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Interregna: Time, Law, and Resistance

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GREENHOUSE, CAROL. *A Moment's Notice: Time Politics across Cultures*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

BEYNON-JONES, SIÂN M., and EMILY GRABHAM, eds. *Law and Time*. New York: Routledge, 2019.

The temporality of resistance is one of interregna. Resistance wins, loses, and draws, while old and new power relations continuously rise and fall, being entrenched and resurrected as they are contested and usurped. Just as power radiates from all over, from the state, law, other social institutions, and relationships, resistance is diffused across yet vested in individuals and groups, moving in solidarity through interconnected pasts, presents, and futures. "Interregna" thus resonates with contemporary theories about the multisited nature of power, but expands the scope of attention to temporal heterogeneity. It sees resistance as a great host crossing lands, seas, and times. Protests in this political moment are connected by their fury and determination to overcome injustice, as well as by histories and memories to struggles that came before. "Interregna" also keeps us alert to unknown wrongs that lie ahead, and the need to fight ceaselessly for progressive justice. Understanding resistance as interregna, we sharpen our appreciation for law and power, and the manner by which we study legal mobilization, legal consciousness, and social change.

The *đình* stands against a backdrop of dark green foliage, its white walls and red roof tiles half-concealed by the leafy branches of trees in the courtyard. Grass grows along a dirt road that meanders around the white walls of the *đình* and vegetable patches to their left, cuts through the paddy fields in the back, and

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disappears under the archway marking the village entrance. White clouds drift idly across the blue sky.

Villagers come to the *đình*, the heart of community life, to pay respect to their ancestors on the first and fifteenth day of the lunar month, said Uncle Vu. I turned my head away from the oil painting and looked around, wondering if Uncle Vu was referring to the *đình* portrayed in the painting or the *đình* where the painting was hanging. This village has been standing here for seven hundred to eight hundred years, he continued. The road outside used to be paddy fields.[2]

I had come to visit Uncle Vu and Auntie Ly, his wife, on the outskirts of Hanoi, Vietnam, where Uncle Vu is resident group leader of approximately 280 families. I wanted to talk to them about their families and learn about their views on filial piety and laws that require adult children to look after their elderly parents ("parental maintenance laws"). My curiosity was motivated by a fundamental puzzle in law and society scholarship, whether and how anyone would invoke the law to solve their problems—a research tradition known as legal mobilization.[3] Would parents mobilize parental maintenance laws against their children? Cumulative wisdom in law and society scholarship tells us that most people would not resort to official law, what more to use it against their children.[4]

My curiosity led to Uncle Vu, Auntie Ly, a young woman called Mai, and hundreds more. When Uncle Vu and Auntie Ly sat under the ancestral altar in their living room, chatting about their neighborhood, Uncle Vu said he and his neighbors had thwarted a corporation's plan to demolish their *đình* several years ago, and invited me to visit it. The two-minute walk put me on a journey through time, far away from courts yet connecting official law, filial piety practiced in families, clans, villages, and metropolises, and Uncle Vu, Auntie Ly, Mai, and everyone else in my study.

To Uncle Vu, shoulders bent and hair washed white by the passage of seventy-five Gregorian calendar years, the painting of the *đình* represents an idyllic past when the tradition of filial piety was much stronger, and the *đình*, a highly revered form of filial piety. Ancestor worship, performed on significant days of the lunar calendar at this *đình* and other temples, makes up part of Confucian-influenced filial piety practiced in the societies to which I travelled. Like filial piety, ancestor worship links previous and

2. Field notes and interview, December 3, 2016.

3. On the development of legal mobilization as a law and society research tradition, see Chua (2019a).

4. This project explores whether and how the elderly use parental maintenance laws, and how their experiences and views could be understood in relation to the ways in which families and individuals participate in and perceive parent-child relationships. The project spans seven research sites: Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and their surrounding areas in Vietnam; Guangzhou-Shenzhen, Xiamen-Quanzhou and their nearby provinces and villages in southeastern China; Taipei, Tainan and their adjacent countryside in Taiwan; and the city-state of Singapore. The parental maintenance laws of these four territories require adult children to provide financial support to elderly parents who have no means of livelihood or income, and, additionally, in China and Vietnam's case, to give emotional care (also see note 6). I conduct interviews, observe court proceedings, and analyze court decisions, policy directives, legislation, and media reports. The three hundred interviewees (so far), selected based on purposive stratified sampling, include lawyers, judges, mediators, social workers, healthcare workers, community leaders, village heads, litigants, as well as ordinary folks of diverse backgrounds in terms of age, place of residence, economic status, occupation, religion, language, sexuality, gender, and education. Most of them identify as the dominant ethnic group at each site, namely, ethnic Han Chinese and Viet. I also sample ethnic minorities for the purposes of tacit comparison and verification.

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present lifetimes, meant for the living to remember, respect, and repay their forebears. It also reaches forward in time, joining the past and present to their offspring, who are expected to continue with and pass down its practices (Fortes 1976).

Both the *đình* and the norms it embodies, filial piety, are ingrained in their physical and emotional landscape, taken for granted but acted upon as meaningful things and ideas. They are receding but weathering the present. They are surviving, not the idyllic past suspended in a painting, but always changing in a bustling city where the new and old jostle for a place in the future.

Parental maintenance laws capture only a fraction of all this. Legislators ground the authority of these laws in a fantasized, singular tradition of filial piety, ageless and transcendent of individual life spans of parents and children, relying on successive generations to perform and carry it forward.[5] These laws usually regulate the financial obligations of younger generations to the older, and leave out ancestor worship and other practices of filial piety.[6]

In Uncle Vu's view, parental maintenance laws are irrelevant to ensure the present or future of filial piety. As resident group leader for over twenty years, he has not come across a dispute in which a parent turned to parental maintenance laws to sue their child. The tradition of filial piety (*hiếu*; 孝) in his neighborhood is still strong, he said.[7]

Uncle Vu's reaction, a rejection of state intervention, is one type of response among my interviewees. I also found other kinds of resistance, as my fieldwork in southeastern China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Singapore progressed. Some interviewees go against so-called traditional norms of filial piety, use parental maintenance laws to resist them, or challenge the very meaning of those laws.

Noticing the close connection between time, law, and resistance, I started exploring ways to theorize about their relationship. The subject of time has fascinated social theorists, social scientists, and philosophers alike. At the intersection of law and time, anthropologists such as Greenhouse (1996) take a macro-level approach to analyze time as structural power and the role of law in its making.[8] Geographers examine law and temporality in relation to space, or spatio-temporality (see, e.g., Valverde 2015). A multidisciplinary range of scholars study the dynamics between time and formal legal systems (see, e.g., Corrias and Francot 2018; Ranchordás and Roznai 2020; Mawani 2014; Grabham 2016; Beynon-Jones and Grabham 2019). In addition, scholars from anthropology, sociology, law, and other disciplines hone in on the micro level, interlocking

5. Even though Singapore's Maintenance of Parents Act was not intended to promote filial piety, it was meant to offer protection when filial piety failed (Hansard, July 25, 1994, Column 150-1). In short, the starting premise of Singapore's parental maintenance law still aligns with basic filial piety norms, which obligate children to take care of their parents.

6. In addition to financial obligations, China's *Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly* urges family members living apart from their elders to visit them frequently, and Vietnam's *Marriage & Family Law* and *Law on the Elderly* exhort children to respect and tend to the emotional needs of elderly parents.

7. Interview, December 3, 2016. Nonetheless, many other lay interviewees and legal experts in my study believe in the legitimacy of parental maintenance laws. Perhaps it is because they trace the state's legal authority to a much older normative order (Kahn 1999), in this case, filial piety.

8. More broadly, anthropologists also analyze time at a macro-level (see, e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1940; Fortes 1949; Geertz 1973; Bear 2014).

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effects of time and law on individuals and social groups.[9] However, despite the voluminous scholarship on time, and recent surge in law and time publications, the relationship among time, law, and resistance has not occupied a central place in law and society scholarship.[10]

Informed by my fieldwork and inspired by the vast literature about time, I devised the concept of "interregna" to theorize about this tripartite relationship. Briefly, *interregna* is the temporality of resistance, a concept composed of three building blocks—social times, personal times, and inter-temporalities: *Social times* are relationally constructed and are cultural formulations of agency; *personal times*, also relationally constructed, are expressions and enactments of agency; through the interactions between social and personal times, we live in *inter-temporalities*. The meaning of interregna and its implications for law and society scholarship on power, resistance, and mobilization unfold as I explain the three building blocks and arrive at the elaboration of interregna in the final section of this essay.

Along the way, I consider Carol Greenhouse's *A Moment's Notice* (1996), a foundational text on law and time, and read it beside contributions in a recent volume edited by Beynon-Jones and Grabham, *Law and Time* (2019), as well as other writings in law and society, the broader social sciences, and humanities. As this is a review essay—as opposed to a book review—I draw from these writings and my own research to introduce my own thinking about time, law, and resistance. Greenhouse scrutinizes the macro workings of law and time, but does not theorize explicitly about agency or personal times. On the other hand, several chapters in the Beynon-Jones and Grabham's volume concentrate on subjective experiences with the social times of law. With "interregna," I cut across macro- and micro-level studies of law and time to theorize about what happens to social and personal times when there are conflict and resistance, and the two rub against each other.

SOCIAL TIMES AND LAW

Social time gives us a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1998; Atkinson 2019), a set of rules, norms, and expectations not only about how but also when we should feel, think, and act, and assign meanings to birth, death, love, violence, and many more aspects of life. There are heteronormative, "straight" times, shared beliefs about when it would be appropriate to become sexually active, get married, and bear children;[11] times organized around work, such as when to plough the fields, start cooking dinner, or report at the office; and, times built on familial obligations, what and when each family member ought to do for each other, such as offer financial maintenance, give emotional support, and perform ancestor worship. Having no feel for the game or rejecting it takes

9. Recent examples include various chapters that I cite from the Beynon-Jones and Grabham (2019) volume, and the 2014 special issue of the *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*.

10. Mawani's (2015) recent essay in this Review Section focused on the connection between law and time, but not through the lens of resistance.

11. See Boellstorff (2007) on queer time; Freeman (2010) on chrono-normativity; and Borneman (1996) on the "serial trinity" of birth, marriage, and death in human life course (216).

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us out of pace with a social time, possibly leading to ostracization, alienation, and other punitive consequences.

Social time is relationally constructed. It is not merely an objectivist conception like the mechanical, uniform time of Newton independent of humans, or an *a priori* concept subjectively rooted only in our minds per Kant or Descartes (Elias 1992). Social time continuously emerges from our relationships—among us as humans; between us and nature, such as the biological workings of our bodies, microorganisms, plants, animals, and other living beings; between us and human-made technologies and nonliving things; and between us and the supernatural, gods and ghosts, heaven and hell, and other other-worldly planes and beings—as we give meaning and respond to ongoing changes to those relationships. Social time also emerges from its objective manifestations, such as clocks, calendars, laws, folklore, buildings, and art created and preserved by us, our forebears, and our offspring.[12]

Hence, social time issues and perpetuates whenever we conceive of it through our relationships with humans and nonhumans; when we practice it by producing and engaging with its representations; and, as a result of our conceptions and practices, as we live by, live with, and live its temporality.[13] These conceptions, practices, and modes of living keep on unfolding as human activities and social life carry on. Each conception, practice, or way of life is not exclusive of the others. They can coexist, overlap, or issue in sequence to one another.

The social times of filial piety in Uncle Vu's Vietnam, China, Taiwan, and Singapore transmute from ever-shifting relationships among humans, nature, and things: from the agrarian economy of Uncle Vu's ancestors memorialized at the *đình*, three or four generations living together, tilling the land, and rearing animals for food, to the industrial then post-industrial generations of his son and grandson, who move and dig the earth to make finer machines, produce images sharper than the lusterless painting of the *đình*, and replace diminutive *đình*s with loftier edifices, uprooting in search of these glory and riches farther and farther away from their natal homes.

Between parent and child, their relationship gradually alters as the parent ages and the infant-child grows into an adult-child. Both have intimate relationships with nature, their physical health, and their bodies' life course from birth to death. Both strike up relationships with objects like money, provided by the parent to the infant-child and then by the adult-child to the parent. Both are expected to procreate and commemorate the dead, and maintain relationships with the supernatural by performing ancestor worship. They keep ancestral altars and temples, such as the *đình* in Uncle Vu's neighborhood, and the lunar calendar that indicates the days of worship. Like Uncle Vu, they live *by* these conceptions and practices of social time. Auntie Ly,

12. I learned from such works as Adam (1990; 1995) on the connections between time and nature, Kristeva (1981) on "women's time," and Beynon-Jones (2017) on "gestational times"; Elias (1992) on the relationship between natural times and social times (also see van Tienoven 2019; Tabboni 2001); Grabham (2016) and Adam (1990; 1995) on the role of human-made things in the production of time; as well as social sciences and humanities writings on the agency of nonhuman creatures and objects, such as critters, architecture, and machines, and its significance to human relations and actions (see, e.g. Latour 1993; 2005; Barad 2007; Bennett 2010; Grosz 2005; Haraway 1991; 2016).

13. I found guidance from Lefebvre's "The Production of Space" (1991) for my conceptions, practices, and modes of living in relation to time, though I did not adopt his ideas wholesale.

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Uncle Vu's wife as you will find out, perhaps lives *with* this social time in quiet subordination and resignation. And, some of them even *live* a given time by embodying and exemplifying its norms, later illustrated poignantly by Uncle Vu and Auntie Ly in their quest for a male child.

Because social time comes from relationships (Benda-Beckmann 1979; Adam 1990; Barrows 2010), it is context dependent. It has no universal standard, tempo, or measure (Sorokin and Merton 1937; French 2001). The times of Uncle Vu's society and my other research sites share some characteristics. Their dominant forms of filial piety are influenced by Confucianism.[14] However, having undergone different political upheavals, economic turmoil, and population flows, the times of these four societies also vary from one another as well as within themselves.

By setting the rules and expectations about when and how human activities and social life take place, social time incarnates power. It prescribes the limits and conditions of agency, cultural propositions that modulate our goals and "broader sense of what is possible and of what relevance is about" (Greenhouse 1996, 234). Timekeepers, the people and organizations in power, shore up legitimacy by naturalizing their preferred social time. They make the pacing of their preferred time, and thus certain availability and meanings of thoughts, feelings, and actions seem like the right course, and they impose this temporal order to govern a group of people (Greenhouse 1996). Thus, by introducing the Gregorian calendar to the societies that they missionized, clergymen rearranged the sequence of daily and seasonal activities, including what is or is not to be done (Munn 1992, 109–10). By applying clock time to work, capitalists turned task-oriented labor into timed commodity (Thompson 1967), and companies created distinctions between paid and unpaid labor (Hayes 2019).

As embodiment of social time, filial piety enforces hierarchal relations of the family and controls the agency of its members. This hierarchy, at the top of which sit patriarchs like Uncle Vu, puts a value on the moral worth of children based on their conduct, emotions, and thoughts toward their parents and other elders. According to Uncle Vu's interpretation of filial piety, children must conduct themselves according to their parents' wishes or needs as and when they arise, at the expense of other options and regardless of their circumstances or true feelings toward their parents. Uncle Vu insisted that children look after their sick parents at home. To him, sending ailing parents to nursing homes is an unfilial act;[15] to younger interviewees, nursing homes are a viable option, especially if they have no ability or energy to tend to their sick parents personally.

The state is a powerful timekeeper (Greenhouse 1996), imposing and enforcing social time to create a "state time" (Ssorin-Chaikov 2017). It also tries to suppress or refashion rival temporalities, reevaluating and reformulating agency that falls outside its temporal framework (Greenhouse 1996, 23–24). For example, when European powers divided the world into twenty-four time zones and instituted Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), they eroded temporalities inspired by deities and natural forces,

14. More specifically, these are Confucian-influenced traditions of filial piety among Han Chinese in Taiwan, China, and Singapore, and Viet or Kinh in Vietnam, the dominant ethnic groups in the four respective societies.

15. Interview, December 3, 2016.

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and foisted on their colonies the supremacy of Enlightenment rationality (Mawani 2014; also see Barrows 2010; Zerubavel 1982).

Because social time is an integral part of law's logic and power (Mawani 2014), much of which imposes, maintains, and materializes a particular social time (Beynon-Jones and Grabham 2019), law is a formidable technology of the state for governing agency. Law distinguishes between who and what fall within its purview, when they are to be counted, and orients its subjects toward particular forms of action (Greenhouse 1996, 183–84). For example, Thai injury law blames somebody whose actions took place within a narrow timeframe of the accident's occurrence. For victims who attribute their misfortune to nonhuman or supernatural causes outside this timeframe, Thai law denies their agency whatsoever to find redress (Engel and Engel 2010). Conversely, Tibetans' legal system incorporates their own cosmos of coexisting but different sequences of time, and allows claimants to make their case for causation without having to establish temporal proximity (French 1995, 73–74).

In my study, Vietnamese and Chinese parental maintenance laws do not explicitly allow defenses for adult children. According to this approach, children's "moral debt" to their parents accrues from birth or legal adoption.[16] Vietnamese and Chinese representations of state power, judges, and community leaders such as Uncle Vu, tend to delegitimize and exclude from their consideration history of estrangement, or worse, between parent and child.[17] Despite various attempts at explaining my question in different ways to Uncle Vu, he could not understand what I meant about possible defenses for the child: "We have to accept things the way they are."[18] By contrast, Singaporean and Taiwanese laws allow the waiver or reduction of obligations, if the child could show that their parent failed to fulfill their own duties toward them. In fact, the Taiwanese legislature passed an amendment to provide for defenses, transforming delegitimized past events into legitimate concerns and empowering children to protect themselves from parents characterized as scoundrels and thugs (*fei lei* 匪类).[19]

But any social time, even in the domineering form of state time, is hardly the only time. Social times imbricate and coexist in social fields.[20] Some social fields overlap with one another. Some exist within larger social fields, perhaps intersecting with other social fields that lie within and outside the larger one. Social fields include the state and the society it purports to govern. They include communities within that society and each family within each of these communities. Social fields can form or dissipate, as we develop new institutions and relationships, and possibly altering, reinforcing, or contesting other fields with which we interact.

16. "Moral debt" is a common term used by interviewees who say that children are beholden to their parents by virtue of being born or given biological life.

17. However, I did come across the occasional view that judges in these two jurisdictions could take into account the history of the parent-child relationship.

18. Interview, December 3, 2016.

19. Article 5 of Singapore's Maintenance of Parents Act refers to abandonment, abuse, and neglect as grounds upon which parents' claims could be dismissed or reduced. According to Article 1118-1 of the Taiwanese Civil Code, the defenses against parents' claims are maltreatment, serious insults, or severe misconduct against the child or close relative, or failure to fulfill parental obligations toward the child.

20. My depiction of social fields is influenced by Bourdieu (1977) on *habitus*, Fligstein and McAdam (2011) on strategic action fields, and Moore (1973) on law as a semi-autonomous social field.

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Within most, if not all, social fields there are multiple state and nonstate orders, each with social times of its own (Benda-Beckmann 2014). In my study, parental maintenance laws converge with and diverge from filial piety norms on the ground. Despite the equal legal obligation on sons and daughters, in practice, sons—especially the eldest—are still expected to shoulder the greatest responsibility (and in some parts of China, Vietnam, and Taiwan, they often inherit most, if not, all of their parents' property).[21] Filial piety itself is not singular but split into innumerous strands, some of which is probably unrecognizable to Uncle Vu. Missing or diminished from many variations are absolute subservience to parents and the imperative to produce offspring, much less the relentless pursuit for a son.[22]

A given social time, then, is really part of social *times*, emerging from relationships that create and are created by phenomena of *inter-temporalities*. We do not live in one social time, such as that of a nation imagined by Anderson (2006) but in temporal heterogeneity (Allen 2008; Chatterjee 1999). Uncle Vu grew up during the precarious time of war, born shortly before the French War (1946–1954), and fought and was wounded in the American War (1955–1975). He dwells in contemporary Vietnam, a one-party socialist state whose social time for the nation is quickening with the pace of economic development as it leaves behind the ashes and smells of war time.[23] He also inhabits a social time of parental maintenance laws. While pushing Uncle Vu and his descendants from a time of planned economy toward a market-oriented economy, his government is reaching into the past for moral authority to address its anxieties about the nation's future, one filling up with a rapidly aging population and growing welfare burden.

Uncle Vu concurrently bides a social time that does not wholly comport with the imagined, idealistic past on which these official laws anchor their authority. That idealized past, if it did exist, had long been shattered by air raids and bombs that scattered families in and around Hanoi. The paddy fields dotting the village landscape, portrayed in the *đình* painting, have vanished, claimed by Uncle Vu's government and replaced by the thoroughfare fifty paces away from his gates. Around him, filial piety—analogous to the *đình* and expanding urban landscape around it—is shifting in meaning and expanse, its importance being tested and encroached upon. Village time, Uncle Vu's imagined temporal order of a past in which parent and child dutifully perform their roles, is running into urbanization, a time that revels in the present while chasing the future, a time of forgetting: "People now are pragmatic and do not care about the past."[24]

In perpetual states of inter-temporalities, social times—and by extension, law, the keeper and enforcer of social time—pull, push, guide, and block agency from and into several directions, generating and exacerbating inequalities. The result is the

21. Even though Taiwan's Civil Code requires testators to allocate "compulsory portions" to daughters, some Taiwanese interviewees gave up their legal entitlements. They did not feel entitled to inherit their parents' property, because they felt they belonged to their husbands' families upon marriage. Or, they were pressured by brothers or other male relatives who told them that they would eventually marry and no longer be part of the natal family anyway.

22. The importance of the male child, of course, varies from individual to individual, family to family, and generation to generation at each research site. In this regard, scholars who study China have written extensively about the impact of China's birth policies, see, e.g., Fong (2004); Goh 2011; Shi (2017).

23. On "war time"—but not specifically on the Vietnamese context—see Dudziak (2010).

24. Field notes and interview, December 3, 2016.

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marginalization and domination of people who represent an unwanted future or past (Greenhouse 1996, 98–100). "Temporalities are not just aesthetic qualities of law, they also have important implications for social practices" (Benda-Beckmann 2014, 1). Contributors to *Law and Time* write about the colonial erasure of indigenous land (Keenan 2019; Painter 2019) and medicinal practices (Cloatre 2019). In the American Sander County, long-time residents ostracized newcomers, fearful that they would replace "iterative" social time, which preserved "the good old days," with a forward-looking time that portended economic and demographic changes (Engel 1987).

By moralizing the relationship children ought to have with their parents, parental maintenance laws are inherently unequal. In Vietnam and China, if implemented in their most absolute form as Uncle Vu insists, these laws would require children to provide financial maintenance and emotional care to their parents regardless of parents' behavior or their past or present relationships.[25] Children's agency is handicapped by oppression wrapped in the guise of a virtue extolled for thousands of years. While Singaporean and Taiwanese laws allow certain defenses, social workers, mediators, and adjudicators often advise children to set aside their feelings and give their parents some money. Moreover, the defenses cannot cover all of the children's hurt. Parents' infliction of emotional violence, such as favoritism toward sons and homophobia or transphobia toward queer children, would usually fall outside the scope of these defenses.

The inequalities between parent and child emanate from Confucianism, the patriarchal discourse that underpins the order(s) of filial piety. When husbands in my study say they take care of sick parents, and I press them for details, what they usually mean is that they foot the medical bills, while their wives do the cleaning, feeding, and comforting, performing the feminized and gendered labor of filial piety.[26] Said Auntie Ly, who looked after Uncle Vu's bedridden mother for the last ten years of her life: "When I married [him], I accepted my duty"[27]—the hallmark of a virtuous daughter-in-law who is an extension of her husband's filial piety.

Many married Vietnamese women in their thirties and forties would hesitate to fully follow Auntie Ly's footsteps. Young women in their twenties might even refuse to march to the prescribed rhythm for daughters-in-law. These diverse experiences with the inequalities of and varied responses to social times among Auntie Ly, Uncle Vu, wives, husbands, and children arise from differences in their human agency—their resistance and other forms of engagement with social times—what I call personal times.

PERSONAL TIMES AND RESISTANCE

Whereas social times concern the programming and control of agency, *personal times* are the formulations, variations, and renditions of individual human agency. They are the actions, thoughts, and feelings we form, possess, express, or enact when encountering social time. A deed, notion, or affection carries and transmits agency, if it

25. So long as parents meet the economic conditions explained in note 4.

26. To varying degrees, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Taiwanese parental maintenance laws include the duty of children-in-law to their parents-in-law.

27. Interview, December 3, 2016.

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brings consequences to ourselves, a fellow human, nonhuman being, or thing (even the supernatural, as some might believe), by maintaining, altering, or stopping a course of events.[28]

Personal times and social times constitute one another. Conceiving, practicing, and living are different levels of their mutual constitution. Like social times, personal times are relationally constructed.[29] They are not something that you or I simply have. Personal times manifest when we conceive of social time through our human and nonhuman relationships; when we practice social time as we relate and respond to its representations; and, based on these conceptions and practices, when we (try to) live by a given social time, live with (or against) it, and live (or languish in) it.

By their mutual constitutions, social times and personal times are therefore different materializations of the same processes. The two, however, are not in and of themselves mere differences in scale and magnitude. They are each other's enforcer and maker, as much as they are each other's detractor and undoer.[30]

Having walked with Uncle Vu and Auntie Ly, met their son and grandson, the people they love, seen the things they hold dear, the ancestral altar in their house, acquainted with the spirits they commemorate, Uncle Vu's parents and second wife, and visited the places they cherish, the *đình*, and having done the same hundreds of times over with others who, too, treasure, grieve, and fend for people, things, and places: I not only found social times but also personal times in multitudes and inter-temporalities. Individuals might comply with social times, or they might respond with their own sense of pace and disposition, personal temporal orders that are not perfectly in synch with the social times bearing upon them.

Two days before visiting Auntie Ly and Uncle Vu, I met Mai, a university student in Hanoi. Auntie Ly's story, the filial daughter-in-law who spent ten years taking care of Uncle Vu's mother, would resonate with Mai's grandmothers living in the village two-and-a-half hours' drive away. But it would not with Mai: "If I get married … as a new, young family, my husband and I should create our own rules. If I were told to look after my parents-in-law, I would expect my husband to care for my parents."[31]

Mai asserts a personal time slightly out of step with the social time to which her grandmothers and Auntie Ly subscribe, because we learn how to conceive, practice, and

28. Although I glean from science and technology studies' insights into the agency of things and creatures (see note 12), I leave open in this essay the question of whether and how I would theorize the agency of nonhumans in the coproduction of times and interregna.

29. I build on studies about the relational nature of human agency (see, e.g., Strathern 1988; Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Chua 2019b; see also Chua and Engel 2019).

30. Greenhouse (1996) rightly criticizes Durkheim (1982) for treating personal time as an individual's awareness and experiences with social time while leaving individuals and social wholes separately afloat in the same social space (28; see also Tabboni 2001). Greenhouse did not offer her own theorization of personal times in *A Moment's Notice*, but in a later article (2014), she considers the relationship between personal times and social time, noting that contradictions between the two find expression in religious affiliation, political association, self-identity, personal attachments, and other aspects of social life. I am grateful to Greenhouse for our correspondence about her intention behind *A Moment's Notice*, which was to engage with legal pluralism debates in anthropology, and use those debates to intervene in public discourse about politics of identity and representation at the time. Taking off from Durkheim's separation of social from personal time enabled her to focus on officializations of social time, and examine how states calculatedly responded to political demands arising from multiculturalism (personal correspondence, March 3, 2020).

31. Interview, December 1, 2016.

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live social time interpersonally and intra-personally. Filial piety norms are propagated through intergenerational bonds, one telling the next about folktales that exalt the filial and condemn the contrarians for whom gruesome punishment awaits in hell.[32] They transmit through relationships with germs, bugs, architectures, medicines, and monies, molding the fates and fortunes of individuals, families, clans, villages, communities, even entire societies, and thus our experiences with the social time(s) of filial piety. To borrow the words of Elias (1992), we learn from one another and teach the next generation. We also learn from ourselves as we undergo self-interactions (Mead 2002). We interpret our past-personal times and use these present interpretations of past experiences with social times to guide our goals, desires, and actions for the future (Flaherty 2011; Mead 2002).

Mai grew up in a village where mothers and grandmothers dedicate themselves to their husbands' natal families and male children, and advise young women to do the same.[33] For Mai, this village life was additionally a violent one. Mai's alcoholic father used to beat Mai's mother and her, until Mai's mother got a divorce and took Mai and her brother to live with their maternal grandparents. Mai also reads books, follows social media, and goes out, learning about and talking to peers who reject the dictates of social times with which they had grown up. These intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences with social times of filial piety influence Mai's personal time. Shortly after our first meeting in Hanoi, Mai graduated from university. She moved out of the campus dormitory, rented a room, and found her first job in the capital city.[34] Eighteen months later, she became a paralegal and returned to university to study part-time for a second degree.[35] When I asked if she was dating anyone, she replied that she wanted to finish her education and concentrate on her career first.[36]

Asserting independence from the village time of filial piety, however, is only one of Mai's personal *times*. Wanting to live on her own (with her future spouse) does not mean she would renounce her duties to look after her parents, she clarified.[37] We enact multiple personal times, as we move within and across social fields and encounter varieties of social times. Building on her thesis in *A Moment's Notice*, Greenhouse (2014) later points out that the agentive standpoint is unstable, contextualized according to power relations of the place, social position, and different temporal experiences, which, in the language of this essay, arise from our enactments and expressions of personal times. When interacting with a social time, we might deploy multiple personal times, though we might favor one rendition (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). In each interaction, present-personal times ensue from our present interpretations of past-personal times, experiences with social times (in and of themselves expressions of personal times)

32. Both Vietnamese and Chinese cultures have their traditional "Twenty-four Tales of Filial Piety." The Jade Pagoda in Hanoi houses a hall of the "Ten Courts of Hell" with inscriptions about the types of misdeeds punishable in each court. Haw Par Villa, a theme park in Singapore, features a sculptural display of the Chinese "Ten Courts of Hell," graphically depicting the torture and violent penalties for wrongdoers. The punishments for committing unfilial acts include the slow extraction of internal organs and grinding by a large boulder.

33. Interviews, December 1, 2016 and July 21, 2017.

34. Interview, July 21, 2017.

35. Interview, December 8, 2018.

36. Interview, January 11, 2020.

37. Interview, December 1, 2016.

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that we put forth as memories in this very present, as well as our aspirations and imaginations of the future, which we construct based on our present- and past-personal times (Mead 2002; Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Flaherty 2011; Flaherty and Fine 2001).[38]

When I met Uncle Vu, he was a patriarch and local representative of state power, a resident group leader, recalling his experiences with social times—past-personal times—when he was a peasant-turned-soldier, son, and young husband. When Auntie Ly talked about her marriage to Uncle Vu, she was a mother and grandmother, constructing her past-personal times as a daughter, a daughter-in-law, wife, mother, and grandmother. When Mai, the urban-dwelling, twenty-something student, spoke about her future, she was leaning back and letting Mai, the village daughter of a violent father (as she recalls that Mai to be), rush forth into her present and guide her intrepidly into a hopeful morrow. Mai the village daughter and Mai the urbanite are ever here in the present and there in the future, the two redrawing and revising each other.

If personal time mismatches with social time, conflicts could arise. Mai's rejection of pious subservience could collide with a future mother-in-law who aligns with Uncle Vu and Auntie Ly's preferred social time. If an adult-child in Uncle Vu's community were to plead for reduction or absolution from filial piety duty, they would find themselves at odds with him. When Uncle Vu and his neighbors fought to preserve their *đình*, they were repudiating a social time privileged by the state, one that lacks an intimate relationship with the *đình*, and claiming another time when humans highly valued their relationship with the humble structure.

Thus, social times become "out of joint"—to use the Shakespearean reference popular among law and time writers (see, e.g., Tomlins 2009; Lazar 2019; Corrias and Francot 2018; Beynon-Jones and Grabham 2019)—not because they happen to run into each other. They clash because they are relationally constructed. Disparities in social positions mean that our relationships with fellow beings, and worldly and other-worldly things differ from one another. For groups and individuals whom a dominant social time privileges, its pacing and expectations seem easy and instinctual to follow; on the other hand, they feel forced and oppressive to those disadvantaged by that social time, for example, heterosexuals compared to nonheterosexuals in relation to straight time (Freeman 2010). We do not live with, live by, or live all social times in which we are situated with the same degree of competency or willingness (see Benda-Beckmann 2014 on law's times)—leading to the unequal effects of social time discussed earlier.

As social positions shift, disparities readjust, and personal times manifest according to those changes. Parent-child relationships begin with the child being entirely reliant on their parents, who are usually the caregiver. As the child becomes economically, physically, and emotionally independent of their parents, their unequal positions to each other are recalibrated, perhaps even switch around. If a parent falls ill, the change in the parent's relationship with nature disrupts the child's personal times as they feel

38. The past is irrevocable for having really taken place, but it is changeable as the past that is being interpreted (Mead 2002; Flaherty and Fine 2001). Although I draw from Mead's ideas about time, which Abbott (2001) criticizes for being solipsistic, I emphasize that personal times are not unlimited and thus the past cannot be "whatever we make it" (Abbott 2001, 229). I relate not only the making of social times to personal times—past-, present-, and future-personal times—but also personal times to one another and to social times.

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the closing in of social time and its intensifying demands to look after their parent. If the child loses their job, their disrupted relationship with money hampers their ability or willingness to give parental maintenance. If the child converts to Christianity and adopts its temporal order, they upend relationships with the supernatural and affiliated objects such as the *đình*—ancestors, ancestral altars, and ancestral temples, once beheld true and sacred, now besmeared, false and profane.[39]

Therefore, when and why our agency veers toward a particular temporal orientation emerge with who we are being in a social field and its social time(s) with which we are interacting. Personal times range from being totally in concert with a social time to being fiercely resistant toward it. We might willingly comply with a social time's formulation of agency and enact personal times in accordance to it. We might strategically make use of social time (Bourdieu 1977) and deploy personal times to our advantage or desire. In other interactions with social times, however, we might feel forced or compelled to adhere to them.

When Auntie Ly realized she could not get pregnant, she found Uncle Vu a "second wife," who gave birth to two sons and one daughter, so that he could fulfill his filial obligation of perpetuating the family line. After the second wife developed a brain tumor, Auntie Ly took care of her until she died. Now Auntie Ly helps Uncle Vu tend his ancestral altar, where the second wife is honored together with generations of his ancestors who are descended from or married into the male line.

To outsiders, Auntie Ly conforms to the social time of filial piety. So overwhelming is its force that she wants to live as a role model,[40] a filial daughter-in-law, and pass down to her children and grandchildren her variant of personal time that harmonizes with this misogynistic social time. Away from outsiders, Auntie Ly probably struggled with her actions all her life. Raised by Auntie Ly and Uncle Vu in the same house, the second son of the second wife disclosed in a separate interview that he could sense the conflicts that were suppressed and kept out of view by the couple.[41] Because social times' imposition of agency affects each of us differently and fosters inequality, perhaps Auntie Ly lacked the willingness or ability to challenge a dominant social time.

Unlike Auntie Ly, some of us might decide to take up resistance, another type of personal time. In law and society writings and my fieldwork, resistance comes in an array of conceptions, practices, and livings. They include resistance against law or nonstate orders, resistance by means of law, and resistance through law to redefine the temporality of a legal or nonstate order.[42] Resistance can be carried out by individuals as well as groups, and its varieties can be differentiated based on our intentions.

One variety of resistance comprises everyday acts (de Certeau 1984; Ewick and Silbey 1998; Merry 1995; Scott 1985; 1990; compare Ortner 1995; Kerkvliet 2009; Prasse-Freeman 2020) that negate, criticize, or disengage with a social time. When

39. The rejection of ancestor worship—refusals to hold joss sticks or burn incense, and discarding of ancestral altars—after converting to Christianity is the most evident among interviewees in Singapore. This phenomenon is related to research on the compatibility between Christian conversion and ancestor worship in East and Southeast Asia (see, e.g., Addison 1925; DeBernardi 2001; Lo 2008).

40. Interview, December 3, 2016.

41. Interview, July 27, 2017. Uncle Vu and his second wife gave their first son away, following the traditional belief that giving a child away would bless a couple with more children.

42. These different types of resistance are based on Merry (1995).

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carrying out everyday resistance, we are aware of social time's power at work and its unequal or unjust effect on us. However, we do not go further than tactically maneuvering against an immediate problem or specific target (McCann and March 1996), such as a landlord, boss, or parent. The intention is to survive, get by, or derive brief satisfaction. We might perform everyday resistance by covertly ignoring or evading a requirement. Adult children in my study occasionally tell their elders that they face financial hardship to evoke sympathy and excuse themselves from providing maintenance. We might also quietly refuse to apply or follow a rule. As a resident group leader, Uncle Vu declines to refer to official law to resolve family disputes, and prefers "moral rules and traditional norms."[43] By sidelining its laws, Uncle Vu is resisting against the state's interference into (his interpretation of) the social time of filial piety. In ad hoc fashion, whenever he handles a family dispute, he is letting the normative order of filial piety, rather than the state's legal order, reign supreme in his neighborhood.

In addition, we might display everyday resistance through jokes, satire, or other negative expressions in the presence of people we trust and away from those we distrust or fear (Scott 1985; 1990). Our actions and words seem to go along with the dominant temporality, but our outward compliance does not indicate full acquiescence. We might have complied outwardly to protect people, relationships, or interests that we hold dear (McCann and March 1996; Chua 2014). When Mai's father was abusing her and her mother, Mai's maternal grandmother advised her own daughter, Mai's mother, to put up with the violence and stay with her husband so that the children could have a "complete family."[44] Mai's mother tried until she could no longer tolerate the abuse and filed for divorce.[45] Reflecting on how families in her village resolve problems on their own, Mai said it simply meant that family members adjusted the "space" between them to ensure that family bonds would not be broken by "claim(ing) too much. In Vietnam, on the surface, it looks like one is fine with the solution but the inner self does not agree, but you cannot do anything about it."[46] Over the course of the three-and-a-half years that I have known Mai, she has never vilified her abusive father, nor questioned her elders' manner of intervention. This was the only moment of critical introspection that she revealed—to an outsider who would not repeat it to her family.

The other variety of resistance is directed at systemic or structural inequalities bred by social time, such as sexism, patriarchy, racism, and poverty (McCann and March 1996), and at reformulating its cultural propositions of agency. Mai's insistence on living independently from future in-laws is such an individual act of resistance. In Taiwan, advocacy against parental maintenance laws amounts to a collective, coordinated form. Taiwanese law used to lack explicit defenses against parents who abused or abandoned their children. Eventually, social workers, lawyers and aggrieved children who were sued by their parents spoke out, leading to legislative amendments in 2009 (Chen 2013). The amendment subsequently empowered children to resist by means of law, by raising the new defenses against parents who demanded financial support. Moreover, the advocacy to change Taiwanese parental maintenance law and subsequent litigation are

43. Interview, December 3, 2016.
44. Interview with Mai's maternal grandmother, July 22, 2017.
45. Interview with Mai's mother, December 9, 2018.
46. Interview, December 1, 2016.

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resistance *through* law. These efforts attempt to redefine the meanings of filial piety, by modifying the significance of events, placing greater value on parents and children's equal performance of obligations, and reducing the hierarchical nature of their relationship.

However, unsurprising for any mutually constitutive relationship, as creative and varied as resistance and other types of personal time may get, they are not infinite in their possible permutations. They are built from preexisting stocks of knowledge of the social time with which they are engaging (Elias 1992; Tabboni 2001), the same materials used for the conceptions, practices, and livings that co-construct that very social time. Mai the village daughter does not vanish as the Mai the urbanite keeps on taking shape in her present and into the future. Mai does not completely reject the norms and practices of filial piety and their delineations of children's agency. It simply means she would adjust the performance of her filial duties to accommodate her own wishes as well.[47]

Notwithstanding her father's drunken rages—slapping her, slamming her head against the wall, and burning her schoolbooks—Mai believes it is her duty to care for him. After moving with her mother and brother to her maternal grandparents' house, Mai stayed in touch with her father, who remained in the same house with his mother about ten minutes' walk away. Soon after the divorce, Mai's father suffered a stroke, lost his physical mobility and speech,[48] and had to hobble around with a plastic chair for support.[49] Whenever Mai returned to the village, she would bring her father presents from the city, cook for him, and wash his clothes. Mai's paternal grandmother explained that her son beat Mai's mother and Mai only because he was ill.[50] Mai's maternal grandmother counselled Mai to maintain a good relationship with him, because he was, after all, her father.[51] As though Uncle Vu was speaking through her, Mai said, "It is because of *hiếu*. Since I was young, I have been taught to obey my parents and support them regardless of what they have done."[52]

Still, the social times in which Mai is living are diverging from the times of Uncle Vu and Auntie Ly when they were her age. The finite possibilities of personal times do not have to hold us back from remolding social times. We continually use available knowledge to customize our personal times and deploy them based on our present interpretations of the past and future.[53] Social times, being mutually constitutive with personal times, are susceptible to our shifting conceptions, practices, and living.

47. Interview, December 1, 2016.

48. Interview with Mai, July 21, 2017.

49. Field notes, December 9, 2018. On this visit, I did not interview Mai's father, because I was unsure if he could give informed consent. He died of health complications shortly after my visit.

50. Interview with Mai's paternal grandmother, December 9, 2018.

51. Interview with Mai's maternal grandmother, July 22, 2017.

52. Interview, July 21, 2017. After her father's death, Mai continues to visit his mother, her paternal grandmother, help out at her house, and dine with her on lunar new year's eve (in addition to the family dinner at Mai's maternal grandparents' house, where Mai lived with her divorced mother). Because Mai's father died only shortly before the lunar new year in February 2019, Mai and her family followed the custom of only marking the occasion within their family and not celebrating with outsiders so as to avoid bringing bad luck to others (Interview, January 11, 2020).

53. Flaherty (2003; 2011) examines how individuals experience and respond to time (but not explicitly "social time") and finds that temporal agency largely comes from existing arrangements and contributes to their reproduction.

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Relationships morph, even fall apart, the powerful come and go, and we think, feel, or act toward a law or decision made in a past time as we interpret it while moving into ever-present times (Benda-Beckmann 1985).

Parental maintenance laws seem to resemble the timeless ordering of filial piety. In reality, these laws have merely attempted to capture a moment of a social time imagined and desired by the state to exact its will on everyone. There is no singular nor static version of filial piety conceived, practiced, or lived. There are many versions of it, each performed, enacted, expressed, reinforced, opposed, and gradually abraded by personal times. None of these social times keeps still for the promulgation of laws, the signing of a mediation agreement, or the decision of an adjudicator.

In short, social times, including the times of law, are stable but poised for contingency, for they are collectively made, enforced, resisted, and undone by personal times.[54] Their formulations of agency are not quite uniformly achieved. Apparently homogeneous temporal orders imposed by laws can turn out to be malleable and vulnerable to resistance (Beynon-Jones and Grabham 2019). A few of us might get away with resisting a social time or put up with the consequences, but probably would be unable to revolutionize it. We could, nonetheless, influence and bring along others to enact personal times that question the legitimacy of a social time.

The more frequently and more intensely our personal times press upon a social time, the more likely we could one day alter it. When Auntie Ly was Mai's age, her life was centered around marriage (to a man), childbirth, and serving that man and his parents. Mai, who also desires to get married and have children, possesses more control over the pace of doing these things. Perhaps it is due to changes the state brought upon social times, opening up economic possibilities for Mai's generation in the city, hundreds of miles away from their elders and birthplace; and changes brought by young people like Mai, who are seizing these opportunities to express personal times that slowly but surely remake how social times are conceived, practiced, and lived.

Overlapping social times, and plural personal times—the resistant, compliant and everything else—compose "[a] world in process. A world of interaction. Temporality defined by relation. An entangling of micro process with macro order" (Abbott 2001, 238–39). In this world of ceaseless inter-temporalities, interregna heave.

INTERREGNA

When a regime falls into interregnum, powers of old fade, and forces of the new have yet to rise to dominance. A state of interregnum is uncertain and unstable. No one is in total control. Those who seem in control are vulnerable to usurpation. Resistance comprises plural states of interregnum—interregna—for times are many and interpenetrating, and so are the powers they command. Every power is an interlude to the next rising power. An interlude may be long or short, but there is always another interlude before and after it. Legal orders of the state and nonstate orders in imbricating social fields are constantly rising to and falling from power. Someone, somewhere, was, is, and

54. In his discussion of eventful temporality, Sewell (2005) writes that social relations are characterized by path dependency, temporally heterogeneous causalities, and global contingency.

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will be stepping forth to resist law and other hierarchies of power and control. Acts of resistance might change social times, and depose power and the powerful. More resistance might accompany or follow the changes and depositions. Regardless of the consequences of resistance, social times mutate, even transform, as those of us living in their times conceive of time, practice time, and live by, live with, and live time.

Even when resistance falls short of realizing its full intention, irresolutions compound interregna. Resistance might coexist with, even co-constitute, other types of personal times that we assert in order to adhere to social time strategically, willingly, or under coercion. As we travel in and out of social fields, engaging in human and nonhuman relationships, our moments of resistance might become more strident than our other personal times, and exert stronger influence on our lives and the social times in which we dwell; but they might also become subdued and mitigated by competing personal times. Mai's resistance against filial piety norms passed down by her elders is only partial, tempered by her partial compliance. She wishes to reside independently from her future in-laws, just as she fulfills her elders' expectations to look after her father regardless of his violent past.

Mai is not alone. She is joined by her schoolmates, other interviewees from my study, and many more women. Because social times and personal times are collectively produced, individuals and groups compose the interregna of resistance. Domination and subordination, farts[55] and riots, reforms and revolutions are not the deeds of one single human or group of people. They rely on the collaboration, complicity, acquiescence, acceptance, doing, and not doing of many. Bumping into Mai, her friends, and their fellow resisters, are Uncle Vu, Auntie Ly, grandparents, parents, children, judges, mediators, social workers, and community leaders whose personal times diverge greatly from theirs. Social change could accumulate with the interstitial resistance of young women such as Mai, hasten as a result of legal reform and political movements, and be decelerated by the likes of Uncle Vu, Auntie Ly, party cadres, and legislators who promote refrains of the old. These individuals and groups from the same social times and different times enact varieties of personal times—as memories, present-personal times interpreting the past; as present-personal times that co-constitute present-social times; and, as aspirations and imaginations, present-personal times grounded in the past and present but oriented toward the future. Resistance rubs against other personal times and against social times, in simultaneity, in sequence, in unending cacophony.

Being a state of interregna, resistance looks like a swarm, a flight, a great host, a shape-shifting thing that crosses social times, delineations of societies, and nation-states. It is multidirectional, multisited, and multitemporal. It might triumph at one place, and retreat in defeat at another. With every encounter, it changes contours. The people who form this great host sometimes act on their own and sometimes amass in groups, formations that forge, swell, dissolve on and on and on.[56]

Understood in relation to "interregna," law and other powers radiate from multiple sites and temporalities. Resonant with theories about interconnected sources of power

55. Referring to covert resistance, Scott (1990) quotes in the opening page of *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* the Ethiopian proverb, "When the great lord passes the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts" (v).

56. Despite being inspired by Negri and Hardt's (2017) "assembly," especially in writing this paragraph, I do not subscribe to their idea that the assembly moves in "coherent formation" (27–28).

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(see, e.g., Fligstein and McAdam 2011; Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Chua 2019a), "interregna" recognizes that states as well as social institutions, such as family, corporation, church, and education, and groups, such as clans, villages, offices, and schools, can wield control over human agency. However, "interregna" is additionally attuned to time. The concept traces agential constraints further than the present or a given research moment, and stretches the scope of scrutiny wider than human-human relationships to the forces behind human relationships with the nonhuman and nonliving.

Since power is dispersed but interconnected across and through time and place, the great host of resistance makes continuous, arduous journeys linked to pasts, presents, and futures, beyond the individual, group, and singular lifetimes. The journeys encompass and weave acts of the interstitial and grand together. Disruptions, detours, and abeyances do not severe the journeys of resistance. Regardless of magnitude or duration, resistance is neither about linear nor discrete events. Its journeys run into barriers and dead ends, navigate labyrinths and unexpected bends, and might wind up at several destinations. The disruptions, detours, and abeyances generate and alter relationships, possibly leading to new ways of conceiving, practicing, and living social times—alternative personal times with resistant potential.

"Interregna" thus helps us think about everyday resistance differently from the discussion in law and society scholarship so far. Since the "cultural turn" of the 1980s (Seron and Silbey 2004), scholars in our field have acknowledged and often celebrated covert acts of resistance. They have also debated the value of such resistance, which frequently does not appear to change the oppressive condition (see, e.g., Handler 1992; Merry 1995, McCann and March 1996). In these debates, they might treat covert acts as the foundation for overt forms of resistance, but exactly how the former gives rise to the latter remains under-investigated and under-theorized (Chua 2019a).

When viewed as part of interregna, the relationship between covert resistance and bolder, organized forms of confrontation is more than chronological, with the former lining up before the latter, from small to big, and predecessor to successor. All kinds of resistance, covert, open, uncoordinated and organized, by individuals and groups, occur within and span across social fields and chronologies. Making up this swarm of dissenting human agency, they are temporally affiliated with one another in varying looseness and tightness. In this swarm, resistance by Mai, her classmates and other individuals, legal campaigns, and women's rights and LGBTQ rights movements that challenge the prevailing meaning of family take place preceding, concurrent to, and succeeding one another. Collectives and communes, heroic Davids, and everyday people of yesterdays, nowadays, and hereafters coalesce as agents and possibilities for democratic politics (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010; Hardt and Negri 2017).

"Interregna" therefore casts lengthier and diffracted lights on social movements. The starting point for studying large-scale collective actions should be the disparate and heterogeneous motives and actions of resisters. Legal mobilization scholars would interrogate activists' pasts and hopes for the future to understand their present, and attend to dissensions among activists—what brings them together and coalesce as a movement despite their differences, and what makes them splinter off. They would examine both collective and individual biographies and dreams, and how they recursively influence one another (Jaster 2019). Whether studying historical or contemporary movements, they would not reduce or flatten messy, inconsistent narratives.

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No longer should nor can scholars go in search of coherent, much less causal, narratives (Jaster 2019; see also Grosz 2005), but find answers and inspiration in the temporally higgledy-piggledy.[57]

Most of all, by understanding resistance as being about interregna, we appreciate oppression and change in transcendence from our here and now. We liberate ourselves from the overwhelming significance of our mortality, that singularly important human life, and ooze into a present "which extends into the long-term past and the even longer-term future … no longer bounded by our individual lifetime" (Adam 1995, 174). Oppression and resistance keep on surging and subsiding, ever threatened and threatening. As soon as oppression materializes and triumphs, resistance begins or might have already begun.

Of course, a lot of power is so great and some laws are so domineering that their oppression feels long and total, whereas much of resistance feels fleeting and insignificant. The concept of interregna does not deny the force, brutality, or longevity of oppression. But it suggests that oppression lacks utter permanence, as much as it comes very close in many cases, to the point of despair and loss of all hope. Likewise, neither is change permanent nor can it be. That is not to say a victorious court judgment or a concession after months of protest is pointless. These triumphs are, however, vulnerable and unstable, contested the moment they appear.

Law and society scholarship already hints at how oppression and change transcend our here and now. Already we are aware that the import of justice, and even the definition of grief shifts relationally—and therefore temporally. Long have we learned that social change does not begin with the judgment of the highest court of the land, much less bestow a "happily ever after." The winning of a judgment is connected to bygone struggles and strife-to-be, and to fights that are ensuing whilst the judgment is read and lauded. As I write this essay, resistance is cresting. Protestors of today—Black Lives Matter against racism, #MeToo against sexual abuse, outcries against populist nationalism, and demonstrations against the tightening clutches of authoritarianism—call upon survivors, martyrs, and legends to stand with them, weep for them, and nourish them with anger, fortitude, and ingenuity.

And, yet, while we excavate the pasts and expose the presents to engineer desired comings, our future times are open, known to us only when they metamorphose into presents. While the youth of Mai's age unpick the threads of filial piety, contemporaries of Uncle Vu and Auntie Ly are left bereft in a milieu they never envisaged, their only safety nets ripped and adrift. When I started writing this essay, we knew little about the virus called SARS-CoV-2. As I finish the final draft, hundreds of thousands have died in the COVID-19 pandemic, millions have been afflicted, and billions have endured government-imposed lockdowns. We find ourselves in a "dysconnected" present, when the interconnectedness of humans, nonhumans, and objects invite contagion into human habitats, and the strategies to disrupt such interconnectedness and defeat the contagion segregate the haves from the have-nots (Chua and Lee, forthcoming).

57. Situating resisters in interregna might appear to deny them coevalness and impose allochrony that puts them in different temporalities from the researcher, thus recreating the Other (Fabian 1983). However, seeing resisters in different times to understand their relationships to power and the potential of their agency lives up to the spirit of Fabian's critique, as it recognizes the complexities of subjects, and does not portray them in binaries or dualisms such as us-other, East-West, or traditional-modern.

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Waiting for the advent of post-pandemia, we wonder but cannot foretell what will happen to the inequalities and cruelty endemic in our societies, revealed starkly by the inter/dysconnectedness of contagious times (Chua and Lee, forthcoming).

Thus, as we head into our futures, unknown tragedies lurk, and the meanings of social change, law, and rights are open to be wielded and molded by those who care about justice as well as those who will deny it. Seeing resistance in constant interregna sharpens lessons in law and society scholarship: Authoritarianism is all over (Chua 2019a), progressive justice is never secure, and so resistance, small and big, scattered and orchestrated, must continually be in motion and always in solidarity.

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The appropriate length of my visit to the *đình* came to an end. It was time to bid Uncle Vu farewell. I plodded across the busy street at a steady pace to allow motorcycles to maneuver around me at their rhythm. When I reached the other side, I turned around, took out my smart phone, and snapped a photograph of the *đình*.

The *đình*, with its red-tiled roof, stands against the backdrop of two-story apartments. One or two trees, barely taller than the apartments, grow along the periphery of the *đình* courtyard. Its white fence adjoins the concrete walls of adjacent shophouses. Cars and motorcycles zip past its burgundy gates. Uncle Vu walks along the pavement back to his house and Auntie Ly, his stooped figure in a well-worn, white cotton undershirt occasionally bumping against other pedestrians, some his age, and others younger men and women like Mai. Above the *đình*, the December sky is grey, a hazy shade of winter.[58]

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58. Simon & Garfunkel's "A Hazy Shade of Winter" (1966)—or, if you prefer, The Bangles' cover in 1987 or Gerard Way's version in 2019—begin with:

> Time, time, time, see what's become of me
> While I looked around for my possibilities
> I was so hard to please
> Don't look around
> The leaves are brown
> And the sky is a hazy shade of winter

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