interview, a business meeting to close a million-dollar deal, a flight. Friday I had a customer at six at Yonge and Bloor and his flight was at seven. So the time he gets into my cab is the time he should have been going through security at the airport. He says he has a security pass but that doesn't do anything for me! It is a forty-five-minute drive. He is transferring his stress to

me immediately. The minute he gets in the cab. That is the service you are doing for this customer. You're a doctor and he has a pain and you want to help him because this is your job. You have to do something.

For Billie “making time” is part of his labor. A taxi may appear to be a liminal space within the nodes of global capital—in other words, another non-place that people traverse and travel through rather than live in and make meaning. But cabs are only liminal in the back; there is a living subject in the front. It is the driver whose heart rate accelerates and adrenalin increases due to the diminishing time the passenger has left to catch a flight. The taxi driver exposes the singular gaze of acceleration and liminal spaces, and considering his or her position can help us understand the contemporary moment. Some populations, like taxi drivers, are in motion but are inexorably tied to a structural position within capital. They are treated as mechanical pieces of the technology that “cradle” the valuable and producing subject, the frequent business traveler.

Judy's comments on the speed of life make an important link between speed and power as particular to social and political contexts. Judy realizes that different experiences of time are linked to greater structural inequalities. In her case, the difference is gender. I ask Judy if she feels stressed out when her fare asks her to go faster, as I had learned that Abraham and Billie were. She surprises me in her response:

You know you aren't going to believe this, but rarely have I heard “go faster.” And do you want to know why? It is because I am a woman driver. Men get scared of women drivers, you know. Do you know that almost every day I have had to hear a man tell me to “slow down”? They say, “I'm in no hurry, SLOW DOWN.” And I'm not even going fast, but they don't feel comfortable because I'm a woman. This has to be why. Have you ever heard of someone getting in a cab and wanting a slow ride? I see them. They get in. And they don't say anything. But they looked freaked out and they hold on to the handles, and they aren't relaxed. My last fare I drove to the airport, was like this. I never say anything. But once in a while I say “relax, I'm not going to kill you.” But I have to slow down if they say so.

Her tempo is dictated by her fares, like Abraham and Billie. However, with Judy, that tempo cannot be disarticulated from male dominance and the fares' gendered understanding of appropriate pace and mechanical competence.

Significantly, in discussions about time and the conditions of their labor, the drivers share a comforting notion that, overall, they are in control of their time—perhaps not their tempo, but their time spent on the job. This belief appears to work almost as a technology of the self. Foucault defined technologies of the self as consisting of the various techniques that allow individuals to exercise, by their own individual means, operations on their own bodies and minds in order to work upon themselves to achieve a state of being, such as happiness, or a sense of well-being and quality of life.⁵ The practice of controlling time works here via specific strategies but also through the repetition of a discursive statement: “I control my time.” This statement works like a mantra. It is repeated over and over and mentioned several times by all the drivers as an aside or a *but* to everything else they endure. The sense of—and belief in—control permeates the way these drivers see themselves existing in space and time. Abraham's wish to soon return home again is supported by the fact that “there will always be a cab to drive,” since he can leave and come back when he wants to. For Billie, like Judy, the instant cash means that he has the option to make more money if he works longer or later if something comes up. When Billie's children have to pay their tuition, he is most likely to spend more hours on the road—he can “control” his income. Judy tells me, “I can go out whenever I want; if I don't feel like working then I can just stay home or do something else or go out at night with people.” In the next breath, though, Judy admits: “But I'm afraid if I do go out, I won't have a good time. And then I'll be thinking the whole time that I should be driving. That's what happens, too, when I decide to stay home and take it easy. I can't.” Abraham explains why drivers keep driving: “There is one thing that keeps you driving and that is that you make your own hours, no boss over your shoulder, but it is like gambling. Today I don't make any money and I say ‘That's it! I'm going to quit this shitty job.’ But the next day you make money and it gives you hope. And I think I can save up to get to my country.” Billie expresses the gamble in terms of fishing: “You got to know what time, where to go, otherwise it is like fishing. This job is like fishing. There is no fixed salary. It is all about timing. You have to try and catch a fish, but you'll go again tomor-

row to try again because that is what you do.” Later in the conversation, Billie shifts the focus of the metaphor and refers to himself as the fish, lost in the current: “I’m like a fish caught in a stream and I have to go the way the river takes me.” But Billie’s animal-ecology analogy runs through Judy’s and Abraham’s sentiments as well. “It is a dog-eat-dog world for us drivers,” says Judy. Abraham claims, “I’m like a hyena. When the daylight comes, I need to get off the road and home.” Each of these animal analogies casts the driver in a subordinate role to another dominant rhythm somewhere higher up the food chain: the fish is pushed around by the stream, the dogs compete for scraps from the master’s table, and the hyena patrols the night for the lions’ leavings. When talking about temporality, the drivers first reflected on their own labor and the temporal demands associated with driving. As the conversations continued, they considered their own lives within the larger structures of time. All in all, they understood their time as being dominated and relative to a dominant temporality. The taxi driver’s time is structured around the instant. This fact is not merely representative of a sped-up world. It is an experience of time that is constantly oriented toward the temporal needs of other populations and individuals—the experience of the subordinate subject, a piece of the machine.

Regardless of their material wealth, career orientations, and social positions, time is a problem for both the taxi driver and the business traveler. Michael Hardt’s rumination on prison time is particularly compelling here as a route toward the next section of analysis.⁶ For Hardt, the ultimate form of punishment in much of contemporary society is “doing time.” The fact that a temporal nothingness, a great void in living a life, exists as a punishment automatically necessitates the questions: “How could one redeem time? How could one live a full time?”⁷ According to Hardt, cultural anxieties over filling time exist, in part, because prison exists as a reminder of a full life, rich in time. However, prison is not the alternative to society; rather it is “a focal point, the site of the highest concentration of a logic of power that is generally diffused through the world. Prison in our society is [that logic’s] most realized form.”⁸ Where one stands in relation to the attainability of temporal fullness (the *opposite* of a prison sentence) determines one’s temporal horizon of possibility. Such horizons are partially determined by modern institutions of power that promise to work out and manage quality time for different populations.

The control of time is a problem for both frequent business travelers and taxi drivers. Both populations must orchestrate and make personal choices

to navigate their time and maintain themselves in a certain order of time. However, they are met with different biopolitical investment. For the frequent business traveler, quality time is made to order, right down to the pillow menus at hotels that promise to match sleeping styles with designer head-cushioning technologies. Frequent business travelers imagine themselves as self-sufficient and independent, well versed in the limits of their bodies. They describe themselves as being solitary navigators of their own roads. However, their time is almost entirely dependent on the time of others. Their leisure and labor demand an infrastructure of temporal maintenance made up of a host of timekeepers and time makers whose time is not their own. The logic of prison time extends into the realm of labor. There is a demand for the fullness of time, but it must also be a time of productivity and efficiency.

Mean Time

Abraham told me:

You know your mind is set for nights. If you sleep day and work nights, time is different. You wouldn't believe me. When I see the sun come out, I feel like I'm a hyena. I run to my house because when you see the light and you are used to the dark, you don't feel too comfortable. I can't explain how it feels, but I feel like I'm stuck and I can't do anything about it.

Soon after 9/11 the municipal government in Toronto began increasing the number of cab licenses and changing the driving requirements for taxi drivers. One of the major changes was the expectation that drivers would go to Taxi-U (Taxi University). There drivers would learn cultural sensitivity and basic issues in professionalism, such as how to open doors for people with disabilities. As of 2013, drivers are expected to pay \$750 for the course or no license will be provided. As Abraham understands it: "Basically it was a way to make money—I already know that I'm supposed to smile and be nice to people even if I don't feel like it, just like all those people who work in restaurants who have to give service with a smile."

At the time of my interviews with the taxi drivers, tourism in Toronto had significantly waned—it was a post-9/11, post-SARS, post-global economic crisis Toronto. Hotels, theme parks, theaters, and restaurants were unusually empty. The ethos behind increasing the number of cabs was to

make sure no one had to wait for a cab. It is important to note that the impetus to make cabs overavailable stands in direct contradiction to a wider city initiative to make the city more bikeable, walkable, and green. The drivers I interviewed, as well as the discussions I followed in *Taxi News*, generally pointed to one explanation: the changes in cab policies were an initiative for the city to make quick and easy money off of immigrants without a concern for the drivers' economic equality. Driving a cab is the one available job for people waiting for papers under the asylum-seeker program.

Each plate is worth approximately \$80,000 on the market. If a plate owner controls sixty plates, the investment is worth \$5 million at current market prices. Plate owners do not typically own the cars themselves. Instead the taxis are usually owned by somebody else. At current rates, obviously, the \$80,000 plate is worth three to five times the value of the taxi. The cars and plates are then rented out on a shift basis to itinerant drivers, who must hustle for long hours to make up the cost of the regulatory apparatus before they get paid themselves. The lease owners are large conglomerates. Eight owners control most of the licenses in Toronto. None of the eight owners are drivers themselves, nor have they ever driven a cab. The drivers I spoke to also claimed that most of these owners live outside the country.

The drivers who do not own their own plates make anywhere from thirty to a hundred dollars a night after gassing up, paying the car rent, and getting something to eat. The average cost of rent for a plate is \$1,000 a month. This is usually 30–50 percent of a driver's income. For the drivers, there is a direct correlation between their temporality and government licensing initiatives. The investment in the city's image by providing more cabs is a disinvestment to existing taxi drivers' time. They endure a slower pace of life, which for them means fewer fares and longer hours. And, more important, this change in labor time means the drivers have even less time to take care of their own lives outside the cab.

Pico Iyer, a popular travel writer and the author of *Global Soul*, is best described as an advocate for the precarity of the well-heeled and jet-set classes of a globalizing world. He gets it so mistakenly wrong when he asserts: "The 'borderless economy' we hear trumpeted so often means that today's businessmen and women have to live everywhere at once, and the speed of global communications means that they can be anywhere tomorrow. Frequent business travelers are the new breed for which 'globaliza-

tion' takes root in the stomach and the heart."⁹ The affective dimensions of laboring in the global economy cannot be leveled out in such a way as to argue for the precarious position of the privileged when we know that there is so much invested in rescuing these bodies. A consideration of the stomachs, hearts, and living lives of city cab drivers reveals a condition of labor only superficially analogous to sufferers of frequent-flyer fatigue. True, both are tired and overworked. And even though drivers don't travel through geographical time zones where the continents drift, they do travel through many dislocating zones of time. Cab drivers' (ironically immobile) travel includes webs of other people's temporalities. It includes excessively long hours with little pay and the particular demands of "night people" and their rhythms, as well as a different kind of stress during the rhythms of the day. However, unlike the jet cradles and nap oases in place for the frequent flyer, there are no technologies of care or temporal infrastructures to keep drivers in time. The cab driver relies on his or her own devised temporal strategies and technologies of the self to navigate the road and maintain his or her time. These technologies of the self result in an alternative architecture of time. The absence of external and infrastructural temporal investments into the life of the taxi driver is where we can best locate how globalization may take root "in the stomach and the heart." More specifically, the absence of temporal investments reveals how a taxi driver's life is lived in a "state of exception" to the temporal order.

For example, Judy expresses frustration over a lack of adequate health insurance and benefits: "We have to do everything ourselves — I mean take care of ourselves. Many drivers don't do anything. They die from heart attacks." Judy explains how she makes time to work out at home in the morning before her shift with a Pilates DVD. Abraham compares driving the day shift to "smoking ten packs of cigarettes a day" because of the exhaust fumes. He says, "When I blew my nose it would be black, and I would cough up stuff at night." He also reiterates Judy's stories of casualties in the driver's seat. They don't result from crashes, but rather strokes, heart attacks, and high blood pressure. Abraham feels that even a few years ago he could have had a little more time to take care of himself. He reminisces about playing soccer some days: "I used to be more active. You know, I'm pretty young. I'm thirty-five and I have trouble walking. I can hardly run. Now driving for years and living in the city, I basically sleep, drive the cab, eat. I don't exercise. I park the car right by my house and I walk to the door—less than eight meters." Judy tells me: "Being on the road all day

is just bad for your heart—all the near misses. My heart is skipping beats all day.” As for being aware of the limits of her body, unlike the “woman road warrior,” who is told to be aware of her menstrual cycle for scheduling travel, no potential for such adjustments exist for Judy. She points to her left eye, which is extremely puffy and red. She explains that this winter she is going through menopause and has to keep her window slightly open to keep herself cooled down while the heat blasts for her fares that “need the cab to be warm.” The skin around her eye has become swollen from the stream of cold air it gets from her window, coupled with her “hot, flushed body and the extra heat in the cab.” Her body is at odds with the temperature controls, the season, the time of night, this time in her life cycle, and the climate all at once. Judy must provide a pleasant ride. Her labor is both immaterial and affective, but her labor materializes on her body.

Judy’s experience provides an interesting counterpoint to the salience of *affective*, *precarious*, and *immaterial* labor as concepts with which to examine the production of the subject under global capital. Marxist theorists of globalization and neoliberalism such as Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and Jason Read use the terms *biopolitical production* and *real subsumption* interchangeably to refer to the elimination of any exteriority to capital.¹⁰ All social relations become relations for capital. Thus, capital’s confrontation with the body, the market, and the world becomes interiorized as the full realization of biopolitics. One familiar example of *formal subsumption* is automated bodies that work like robots and are fragmented by the dictates of the machine. Read defines *formal subsumption* as the encounter between capitalism and its outside—it is capital’s confrontation with other modes of production: the machine, the body, the world, and the world market.¹¹ These theorists do not argue that formal subsumption no longer exists, but rather that real subsumption has become hegemonic. The end products of human labor in formal subsumption are generally material. The movement toward real subsumption depends on and creates immaterial labor through the production of knowledge, desire, information, and experience. While it still requires material bodies and materials, the immaterial quality of labor and production within real subsumption becomes the defining factor.

Even in the context of affective labor, it is *not* safe to say that we are all precarious laborers, all road warriors, in the same way in this era of empire, fast capital, global capital, real subsumption, and neoliberalism. These terms are most useful when recognized alongside an understanding of the differential biopolitical economy of time. Part of capital’s transformative

effect is maintaining a fiction of generalized effects. Being aware of temporality disrupts the tendency to generalize the conditions and effects of capital's transformations.

The business travelers I interviewed are in the trade of affective labor, producing an emotional and immaterial effect. Claire cultivates emotional intelligence in a large corporation so that employees don't waste time. Darryl trains managers to cultivate the most productive use of time. But for taxi drivers, affective labor is about creating a connection in space and creating time for another person. Their job is to get a passenger somewhere on time, by the fastest means possible, and even "making time" if possible. They learn in Taxi-U that they are in the business of producing a pleasurable ride, bridging the distance between point A and point B. From the outside, this is not affective labor. They are not producing an emotion, knowledge, or information but rather a destination. Yet they are producing time. But if we shift gears and look inside the vehicle, then driving a cab does become a recognizable form of affective labor.

Drivers talk of accommodating the mood of the fare and quote their Taxi-U manuals that state: "The fare has the right to a silent ride and the drivers should also be ready and willing to converse as they are 'ambassadors of the city.'" All three drivers explain how they have to be cheerful even if they don't feel like it, even when they encounter racism, sexism, or intruding questions about their nationalities, their immigration status, or religions. Billie explains how he always starts off the ride with a question: "How is your day going?" He goes on: "It means you are caring about this guy—and I really care—he's a customer. This is customer service. The guy gets a chance to empty himself from the stress he has. Or if he is happy, he is expressing more and may get even more happy about it. And when they are upset sometimes you tell them a story about another fare and maybe they will get more relaxed." Significantly, there is also the element of confession. Random strangers enter a cab and divulge secrets and intimate details of their private lives to the driver. Like a bartender, the cab driver doubles as a therapist, a willing ear. Whether or not the driver cares, and many do, providing this willing ear is part of their customer service.

To a large extent, the drivers also share an entrepreneurial ethos with frequent business travelers. They take pride in their labor as if they were solitary and independent businesspeople. The drivers recognize the competitive climate in which they labor. The drivers significantly valorize their control over their own time and ability to be affective laborers. Billie is a

particularly interesting example. He sees himself and his cab driving as a business first and foremost. Billie explains that, after years of experience, he has become discerning. He prefers only to drive people with an education or people like him. Billie will start his day at a downtown hotel even if that means waiting an hour for his first fare. Through his discussions with passengers, he learns when the next big conference, meeting, or training workshop will be and what areas may be requiring a connection to the financial district. He explains that his strategy is often to give them a tour of the area en route and explain things about Toronto while getting the fare to the destination faster: "I have made business cards so that I can hand them out to good fares. And many times out of the year, I'll have a whole month where I work with one group of people." Billie's strategy of only driving during business hours is an example of an attempt to normalize his time to a legitimized time frame.

Sharing time with the business traveler gives Billie some sense of legitimacy, not only within the business world but also with the general public. Further, it offers a potential opportunity and a sentiment of hope for his future. Later in our discussion Billie explains his hope:

If I work these hours and meet these types of people, the educated who have some power, I just might meet someone who can help. Like one guy will ask you and feel sorry for you. He'll say, "you don't look like a taxi driver, what are you doing?" And you tell him your story. And maybe he can do something for you—like give you a card or a phone number or he can talk to a recruiter for you. So you feel okay . . . sometimes.

Billie recognizes a looming temporal order, and he works very hard to not be cast as one of the outliers of time. The night people, he claims, "are the scum of the earth. These people have no life. Anyone out after ten on a weekday or 2 a.m. on the weekend is a person with no life." His experiences with racist tirades from fares and a social system that doesn't recognize his engineering credentials and has him delivering food and people instead has made him sensitive to when and where he works in the city. That there is a temporal order of things, and that a certain dominant temporal order should be maintained, is entrenched in his speech and his actions. Time becomes the arbiter of exclusion and inclusion. It is a measure of what it means to be a worthy human. Billie works to maintain the temporal order in more ways than by labor alone.

Feeling out of time in an alternative temporal plane is a common state of being for the taxi drivers. It is significant that the drivers don't refer to themselves as warriors trying to balance their lives. Instead they talk of themselves as fish floating in a stream, dogs in a dog-eat-dog world, and hyenas that can't stand the daylight. Feeling out of time and exiled from a "normal time" is exactly how Abraham explains his life: "I know it is really bad, but I can't change it. I've lived in this building for four years and I don't even know my next-door neighbor because of my night shifts. I come home; they're gone to work. While they're gone I'm going to leave for work. When you do this six days a week, you just won't know a lot of people." They are out of time in terms of the normal order of the day, but they also feel out of time when they are expelled to a state of exception in their interactions with fares. In a relationship of subservient time, the "state of exception" is not a space they enter, but it is constituted in time when momentary and fleeting interactions with fares reinforce their lives as outside of the order.

Quite often, exchanges of racism, sexism, and class violence are not so fleeting. Abraham tells me that "you cabbies" is something he hears every other day. When that happens, what he hears is a general statement that lumps all drivers into "pieces of shit and stupid immigrants." Abraham explains that racial violence is a consistent part of his interactions with the public. Billie tells a story of a businessperson he picked up from the financial district who asked him some personal questions: Where are you from? Why are you driving a cab? Do you have a family? Do you own a house? When Billie explained that his kids were in university and that he was recently able to afford a small house for the family, the fare responded by saying that Billie was a good example of someone who had made it on his own. The government, said the fare, doesn't need to help immigrants. Billie goes on to say: "I couldn't work after that. I went home in the afternoon. I felt it was an intention to stop immigrants from doing their own jobs because the guy said he had been at a meeting and said, 'no matter what we do to them, they will make it, so why not leave them alone from the beginning.'" Billie gets angrier when he recounts this story. He exclaims,

What is this? We bring people here to stop them. What is the reason? The guy has an education. The poor, back home, culture spends all this money to make him a healthy guy with education and he comes here 100 percent in your hands and is ready to use it. So why stop him from doing what he was doing and push him to do low-level

jobs? When we can't get the job we want, we are supposed to deliver pizza.

Judy shares a disparaging interaction with a female fare. She recalls driving into the financial district at ten at night, where a young woman in "a power suit and a briefcase, obviously burning the candle at both ends" flagged her. Judy couldn't afford a babysitter for her son and would sometimes have to bring him along during her night shifts. He would sleep in the front seat while she worked through the night. On this night:

The woman looked into the car and then asked me, "What kind of mother are you, running your babysitting business at the same time?" I drove away really upset and this was the worst time of my life I think. It was this time when my son was too young to stay on his own. This is really bad. You might think this is horrible, but sometimes I would leave him alone and I would drive by every hour to check on him.

Billie, Abraham, and Judy may be the true road warriors in the sense of being solitary, self-sufficient, and independent. There isn't a time-maintenance infrastructure to support their time needs and to help keep things in order. There are only strategies of survival and technologies of the self.

The Subarchitectures of Time Maintenance

Pierre Bourdieu suggests that "waiting is one of the privileged ways of experiencing the effect of power." In order to dissect the relationship between time and power, Bourdieu outlines an ethnography that must "catalogue and analyze all the behaviors associated with the exercise of power over other people's time both on the side of the powerful (adjourning, deferring, delaying, raising false hopes, or conversely, rushing, taking by surprise) and on the other side of the 'patient' as they say in the medical universe, one of the sites par excellence of anxious, powerless waiting."¹² The taxi driver's temporal labor is a form of labor that consists almost solely of waiting. As Bourdieu writes, "It follows that the art of taking one's time[,]. . . of making people wait[,]. . . of adjourning[,]. . . is an integral part of the exercises of power."¹³ The lack of time control over one's own immediate and long-term bodily needs in the cab driver's life includes increased heart palpitations, black phlegm, having a full bladder, falling asleep at the wheel, and over-

heating. These are a few of the most common side effects for the drivers, who are synchronizing to the tempo of structural “backseat” relations and constantly waiting to be necessary to others’ time needs.

Judy, Billie, and Abraham each recount stories of falling asleep at the wheel. When drivers are in the car typically twelve hours a day, and in some cases sixteen hours, staying awake is a struggle. Judy says, “I catch myself dozing off here and there, but I can catch myself.” Abraham tells of the time he fell asleep while he was stopped at an intersection in the day. His fare angrily got out of the car. Abraham mentions khat, a bitter green leaf that is chewed on but not swallowed and is usually lodged in one side of the mouth. Khat leaves produce cathine as a stimulant. Chewing khat “makes you stay awake and stay full of energy. It is good for a Friday or Saturday,” explains Abraham. He goes on to say: “Some drivers can work twenty-four hours on it, and I would take it more often if it wasn’t so expensive.” All of the drivers attest to drinking “too much coffee.” They express frustration with being unable to take bathroom breaks because of parking or having a fare that is going far. Billie rhetorically asks, “Can you imagine not drinking something you wanted because you were thirsty, because you might have to go the bathroom? It is like being a child.”

While places of rest are not always convenient, they do constitute an alternative temporal architecture necessary for drivers’ needs. Informal but established rest areas provide places for bathroom breaks and naps, or a parking space to be able to stand and stretch. The drivers’ temporal infrastructures are both ad hoc and get established over time. Quite often, breaks are spent with congregations of drivers from the same ethnic communities, another testament to how the geopolitical and chronopolitical are mutually imbricated. Billie explains that drivers of the same ethnic communities will frequently drive the same kinds of hours. The circumstances of why taxi drivers moved to Toronto in the first place often determines the type of hours they work. Their reasons for being cab drivers are historically contingent. (Generally, most drivers are immigrants, except for a few older men who have been driving for more than fifty years.)

Billie explains that Middle Eastern drivers are quite often educated fathers who are less likely to work through the night and into the morning hours because they have families. Billie’s earlier ruminations on keeping a normal routine fit this profile: “I try and make life close to the way it was before we left. I like to dress well for work and come home at a decent hour as much as possible.” Abraham confirms that the temporal choices of

drivers are linked to ethnic communities during a discussion of his own circumstances: “Most people from my country and the African continent that are driving are waiting for papers for asylum and are in between things. So they don’t need to be free at night. And I actually feel more comfortable with night people.” Judy will go to a certain bar where drivers from her community will be out at particular times. And while it is uncommon to take breaks, the drivers relay the particulars of where these breaks are taken. According to Abraham, “We meet at the bus station, that’s our stand.” And for Billie there is a particular stand at an intersection north of the financial district. Billie exclaims, “Look! When we are all immigrants, we come to this town and you get to know each other and destinations where you feel relaxed and okay. You know what time, where to be.”

“The Indian house by the airport” is an attempt by Sikh taxi drivers and their wives to provide a place of rest. A South Asian driver tells me about a house close to the airport that a particular taxi fleet owns. The house has been made accessible for the fleet’s drivers. It is part of their infrastructure of time maintenance. Like Darryl, whose airport lounge “is like home,” this driver says: “[The house by the airport] is like home; it has a bed. There are old and new Indian movies, Indian food, and newspapers from back home.” He goes on to say, “We usually work sixteen hours, and we go to this place to take breaks because it is between the highway for the city and the airport. And we can’t go home to rest. And we are Aerofleet [a fleet tied to the airport], so we can’t pick up passengers in the city. So some of us have organized this place for us.” The fact that the house is sustained and supported by the labor of the wives of the drivers and fleet owner adds another dimension to the temporal layering and politics of maintaining and nurturing dominating tempos. In this context, the women are temporal labor within a subalternative architecture of time—two levels removed from dominant temporalities. Because these drivers rest in a space created by their fleet owners, it might seem possible to also conclude here that this is an indentured relation of the body to the company—a cab driver’s company store. However, what complicates this type of conclusion is the comfort the drivers feel being in a space where they aren’t treated as bare and expendable life, but as members of a community. The space also serves the basic bodily needs of the drivers who work just to get by.

Other material structures within the urban landscape reflect the biopolitical economy of time for populations who wait differently. The proposal published in *Designing the Taxi* by the Design Trust for Public Space

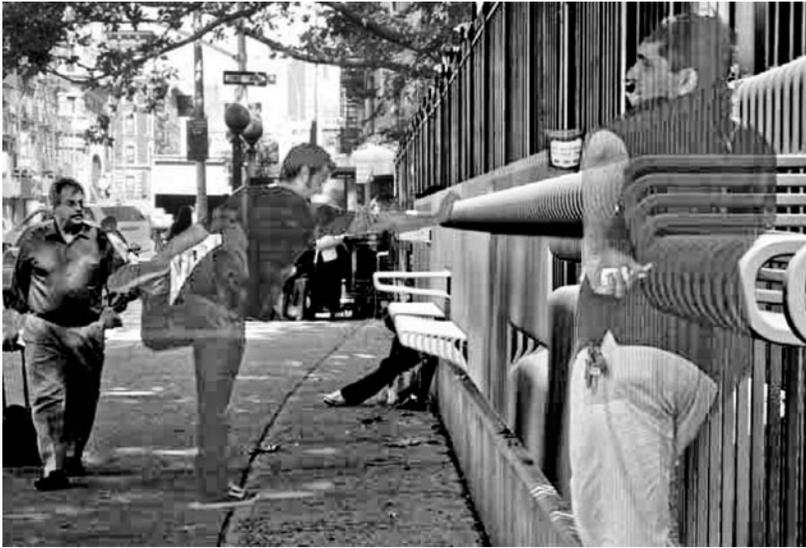


Figure 2.1. A *STRETCH*fence designed for taxi drivers. The Design Trust for Public Space in New York City asked Truck Product Architecture in New York City to draw up plans for a rest station for taxi drivers at Houston Street and First Avenue. Megan Canning, Savannah Gorton, Deborah Marton *Designing the Taxi* (New York: Design Trust for Public Space, 2005), 30.

includes designs for waiting stands for taxi drivers and passengers.¹⁴ The design group consists of architects, leading interior designers, public-space advocates, and two representatives from New York Taxi—a fleet owner and a driver. Two specific design initiatives that the group has put forward to city planners involve two types of taxi stands. One is for fares at the airport who need to wait for cabs. The other is for taxi drivers in the public space of the city (see figure 2.1). The open-air relief stands, resembling children’s monkey bars, are public spaces in which drivers can sit, stretch, rest, and use the restroom. The space offers the bare minimum of resources and is designed for “relief” (see figure 2.2). The waiting stand at the airport for fares, on the other hand, adds modern glamour to waiting with television screens, outlets for laptops, and shelter from the weather (see figure 2.3). Passengers can plug in and (literally) recharge their batteries while the drivers stretch in order to (figuratively) recharge their bodies for their shifts. Both are forms of recalibration within diametric architectures of time. Both are responses to the time demands of drivers’ labor.

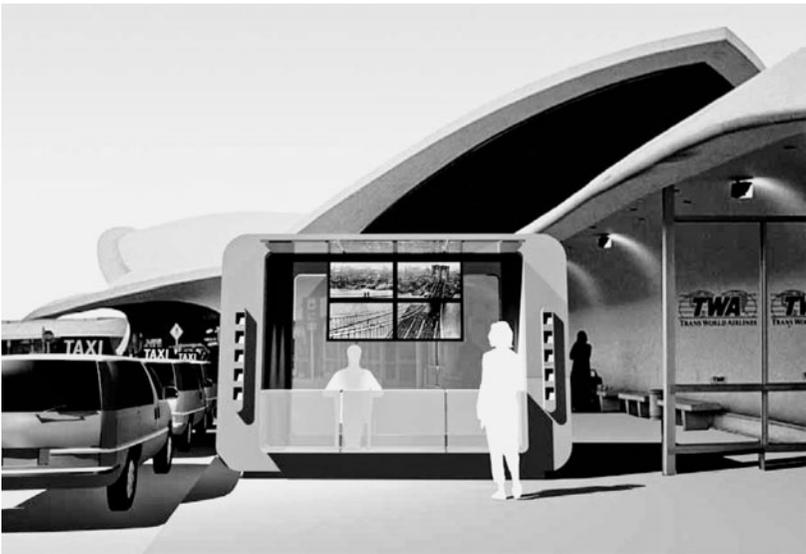
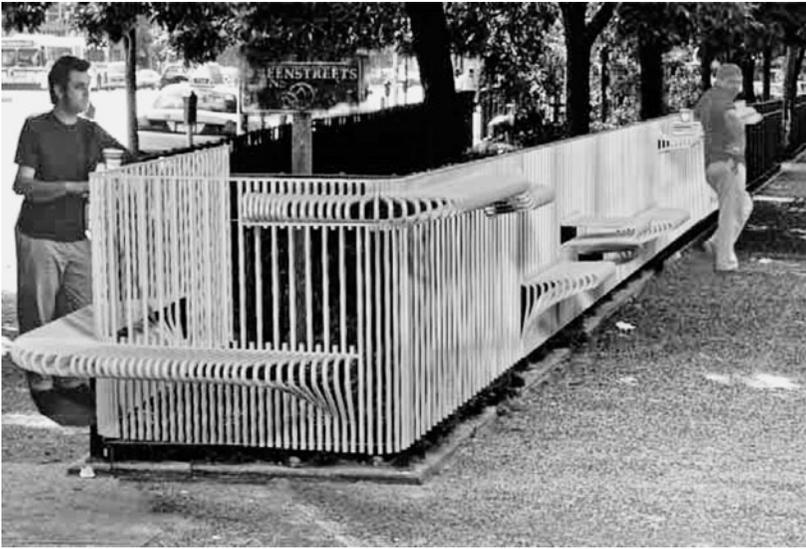


FIGURE 2.2. (top) Another view of the STRETCHfence from *Designing the Taxi*, 30.
FIGURE 2.3. (bottom) A taxi stand for waiting fares designed by Weis and Yoes for the Design Trust for Public Space in New York City. The stand is promoted by *Designing the Taxi* as “bringing glamour to the wait for a taxi,” 32.

I can't argue that these relief stands won't provide any respite, nor can I deny that, without a doubt, they are much needed demarcated zones in cities where drivers are fined for quick stops to use restrooms. But it is important to point out that these two design initiatives reveal the disparity between investments in the time of drivers and fares. Relief stands do not overcome the low wages and inhumane hours necessary for taxi drivers to make a living wage. The different vision of what constitutes relief for different populations speaks volumes to how the time of the drivers and passengers are differentially imagined, regulated, and practiced. It is not so much about whether these technologies for waiting work or not, whether they actually provide relief or not, but what they indicate about the politics of uneven temporal orders and architectures.

Cab-Lagged at the Margins of Time

Over the course of their days, as part of their livelihoods, the drivers' technologies of the self include synchronizing to the time of others. How they understand time is in large part structured and controlled by the time of others. Attention to synchronicity as a relation of power forefronts disjunctive temporal differences in a world that too often claims to be working in organic temporal unity. While there is a rhythm to social life, it is neither an equitable nor egalitarian rhythm. The micropolitics of maintaining rhythm is such that the temporality of the frequent business travelers ultimately governs the time practices of the cab drivers.

This chapter has explored what it means to be out of time from the perspective of living and laboring on the margins of the temporal order. If jet lag captures the temporality of those living life in the fast lane, *cab lag* is a potentially productive term that evokes the materially impoverished relationship to time that is exacerbated by the sped-up lives that others choose. Cab-lagged temporalities, those servicing the privileged itineraries, exist on the boundaries of time, falling in and out of time without the safety net of a temporal architecture to keep them in time. Cab lag, then, refers to a condition of labor of where people exist in a differential and inequitable temporal relation with another group with whom they are expected to synch up. The cab-lagged temporality includes hotel maids whose labor now requires them to lift luxury mattresses for the socially jet-lagged and clean on a night shift so that business travelers can sleep during the day.¹⁵ The cab-lagged temporality includes city workers paving over highways in

the morning before the rush hour. It includes women who work in call centers and answer the phone with a cheerful “good morning,” preferably without an Indian accent, even though they are working in Delhi late at night.¹⁶ The cab-lagged class includes aging security officers from privatized companies who work in skyscrapers and airports. The cab-lagged may include nannies and housecleaners. Cab-lagged populations do have a relationship to the dominant temporal infrastructure. They clean, service, secure, and maintain it.

The different workers I describe will find and enact a distinctive architecture of time of their own making. The experience of being out of time is differential. It depends on where one is positioned within the larger biopolitical economy of time. And the maintenance of the body is at the center of the struggle for life for some and imbricated in the maintenance of a certain lifestyle for others. The cultivation of differential temporal regimes is not an autonomous practice, free from modes of production and institutions of modern power. Rather, it is conditioned and disciplined by this power. Taxi drivers and frequent business travelers are just one incarnation of the mutual imbrication of time. The relationships among these temporalities are not simple temporal binaries—fast classes and slow classes—with one floating high above and the other stalled on the ground. Their difference is not spatial. It is temporal. All populations under global capital are at once out of time but firmly grounded in time. The point is that time, as it is constructed in terms of power, must be acknowledged as differential, relational, and tangled.