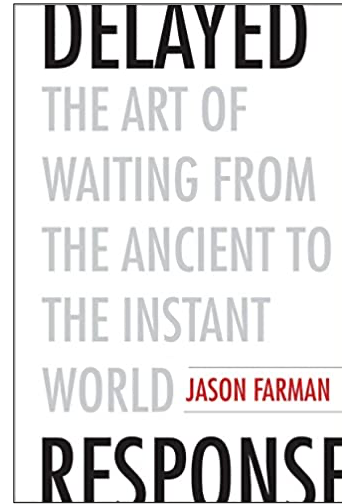


Jason Farman, **Delayed Response: The Art of Waiting from the Ancient to the Instant World**, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018, 232 pp., \$18.60 (hardcover).

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The proliferation of mobile technologies and instantaneous connectivity and communication in today's society has shifted the temporal expectations of messages. We expect communication to happen quickly and efficiently, as messages can transcend geographical space with the touch of the "send" button on our phones. It arguably has exacerbated the frustration felt during points of waiting and delay in our vastly accelerated world (Agger, 2004; Hassan, 2009; Sharma, 2013; Wajcman, 2008). Jason Farman's book, **Delayed Response: The Art of Waiting from the Ancient to the Instant World**, offers a reflection of the ways in which waiting has been perceived throughout different temporal, spatial, social, and cultural contexts. Grounded in ongoing conversations in time and temporality studies, as well as technology, society, and media studies, Farman's book makes a crucial contribution in helping us understand "negative" time, interstitial time—time of waiting, of delays, of uncertainties. The attention given to delays and waiting, in a way, ruptures the neoliberal capitalist perspectives of time as a resource that is only seen as valuable when used productively. Delays are certainly, within this framework, the opposite of what we might consider "productive."



Poetically written and wonderfully meandering at times, Farman's analysis cuts across a myriad of sites of delay and waiting, demonstrating the complexities of how we understand and draw meaning from delays in communication, and social relations and power dynamics embedded therein. He starts off with familiar examples of waiting for communication in our digital and mobile age, while framing it within a history of communication delays, guiding us along a journey of how the expectation that we have to wait has all but been eliminated, given the affordances of instantaneous connections granted by technology. At the same time, he invites us to view waiting as a way in which we become aware of time, and how "time [itself] is a medium that communicates" (p. 5). The idea that time itself communicates social structures, power, and cultural practices is a theme that runs throughout the book. Each of the book's eight chapters focuses on a site of delay or waiting, ruminating on the implications and impacts of waiting on both our individual bodies and social perception of time. The range of topics covered in the chapters is a testimony to the ubiquity of delays as well as the diverse ways in which rupturing the normative frame around logics of neoliberal productivity reveal meaningful elements in our practices of communication, both historically and currently.

Chapter 1 focuses on the aftermath of the earthquake near the Fukushima nuclear reactor in 2011, in which communication infrastructures were impacted, creating delays and anxiety as family members attempted to reach out to each other. The focus, though, is not the anxiety, but rather the chapter compels us, the readers, to reflect on our own anxiety within our synchronous culture when the act of waiting itself

becomes dramatic, becomes an anomaly. Chapter 2 takes us back in time to when pneumatic tubes were the norm for transmitting messages around the city. Juxtaposing a story about fiber optics development, these pneumatic tubes represent an obsolete technology, forgotten and buried under the city, highlighting the erasure of old technologies of communication (and patterns of waiting) as newer ones supplant them, creating new structures of temporality. Chapter 3 delves into how institutionally designed systems and symbols of waiting influence our experience of waiting (e.g., symbols of digital waiting like progress bars compel us to think work is being done during waiting, rendering us willing to wait longer than if it were not present). Though the act of waiting sits contrary to the perpetuation of capitalism, the experience of waiting determines how likely we are to continue our relationship with the institution in the future. Chapter 4 explores the relationship between knowledge and delays, positing that certain types of knowledge benefit from delays. He uses space exploration as an example of this. Delays in getting information back from satellites not only whet the imagination for what we might receive, but also provides crucial information about the distance and positioning of astral bodies in relation to us and to each other. In other words, delays themselves are an alternate form of knowledge. In chapter 5, Farman jumps into the archives and examines the letters of Civil War soldiers, ruminating upon the wartime tactical ramifications of delayed communication. Chapter 6 contemplates the connection between uncertain durations of waiting in communicating over distance and the separation between a form of communication and the body of the communicator, mediated by the wax seal as a symbolic representation of the power of the author. Message sticks carried by Aboriginal people in Australia to communicate across distances take a prominent role in chapter 7, which addresses how these traditional forms of messaging also act as tacit markers of time that were erased through European colonization.

Finally, chapter 8, the last chapter, offers us "tactics" for how to deal with waiting. This, for me, was the book's most powerful chapter, with a crucial message for our frenetic, overpaced society. Tying together the themes from the previous chapters, Farman asserts that waiting presents us with opportunities to reflect upon the ways in which time intersects with dynamics of societal power, stating, "How we wait comments on our society's notions of power, efficiency, and ambitions for the future" (p. 189). He frames waiting both as important to a sentiment of collective time, as well as moments in which societal power are brought to light, in that "those in positions of power reiterate that power by making us wait" (p. 190). In these ways, argues Farman, we are able to draw out societal inequalities while connecting our individual "timescapes," as Barbara Adam (1998) would put it, to a collective sense of time that compels the interrogation of power structures that force certain people to wait, and how temporality itself is both a constitutive and constructive of these power structures.

This book is clearly intended for both academic and public audiences. Farman's writing style is pleasantly engaging to read and filled with rich descriptions of historical instances of waiting that draw the reader in. Throughout the book, he uses fantastic examples to illustrate the meaning that waiting and delays present to us. His case studies are eclectic and show that delays and waiting happen across different context and time periods. Farman takes us through historical instances of waiting, demonstrating how the character and the meaning of waiting has shifted throughout history. With the proliferation of instantaneous technology, there is an expectation that waiting and delays are relics of the past. This book reminds us not only that this expectation remains unfulfilled, but that the act of waiting itself is an act of important self- and social reflexivity.

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