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LEFEBVRE AND RHYTHMS TODAY

Steen Ledet Christiansen & Mirjam Gebauer

Rhythms abound today, in a time where all manner of rhythms intersect and amplify each other. We experience the everyday rhythms of work, relaxation, and their increasing overlap. The mediated rhythms of news cycles, social media obligations, and the shows we follow take on an increasingly staccato pace, moving in smaller and smaller increments of time. Simultaneously, climate change and ecological collapse reveal time scales too long and too deep to be previously noted; the rhythms of deep time suddenly threaten to overtake our quotidian hum-drum life in ways that are unimaginable.

Small surprise, then, that the rhythmanalysis presented by the French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre has sprung into focus once more (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 2004, originally published 1992 as *Éléments de rythmanalyse*). The Neo-Marxist thinker had been widely known through his contributions on questions of space, place and urbanity, one of his main works being *The Production of Space* (1974, *La Production de l'espace*). His rhythmanalysis, however, grew out of another important project which followed him throughout his life resulting in the three-volume work *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947, 1961, 1981 *Critique de la vie quotidienne*). The earliest thoughts on rhythm appear in the second volume of the *Critique*. The small book which was solely dedicated to rhythms and the last book written by Lefebvre, was in part the result of a

collaboration with his wife Cathérine Regulier-Lefebvre and was published in 1992 posthumously. It seems as if Lefebvre was well aware of the high potential which the perspective on rhythm implies, as he contoured his project as a "new field of knowledge". However, it took around two decades before the rhythmanalytical approach would make the impressive impact in different fields, as it has today. In this way Stuart Elden, one of the two translators of the English version of the *Rhythmanalysis*, proved to be quite foresighted when he in his introduction, in 2004, guessed that it was "probably too early to tell" (2004, xiii) whether Lefebvre had succeeded with his aim to found a new rhythmanalytical science. It was indeed only with the English translation around ten years after the publishing of the French original, that a broader dissemination of Lefebvre's approach was launched.…Today, we see Lefebvre's concept being used in a wide variety of fields such as political theory, sociology, urbanism, environmental history and media studies. Namely influential titles such as Yvette Bíro, *Turbulence and Flow in Film: The Rhythmic Design* (2008) and Thomas Apperley, *Gaming Rhythms* (2009) were one of the main source of inspiration for the present undertaking. Not least, the internet platform *Rhuthmos* which was established in 2010 and collects French, English and German contributions on rhythm from a wide range of fields bears witness to the awareness of the notion of rhythm in academia and the productivity of rhythmanalysis.

In *Rhythmanalysis* Lefebvre provides a straightforward definition of rhythms: "Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is *rhythm*" (15, emphasis in original). Rhythmanalysis proceeds by refusing to "isolate an object, or a subject, or a relation" but instead "seeks to grasp a moving but determinate complexity" (12). This perspective on temporal patterns opens for a whole new field of investigation, a "new field of knowledge", as Lefebvre calls it. Lefebvre has no patience for synthesis but instead wishes to *link* the triad of "time-space-energy" without *fusing* them (12). Consider how time feels slower in an airport while waiting for a connecting flight, because we have no energy to spend. We cannot synthesize this triad

but we can easily see how time, space, and energy are linked here. In this way, the particular is allowed precedent over abstraction. Each rhythm works according to its own logic, yet escapes any logic we may try to enforce on it.

To say that rhythms escape logic and deal with the particular is not to say that we cannot detail rhythms. Lefebvre outlines four forms of rhythms (Lefebvre 2004, 18): 1) *secret rhythms*, what he also calls physiological and psychological rhythms, that covers the rhythms we are unaware of, whether those of memory, breathing, or trees growing. 2) *public rhythms*, essentially the social rhythms of calendars and organized life, but also the shared rhythms of tiredness, digestion, and so on (the examples are Lefebvre's). 3) *fictional rhythms* that cover everything from gestures, art, and other cultural endeavors. 4) *dominating-dominated rhythms* that Lefebvre points out are both completely made up but also potentially long-lasting. We should distinguish here between what feels arbitrary to the individual (why do I have to begin work at 8?) while being necessary for the social to function (everybody else begins at 8). If this sounds contradictory, we can think of social norms such as work and retirement age; both of which are arbitrary rhythms with long-lasting effects.

Most importantly of all, all of these rhythms (and for that matter, any rhythms that we would want to add to this typology) interact and impact each other. So, these rhythms link. And yet, while they link, they do not fuse and become one rhythm. While I might be tired from work, and while the interaction between work and (lack of) energy can impact my breathing, no one would argue that my work rhythms, my sleep rhythms, and my breathing rhythms are the same. Although, indisputably, if my breathing rhythm stops my work rhythm becomes much more complicated. This is why Lefebvre rejects conventional thesis-antithesis-synthesis thinking. Different rhythms never become one rhythm, but they will amplify or decrease each other.

The attractiveness of Lefebvre's argument should be clear now; rhythmanalysis' core idea of thinking distinct issues together resonates with a multitude of theoretical innovations since Lefebvre's

work was published. At its most basic, rhythmanalysis allows for a move away from constructivist thought, ranging from critical theory, poststructuralism, and most other branches of cultural theory, without giving up the insights provided by constructivist theories. Rhythmanalysis simply insists on allowing discourses, texts, materialities, and sensations to move unhindered between each other. Different rhythms that never fuse but always link.

Rhythmanalysis allows us to discuss lived experience, both in terms of the constraints of contemporary society, but also the affordances (social, technological, cultural) that we all have access to, in different ways. In this way, rhythms allow us to recognize how multiple, different forms inform both our experience but also culture and society as a whole. Rhythmanalysis allows for close attention to the particularities of each rhythm, while also recognizing the combined effect.

Here we find the first point of contact with other recent theories, namely the actor-network theory of Bruno Latour, Annemarie Mol, and others. Latour's concept of translators as that which "may generate traceable associations" is clearly close to Lefebvre's conception of linking over fusing (Latour 2005, 108). Similarly with Mol's work on distribution, the way that everything exists in multiple sites, as layers that may compete against or complement each other (Mol 2002, 105). Rhythms also layer, adding and subtracting, weaving complex forms among times, spaces, and energies.

Similarly, Lefebvre's rejection of dualism is parallel to new materialism's desire to recognize "how matter comes to matter" (Barad 2003), or as Karen Barad specifies, how matter *intra*-acts in addition to *inter*-acting (Barad 2007, 33). This is why Lefebvre asks for the particular, the way that one rhythm manifests and makes itself felt. Another way of asking the same question is to ask which affinities rhythms have with the capacities of times, spaces, energies, much in the same vein that William Connolly asks that question (Connolly 2010, 180). For Connolly, affinities spread between and beyond distinctions of human and nonhuman, in exactly the same way that Lefebvre insists that distinct rhythms amplify each other. Rhythms are transversal.

In this desire to slide between the human and the nonhuman, we also find a desire to slide between scales. Many rhythms are beyond human timescales, yet make themselves felt in surprising ways. Ecocriticism has devoted itself to registering the experience of those timescales, in literature, film, and other arts. Timothy Clark explicitly argues that the Anthropocene — the epoch that began when humanity globally impacted Earth's ecosystems — is exactly a scale effect, where "numerous human actions, insignificant in themselves, […] come together to form a new, imponderable physical event, altering the basic ecological cycles of the planet" (Clark 2015, 72). When natural rhythms and social rhythms collide, arrhythmia follows and "brings previously eurhythmic organisations towards fatal disorder" (Lefebvre 2004, 16).

We find much the same interest in scales moving at different speeds in Hartmut Rosa's argument about social acceleration. Rosa shows that our experience of lack of time "stand in a directly paradoxical relation to the category of technical acceleration" (Rosa 2013, 78). The faster technology works, the less we feel we have time. Paradoxical, because the intention is the reverse: faster technology should free up our time to do other things. Of course, this is a classic example of Lefebvre's arrhythmia when two (or more) rhythms intersect. Technological rhythms are accelerating but our biological rhythms are not. Predictably, social acceleration follows in ways that clash with our experience.

Finally, and most importantly for the present volume, is the way that fictional rhythms interact with dominating or dominated rhythms. These intersections may work as arrhythmia but surely can also work as eurhythmia, rhythms working in concert. We cannot, therefore, separate an aesthetic work's rhythms from the rhythms of power that surround and inform it. In this way, works both render dominating and dominated rhythms sensible, i.e. make these rhythms *available* for our experience, but at the same time these works also *constitute* our experience. Rhythmanalysis allows us to tie together the workings of text and culture into differentiated rhythms, acknowledging that textual rhythms may cut across cultural rhythms and cultural rhythms may manifest in texts.

The point of the above is not to subsume other theoretical approaches to rhythmanalysis, nor to diffuse rhythmanalysis into pre-existing camps. Instead, we should recognize that rhythmanalysis has gained interest precisely because it resonates with other approaches and allows us to articulate ideas that are circulating in academia already. As we have seen, rhythmanalysis allows us to: 1) analyze phenomena in their particularity; 2) examine the way phenomena interact and link up, even across temporal and spatial scales that are often thought separate; and 3) locate moments of conflict (arrhythmia) and stability (eurhythmia). Taken together, these three approaches allow for a thorough analysis of any phenomenon.

This volume thus contributes to rhythmanalysis by outlining a methodology for others to adapt, while at the same time providing specific instances of how rhythmanalysis can work as an analytic tool, but also shows how rhythms manifest in a multitude of ways. The eclectic collection of contributions shows the suppleness of rhythmanalysis. In the opening chapter, **Peter Dayan** asks: "How Musical is Henri Lefebvre's Rhythmanalysis?" While most researchers dealing with Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis lean on Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore's English translation, Peter Dayan has obtained the rare French original. Here, he finds a somewhat different understanding of rhythm and its role in cultural analysis compared to the English translation. In the different pictures on the book covers and the somewhat deviating translation of the book title, Dayan finds first indications of what he pursues further in comparative discussions of selected quotations from the French Original and the English translation. For Lefebvre, Dayan claims, rhythm is a universal concept which has its point of origin in art, one of Lefebvre's central points of reference being Romantic music. The English version, on the other hand, presents rhythmanalysis exclusively as an analytical tool for investigating the culture of everyday life, making of Lefebvre a representative of cultural studies. While in the English translation, music and art appear as cultural phenomena such as the media and urban life, which all can be analyzed likewise, Dayan claims, that the universal idealist

Lefebvre, much more ambitiously, envisions a kind of embodied listening. Following the Romantic concept, according to which inherent to music are rules representing an ideal sphere to which the rational mind has no access to, Lefebvre seeks to grasp rhythm in order to create access to this very ideal sphere.

In the chapter "Rhythms, Refrains and Regionality: Learning from Kathleen Stewart", **Neil Campbell** suggests understanding the writings of anthropologist Kathleen Stewart as a rhythmanalysis in practice. In the same way as Lefebvre, Campbell argues, Stewart rejects representational thinking. Programmatically in this regard seems her phrase in the essay "Worlding Refrains": "What is, is a refrain." With a particular attentiveness towards the emergence of difference in repetitiveness and the sameness in dissimilarities, Stewart captures aspects of everyday life which often go unnoticed. In her 'cultural poesis', Campbell argues, she blends anthropology, auto-ethnography and fictocriticism focusing on 'worlding' practices and the intensity and liveliness of things. In her first book *A Space on the Side of the Road* (1996), Stewart traces ordinary lives among the ruins of the West Virginia coal camps, thereby highlighting an everyday which represents the flipside of globalized capitalism. In her second book, *Ordinary Affects* (2007), she includes among others example of events from her own life and in the essay "Road Registers" (2014), which completes the body of analysis of the chapter, Stewart depicts the American Road as an ensemble of different streams of energy which compose 'roadness' in its complex 'flightiness'. Rhythm, as it is shown by example of Stewart's work, facilitates connections 'between milieus'. Contrary to a concept of the region as conservative, nostalgic and limited, she displays its dialogical nature where different kind of unpredictable trajectories connect the regional to the national and the local to the global.

In the next chapter, "The Rhythm of Things in Lutz Seiler's Prose Work", **Mirjam Gebauer** argues that the concept of rhythm and rhythmanalysis can shed new light on the prose texts of the German author Lutz Seiler who in 2014 received the Deutscher Buchpreis, Germany's most prestigious prize for the best Ger-

man-language novel of the year. While stylistic mastery and magical realism were named prominent characteristics of Seiler's texts, only few critics have noticed the peculiar focus on sounds and noises and their rhythmical structure. Gebauer examines three of Seiler's prose texts, the novel *Kruso* (2014) and the short prose pieces "Turksib" and "The Balance of Time" (both 2009) which all feature curious, outdated technical devices making mysterious sounds and which the different protagonists feel strangely attracted to. A relation between the representation of these significant things in the texts and rhythmanalysis is established by referring to Hartmut Rosa's concept of resonance. Rosa claims that in the late-modern, accelerated everyday time is too short to establish resonant relations to the environment, including the items we are surrounded by. Instead, things are being degraded to anonymous commodities which are frequently renewed. Gebauer interprets the protagonist's peculiar behavior towards the obsolete, technical devices in their surroundings as attempts to synchronize with a rhythm which has no space in our contemporary life. By using the obsolete devices as temporal reference systems and by creating eurhythmia and even isorhythmia with them, the protagonists are enabled to create islands of a slowed perception for themselves.

Change of rhythms and other recent tendencies within viral communication are the topic of **Jørgen Riber Christensen**'s article "Viral Rhythms: Recent Changes and Developments of Viral Communication in Social Media". Christensen conducted an empirical study based on a survey of the top-20 chart of viral videos within one week in 30 April – 6 May 2015 carried out by "Unruly Viral Video Chart". A combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis was directed in order to determine in which rhythm the videos come and go within the chart. In addition, each video in the chart were analyzed in regard to genre, content and narrative mode. This procedure replicated an analysis from 2010 by Christensen which at the time went over a period of three month and the results of both studies were compared with each other. This comparison shows that the frequency of change or the rhythm by which viral videos appear and disappear had

become much more short-lived. While in the survey from 2010 44 of the 89 registered videos stayed in the chart for more than one week, in the survey from 2015 only 19 from 95 videos stayed in the chart for more than one day. The qualitative content analysis shows that dominant genres still are music, humor and comedy, although the content of the videos was less transgressive and provocative and the humor more gentle. Also the results show that viral communication has become part of the news circuit as videos from the news are distributed via Facebook and other social networks. Finally, Christensen observes that in the sample from 2015 pathos as rhetorical mode is prevalent in a significant number of viral videos and therefore can be seen as an actual trend in viral communication.

Undertaking a rhythmanalysis of Doug Liman's science fiction blockbuster and action film *Edge of Tomorrow* from 2014 in his article, "Drone Rhythms: *Edge of Tomorrow*", **Steen Ledet Christiansen** identifies two significant rhythms: the game rhythm and the action rhythm. The game rhythm is established by the time loop which the leading character, Major William Cage, played by Tom Cruise finds himself trapped in and which forces him to live through the same day by the end of which he is killed by his opponents, Mimic aliens. Breaking with the Hollywood convention that events only are shown one single time, *Edge of Tomorrow* is structured around the concept of repetition and difference. Elements of variations are only introduced when Cage starts to learn and is able to do things differently. However, this learning process is hampered by the speed and loudness of the sensorial impressions tumbling down on Cage and the viewers of the film. Drawing on Brian Massumi's definition of affect, Christiansen makes the case that the viewers are not in control of their reception experience, but are being produced as subjects through the extreme rhythm of the film, for instance editing rhythm. He shows how the film conditions its spectators, not unlike as the forced repetition conditions Cage, in a certain manner. Quick shots, rapid editing, handheld camera and the soundtrack create disorientation together with a sense of urgency. Simultaneously, the steady repetition

of the same gradually results in a need for difference and even a sense of boredom. The combination of speed, loudness and repetitiveness create what Christiansen calls a "drone rhythm", an arrhythmia benumbing the spectators. The game and drone rhythm of the first part prepares the viewers for the even more speedy forward momentum of the second part, when things finally change and the narrative unfolds, resulting in an accelerated acceleration. The drone rhythms' assault on the viewers' sensorium is often found in contemporary action cinema, training and modulating the viewers for life in a time of fear and terror.

Bent Sørensen's article "Micro- and Macro-Rhythms in the Spools, Loops and Patches of Jack Kerouac and A.R. Ammons" keeps a focus on the material aspects of the literary work, particularly in the moment of production. Kerouac and Ammons both share a preoccupation with continuity and return that have lead them to use spools of paper for their writing. Sørensen shows how Kerouac's well-known obsession with the similarities of music and literature manifests in an emphasis on melody over rhythm. Rhythm recedes into the background while timing and improvisation are foregrounded. This improvisational quality registers materially through the constraints of notepad pages over spools; a quality that Sørensen identifies as micro-rhythmic as a contrast to the collection's macro-rhythmic unity. In contrast to this, Ammons is a poet who produces arrhythmia via the constraints of typewriter and machine tape. The two writers' poetics are posited as opposites, despite their many similarities. While Kerouac desires flow and continuous motion, Ammons employs rupture and breaks as formative functions in his poetry. Arrhythmia is used productively by Ammons but becomes the death of Kerouac. Sørensen concludes by pointing out how Ammons' more conventionally modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and disruption has allowed for an easier acceptance into the literary canon, contra Kerouac's irreverent flow.

The rhythms and cycles of nature and its representation is broached by **Jens Kirk** in his "Mapping Wild Rhythms: Robert Macfarlane as Rhythmanalyst." Rhythms become a useful criti-

cal tool to analyze the structure of Robert Macfarlane's *The Wild Places*, a self-styled counterhistory to the obituaries for the wild. Macfarlane insists that maps are futile exercises in categorization that utterly miss the vibrant rhythms of nature. Instead, the traveler, Macfarlane's ideal form, learns to recognize and appreciate the cosmic and cyclical rhythms of the wild. As Kirk shows, however, in arguing for this relation, Macfarlane himself employs the device of the pastoral to mediate between the urban and the wild. Retreat and return becomes the ur-rhythm that Macfarlane constructs throughout his novel. Retreats are, argues Kirk, always already textual figures of the reading imagination. Finally, Kirk finds in Macfarlane a mutual containing of the quotidian in the cosmic.

We find more nature rhythms and pulses in "The Pulse of Nature: Gary Snyder and the Shamanic Beat," where **Camelia Elias** outlines the connections between myths, ancient beliefs, and contemporary eco poetry. Eco poetry resonates, argues Elias, with Neoplatonic thought and shamanic magic, rituals, and ghost-dancing. Gary Snyder regards the (nature) poet as a magician, a thread Elias picks up and spins into a theory of magic as the sensual aspect of the language we speak. Through readings of several Snyder poems, an alchemy of the senses is located in the poetic forms, as a kind of animist philosophy. Poems are natural rhythms when nature is allowed to speak for itself.

In the following article "Rhythms at Sea: Lefebvre and Maritime Fiction", **Søren Frank** makes the point, that the concept of rhythm may help to achieve a concrete and existential understanding of the maritime existence. Starting out with a discussion of the epistemological and methodological implications of rhythmanalysis, he argues that the rhythmical relates to the body and the senses and in this way circumvents the concept of representation. Rhythmanalysis, Frank argues, can be considered an epistemological project which invites us to revise the conditions of knowledge production in the humanities and might enable us to relate the phenomenological with the discursive and the aesthetical approach to the world. Maritime existence is both a good example of what

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has called a "presence culture" and a suitable opportunity to test the fruitfulness of rhythmanalysis. The sailor's body can be considered a contact zone where social and natural rhythms interact, creating repetitiveness and monotony, on the one hand, and a sense of mystery, on the other. In his readings of maritime fiction, Frank considers an extensive selection of maritime fiction including among others Joseph Conrad *The Nigger of the "Narcissus": A Tale of the Sea* (1897) and *Typhoon* (1902), James Fenimore Cooper: *The Red Rover: A Tale*, Jens Bjørneboe: *The Sharks: The History of a Crew and a Shipwreck* (1974 /1992) and Nordahl Grieg: *The Ship Sails On* (1924) (orig. *Skibet gaar videre*, 1924). Finally, Frank discusses questions of pedagogy and academic writing, as rhythmanalysis implies a pre-conceptual observation of its objects and leads to a more descriptive style of writing. This might imply, Frank argues, not a completely change of style, but an expansion of the academic discourse catalogue.

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HOW MUSICAL IS HENRI LEFEBVRE'S RHYTHMANALYSIS?

Peter Dayan

Every student is told, when she or he is writing an essay, to begin by looking carefully at the key terms in the essay title, and if any of them is problematic, to flag and consider this. In my title for this article, there are three such problematic terms: "musical"; "rhythmanalysis"; and "Henri Lefebvre". All three change their meaning according to context; but also, more than one might expect, according to the language in which one reads them.

Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life by Henri Lefebvre, translated by Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore, was first published by Continuum in 2004, and republished by Bloomsbury in 2013. (All quotations in English in this essay refer to the Bloomsbury edition.) It has become a popular, influential, and widely read book, as the other papers in this volume will testify. However, it differs in some fundamental ways from the book by Lefebvre of which it presents itself as a translation; so much so, indeed, that I will be arguing it suggests a significantly different definition of rhythmanalysis; and inasmuch as it ascribes that definition to Henri Lefebvre, who is credited as the author of the book, it therefore gives a substantially different impression of what Lefebvre thought.

Lefebvre's original book (to which all quotations in French in this essay refer) is much less popular than the English version, and not very accessible. It has never been republished since the

first edition, published in Paris, by Syllepse, in 1992, the year after Lefebvre's death. The print run was small. Very few libraries have the book. I imagine, therefore, that few people can have compared the English and French volumes. But such comparison is most instructive.

If one places them side by side, two telling differences are immediately apparent. The first is the image on the cover. The Bloomsbury edition has a picture of a mighty suspension bridge, clearly intended to represent urban modernity. The French, on the other hand, features a painting entitled "Untitled (Bronzino)" by the Argentinian painter Osvaldo Romberg. This painting is itself a reproduction of a portrait of a gentleman posing with a book by the Florentine painter Bronzino, dating from the 1530s, which Romberg has overlain with a pattern of coloured squares in acrylic paint. The second difference is the title, and subtitle. The French reads: *Eléments pour un rythmanalyse: introduction à la connaissance des rythmes* (which one might translate as *Elements towards a rhythmanalysis: introduction to an understanding of rhythms*). The English is, as we have seen: *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life*. The aim of the book in French, then, is to introduce the reader to an understanding of rhythm itself (and both the title and the subtitle assert that it is merely an introduction to a much larger subject). The title combined with the artwork on the front cover signals unambiguously that the subject of the book is rhythm as a universal concept, and that this concept has its point of origin in art. The front cover of the English book, on the other hand, contains no hint of the origin of rhythm in art. It is not about looking at or learning about rhythm itself; it is about using rhythmanalysis as a tool for investigating space, time, and everyday life, as referenced by the bridge. The English translation diverts our attention away from rhythm itself to the object of analysis, and away from art to everyday life.

What has motivated this profound change, between the French and English versions? The most obvious answer is this: the change of title reflects a basic contrast between a French theoretical tradition and an Anglophone empirical one. Lefebvre's is a historical and theoretical approach that focuses on the origins and de-

velopment, context, and functioning of rhythm as a concept. His translators prefer to divert their gaze, and ours, away from the word and concept themselves, towards a practical understanding of the world in which we live. He is interested above all in *how* we understand; they are more interested in *what* we understand. The English word "rhythmanalysis", then, would seem to refer primarily to an analytical tool, useful in understanding everyday life. Lefebvre's original "rythmanalyse", on the other hand, would be an enterprise aiming towards an analysis of rhythm itself. We shall see that the contents of the two books do indeed exemplify the differences promised by their covers.

And what about "musical"? That, too, is a notion of which different appreciations emerge from the two books. And as one might have guessed, Lefebvre's is far more rooted in an understanding of music as an art form, with all that this implies, rather than merely as a social phenomenon. He never simply equates the rhythms of music with those of non-musical phenomena. He gives them a special status, a unique and absolute status, which is effaced in the English translation. To show how this transformation between the French and the English operates, I will spend much of this essay looking at a passage which considers the relationship between the rhythms of music and those of the city. I will give first Lefebvre's French, then the English of Elden and Moore; then I will point out how the two differ.

> Rythmes. Rythmes. Ils révèlent et ils dissimulent. Bien plus divers qu'en musique, ou le code dit civil des successions, textes relativement simples, par rapport à la ville. Rythmes: musique de la Cité, tableau qui s'écoute, image dans le présent d'une somme discontinue. (52)

> Rhythms. Rhythms. They reveal and they hide. Much more diverse than in music, or the so-called civil code of successions, relatively simple in relation to the City. Rhythms: the music of the City, a scene that listens to itself, an image in the present of a discontinuous sum. (45)

This passage might seem to contain a bewildering volte-face. First we are, it appears, being told that the rhythms Lefebvre is considering are more diverse than the rhythms of music; that music, which obeys a code of succession, is relatively simple compared to a city. Then we are told that rhythms actually *are* the music of the "Cité". There might well appear to be a problem or a paradox here. How can Lefebvre say first that the rhythms of the city are more diverse than those of music, and then say that music is the rhythm of the city? To a careful reader of the French, however, there need be no paradox.

The English translation effaces the ideologically fundamental distinction, in the French, between the word "ville", without capital, in the penultimate sentence, and the word "Cité", with capital, in the last sentence. The two words do not have the same meaning in French. Paris, in ordinary parlance, is "une ville", a place where many people live and work. A "cité", in contrast, is usually either a medieval town limited by its defences (natural or built), as in the "île de la Cité" in Paris, or the "cité de Carcassone", proudly filling its medieval ramparts; or else it is a set of buildings with a common purpose, like a "cité universitaire", which is a student residence, or a "cité de la musique", which might include concert halls and a conservatoire. The "cité" has an architectural, moral, or purposive coherence that the "ville" lacks. Moreover, "Cité" with a capital unmistakeably has a religious connotation, like the City of God of Saint Augustine, which is definitely a "Cité" and not a "ville". Lefebvre only uses the word "Cité", with a capital, once elsewhere in the book, almost in passing, but in a most revealing way: "le *modèle* militaire a été imité dans nos sociétés dites occidentales (ou plutôt impérialistes). Même dans l'époque dite *moderne* et peut-être dès l'âge médiéval, depuis la fin de la Cité" (57). Elden and Moore translate this passage thus: "the military *model* has been imitated in our so-called western (or rather imperialistic) societies. Even in the so-called modern era and maybe since the medieval age, since the end of the city-state" (48). Modern society, with its militarism and imperialism, begins for Lefebvre where the City ends.

The City of Lefebvre, identified both with its medieval architectural coherence, and with a kind of religious social organisation that military rhythms supersede, is not of our time. It has the unity and the sense of divine timelessness that the modern town lacks. Its rhythms, unlike those of the "ville de Paris", can be received as musical.

This distinction between "ville" and "Cité" is not something one would understand or guess from the English translation, which uses the word "City" to translate both "ville" and "Cité". That distinction is, however, as we have seen, perfectly clear in the French. It builds a contrast between a purposively ordered realm, where successions are determined, and a modern world which has no such order. Music, it seems, the particular kinds of rhythm that characterise music, equate with those of the "Cité", but not so well with those of the "ville", which is a less coherent entity.

Music in Lefebvre's definition, quoted above, is characterised as a "code civil". The "code civil" is the foundation of French law, created under Napoleon in 1804, and steadily modified but never abolished since. It includes France's notoriously prescriptive laws on succession, on who can inherit what from whom. And that is what music is, according to Lefebvre's initial definition: a set of laws determining succession, succession in time. The rhythms of the modern "ville" are more diverse than those of this kind of music.

However, Lefebvre's definition of music is not quite as clear-cut as this might imply. After all, music has not always been received thus, as a codified art form. In fact, a rejection of music as a code, as a set of laws, was the fundamental principle of Romantic music from the time of Beethoven – which was, of course, also exactly the time of Napoleon, who created the "code civil", and of Hegel, who is clearly for Lefebvre the great ancestor of the kind of dialectical thinking that allows for the rise of rhythmanalysis. Since then, art music has always presented itself as continuously in revolt against any laws that can be codified. And Lefebvre knew this well, as we will shortly see. One can identify in his writing a tension between on the one hand, a pre-Romantic or anti-Romantic

rationalist concept of music, according to which music can be defined as a code (expressible in verbal or mathematical terms); and on the other hand, a Romantic concept, according to which music is an aesthetic activity whose rules exist only in an ideal sphere to which the rational mind has no reliable access – and perhaps not necessarily in sound.

The Romantic musical tradition gives a privileged place to the listener. Since it denies the ability of the analyst or of verbal discourse to determine the quality of music, that quality can only be determined in the act of listening to music. In the final sentence of the quotation from which I began my analysis, above, that act of listening has a crucial place. Yet, curiously, what is listened to appears not to be music.

> Rythmes: musique de la Cité, tableau qui s'écoute, image dans le présent d'une somme discontinue. (52)

> Rhythms: the music of the City, a scene that listens to itself, an image in the present of a discontinuous sum. (45)

"tableau qui s'écoute": the word "tableau", translated by Elden and Moore as "scene", could at least as well mean "painting". And "qui s'écoute" is more likely to mean "that can be listened to", rather than "that listens to itself". The music of the City might, then, be an audible work of visual art; a painting that can be listened to. This may seem odd, but it fits well with the general thrust of Lefebvre's cultural theory. He is always careful to place the reception of art at the centre of art itself, and to evoke that reception not as an intellectual process, but as a corporeal one. Art becomes embodied in us, not through rational reflection, but through a process that involves our body as a locus for a kind of sympathetic vibration with the rhythms of art. Indeed, artistic understanding becomes identified with that embodied sympathy; and the embodied sympathy cannot be restricted to the specific senses that receive the work. A painting is not merely seen, music is not merely heard, a poem is not merely read; the whole body,

with all its senses, responds to each. This is in some ways originally a Romantic notion, but Lefebvre and his contemporaries, notably Roland Barthes, gave it a new life in the 1980s. Lefebvre never presents his reception of art as rational, abstract, or scientific. It is always constructed, with the active participation of his senses, as process that engages the body.

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The chapter entitled "La Journée médiatique" (in English, "The Media Day") is a sustained exercise in the edification of a distinction between two different approaches to cultural analysis. One is that of poetry, literature, or perhaps religion; this is unambiguously the one that Levebre valorises. The other approach, which he condemns, is the journalistic. The reviled approach, the journalistic one, is identified with communication: communication implying a model of discourse in which the truth is present in the world, can be translated into words, and then passed transparently from one person to another, without the participation of the body. This Lefebvre rejects, because he does not believe in the existence of any such present truth before the moment of its constitution by the receiving subject. The poetic model, on the other hand, is one of dialogue between the world and the humanity that constitutes it. This dialogue is not a communication of facts or of points of view. Nor is it an exchange of views. It is the very process within which facts and points of view are established. It is an embodied process. It happens in thought, but not as a thought. It never arrives at a final truth; it is a process without end. That is how, for Lefebvre, analysis should work, as he had already said in the preceding chapter, "Dressage", "les analyses dans la pensée ne parviennent jamais *à terme*. Pas plus l'analyse des faits sociaux précis comme le *dressage* que l'analyse du théâtre, de la musique, de la poésie comme rythmes" (61) ("the analyses in thought are never brought *to term*. No more so the analysis of precise social facts like *dressage* than the analysis of the theatre, of music, of poetry as rhythms", 51). It may seem strange that he refers to art – theatre,

music, poetry – and more specifically, to the rhythms that can be found in all forms of art, to justify his assertion that the analysis of social facts should never reach a term. But in fact, that analogy with art is essential to his method. Like the allusion to the timeless pre-modern City, it serves to give his method its true orientation: towards the universal.

This may sound odd to 21st-century academic ears. Nothing is now more unfashionable, in the critical academy, than the universal; we like to think that everything is historical, relative, contingent, time-bound, and appeals to the universal make us suspicious. But while that concept may be foreign to what anglophone readers look for in rhythmanalysis, it is absolutely central to Lefebvre's project. His fundamental ambition, as he says, is to prove that rhythm is a "universel concret".

> On pourrait atteindre, par une voie détournée et paradoxalement à partir des corps, l'universel (concret) que la ligne directe, philosophique et politique, a visé et n'a pas atteint, encore moins réalisé: si le rythme consolide son statut théorique, s'il se révèle concept valable pour la pensée et comme support dans la pratique, n'est-il pas cet universel concret que les systèmes philosophiques ont manqué, que les organisations politiques ont oublié, mais qui est vécu, éprouvé, touché dans le sensible et le corporel? (63)

Since the translation provided by Elden and Moore seems to me in some respects awkward and unclear, I will allow myself to provide my own version:

> We might be able to reach, by an indirect route and, paradoxically, beginning from the body, the (concrete) universal that the direct approach, philosophical and political, has aimed at but has never reached, still less realised: if rhythm consolidates its theoretical status, if it reveals itself as a valid concept for thought and as a framework

> for practice, is it not itself that very concrete universal which philosophical systems have missed, which political organisations have forgotten, but which is lived, felt, touched through our senses, in our bodies?

This is a truly tremendous, millenial claim. Lefebvre claims to have found the universal that philosophy has aimed at but missed, and that politics has forgotten: and the name of this universal is rhythm. This may seem, to the anglophone cultural critic, a strange affirmation to find in the writing of a contemporary theorist. However, in the perspective of the Romantic mindset, it is at least understandable. Rhythm, as we have seen, is for Lefebvre a concept originally derived from the arts; indeed, it is what unites the arts. The fundamental tenet of Romanticism is that no universal exists where it can be found by rational enquiry. It must always be created by the forces of art, unless we accept the teachings of religion. That is why, if you want to escape from the hollow present of the journalistic day into the true presence of rhythm, you have only two alternatives:

> Vous voulez de la présence? Adressez-vous à la littérature ou à l'église ... (67)
>
> You want presence? Turn to literature or the church ... (57)

That is very clearly and unmistakeably a Romantic point of view. No one before the Romantics, and no rationalist or post-modernist, would, I think, have aligned religion and literature in this way, and opposed the two of them to journalistic communication.

But I have been analysing passages in which Lefebvre talks of the arts in general, or of literature. It is time to return to the specificity of music. One chapter of Lefebvre's book is entitled, precisely, "La musique et les rythmes". Since it is addressed directly to music, it does not have much to say about the place of music in rhythmanalysis generally. It does, however, help to situate what

Lefebvre means by "music". The music he talks about is all in the modal and tonal traditions, going from the ancient Greeks to the Romantics – and not too far beyond. There is nothing whatever about the atonal or experimental music of the 20th century. Here is the full list of composers mentioned by Lefebvre:

Bach
Beethoven
Schumann
Ravel
Mozart
Rousseau
Rameau

With the exception of the outlier Ravel, this is a list whose coherence and signification would readily have been recognised more than a century before Lefebvre wrote this chapter. It contains the three great gods of the Germanic musical pantheon as the Romantics saw it – Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven – plus the greatest of the German Romantics, Schumann, and two Frenchmen who were universally recognised not as the greatest composers, but as among the most important thinkers about music of the period that gave birth to Romanticism. Conspicuously absent are any 20th-century composers whose aesthetics might disrupt the status of the musical work as the Romantics knew it. And this is not surprising.

From the very beginning of the book, Lefebvre constantly stresses the importance to rhythm of what he calls "la mesure". This is translated by Elden and Moore as "measure". That is certainly fair enough. But in French, "mesure" also means what British English calls bars, the bar of music being the fundamental unit which had allowed for the regularity of rhythm since the 17th century. This musical measure was first discarded by Erik Satie (whom Lefebvre does not cite), in the 1880s. (Ravel, on the other hand, whom he does cite, never abandoned the bar.) Many 20th-century composers, following Satie, similarly contested the regularity of

the bar, perhaps the most famous being John Cage. But for Lefebvre, it would seem, any music without bars, without measure, remains inaudible - or perhaps not audible as music. Lefebvre needs his music to have the kind of rhythm that can be accommodated within the conventions of 19th-century musical notation. To be more precise: music, for him, should have a rhythm whose analysis has clear starting points, measurable starting points, but such complexities that the analysis is never finished. And the reason for that, as ever, is that this endless analysis, with a clear starting point but no clear *term*, is the one way to escape the present and direct ourselves towards the timeless concrete universal that was originally born of religion, and then, in Romantic times, in the time of Beethoven and Hegel, migrated to art – poetry, music, and painting.

To sum up or clarify the above: music, for Lefebvre, requires three conditions for its existence. First: it must have rules. Second: it must escape those rules. Third: as it escapes, it must be received by our bodies.

> Le rythme musical ne relève pas seulement de l'esthétique et d'une règle de l'art: il a une fonction **éthique.** Dans son rapport au corps, au temps, à l'œuvre, il illustre la vie *réelle* (quotidienne). Il la *purifie*, dans l'acceptation de la **catharsis**. Enfin et surtout, il apporte une compensation aux misères de la quotidienneté, à ses déficiences et défaillances. La musique intègre les fonctions, les **valeurs** du Rythme ... (90)

Elden and Moore's translation runs as follows:

> Musical rhythm does not only sublimate the aesthetic and a rule of art: it has an **ethical** function. In its relation to the body, to time, to the work, it illustrates *real* (everyday) life. It *purifies* it in the acceptance of **catharsis**. Finally, and above all, it brings compensation for the miseries

> of everydayness, for its deficiencies and failures. Music integrates the functions, the **values** of Rhythm ... (75)

I would translate it thus:

> The rhythm of music does not belong solely to the domain of aesthetics and of artistic convention: it has an **ethical** function. In the way it relates to the body, to time, to the work, it illuminates *real* (everyday) life. It *purifies* it, in the acceptance of **catharsis**. Finally and above all, it brings compensation for the troubles of everyday life, for its deficiencies and inadequacies. Music incorporates both the functions and the **values** of Rhythm ...

It will be obvious that my translation gives a far more active role to rhythm, which illuminates (rather than merely illustrating) life. Further, according to my translation, while music has an ethical function, it *also* belongs (though not solely) to the domain of aesthetics and artistic convention. (Elden and Moore give a radically different sense by using the verb "sublimate". I will allow myself to say that this cannot be the sense of the French; the translators have ignored the preposition "de".) Lefebvre's music has its legitimate first home in the domain of aesthetics and of convention, of the measure. But through its action on the body, music reaches out beyond convention, to illuminate and purify life. As it does so, as it reaches out, it takes rhythm with it; and rhythm can then acquire that sure sign of the universal, of the absolute, of the proper, which is a capital letter. The City and Rhythm share that capital.

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I have been suggesting that for Lefebvre, the most musical music, the music that best supports his idea of rhythmanalysis, is Romantic music. Modern experimental music is beyond the pale. What about music before Romanticism? That is not exactly beyond the pale, but in its more comfortable relationship with codes, it is not

what inspires him. He makes this perfectly clear in a careful contrast between Schumann and Bach. He suggests that Bach is more likely to be viewed as a composer whose work has a mathematical logic to it, and he links this to the importance of melody and harmony in Bach's work. In Schumann, on the other hand, rhythm dominates. Hence:

> Dans la mesure où l'étude du rythme s'inspire de la musique (et pas seulement de la poésie, de la marche ou de la course, etc.), elle se rapproche plus de Schumann que de Bach. Ce qui n'élucide pas la confrontation et la parenté entre la pensée mathématique et la création musicale, mais déplace la question. (24)

> To the extent that the study of rhythm is inspired by music (and not just by poetry, by walking or running, etc.), it is closer to Schumann than to Bach. This does not explain the tension and the kinship between mathematical thought and musical creation, but it does shift the question. (24)

Bach, of course, does have rhythm. But it is a kind of rhythm that sits more comfortably within the bar. It is therefore less useful for rhythmanalysis than Schumann's, which creates a new kind of tension with the mathematical, a tension with measure, between the complex rhythms of his music and the measure of the bar.

Not everything that is called music, then, is equally musical to Lefebvre's rhythmanalytical ear. What he listens for is the concrete universal as it escapes journalistic or rationalist analysis, and takes root in the body; and it is the music of the great Romantic tradition which best corresponds to that kind of embodied listening. It always begins from the code, the measure, but refuses to be limited by them. It looks out from there towards a universal that no rational analysis can ever reach. We can sense it in our bodies – that is why it is a *concrete* universal – but we will never have explained it in our minds. It is musical in a way that is shared by

poetry. That is both the aesthetic and the ethic that orientates his analysis of rhythms.

This explains why his method is not popular among literary critics today. Our critical world does not like Romantic universalism as a critical stance. Lefebvre's musicality does not sit well, either with the approaches of structuralism and deconstruction (which are Romantic in some ways but not in others), or with the new historicism (which tries to reject universalism in principle). I cannot help suspecting that the English version of the book is far more popular than the French precisely because of the way it obscures, or at least swerves around, Lefebvre's universalism and idealism. It allows the anglophone reader not to notice the real implications of Lefebvre's musicality. Anglophones, it seems to me, read Lefebvre in order to find a way to interpret social phenomena, without seeing that his method rests upon a truly radical world view which rejects not only capitalism, but the entire rationalist ideology, and clearly prefers a universalist idealism which for him was originally religious, and then found its home in art, paradigmatically in the music of the 19th century, having been released by Hegel and Marx from the dead weight of rationalism. Philosophy, for him, remains generally an unreliable ally in the expression of that idealism, because it flirts dangerously with the idea of a term and of a present and communicable truth. For him, thought is only interesting when it cannot be reduced to a truth, when it both finds and has itself a rhythm whose analysis can have no term. We should never be satisfied with what we have found. Just as when we try to formulate what a piece of Romantic music means to us, the value of the exercise of thinking in rhythmanalysis is not in conclusions; it is in the process, and in the concrete universal it allows us to imagine, using our bodies as sounding-boards for that imagination. Rhythmanalysis in English is taken as a way of analysing space, time, and everyday life. Rhythmanalysis in Lefebvre's French has a completely different ambition. It invites us to think about rhythm itself, to allow the very concept of rhythm to emerge as a concrete universal, as the universal that philosophy and politics will always miss, but that poetry and Romantic music

have for two centuries been teaching us to feel with our bodies. The true aim of rhythmanalysis is to feel that rhythm in the world; not to find, but to create the music of the City.

The rhythm of the modern town, exemplarily of the "ville de Paris", is certainly fascinating in its diversity. We can never quite feel it as music; its very modernity is in its disruption of measure. Why should rhythmanalysis address this complexity? The anglophone answer might be: because understanding the modern city is our goal. The French answer might be: in order to gain a better understanding of what rhythm is, and how it articulates itself against modern life. From the French point of view, then, perhaps the real underlying aim of rhythmanalysis is ultimately defined not in relation to the real town, to the "ville de Paris", but to the music of the ideal City – with a capital C. Indeed, perhaps our true task, a millenial one, would be to create the City itself through the rhythm of its own music; and to create it for ourselves with the same body that resonates to the music of Schumann.

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RHYTHMS, REFRAINS AND REGIONALITY: LEARNING FROM KATHLEEN STEWART

Neil Campbell

> "The community of actual things is an organism; but not a static organism. It is an incompletion in process of production." (Whitehead 1979, pp. 214-15)

> "To be undertaken." (last words of Henri Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis*)

Anthropologist Kathleen Stewart states that, "My work is an experiment that writes from the intensities in things. It asks what potential modes of knowing, relating or attending to things are already being lived in ordinary rhythms, labors, and the sensory materiality of forms of attunement to worlds" (Stewart, 2009, n.p.). Her method as a writer has evolved through her attention to the "intensities in things" and her descriptions of the workings of these "worlds" wherever they appear and take form within the everyday. Stewart often refers to "rhythms" in her work, either directly, as above, or through other related terms, such as "pulses", "forces", "eddies" "tracks", "registers", "surges", or most obviously "refrains". In this sense, she shares much in common with Henri Lefebvre whose *Rhythmanalysis* she cites directly in, at least, one major essay and whose influence haunts her work. This chapter will begin to show some dialogues between Stewart's version of *fictocriticism* and Lefebvre's outline for rhythmanalysis, and go

on to indicate, if only briefly, how these ideas might contribute to a rethinking of what I, like Stewart, term regionality.

In her essay "The achievement of a life, a line, a list" (2013) Stewart sets out some of the key questions within her work:

> I wonder, here, how circulating forces spawn worlds, animate forms of attachment and attunement, and become the air and ground of living in and living through the things that happen … how a self achieves whatever counts as "a life". I wonder how forces take on forms, how they come to reside in experiences, conditions, objects, dreams, landscapes, imaginaries and lived sensory moments … (Stewart 2013a, 31)

To approach a method that tracks these multiple relations of living – "whatever counts as 'a life'" – Stewart rejects representational thinking in a similar way that Lefebvre does, when he argues against a narrow insistence upon the "present ([OR] representation)" (Lefebvre 2014, 56) through which depth is simulated (or imitated) and thus simply "resembles", "mistaking itself for presence" (ibid., 33), existing "there" but with "neither depth nor breadth, nor flesh" (ibid., 56). This is in contrast with what Lefebvre calls "presence" which is happening "here", brim full of "dialogue" (ibid., 56) and complexity, bringing forth "all its presents" (ibid., 34) through multifaceted interacting rhythms. Like poetics, Lefebvre insists that "The act of rhythmanalysis […] transforms *everything* into presences, including the *present* […] in a dramatic becoming, in an ensemble full of meaning, transforming them no longer into diverse things, but into presences" (ibid., 33). Non-representational methods, according to Phillip Vannini, "enliven rather than report, to render rather than represent, to resonate rather than validate, to rupture and reimagine rather than to faithfully describe, to generate possibilities of encounter rather than construct representative ideal types" (Vannini 2015, 15). To achieve this, Kathleen Stewart evolves her writing as "cultural poesis", blending anthropology, autoethnography and fictocriti-

cism to "follow lines of force as they emerge in moments of shock, or become resonant in everyday sensibilities" (Stewart in Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 1041), achieving what she also describes as the "compositionality of things" (Stewart 2008, 80).

With this in mind, Ben Highmore comments on the impact of reading Stewart whereby, "As you read you become more and more alert to your surroundings. Your skin begins to prickle with the apprehensions of the lives of others, of resonances of care and indifference, of anxiety and ease … It attunes and reattunes the human sensorium" (Highmore 2011, 8). Rather like in Lefebvre, "nothing is immobile […] [The] *object* is not inert; time is not set aside for the *subject*"; the human and non-human therefore "moves in multiple ways" (Lefebvre 2014, 30). "A still life", argues Stewart, "is a static state filled with vibratory motion, or resonance. A quivering in the stability of a category or a trajectory, it gives the ordinary the charge of an unfolding" (Stewart 2007, 19). *Lives, in other words, even when they seem static and fixed, resonate with unfolding rhythms.* "Repetitions, ellipses, pauses, still lifes – all of these are co-constitutive when you think of them as rhythms in a composition" she says (Stewart in Pittman 2013 online). Through close attentiveness to the everyday, therefore, one can appreciate and describe these unfolding rhythms that, in all their intensity, constitute life, and yet are often overlooked or ignored. "What we *live* are rhythms … A rhythm invests places, but is not itself a place; it is not a thing, nor an aggregation of things, nor yet a simple flow", wrote Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1994, 206). Life, in all its forms, is constituted through the *relations* of such rhythms and "their inscription in space by means of human actions" that form into an intricate interacting "meshwork" (ibid., 117).

Stewart's approach to this appreciation of rhythm, outlined in her first book, *A Space on the Side of the Road* (1996), is to "track a moving object", "record the state of emergence", and uncover "the haunting or exciting presence of traces, remainders, and excesses uncaptured by claimed meanings" in the lives of Appalachia (Stewart 2005, 1027). Thus rather than "represent" such processes in static forms that reduce the rhythms of living to a contained

framework, Stewart's soaring accumulations of description and action can be seen as putting into practice Lefebvre's notion of "transform[ing] *everything* into presences", gathering-up the everyday as dense assembled experiences and surprising moments of becoming through which the familiar takes on new and different attunements and compositions. Stewart calls her style a "speculative topography of the everyday sensibilities now consequential to living through things. An attention to matterings, the complex emergent worlds, happening in everyday life" (Stewart 2011, 445). One might call this, following Lefebvre, rhythmanalysis in practice. Stewart's work slows down the rush to representation and theoretical answers, preferring a slowness "to give pause to the quick, naturalized relationship between thinking subject, concept and world" in favour of "descriptive eddies", "speculative attunement" where "things matter not because of how they are represented but because they have qualities, textures, tracks and rhythms (Lefebvre 2004)" – explicitly referencing Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* (Stewart 2013a, 31-2). What she learned from Lefebvre (and also from Gilles Deleuze, Michael Taussig, Stephen Muecke and others) are the nuances of the ordinary and how, in Lefebvre's words, "there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: difference" (Lefebvre 2004, 16). Thus the rhythms of life ["where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy" according to Lefebvre (ibid., 25)] occur regularly in Stewart's writing: shopping, going to the garage, hospital visits, suburban walking, or dining. And even when apparently repetitive, these moments "give birth to" difference (ibid., 17). Lefebvre wrote that "The repetitions and redundancies of rhythms, their symmetries and asymmetries, interact in ways that cannot be reduced to the discrete and fixed determinants of analytic thought" (Lefebvre 1994, 205-6), for they always include the possibility of something new emerging.

As Stewart assembles a "life" or the "life of a place" (like the American Road in the essay "Road Registers" or a house in "New England Red" or a region West Virginia, New Hampshire, Ver-

mont, or Boston in various essays) she performs what Lefebvre defines, through his example of "This garden that I have before my eyes", as "the apparent immobility that contains one thousand and one movements" (Lefebvre 2004, 26).[1] Attuned to life's rhythms, its "one thousand and one movements", her work is simultaneously local, national and global demonstrating how in Tim Edensor's words, "national and global rhythms increasingly pulse through place" (Edensor 2010, 3):

> I [Stewart writes] am suggesting here that we might now think of a life – a collective life or an individual life – as a series of worldings that have laid down tracks of reaction, etched habits and … composition onto identities, desires, objects, scenes and ways of living. (Stewart 2013a, 32)

Hence, examine the opening of her essay "Worlding Refrains":

> What is, is a refrain. A scoring over a world's repetitions. A scratching of the surface of rhythms, sensory habits, gathering materialities, intervals, and durations. A gangly accrual of slow or sudden accretions. A rutting by scoring over. (Stewart in Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 339)

In this thickness of language and rhythms Stewart challenges us to become encountering readers, active engagers with percepts and affects (scoring, scratching, rutting, accruing, and accreting), as if facing life and living as an active, organic process (see Deleuze and Guattari 2003). Like Heidegger's language before her, Stewart's tends to clot like thick paint (Steiner 1978, 85), forcing the reader to slow down, rethink, and project possible meanings from the terms and words created, thereby breaking the shackles of absolute representation and meaning wherein words have clear and direct referents; agreed, established and often presupposed.

1 Or in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari a thousand plateaus!

Crucially, such entangled, rhythmic language – "A gangly accrual of slow or sudden accretions. A rutting by scoring over" – conveys the experiencing and generativity of ordinary life at its most apparently quotidian: "The surge that starts things. A cracking open, like a kernel that splits and becomes fecund. A crackling. A flashing up" (Stewart 2007, 120). In the events and moments that constitute the living of life, with what Lefebvre terms "multiple transitions and imbrications" (Lefebvre 2004, 101), moving from personal to public, she finds immense, immanent unspoken energy, like her description of a homeless person's sign:

> Hungry. Will work for food. God bless you … The graphic lettering that pleads for the attention of the passing cars glances off the eye as something to avoid like the plague. Moving on. But it also holds the fascination of catastrophe, the sense that something is happening, the surge of affect toward a profound scene. (Stewart 2005, 1031)

The words both describe and project, as if the homeless man disrupts the normative rhythms or "dressage", as Lefebvre terms it, of mainstream society (Stewart 2007, 120; Lefebvre, 47-53). In what follows, Stewart unpacks the nuances of the encounter, its "impacts" and objects, its social assembling of affects like fear, abjection, hope, need, and desire alongside the divisiveness of wealth and class revealed by the scene. As the gaze moves like the car itself, it glances at a scene it is itself not a part of and yet absolutely implicated in; something happening there whose forces have the capacity to affect and be affected. It is a profound scene, however ordinary; an individual encounter of bodies and rhythms in space, and yet simultaneously, a collective moment in which community and society, region, nation and world are bound up; different and connected. Stewart's characteristic descriptive methodology – "the mind playing over the world of matter" (Doty 2010, 33) – refuses to close the scene down through categorical acts of representation, offering instead an opening-up because "something is happening" in this "surge of affect" as rhythms shift.

Ordinary Affects, Stewart's second book in 2007, embraces these rhythmic spacetimes as if capturing the spirit of Tim Edensor's point: "For the everyday is a site for the enfolding of multiple rhythms, and though the immanence of experience is usually anchored by habit and routine apprehension, there is always a tension between the dynamic and vital, and the regular and reiterative" (Edensor 2010, 10). Stewart's ordinary affects are "in motion … defined by their capacity to affect and to be affected [and] … to be mapped through different, co-existing forms of composition, habituation and event" (Stewart 2007, 4). Once again, her work "maps" or tracks these scenes, forms, and registers as they move through familiar spaces, but not with the urge to formulate symbolic meanings (what they "represent" in the bigger scheme of things) or to summarise their achievement or purpose, or to unearth "a flat and finished truth" (ibid., 5). Instead, this process assembles "disparate scenes" as "unassimilated … unframed" (ibid., 44) happenings in a contact zone of colliding, kaleidoscopic energies whirling around bodies of all kinds (human, animal, knowledges, worlds). Stewart's poesis projects or throws things/rhythms/affects into place and requires the reader to participate in the "surge" that ensues and in its "continued reproduction" (Muecke 2014, 170). In other words, this is a creative process like a type of friction, sparked from the reader's active engagement with the impacts of the words, ideas, collisions of energies on the page and in the mind afterwards. As scenes are "thrown" before the reader, they ask of us What? Why? Where? How? – opening out through curiosity, surprise and incitement: "'And' before 'Is'", as Rajchman says of Deleuze's method battling against the "already given" (Rajchman 2000, 6), so that our experience of reading mimics life's very *process* as always active but stuttering rhythmically – "and … and …and". Stewart's literary contact zone "takes … spawns … grows" (Stewart 2007, 9, 10-11) outward, making Whiteheadian connections or Latourian networks.[2] Through such

2 Alfred North Whitehead and Bruno Latour (see Bibliography) are both relevant to this essay. Certainly Latour has influenced Stewart"s work directly.

processes, the local and global intersect, coexist, and overlap, with regionality an active rhythm tracked as an expression of these variant meshworks.

Let us consider the section "A little accident, like any other" in *Ordinary Affects*, which tells how a motor bike hits a deer in west Texas and how the resonance of the event within the public demonstrates the unpredictable charge of life as the one singular, apparently local, happening "spins off" in all directions from stories, actions (people "keep their eyes open"), "conversations", and "questions", to "abstracted principles of freedom, fate, and recklessness" (Stewart 2005, 1032; 2007, 11-12).

> The room comes to a dead stop. All eyes and ears *tune in* to the sentience of the crash *still resonating* in the bikers' bodies. Then, *slowly*, taking their sweet time, people begin to offer questions from their tables, drawing out the details. First there is just the simple will to know what happened. But the talk, once *set in motion*, expands into a thicket of stories and social maneuverings. There is talk of *other collisions and strange events* at that place on the west road. Some people make eye contact across the room. There are sly smiles of recognition. *Little seeds of speculation begin to sprout.* The scene in the restaurant becomes an *ordinary maze* of inspirations and experiments.
>
> It's as if the singularity of the event has shaken things up, lightening the load of personal preoccupations and social ruts. As if everyone was just waiting for something like this to happen. A "we" of sorts opens in the room, charging the social with lines of potential. (2007, 11 – emphasis added)

One might examine this section as a form of rhythmanalysis, since, as Lefebvre writes, "Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm" (Lefebvre 2004, 25). Using Lefebvre's famous chapter in

Rhythmanalysis, "Seen from the Window", for some guidance on such a process, one sees how he gathers up the "polyrhythms" of the street "symphonically", following "each *being*, each *body*, as having its own time above the whole […] having its place, its rhythm with its recent past, a foreseeable and a distant future" (Lefebvre 2004, 41). In Stewart's scene, there are similar "polyrhythms" at play: repetitions, gestures, actions (tuning in, motion, collision), interferences, growth and decline all sown by the "seed" of a little accident that would "compel a response … shift people's life trajectories in some small way, change them by literally changing their course for a minute or a day" (Stewart 2005, 1032; 2007, 12). Like the "digressive, haptic" stories Stewart collected in the hollers of West Virginia in *A Space on the Side of the Road* (Stewart 2008, 79), this ordinary moment, like the homeless man on the street discussed above, unfurls its rhythms to "add a layer of story, daydream, and memory to things"; it "unearths", "sets off", "pulls the senses into alignment" (2007, 12), mixing together "the pulsing impact of dream and matter" (Stewart 2005, 1032, 1038). As Lefebvre put it when discussing the rhythms of the apparently immobile forest, "To the attentive ear, it makes a noise like a seashell" (2004, 30). Through such attentiveness, singular events "spawn" all kinds of unpredictable rhythms binding the local to the global and the regional to the national through happenings, trajectories, spin- offs, projections "resonating in bodies, scenes, and forms of sociality" (ibid., 12), just as Stewart"s book itself *as a whole* performs the same role for the engaged reader.

Ordinary Affects "amasses the resonance in things", becoming, as Anna Gibbs said of all fictocriticism, a "kind of hauntedness" (Gibbs 2005, n.p.), so that as we "live" the scenes, like the one above, as they speak to us, provoke us, spark and spawn in us new and different rhythms as memories and affects that fly off as trajectories to connect or not with other people, places and things like "chains of intimately connected transformations" (Muecke 2014, 171). As Stewart puts it, these "scenes have an afterlife" that cannot be entirely contained: rhizomatically, rhythmically, they live on through the "eccentric circulation" of stories, gestures,

spawning responses and relations (Stewart 2007, 68). So when scenes appear as paused, immobile, as "still life" moments (as we saw earlier), Stewart asserts (like Lefebvre) that by close attention and attunement to what is here and happening, we do not simply refer back to a "given possibility" or "ready-made ideas" (Rajchman 2000, 127) because, as you will recall, "A still life is a static state filled with vibratory motion, or resonance" (Stewart 2007, 19). The "potential stored in ordinary things" erupts from the unpromising stillness as an "unfolding" of rhythms, so that the "residues of past dreaming practices" such as the unquestioning belief in the American Dream of progress and achievement, can be reimagined (ibid., 21).

In a later essay "Road Registers" (2014), Stewart traces the "rhythms, tones, and spatio-temporal orientations" of the American Road as an ensemble of active forces or "energetics" that together "compose" "roadness" in all its complex "flightiness" (Stewart 2014, 550). Through this accumulation of "road *registers*", suggesting a list, the range of a voice or instrument, and a variety of a language, she "worlds"; demonstrating *worlding* as an active presence of differential rhythms stretching beyond the apparent still moment in time and the limited sense of the local often associated with region. The spacetime (or chronotope) of the road emerges in this essay through these registers – "The place itself was a thing made up of our itineraries shuttling back and forth across its surface" (ibid., 557). As Lefebvre notes, "Our rhythms insert us into a vast and infinitely complex world" (Lefebvre 2004, 91), as if asserting, with Stewart, how the immediate and local (our active regionality) is always in direct relations with the global and the worldly.

Her method is a "double compositionality … that works by calling out and scoring over refrains", as if it simultaneously digs down and slides over, both seeing the local details and their relations to the whole, including what might be termed "globalisation" (in Vannini 2015, 20). As she wrote of her own approach and method, her work "underscores, overscores, rescores" as a process of gathering, emphasis and repetition in order to demonstrate that in living "there is nothing dead or inconsequential", since

everything matters (in Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 339, 340). The word "scores" has multiple meanings which suit her approach: suggesting a physical marking or cutting, a musical composition, the acquisition of something (scoring drugs), and the sense of achievement (score a victory). This scoring over draws us closer to everyday but unnoticed things like a "serial immersion in some little world you never knew was there" until it comes into contact as an affective encounter (ibid., 340). Thus worlding happens in the refrains of the ordinary, through "the dense entanglement of affect, attention, the senses, and matter" as each little world registers like a Lefebvrian "presence" or a "bloom space", as Stewart calls it: promising, threatening, and troubling (ibid.). For Stewart, "The world is a bloom space" made up of little worlds that can be "anything" within its many and varied compositions: "the tracks of refrains that etch out a way of living in the face of everything" (ibid., 340, 41). The refrain is intimately connected to this discussion of rhythm, for as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, it "acts upon that which surrounds it, sound or light, extracting from it various vibrations, or decompositions, projections, or transformations … [it] has a catalytic function …" (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 348). Or as Derek McCormack explains, "refrains are always potentially generative of difference, producing lines of thinking, feeling, and perceiving that may allow one to wander beyond the familiar" (McCormack 2013, 8).

In conclusion, Stewart's acute attunement to things, relations, and what she calls ordinary affects gradually evolve towards a complex and poetic expression of regionality as a lively, active and worldly presence:

> It follows leads, sidesteps, and delays, and it piles things up, creating layers on layers, in an effort to drag things into view, to follow trajectories in motion, and to scope out the shape and shadows and traces of assemblages that solidify and grow entrenched, perhaps doing real damage or holding real hope, and then dissipate, morph, rot, or give way to something new. (Stewart 2005, 1028)

Contrary to the sense of region as inward-looking, conservative, and nostalgic, Stewart views regionality as an edgy assemblage of things, circulations, relations, sensations, rhythms and events; pushing beyond critical regionalism through the "tactile compositionality of things" wherein her fictocriticism registers its multiple, dialogical nature without the nostalgic recovery of the origin of things or an imposition of prescribed values. As she said in 2013, "Forms, to me, are social material. My claim is always that these are compositions that are happening and ones that I'm doing. I'm interested in what something is, what is going on, and where it is going" (Stewart in Pittman 2013 online). This sense of regionality for Stewart emerges from her sensitive exploration of rhythms, affects, and refrains, permitting the attention to the details of the everyday to become "etched" or "scored" as "compositions" in her writing – part musical expressions, part material transformations. Following Lefebvre's example, Stewart "garbs" herself "in the tissue of the lived, of the everyday" and gives attention to the worlds it produces, listening "to a house, a street, a town, as an audience listens to a symphony" (2004, 31, 32).

Rhythm, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, is always "between milieus" – "It changes direction … Landing, splashdown, takeoff": "It is the difference that is rhythmic not the repetition" (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 313, 314). Regionality, therefore, for Stewart is similarly understood, sharing much with Edensor's description of rhythmanalysis as helping to explore "notions that places are always in a process of becoming, seething with emergent properties, but usually stabilized by regular patterns of flow that possess particular rhythmic qualities whether steady, intermittent, volatile or surging" (Edensor 2010, 3). There is a continual tension between "milieus": stabilization and surging, regularity and "becoming", "immanent and emergent possibilities as well as repetitive rhythms" captured in Stewart's attentiveness to regionality as a struggle between "normative and counter rhythms" (ibid., 14, 4). Right from her first studies of the hollers of West Virginia, Stewart's concern for regionality is a series of *refrains* that "articulate the repetition while also slightly changing it", creating

a dynamic composition that is both familiar whilst allowing for "improvisation and adaptation" (ibid., 15). The "consistency" of the repetition within the refrain belies that it is "potentially generative of difference, producing lines of thinking, feeling, and perceiving that may allow one to wander beyond the familiar" (McCormack 2013, 8). Stewart's essay "Regionality" (2013) exemplifies this dual movement of consistency and difference, of things being composed – an "event that jumps between landscape and bodies of all kinds" (2013, 275) – as a place made up at its edges of "difference, affiliation, history, ordinary dullness, and comfort, characters and their stories, that gather on a town line, as something throws itself together" (ibid., 276). Out of apparent repetitive familiarity, such as in any region, comes difference; producing "bubble worlds" that, as we have seen, "reinvent the self-in-place by testing its limits" (ibid., 276) as it engages with local and global worlds. Between "milieus", at its edges, regionality "comes into view" as it relates to worldly issues and concerns: for it exists as "forms and rhythms" a "background" to subjectivity and yet critically "decentered by what it sets in motion, hollowed out by the labyrinth of its trajectories and the scenes" (ibid., 277). Following Lefebvre, it is as if she asks us to "Go deeper. Do not be afraid to disturb this surface [of familiar places], to set its limpidity in motion […] transgress its limits" (Lefebvre 2004, 89).

Representations of region through its familiar images like "the maple tree in October, the white colonial houses", do not "produce regionality" or "represent" it, for this emerges instead through its "compositionality", showing how "strands of influence", a "milieu" that pulls things to expression, stretching "from land to heart and habit" (ibid., 277-8). Regionality is, therefore, "the leftovers of everything that has happened", gathered into an "energetics", a "registering circuit", so that coming "from here" is never a static statement but always an awareness of "moves and encounters that continually reset the self-world relationship" (ibid., 278). Refusing a narrow acceptance of globalisation, regionality redefines place not through coherence and consistency alone but rather by its "living forms", "connectivity" – "not because of what they are

but literally because of what they do" (ibid., 279). Lefebvre wrote similarly, that through understanding rhythms one transformed things of the "present", "this wall, this table, these trees" into "presences" – "a dramatic becoming […] an ensemble" (Lefebvre 2004, 33).To know the place you are in, its people, its attunements and atmospheres, as Stewart shows throughout her work, is never defined as a closed, single circle, as region so often is, but rather as she puts it, "Being 'from here' nests in concentric rings stretching out from encounters to tastes, bodies, neighborhoods, a valley, a state, a geographical region"; each ring connecting beyond itself to the worlds it is a part of, helping to form and deform them. It is an "edgy composite" (Stewart 2013, 281), "an intimate, compositional process of dwelling that bears, gestures, gestates, worlds … it throws together in scenes what is potential, problematic, funny, or complicating to an 'us' defined by a moment, a situation, a habit, or a style of expression" (ibid., 282). The notion of a singular "us" as static and fixed sits uncomfortably with this contrary view of regionality as *also* a shifting, moving refrain – a polyrhythmic, heteroglossic assemblage – an "improvisatory conceptuality" (ibid., 283). Lefebvre understood this too, arguing that, as with region, to see it only as a "simple point of reference" or an isolated present, was to deny its capacity as "presence", "moments in the movement of diverse rhythms […] in all its diversity" (Lefebvre 2004, 45).

To return to the opening of her essay "Worlding Refrains" with all this held in mind, is to see the true meaning of her statement that "What is, is a refrain", asserting, as it does, the relations, rhythms, and connections that produce and incite our sense of life like musical forces or "presences"; shifting repetition to difference in our perceptive and affective relations to place, and, likewise, I would argue, our productive experience of the rhythms of regionality which rather than contain and shelter us, "insert us into a vast and infinitely complex world" (Lefebvre 2004, 91):

> What is, is a refrain. A scoring over a world's repetitions.
> A scratching of the surface of rhythms, sensory habits,

> gathering materialities, intervals, and durations. A gangly accrual of slow or sudden accretions. A rutting by scoring over. (Stewart in Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 339)

Or, in the last words of Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis*, the world is not completed but rather "To be undertaken".

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THE RHYTHM OF THINGS IN LUTZ SEILER'S PROSE WORK

Mirjam Gebauer

Before he began publishing prose texts, the German writer Lutz Seiler was a well-known poet. As reviewers of his books have remarked several times, Seiler's original poetic style still shines through in his prose. This observation is largely based on the elaborateness of his language. Besides features of magical realism, linguistic density and stylistic mastery are often named as prominent characteristics of his texts. A few critics have noticed other characteristics, such as Seiler's detachment from the meaning of words and his engagement with phonetics and play with rhymes instead. Even fewer have made the connection between these features and Seiler's literary point of origin as a poet. Seiler's prose writing is also celebrated for its highly sensual quality, and, as poetry and music share the same origin, it may not seem surprising that another prominent characteristic of his writing is his preference for acoustical experiences over other kinds of perception. One literary scholar even calls Seiler's poetics a "sound architecture" (Truchlar 2013, 115-122)[1], and Krekeler observes: "Over and over again, one hears sounds and noises and the time is sought, the sound of things" (Krekeler 2010). For Lefebvre, the rhythm analysist comes "close to the poet" (Lefebvre 2004, 23), and, indeed, the interest in rhythm in Seiler's prose texts is hard to overlook. Howev-

1 All translations from German into English are my own, unless this is indicated otherwise.

er, the readers of stories and novels tend to focus on plot and the representational performance of language, and human beings in general are absorbed by the sense of vision rather than hearing or touch.

In the production process, Seiler certainly follows his own rhythm: he writes slowly, as is also evident from the "downright old-fashioned-masterly perfection" (Jessen 2009) of his texts. This perfection was particularly acknowledged in 2014, when Seiler received the Deutscher Buchpreis for his first novel, *Kruso*. The Deutscher Buchpreis is the most important German literary prize, and in 2015, on the heels of this distinction, came the republication of a volume of prose pieces titled *Die Zeitwaage*, 'The Timing Machine', originally published in 2009. This volume included the prose piece "Turksib", for which Seiler had received the prestigious Ingeborg Bachmann-prize in 2007. *Die Zeitwaage* already contained essential features and motifs which would later resurface in *Kruso*. One such feature seems, at first sight, to have little to do with rhythm: in Seiler's texts, an important role is often played by odd and mostly outdated technical devices. In "Turksib", it is a second-hand Geiger counter, in "Die Zeitwaage", a prose piece in the same collection as that from which its title was derived, it is an old wrist watch whose lack of precision is diagnosed by a timing machine, and in *Kruso,* it is an antediluvian radio which cannot be turned off because of a defect. As can be seen, these are all technical devices which cannot quite perform their original functions anymore, but they are nevertheless of great importance to the protagonists in Seiler's texts.

In the following, I would like to examine the connection between the representation of these specific objects and the significance of rhythm in Seiler's texts. To do so, I take my point of departure in Lefebvre's assertion that rhythmanalysis casts a disclosing light on the world of things:

> The act of rhythmanalysis transforms *everything* into presences, including the *present*, grasped and perceived as such. The act does not imprison itself in the ideology of the *thing*. It perceives the *thing* in the proximity of the *present*, an instance of the present, just as the image is

> another instance. Thus the thing makes itself present but not presence. On the contrary, the act of rhythmanalysis integrates these things – this wall, this table, these trees – in a dramatic becoming, in an ensemble full of meaning, transforming them no longer into diverse things, but into presences. (Lefebvre 2004, 23)

As "the thing makes itself present but not presence", the thing needs a kind of contextualization to be understood on a more profound level. Lefebvre emphasises that it is only a matter of applying an adequate time scale to discover that seemingly immobile, stiff things also have a rhythm. Rhythmanalysis performs a double contextualization of the thing. Consideration of the diachronic dimension of the thing will disclose its specific rhythmical pattern and give meaning to its different states on a temporal axis. In *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre deploys the example of the single broadcast which must be considered in the stream of repeating broadcasts in the 24 hour rhythm of the media day if it is to be understood more completely. In addition, one has to consider the interplay between the broadcast and the rhythms of the everyday-life of the media consumer.

In his own way, the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa has recently considered the rhythm of things. The results of his analysis show that the issues which Lefebvre took up have become increasingly relevant. Very much in line with Lefebvre's social analysis, Rosa diagnoses tendencies of alienation in our approach to things as a result of the general acceleration of essential processes on all levels of society. Based in critical theory, Rosa has unfolded his argument on the relation between alienation and social acceleration in several publications.[2] Analyzing the temporal structure of modern society, he identifies three dimensions of acceleration:

2 See the following publications of Rosa's work in English *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality* (2010) and *Social Acceleration: a New Theory of Modernity* (2013). See also the volume which Rosa coedited together with William E. Scheuerman *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity* (2009).

acceleration in technological innovation, acceleration of social change and acceleration in the speed of individual lives. In his recent book *Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*, ('Resonance: A Sociology of World Relation', 2016), Rosa introduces the notion of "resonance", which, in his perspective, characterizes "successful world relations". The pre-condition of successful world relations and resonance, Rosa argues, is a certain "*temporal* structure", an aspect which was long neglected in social analysis. One of the prominent characteristics of late-modern accelerated society is "the destruction of social rhythms" (Rosa 2016, 55). This destruction becomes noticeable in our approach to the things around us:

> In a world of constant, accelerated exchange of virtually all material surfaces (our floors and wallpapers, kitchens and bathrooms, clothing and tools, vehicles and media), there arises a functional need for alienation from things: They *must not* touch us, or we will not be able to dispose of them and replace them, and they *cannot* touch us anymore, because there is not enough time for the process of establishing a connection with them – especially when the 'loved objects' are high-tech devices which we neither master completely nor understand correctly. (Rosa 2016, 392)

Not only has the frequency with which we replace things accelerated remarkably, but there has also been a spectacular increase in the sheer number of items in our possession compared to 100 years ago. This trend matches the overall tendency to acceleration, which Rosa defines as an "increase of quantity per time unit" (Rosa 2016, 13). However, the quality of our relation to things decreases. Rosa roughly differentiates between two approaches to things. The first regards things as commodities which can potentially be "arbitrarily increased". The other consists in an approach based on "resonance". This kind of approach presupposes a different kind of appropriation which is "time-consuming and requires an *involvement* with the things and the readiness to change oneself,

to put oneself *at stake*". This kind of approach "always contains an aspect of the unmanageable, and therefore one cannot put a price on it. Resonance is no judicial or economic relation of possession" (Rosa 2016, 433). It requires a certain minimum amount of time, as "resonance relations […] presuppose a rhythmic oscillation towards one another, and thus these relations have to meet specific requirements for synchronization" (Rosa 2016, 55). Resonance can be considered a specific form of the coexistence of two or more rhythms which are not only synchronized with each other, but where the involved systems or bodies also have "isomorphic vibration patterns" (Latka 2016) in the first place, so that "the swinging of the one body stimulates the internal frequency of the other" (Rosa 2016, 282). One well known and familiar example of resonance is the periodic stimulation of a child's swing, where the swing's amplitude is gradually increased as a result of the storing of vibrational energy. This phenomenon might be regarded as a special case of Lefebre's eurhythmia, the constructive interaction between at least two rhythms, and it can overlap with isorhythmia when repetition, measure and frequency are equal. This is not always the case for resonance; for instance, the frequency of the hand which stimulates the swing in our example does not need to be identical with the frequency of the swing. For Rosa, an important characteristic of the resonance relation is that it is not a result of the domination or manipulation of one rhythm by another. This means that Rosa's notion of resonance can function as a counter-concept to the consequences of acceleration and the rearrangement of all aspects of social life according to economic principles, and to the resulting manifestations of reification and alienation.

With its re-evaluation of the nature of the relationship between humans and their things, Rosa's concept harmonises with other recent approaches to 'thingness' in modernity, such as Bruno Latour's idea of a "parliament of things" and, more recently, the theories of new materialism. The connection can be explained by returning to our example of the swing: it is crucial that the human being stimulating the swing tunes in to the swing's rhythm

to be able to increase its amplitude. Thus, it is the human being who has to adapt to the thing's rhythmical behaviour and not the other way around. Likewise, Latour and representatives of the new materialism argue that the idea that human thought, intentionality and action sovereignly control and shape our world is an anthropocentric illusion which neglects the significant impact of non-intentional beings, including artifacts and living beings such as animals.

In the light of Lefebvre's rhythmanalytical approach to *the thing* and Rosa's concept of resonance, I proceed by examining the depiction of thingness and of the interaction between the individual and the world of things in Seiler's texts.

THE GEIGER-MUELLER COUNTER AS NARRATOR: "TURKSIB"

The short story "Turksib" takes place on the legendary Turkestan-Siberian Railway in the Kazakh steppe at night and with an outside temperature of minus 40 degrees. The story is related by a first-person narrator, a German writer who is travelling on the train, accompanied by his female interpreter. As one critique puts it, it is a story which "almost entirely seems to consist of how the first-person narrator manages to move from the rear to the front of the train (or is it the other way around?) and looks at a Geiger-Mueller counter (and especially listens to its noise)" (Struck 2009). At the beginning of the story, we find the narrator in the toilet of the shakily moving train, trying to keep his balance: "The kicks of the train were now stronger and came irregularly; with outstretched arms, I held myself between the walls of the tiny cabin" (91).[3] Like the author of the text, the unnamed narrator and protagonist is undoubtedly a writer on a working tour of a remote country. Apparently, he finds himself far from his own comfort zone – geographically, physically and culturally. Coming out of the opened toilet bowl, the noises of the train seem hostile and "resounded in my ears like a contemptuous *Semeysemey*" (91),

3 The quotes from "Turksib" are translated from German by me.

Semeysemey alludes to the large city Semey, which is situated in the region. The surroundings appear both foreign and uncanny to the protagonist. He evidently lacks a frame of reference to make sense of what he sees and experiences here, and this impression is fitting, given the theme of the lecture tour upon which he and his host, the "consul", have agreed: "*Städte im Nichts*", "*Cities in the Middle of Nowhere*" (95). The protagonist moves through the train, experiencing strange smells, darkness, smoke from heating stoves and heavy rhythms in this "caravan of fossil tin caroches, on a track named the Silk Railroad, which cuts through the steppe, from Orient to Occident" (98).

One of the reasons for the protagonist's apparent feeling of unsettledness is the assumed but invisible radioactive contamination of the surroundings, as, for decades, the Soviet Union used the region for nuclear weapons tests, just as the Nevada dessert was used by the US. This is why the protagonist buys a Geiger-Mueller counter, although he does not really believe in the functional efficiency of the device. In the event, it is other features of the thing which draw his attention "It seemed all the more precious and particular now, the small grey-green box, already a bit worn out, and the circumstances under which I had purchased it from one of the hooded merchants who had blocked the station platform before the departure of the train with goods of the strangest kind" (91f.). The device seems exotic in an uncanny way, and the protagonist imagines that it stems from the clandestine vaults "of an empire and its army which were about to vanish completely" (92). He is especially fascinated by the characteristic, shifting sound of the device, "the subtle chattering, its crackle and sanding noise which it emanated discreetly but continuously. When I brought it closer to my ear, it was a kind of melodic scratching, and then a buzzing and whispering which floated weakly like a thin dissenting voice in the running noise" (92). Designed to test local radioactive contamination in order to find out whether or not it is safe to remain in the area, the functionality of the Geiger-Mueller counter seems to have been substituted by the almost willful, mysterious liveliness of the device. Unsuccessfully, the narrator tries to identify a

pattern in the noise, to relate it to familiar sounds and to understand what "the voice of the counter apparently wants to tell me". He even calls it his "little narrator" (94). However, the little box does not only seem to be telling him something; it also appears to enter into direct connection with the protagonist's body, thereby doing precisely what it is supposed to prevent. As the protagonist notes: "I clearly felt how its behaviour penetrated me" (92), which is why "its technology and its effects were a bit uncanny to me" (94). In this way, the narrator does not control the device; the device controls the narrator.

In addition to his strange attraction to the Geiger counter, the protagonist is affected by the rhythm of the train, in contrast to the locals who apparently know how to handle it:

> While I had to catch myself using the walls of the cabinet again, the 'wagon mama' [a kind of train guard] stood totally unaffected, only in her knees was there a subtle, almost invisible seesawing, but from there upwards the kicks from below seemed to disappear without a trace in her body. (95)

As the wagon mama 'rides' the rhythms of the train so competently, the protagonist imagines that she is protecting him from the effect of the Geiger counter as well: "She softened, as I instantly thought I felt, the pestering influence of the narrator box" (95). However, he puts the device "in the chest pocket of my shirt, under the pullover" (94), turning it into the "heart beat of the narrator" (99). Its light blinks with a reddish hue when the device is switched from "acoustical to optical behavior" (94). As the blinking Geiger counter is playfully paralleled to the heart of the protagonist, the blurring of the boundaries between the human body and the machine exemplifies the way in which the contrast between natural and biological rhythms on the one hand and social and technological rhythms on the other is negotiated in the story. In large part, its subtle yet often grotesque humor is triggered by the way in which the technological rhythms of the train and the

Geiger counter affect the protagonist's perception and behaviour. This playful blending of technological and natural rhythms even results in the protagonist confounding the rhythm of the Geiger counter with his own biological rhythm when he mistakes the vibration of the Geiger counter for his own heartbeat.

In the climax of the story, all these aspects and motifs are fused in a comical and grotesque cultural encounter, and we find the protagonist exposed to a situation where he lacks control both in regard to the social sphere and the train rhythms. In this encounter, the protagonist is stopped by the stoker of his wagon who tries to initiate a conversation with the very few German words he masters, among them a few lines of Heinrich Heine's famous poem "Lied von der Loreley" (1824) which he struggles to pronounce with his strong accent. While the stoker tries to remember the rest of the first strophe, the protagonist waits out of politeness because he feels that the song means something special to the stoker, and the protagonist relates this to the local tradition that the people of the steppe find and cultivate their own "lament song": "This was *his* song. His very own, kept by heart" (102). At the same time, the song also seems to mirror a central issue of the story, as the line recited is: "Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten …" / "I don't know what it could mean". This reflects the questionable logic of events in the story, as the different kinds of sensual experiences and social encounters to which the protagonist is exposed are mostly produced by the rhythms of the train and by the interrelation between these rhythms and the protagonist's body, and not by a logical succession of events. This interpretation seems to be confirmed when the protagonist finally tells the stoker the missing last line of the poem, whereupon the stoker embraces him ardently and continuously, repeating and distorting the line and thereby inverting its meaning from: "Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn." into "Koohmt-nierrh-aus-Sienn". Thus, Heine's original "Won't vanish from my mind" is changed into something which could be understood as: "That makes no sense." Similarly, the increasingly desperate protagonist is unable to communicate to the stoker that he wishes the embrace to end. A sudden jerk of

the train causes the stoker to fall on the protagonist, just as the stoker is placing a kiss on the protagonist's face, thus intensifying both the embrace and the kiss.

This central dramatic yet slapstick-like event is mirrored at the end of the story, when an erotic encounter between the protagonist and the female interpreter is sketched in just a few lines. It arises abruptly and is barely motivated by the preceding events of the plot: it is mainly initiated by the rhythmical interaction between the train and the human bodies: "she took in the subtle, regular vibrations of the wagon, its easy swinging and swaying and also took the harder, irregular kicks of the *Turksib,* for which I held myself at her hips" (108).

As most action in "Turksib" originates from the protagonist's interaction with the train rhythms and from his attempt to move through the train, rhythm seems to function as the virtual director of the plot. In this story, rhythm is an attractor which overrides rational choice and human intentionality. Rhythm gains access to the body directly, and, regardless of the will of the subject, it establishes a connection with it. It penetrates the boundaries of the body and enters like the smoky breath of the stoker during the involuntary kiss. The relation between the protagonist and the Geiger Mueller seems to be governed by the same principles. The rhythm of the machine is transferred to the protagonist's body, sometimes without him noticing it: "A palpitation made my chest tight. But it only took a moment before I realized that the stoker's embrace had switched on the narrator [the Geiger counter] and caused it to vibrate" (103f.).

As has been seen in the analysis of "Turksib", the fact that the first-person narrator calls the Geiger counter a "narrator", thus allowing the little machine to symbolically take his place is justified by this object's functioning in the story: besides the rhythm of the train, it is the main source of the action and the driving force of events. It seems only logical that another jerk in the motion of the train stops it from working towards the end of the story, and the protagonist realises "that the narrator had fallen silent" (107).

THE STORY OF A WATCH: "THE BALANCE OF TIME"

The prose piece "Die Zeitwaage" ("The Balance of Time") consists of two different story lines which are internally related in mutual alternation. They are also connected to each other by the same protagonist, who is also the first-person narrator of the stories. The text starts with the narrator's visit to a watchmaker, to whom he brings his wristwatch. The watchmaker examines the watch using a timing machine. The sparse plot of this story line, which is narrated in the present tense, consists of the protagonist observing and mostly hearing the activity of the timing machine. Each of the five parts of this story line fills half a page at most. The second and far more extensive storyline is narrated in the past tense and covers an earlier period in the life of the protagonist, about 20 years earlier. It begins in the late summer of 1989 in East-Berlin during the last months of the GDR, with the political and social changes of the 'Wende' of autumn 1989 on the horizon. Here, the protagonist is in the middle of a personal crisis and a phase of reorientation. He comes to stay with friends in the capital of the country before finding an apartment and taking on a job as a waiter in one of the first subculture bars that would go on to make Prenzlauer Berg a famous Berlin location. When he meets a worker who repeatedly visits the bar, the encounter makes a deep impact on him and prompts his first attempts at writing. Finally, the worker is killed in a working accident that occurs in front of the bar - and in front of the protagonist. During his last visit to the bar, the worker leaves behind the wrist watch which the protagonist takes to the watchmaker in the first story line.

The regular alternation of the story lines gives the prose piece itself a rhythmical character. While the second story line covers several months, the first story line is slowed down to the extreme as the plot focuses on detailing the maintenance of the watch, the activity of the timing machine and the accompanying perceptions of the narrator.

As mentioned above, the story line which covers the visit to the watchmaker opens the narrative, and, for quite some time, no explanation is offered as to the possible deeper meaning of this visit

or of how the second story line is related to the first one. The reader has no other choice than to follow the narrative focus on the things presented, described and experienced. The watch is specified as a "*Glashütte* SPEZIMATIC", year: "sixty-three" (Seiler 2015, 274),[4] whose lack of accuracy is registered by a timing machine which carries "the label *Greiner Vibrograf*" (269). Thus the devices are precisely identified, and it later becomes clear that not only does the significance of the objects transcend their functionality: here, significance almost opposes functionality.

In modernity, the clock stands as a central symbol for the subordination of natural and biological rhythms to social rhythm, as is the case, for instance, in time clocks in work places. In the story, to the extent that the old watch has lost its ability to measure technological clock time, it can be taken to symbolise certain aspects of the human condition and time. It symbolises the contrast between internal individual rhythm and external rhythms and thus also reflects the difficulties of adapting to changed external rhythms in the course of social transformation and acceleration. In the narrative, the watch links the two story lines, and thus also links the present and the past. Apart from the protagonist, it is the only connection between these two story lines and the only thing to endure through a time of significant change. In the following, I would like to explore in more concrete terms the ways in which the watch and the imagery of time are used to reflect on the relation between external social rhythm on the one hand and internal human rhythm on the other.

A timing machine can be considered a particular kind of rhythmanalyst, as it is a measurement device which serves to detect rhythmical irregularities and deviation in the movement of clockwork. To this purpose, the timing machine has a precise frequency of reference. The ticking rhythm of the clockwork is transformed or translated into a graphical pattern which visualizes all devia-

4 The English quotations are taken from the translation by Bradley Schmidt, "The Balance of Time" published in the Internet Journale *No Man's Land*, while the page numbers refer to the German original.

tions: "each tick was a blow and each blow a dot on the paper" (269). For Elmar Krekeler, the timing machine symbolizes the question asked in the story as to "whether something has gone out of step, whether everything is in the right rhythm, in order, whether nothing has fallen out of time" (Krekeler 2010).

As the protagonist follows the maintenance of the watch and notes its appearance, it is mostly the sound of the timing machine which attracts his attention: "I am in the sound" (274). This extraordinary focus on the sense of hearing is related to the focus on rhythm. While the sense of vision is mostly directed towards a picture at a certain instant and thus comes close to the epistemological concept of representation, sound unfolds in the dimension of time. As Lefebvre states about the rhythmanalyst, "He thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but in lived temporality" (21). It follows that, in Lefebvre's view, the rhythmanalyst's most significant activity is listening: "He will come to 'listen' to a house, a street, a town, as an audience listens to a symphony" (Lefebvre 2004, 22). In this case, the protagonist listens to his watch. While a watch normally serves as a reference for rhythms, the watch in Seiler's story has to be brought into congruence with another device of reference, as it is not working correctly. Lefebvre states: "Rhythms always need a reference" (Lefebvre 2004, 36). In the story, the change of the frame of reference makes time and rhythm itself the focus of attention: "The mechanical tone, clear and strong, as if something was beating against the struts of time, essentially not so much ticking but still the echo of the watch that I am entrusted with" (266f.). In addition, the watch is not some anonymous thing, but something precious which has been entrusted to the protagonist. It is also imagined as an extension of the body, as the rhythm of the watch is associated with the rhythm of the body. There are two descriptions of the narrator opening the wristband of the watch while holding the "arm stretched as if for drawing blood" (261, 283), and later the watch lies "as if for an operation" (269). Also there is talk of the "secret heart" (269) and the "heart beat" (275, 276) of the watch. The same metaphors are used in describing how, in a work break spent at the bar in which the pro-

tagonist is working at the time, the worker from the first story line removes the watch from his wrist "with his arm stretched" in a gesture reminiscent of a "carefully carried out operation with which a vital organ is removed for a necessary period of time" (275). Moreover, the watch is compared to a living being when the watchmaker grasps it "as if grabbing an animal by the tail" (266).

In accordance with Rosa's two different approaches to thingness, this is a way of treating things which does not approach them as mere commodities but enters into a more time-consuming and committed relationship with them on the basis on resonance. As mentioned above, in industrialized modernity, the clock has become a symbol of the submission of natural, cyclic rhythms to social linear rhythms, namely the rhythms of work. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* provides a famous example in the form of a clock which measures time in a particular way for workers. For Lefebvre, the clock is not unambiguously used as an example of social rhythms in contrast to natural rhythms: it represents the dialectic between them. As he writes, "The circular course of the hands on (traditional) clock-faces and watches is accompanied by a linear tick-tock. And it is their relation that enables or rather constitutes the measure of time (which is to say, of rhythms)" (Lefebvre 2004, 8). The watch in Seiler's text comprises the two aspects which Lefebvre emphasizes and raises the possibility of synchronizing linear social rhythms and natural cyclical rhythms. I will expand on this assumption in the following by considering the protagonist's special relationship to his watch and to other things around him.

This relationship is depicted in the story line that is set in the last year of the GDR. In Berlin, the protagonist occupies an empty apartment in an old building just by finding it, breaking the lock open and replacing it with a new one, as students and young people often did at the time. People who were not married had difficulty in obtaining housing through official channels, and the state administration was not able to keep stock of old housing, let alone manage it. To furnish his new apartment, the protagonist collects things which he finds in other empty apartments, most probably from people who have fled the country in haste, leaving

their earlier possessions, such as furniture, dishes and even food, completely untouched. The protagonist collects not only things which are of use to him, but also needless things such as outdated decoration. For the protagonist, however, it is exactly these things that gain a ritual significance and thus help him to overcome his personal crisis:

> A few moments in front of these things were enough, and their silent, stubborn persuasiveness transported me into a state of involuntary reverence. In the presence of their gestures that had become meaningless, the contours of that which I would have called 'my story' just weeks before disappeared. (271)

Here, the protagonist apparently experiences the feeling of being part of something bigger than his own story. The quasi-religious vocabulary is remarkable as it seems exaggerated or even outré. The impression of exaggeration is intensified when a new figure, the worker, is introduced into the story and described with extensively deployment of this vocabulary. One might conclude that this character has the same effect on the protagonist as the aforementioned things.

The protagonist meets the worker for the first time when he enters his bar, across the street from which the worker is helping to repair the trolley system. He walks, as if "walking on water" (271), and the protagonist is very impressed by "the reflections of the work coat, which blinded me like the effects of a dream" (273). His appearance initiates a kind of epiphany for the protagonist: "Above all, I felt the undisputed, unquestioned nature of his existence, I wrote: his dignity, his pride, his attitude – that's what mattered. To me his gestures appeared pure and consummate" (275). The worker reminds the protagonist of the "eternal course of things" (273) of a proletarian workplace, an environment that the protagonist himself has abandoned in choosing to flee from his worker "background" (273). Apparently, he used to be a construction worker; in a telephone conversation, his mother reminds

him that he still has his tools. In the protagonist's admiration for the worker, it must be taken into consideration that, in the GDR, the self-proclaimed 'state of the workers and peasants', the 'working class' enjoyed great respect, and that young people, including intellectuals, were encouraged to gain work experience from the so-called 'production basis'. For instance, a feature of many educational paths was the "Berufsausbildung mit Abitur", a professional training which included university entrance qualification. On the other hand, taking on a job as a worker could be a resort for intellectuals who did not wish to commit themselves ideologically in the way expected by the political system in most professions demanding higher education. However, the protagonist states, "I had never really gained access to the inner circle of workers, their holy sphere. […] it seemed to me it was just as if I was missing a particular, definitive trait, a scent, perhaps a certain pitch" (273). In the worker, the protagonist sees the possibility of gaining indirect access to this "inner circle", and he identifies with the worker to a strange degree: "Each of his gestures appeared to immediately contribute to the understanding of my own existence, *the integrity lost* [*der verlorengegangenen Ganzheit*], as it uselessly run through my head" (276). The worker's gestures in removing his watch are highlighted, and during his last visit to the bar, he leaves the watch as a kind of heirloom for the protagonist.

However, the heavy use of quasi-religious vocabulary resonates with a subtle irony and distance to the protagonist's own thoughts. Towards the end of the story the protagonist repeatedly calls himself a "goddamn dreamer, a miserable dreamer" (283), and one gets the impression that the protagonist has been indulging in self-conscious nostalgia, knowing that time has run away from the kind of existential experiences of wholeness and transcendence which he seeks. It is as if he consciously romanticizes a pre-modern and decelerated stage of society in which an individual's identity is determined by its profession. Whereas the worker's profession seems to be fused with his identity, the protagonist's situation is the opposite: following his separation from his girlfriend and during the political system change, he experiences crisis and disorientation, and

his work as a waiter is only a temporary job as he wonders what his task in life might be. The figure of the worker seems to induce an intense resonance in him and kick-starts his writing carrier: "sentence by sentence I culled from his figure" (276). Observing him, he writes his "very first sentence" (274), a process which brings "everything into a new, redemptive context" (274).

The protagonist realizes that his longing for unity, namely for a connection to the world of things, is a nostalgic one which detaches him from the main developments of the present. Nevertheless, writing gives him a way to get hold of what would otherwise be lost. As the dominant symbolic object in the story is an antique watch which he brings to the watchmaker more than twenty years after his encounter with the worker who was its original owner, the temporal dimension becomes increasingly central. In this story, rhythmical unison is only achieved through outdated things and in writing. To the protagonist, what he writes or says does not seem to be central; what is important is whether he is able to reach this rhythmical unison with himself and with his surroundings. This state of momentary resonance can make a statement true one moment and untrue the next. So, when he calls himself a "damn dreamer", he observes: "That was no special sentence. At times it had probably been a kind of *blablabla* and in itself ridiculous enough, but not in this moment. It was true, what I said. I *heard*, that it was true" (283). This scene, which occurred over twenty years earlier, resonates in the present scene, where the visit by the watchmaker is about to end and the timing machine has done its job. The protagonist seems to be rhythmically 'in sync' with the situation, and the way in which he takes his watch back must be considered symbolic: "By the way I clasp the wristband above the wrist, carefully, composed, my arm stretched as if for drawing blood and my hand very close to the counter, I show Walinski that I know how to handle a watch" (283). As the use of similar vocabulary creates a parallel between the way in which the protagonist and the worker handle the watch, the protagonist appears to be the legitimate inheritor of the worker's watch, and, as a prospective writer, he will keep the memory of the outdated lifestyle of the worker alive.

THE DRONING RADIO: *KRUSO*

Like "The Balance of Time", the novel *Kruso* takes place in 1989, the last year of the existence of the GDR. The story is narrated in the third person, and, in this case too, the protagonist, called Edgar Bendler or Ed, is catapulted out of his usual surroundings by a crisis, as he has lost his girlfriend in an accident. Ed leaves the large town where he studies literature at university and travels to the island of Hiddensee in the Baltic Sea, at the time a special, almost mythical place due to its natural beauty and its political-geographical position on the outskirts of the socialist country. It borders Denmark to the North and thus represented a kind of outpost for freedom which was regularly used as a point of departure by people who wished to flee the country by sea. On the small island, special rules prevail. For instance, cars are not allowed, and the inhabitants of the island have a strong autarkic identity as the island functions as a melting pot for all kinds of outcasts from GDR-society who have established a fascinating and unique local cultural environment.

Ed's crisis begins to abate on his journey towards the sea. Whereas he felt as if only a "feeble heart of his presence" (Seiler 2017, 18) was left at the height of his crisis, now he has a "good feeling […] as if he were only now awakening from anaesthesia, millimetre by millimetre" (24). Passing through a city on the coast, he is inspired by the names labelling the doorbells of an apartment building: "As he passed, Ed tried to capture their rhythm: Schiele, Dahme, Glambeck, Krieger …" (24). Here, the improvement in his mental state is accompanied by an increased rhythmical sensitivity. Arriving on the island, Ed soon finds a job as a temporary employee, a so called "esskay" (73, "Saisonkraft", seasonal worker), at the "Zum Klausner" tavern, where he initially spends most of his time peeling onions and doing dishes. In the mysterious and charismatic Alexander Krusowitsch, known as Kruso, he finds a mentor who not only introduces him to the work and the subcultural scene on the island, but consequently also leads him out of the crisis. To some extent, he resembles the worker in "The Balance of Time", and Ed's bond to him seems similarly quasi-reli-

gious and devoted. Once again, the act of working plays a central role in the relationship between the two characters. Ed admires Kruso's way of working not so much because of what he does and how fast he does it, but because of his rhythm in doing it: "Ed admired the calm symmetry of Kruso's movements. […] It was not so much his stamina or speed, it was more a kind of rhythm and inner tension – as if his entire existence were part of something greater" (66). When Ed sees Kruso at work, it is as though he becomes "almost transfixed by the rhythm of the axe and the smooth, powerful movement of his flawless body" (70). Ed emulates Kruso's sense of rhythm and synchronizes increasingly with him in the same way as he synchronizes with the rhythms of his workplace: "He had not needed an alarm clock for a long time. He had internalised the time to light the oven" (224).

The object in the tavern which is most curious is an old radio. It is called "a kind of undertone in the Klausner" (103) because a defect means that it can never be switched off. In this way it gains a certain similarity to a living organism and even an individuality, which is why it is called "Viola":

> Her constant broadcasting was like the house's breathing, varying but continual, like the crash of the breakers and for the most part ignored […]. Ed felt drawn to the monotony of her half-hourly stories, with contents that hardly changed for days. At the end, the weather, water conditions, wind speed. (103)

The steady broadcasting stream allows Ed to develop a clear-cut rhythmical perception and appreciation of the radio's transmission. Its content is moved to the background as the "time signal was the most distinct sound" (103). This backgrounding of semantic content is playfully and poetically demonstrated by the alliteration of the three words "weather, water conditions, wind speed", where the content of the words is subordinated to the phonetic pattern. Nobody pays attention to the content of the broadcasting, as Ed receives the explanation: "'Droning on and on, just dron-

ing'" (111). This kind of media receptive behaviour touches with subtle irony on the schizophrenic situation in the GDR, where it was possible to receive TV and radio broadcast programmes from West-Germany in most areas of the country, but where the content of the broadcasts was of limited relevance to daily life behind the Iron Curtain. Consequently, the broadcasts seemed to be unengaging news from a remote world of fairytales. More specific, the irony also sheds light on the mental state of the subcultural and intellectual scene in the late-GDR, for which the West had little appeal and which was absorbed in its own attempts to realize personal utopias - just like the island inhabitants of the novel.

From the three analyses performed her, it can be concluded that one of the common characteristics of the depiction of the central objects in the texts - the Geiger-Mueller counter, the timing machine, the watch and the radio - is that their temporal dimension is highlighted and problematized in some way. They are technical devices which are obsolescent in one way or another, things whose "gestures" have become meaningless because they have lost their original functions. However, that is exactly what makes them compelling objects of interest to the protagonists in Seiler's texts. They find a certain sensual quality in them, as the objects blink, vibrate and, above all, emanate sounds with regular patterns. The protagonists connect to these things through their bodies: for instance, the protagonist of "Turksib" feels the sounds of the Geiger-Mueller counter penetrate his body. Not only do the protagonists feel attracted to these things; sometimes they even feel absorbed by them against their will. Above all, it seems to be the rhythmical qualities of objects which establish this connection and attraction, and other features of the objects, including their visual nature, such as shape and colour, do not receive the same attention. The protagonists are mostly fascinated by the sound of things, by tonic patterns and rhythms, and not so much interested in semantic content conveyed by symbolic representation. In *Kruso*, for instance, it is the "monotony" of the radio broadcasts' repetition which draws the protagonist's attention. In this way, the perception of the radio is less oriented to the linear than it is to the cyclical signifying a rhythm without beginning or

end, where the internal rhythm of the protagonist converges with the external rhythm of the thing.

That the radio in *Kruso* is given its own name contrasts with our increasingly anonymised relation to the things surrounding us today. Due to ongoing technical innovation and increasing intensity of consumption, technical objects obsolesce and are replaced much faster. As a result, we lack the time to get to know them thoroughly and to become attached to them. The different kind of relation between Seiler's protagonists and their objects resembles the dis-alienated relationship between subjects and things which Rosa is seeking. Since the enlightenment, according to Rosa, disturbances of this relationship have arisen from an increasing reduction to "causal or instrumental interrelations with inanimate objects, especially artefacts" (Rosa 2016: 381) and a "reified objectifying relation to things" (Rosa 2016, 385). These are "*alienated* forms of relation which make things appear 'stiff and silent'" (Rosa 2016, 387). In resonant forms of relations, by way of contrast, they "begin to 'sing'" (Rosa 2016: 387). As the things in Seiler's texts are anything but stiff and silent, it is tempting to interpret their depiction and the eccentric relation of Seiler's protagonists with them against the background of Rosa's assertions and of his more general thesis regarding acceleration in late-modernity.

In Seiler's texts we also find an awareness that complete disengagement from overall social dynamics is not realistic. Therefore, a possible strategy might be to create islands where slower perception is possible and where resonant relations might be created. In the work of Seiler, this happens in remote geographical places: on the Turksib, on the island of Hiddensee in the late GDR, or even in a delimited location such as a watchmaker's shop. These are all places where protagonists who tend to feel out of step with their usual surroundings find the time to synchronize with obsolete technical objects and experience eurhythmia or even isorhythmia as their internal rhythm meets an external rhythm. It is in this state of obsolescence that they find their very own temporary niche in accelerated society.

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THE RHYTHMS OF VIRAL COMMUNICATION AND LEFEBVRE

RECENT CHANGES AND DEVELOPMENTS OF VIRAL COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Jørgen Riber Christensen

The news video "SEE the first glimpse of Prince William and Kate Middleton" peaked, for one day only, in a Top-20 viral video chart, "Unruly Viral Video Chart", with the most popular viral videos of the day. It was May the fifth 2015. Four days before, a video, which was quite different, but similarly one about family relationships, peaked, also for one day only. This was "Mother beats son for participating in Baltimore riots". These two videos point to new tendencies both within viral communication, and within social media in general. These tendencies are: viral videos appear and disappear with a short-lived rhythm, viral videos have become part of the news circuit, and their content and narrative mode have an inclination towards the pathetic. Pathos is here used in its rhetorical sense as a means of persuasion, as opposed to ethos and logos. Aristotle describes pathos: "persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions. Our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile" (Aristotle C. 367-322 BC Book 1, chapter 2). This article seeks to describe and explain these recent developments within viral communication. By recent is here meant 2015, as the sampling of the viral videos that provide the empirical material for the analysis took place in May 2015, and this material is compared to conclusions reached in a more extensive, but similar analysis carried out in 2010 (Christensen & Hansen 2012).

To get under way with the examination of these recent developments two interconnected research questions are asked: The first question is: What is the frequency of changes in the most shared and popular viral videos? This is a question about the rhythm of variations in the content of a top-20 chart. And the second is: How does the answer to this first question connect to content, especially to the genres of these popular videos? The answers to these two initial and basic questions are then put into a wider perspective by two further questions: What does this indicate about the use of social media, especially the performance of viral videos there? And the question will be considered whether this is an indication of general trends in communication and media history?

A final question is how this recent development, which is also of a sociological character, connects to Henri Lefebvre's concept of rhythm (Lefebvre 1992/2007) and to his understanding of urban and abstract space (Lefebvre 1991, 229) and also to his political and ideological views. Already here, it can be stated that Lefebvre's concept of "the reign of the commodity" (Lefebvre 1992/2007, 7) has become central in viral communication.

METHOD

The method of the article is a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Christensen 2015), which merges an external survey with internal analyses of the samples included in the survey. The challenge of this method is to reach results that are representative and of such a general nature that it can present valid and verified trends within the media field that is being examined. The ideal, which in the context of viral communication is impractical if not impossible, is to register the whole population of the media texts in question within a given time span, and therefore the resulting trends will be subject to some statistical uncertainty, though this does not preclude valid results. The statistical validity of a survey is checked through the formula of the confidence interval on the mean, which has the ideal of stating the representative value of the samples of the survey in relation to the whole population of viral videos with a certainty of 95% (Sepstrup 2002, 130-131):

$$\pm 1{,}96\sqrt{\frac{p(100-p)}{n}}$$

Another problem is the selection of the sample to be examined and analysed. What criteria can be employed to select the sample? Graakjær & Jessen (2015, 33-34) have suggested seven criteria, of which three will be used in the survey of the article. The seven criteria are the criterion of randomness, the criterion of variation, the criterion of theory, the criterion of popularity, the criterion of topicality, the criteria of peculiarity, and the criterion of review. The criteria for this survey are of theory, popularity and topicality. Theory is found relevant because the context of this anthology is rhythm, and this concept has given rise to a new focus on the tempo of the comings and goings of viral videos. As such, the understanding of rhythm in the article is the rhythmical component of duration, where as in musical theory, duration is defined as the amount of time a particular element lasts. Put in another way, for how long or brief a period a viral video can survive as widely shared in the social media. This question of rhythm also points to theoretical explanations of why a video is short- or long-lived. The criterion of popularity is unavoidable as it is built into the research question, which is about the popularity of certain videos. If a video is not popular it will not be considered; but by popularity is not only meant what kinds of videos are popular, but certainly also why they are so. The criterion of topicality is seemingly uncomplicated, and it is connected to the other two criteria: How long does a video stay topical, and the videos sampled are only sampled because they are part of a top-20 chart, which is updated on a daily basis; but this criterion is also more general as it deals with indications of new trends in social media.

The practical method of the sampling may be called parasitical (Christensen 2015, 147) as the survey of a top-20 chart has already been carried out by an external agent, and this survey is of a statistical standardised nature and it complies with the confidence interval of the mean. The survey is described by the marketing firm behind it, Unruly Media, like this

World's largest video sharing database

> We built and launched the Unruly Viral Video Chart™ in 2006. Ranking videos by number of shares rather than views, the chart quickly established itself as the definitive source for video sharing data around the globe. Will.I.Am described the Unruly Viral Video Chart as "the billboard hot 100 of the Internet generation" .
>
> The Unruly Viral Video Chart is the largest historical data set of sharing behavior on the social web, with 1.3 trillion views tracked to date and 116 million video shares tracked every 24 hours. (Unruly 2015)

This huge material is filtered in the survey carried out for this article for one whole week from April the 30th 2015 to May the 6th 2015. Every day during this week the 20 most shared videos in the chart were registered and downloaded. Their presence in the chart was entered into an Excel sheet day-by-day, and this also meant that their absence could be noted. This quantitative approach was then supplemented with a qualitative one, when each video was analysed with the view of establishing its genre and content. Based on the outcome of this analysis, the quantitative approach was resumed in order to weigh the presence and absence in the chart of the videos according to their content and genres. This procedure was a replica of the same carried out in 2010 with the difference that in that year the period was three months. Before the results of the survey carried out in 2015 are presented, then in summary the results of the survey in 2010.

The research question of the article from 2012 "Viral marketing videos: Transgression, marketing and social media" (Christensen & Hansen 2012) was what qualifies a marketing video to go viral? The approaches used to answer this question was anthropological gift giving theory (Hyde 2007; Mauss 2000/1959), Bourdieu's sociological theory of habitus (Bourdieu 1984/1979), a narratological analysis of transgressions, and then a quantitative survey of 89

different videos. The answer suggested by the article was that the design of a video with the ambition that it could be shared virally was that it had to be transgressive in the sense that its themes should transgress societal norms e.g. gender politics or grotesque humour, its narrative mode or storytelling should also be transgressive, e.g. metafictional, and the reception of the video should include hesitation in the identification of the sender of the video. It was also a recommendation of the article that videos with music, perhaps directly music videos, had a strong viral potential, and finally, somewhat surprisingly, that videos with the character of being media events in the tradition of Dayan and Katz (1994), no matter their other content, could go viral. It is of interest to the present article that the representative distribution across genres of viral videos from the Viral Video Chart in 2010 was this: Music videos 52.8%, commercials 8.8%, unusual events 7.7%, children 6.6%, political content 5.5%, personal self-improvement or therapy 5.5%, animals 4.4%, mashups 4.4%, celebrations 3.3%, media content 1.1%. By far the large majority of these videos was distributed in YouTube.

This article will now go on to consider more recent trends within the social media, especially with regard to viral communication. To be able to detect and describe these trends, the empirical material collected in 2015 will be analysed.

THE SAMPLES

The immediate aspect of the viral videos sampled for this article in this anthology is the one of rhythm, of variations in the content of a top-20 chart expressed in the constancy or rather, possible lack of constancy in the presence of a video in the chart. What is the frequency of change in the chart? How long does a video survive in the chart, and what are the connections between its life-span and its content? A first view of this can be gained from a diagram (Figure 1).

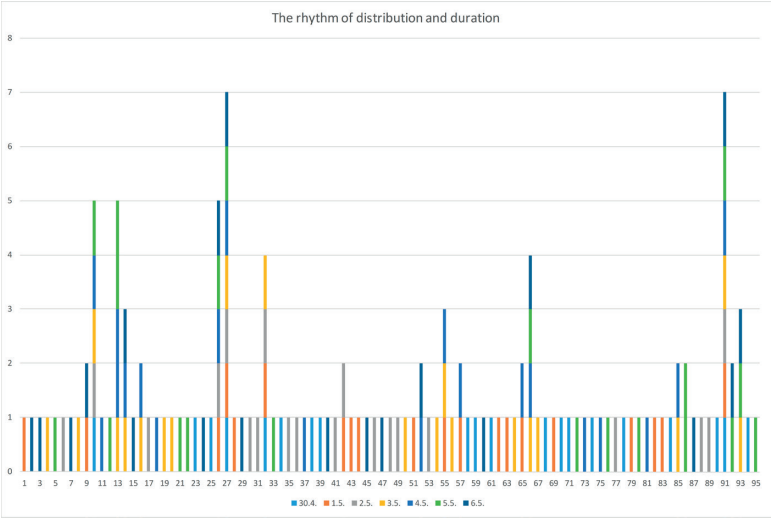

Figure 1. The diagram shows how many days each of the 95 videos was present in the chart, where the vertical axis denotes the number of days. The colour codes denote the dates when the videos were sampled.

Nineteen of 95 videos were present in the chart for more than one day, which is also to say that 76 of the videos only stayed in the chart for a single day. This can be compared to the survey carried out in 2010. In this survey the measuring unit was not one day, but one week, and 44 of the 89 registered videos stayed in the chart for more than one week, 11 of these were present in the chart for seven weeks or more (Christensen & Hansen 2012, 220), and the article based on this survey stated that "there is a certain inertia and continuity in the viral trends" (208). The conclusion is that the turn-over rate or rhythm of popular viral videos has become considerable faster during the five years between the surveys. To explain this notable change, it will be necessary to take a closer, i.e. qualitative, look at the viral videos registered in 2015.

The sampled videos, which had their source primarily in Facebook and to a lesser extent YouTube and Vine, had these titles:

- Breakfast excitement. With gate climbing
- Come on tucker
- Hey kitty, how you makin' all these crazy cat sounds?
- I CAN FEEL IT COMING IN THE AIR TONIGHT
- I've never EVER thought this was possible!
- Abnehmen mit Schlank im Schlaf nach Dr. Pape
- GERMAN, TE VAS DE YOUTUBE
- Hardly Working: Most Retro Video Game System Ever
- Official Call of Duty®: Black Ops III Reveal Trailer
- 1 Million Facebook Likes = ONE GIANT BEE BEARD
- A Modern Night Before Christmas
- Bane Responds to the Super Bowl Blackout
- Construction Workers React to "Wrecking Ball"
- Emotional Interview with Robert Downey Jr.
- FLOYD MAYWEATHER PUNCH-OUT!!!
- I'm weak af ◆◆◆◆◆
- Jake and Amir: Rick Fox 4
- Jimmy Interviews Khaleesi from Game of Thrones
- Nonsense Karaoke with Chris Pratt
- The 2:30 Horror
- The Gorburger Show - MellowHype [Episode 13]
- The Gorburger Show: Le Butcherettes
- Ultimate Dog Tease
- Your Tumblr Dashboard Sings
- [No title] - All Americans should watch this video! Semper Fi Ron
- BANDA MS - HERMOSA EXPERIENCIA
- Hawkeye Sings About His Super Powers
- I NEED U' Dance Practice
- Jimmy Kimmel Asks to be in Manny Pacquiao's Entourage
- Maya Plisetskaya - Bolero
- 4 Beyonce from Todrick
- Abba - SOS
- BIGBANG - 'LOSER' 0503 SBS Inkigayo
- Bone Thugs-N-Harmony- First of the Month
- Gülşen - Bangır Bangır
- I NEED U' MV
- John Legend - All of Me
- Julio Iglesias - Ni Te Tengo Ni Te Olvido
- La Adictiva Banda San José de Mesillas
- Maître Gims - Est-ce que tu m'aimes ?
- Major Lazer & DJ Snake - Lean On
- Marc Anthony - Vivir Mi Vida
- Marco Antonio Solís - Rocola Romántica
- Maroon 5 - Sugar
- Me interesa - Alfredo Ríos El Komander
- Muse - Dead Inside
- N Sync - It's Gonna Be Me
- Nicky Jam - El Perdón
- No Woman No Cry
- Red Hot Chili Peppers - Suck My Kiss
- Sancak - Belki Yarım Kaldım
- Shakira - La La La
- The Clash - Should I Stay or Should I Go
- Wisin, Carlos Vives - Nota de Amor
- Biggest Trick In Action Sports History
- Chris Paul for the WIN!
- Chris Paul's heroics lead the Los Angeles Clippers

- LeBron James powers the Cleveland Cavaliers
- Neymar Jr v Ken Block Castrol Footkhana
- PhantomCam: CP3, FTW!
- A woman is seen beating a rioter in Baltimore
- American Police like to dance as well!
- BREAKING NEWS: Baltimore's medical
- CLIP: President Obama and his anger translator
- Have you met Luther, President Obama's anger translator?
- Heartwarming Victory: 89-year-old World War II veteran
- Hit by Avalanche in Everest Basecamp
- Mother beats son for participating in Baltimore riots
- Republicans, Get In My Vagina!
- SEE the first glimpse of Prince William and Kate Middleton
- They need to have their butts at home
- This can erupt anywhere in socially economically deprived America
- WATCH: Kids at one children's hospital
- WATCH: Strangers in Baltimore come together
- We can't just leave this to the police
- خواطر رائعة – شاهد اجمل الخواطر وأروعها
- Unlikely friends!
- Leo Messi, Eddie Lacy and John John Florence suit up
- WOW! This girl is amazing!
- Ayer Te Vi... Fue más claro que la luna
- BIGBANG - LOSER M/V
- Marco Antonio Solís - Mi Mayor Necesidad
- NBA Nightly Highlights: May 4th
- Vine by Valerie Vine Star
- If our society really wanted to solve the problem
- WTF!!
- BIGBANG - BAE BAE M/V
- Maná - "Mi Verdad" a dueto con Shakira
- HAHAHAHAHAHA-HAHA.
- Never known a dog to behave like this at bath time.
- Ben E. King - Stand by me
- Ed Sheeran - Thinking Out Loud
- BABY FOUND ALIVE UNDER RUBBLE
- Ellie Goulding - Love Me Like You Do
- Wiz Khalifa - See You Again

When each video was analysed quantitatively in order to establish its subject, the result is a distribution across genres and types like this in ascending order: Commercials 2 videos, Media events: 2 videos, Gaming: 3 videos, Sport: 8 videos, Animals: 9 videos, Humour: 15 videos, Topical events and news: 18 videos, and Music: 38 videos, or graphically represented as in Figure 2.

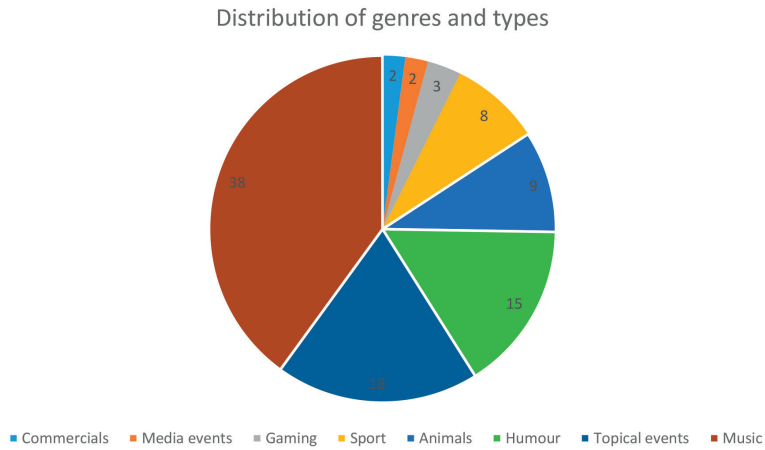

Figure 2. The diagram illustrates the distribution across genres and types based on the content of each video registered in the 2015 survey. The dominance of music is not new as it corresponds to the 2010 survey. The relatively large number of topical events, humour or comedy, and animals is new.

To understand the rhythm of the chart of the most popular viral videos, the first thing to notice is what kind of content has made a video stay in the chart for more than one single day. Only two videos were present during the whole week. They were music videos. There were no videos for six days, but three videos had a five-day duration, their content was a media event (Dayan & Katz, 1992), music and a topical subject. Two videos, which were about animals, were in the chart for four days, and with a three-day duration there were two music videos and one about animals. Eight videos had a two-day period in the chart. They were three music videos, two about sport, and one each with animals, a topical event and a commercial. What then, were the viral hits with only one day in the chart about? It is not surprising that music and music videos took pride of place here with 29 hits, considering the large number of this genre in the overall representation; but what is significant is that 16 viral videos with a topical content

had a one-day life, and the same goes for viral videos that were humours and comic. In conclusion, the mere presence of these two types with a brief life span, topical videos and comic videos, is new as they were hardly noticeable as independent categories in the 2010 survey.

TRANSGRESSIONS AND PATHOS

The qualitative analysis of the videos in the survey is not isolated to establishing their genres and the character of their content. Also their narrative modes were considered, and based on the conclusion of the 2010 survey, special notice was taken of whether these new viral videos were transgressive in any way. Only two of the 89 sampled videos were. The first of these two "Republicans, Get In My Vagina!" satirizes the statement made by Republican state representative for Pennsylvania Stephen Freind that "the traumatic experience of rape causes a women to 'secrete a certain secretion' that tends to kill sperm." The gender political statement of the video is ironically that not women themselves, but older, preferably Republican, men are to decide about women health issues: "After all, who knows better about reproductive health than a bunch of old white men? Don't you want someone like your dad in your vagina? I do", is one of the many transgressive proclamations of the video. In the survey this video has been categorized as topical, and its presence in the chart was one day, as such is can be regarded as one of the few videos that echo the survey from 2010. This video had 9.251.774 Facebook shares and 443 Twitter shares. Graphically the short life-span was shown in the Viral Video Chart quite dramatically (Figure 3).

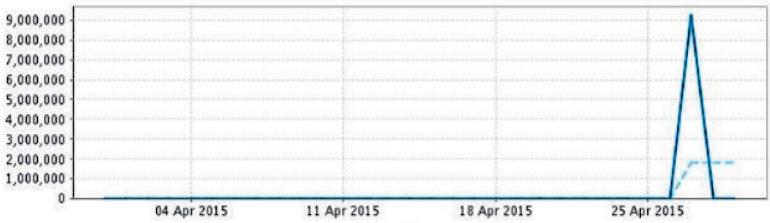

Figure 3. The presence of "Republicans, Get In My Vagina!" in the viral video chart.

The other video found to be transgressive is "WTF!!". It stayed in the chart for three days, and its subject was animals. This video with its transgressive content that harks back to the 2010 survey can be compared to the 18 other videos with animals as subject, often as anthropomorphic characters, in the 2015 survey. This 7-second video shows a scene in a snake pit with quite a number of snakes. The snake keeper handles the snakes, and when a cobra tries to bite him, he slaps it across its neck. The video then cuts to a clip from the animated cartoon series *Family Guy*, where the dog Brian drops its jaw in surprise. The reception of this video may cause a feeling of disgust and phobiatic fear. In contrast, a video from the 2015 sample with animals elicits warm feelings of sentimentality. This is "Unlikely friends!" with two days in the chart with 2.319.514 shares all times, primarily on Facebook. This one-minute compilation video reveals itself as a commercial for Android in the last second. Until then there have been around twenty scenes with the most unlikely animals frolicking together two by two as friend as if the video was an adaptation of *Isiah 11.6*: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them." There are a dog and an orang-utan, a cat and a duckling, a tiger cub and a bulldog puppet, a dog driving a pram with a cat, a parrot feeding a dog with pasta, a dog and a dolphin, a lion cub and a meerkat etc. etc. This pathetic content is common among many of the videos in the 2015 sample. Pathos has been registered in 13 of the

videos. Some titles reflect this: “Heartwarming Victory: 89-year-old World War II veteran” and “WATCH: Kids at one children’s hospital”.

ANIMALS

Pathos is not only found in viral videos with children in hospital or in celebrations of WW II veterans. Animals, particularly young animals are distributed and shared virally so that emotional responses are produced. This is the case with the very simple, and very brief “Breakfast excitement. With gate climbing”. This video is only six seconds long, as this is the limit of Vine, which is a video sharing service owned by Twitter. The tags for this video with four kittens, which are impatient to be fed, are #kitten and #cute. The emotional response to the cute kittens has a function, as the video is distributed by “Every Creature Counts Shelter -The largest NO KILL cat and dog shelter in Colorado”, which asks for donations. Also in Vine, there is “Come on tucker”, a Corgi dog walking down the stairs with some difficulty, but briefly looking into the camera, and thus making contact with the people, who watched and shared it during the one day it was a hit in the chart. Another dog was more durable as it stayed for four days in the chart. This dog illustrates a tendency in viral communication where animals are often anthropomorphised. The dog is eating cereal from a bowl with a spoon. It is sitting at a table, wearing a hood so that the human hands that use the spoon seem to be the dog’s. Another dog, which acts as if it was human, can be observed in “Never known a dog to behave like this at bath time”. This dog thoroughly enjoys a bath in a tub in the most relaxed manner. The anthropomorphification of these animals is what John Ruskin called the pathetic fallacy. He described how it was a judgement of error to imbue nature with human sentiments and behaviour in poetry (Ruskin 1856, 183). However, in the context of viral communication it has a function. The sentimental content and response (Wilkie 1967) to such viral videos may be one of the motivations for their viral existence. Dobele (2007), Bardzell (2008), Hansen (2013), Waterhouse (2014) and Christensen (2014)

have argued that emotional tensions in the reception of viral videos facilitate their sharing. These emotional tensions may be sentimental and pleasure-filled, but also aversion, as we have seen in the video with the snake keeper and the cobra attack.

The article now considers how news has moved into viral communication, and initially the first step will be to contemplate if the pathos generally found in present-day viral communication is also present as a factor in viral distribution of news.

NEWS

The 16 of the 18 videos that were topical and with news content were only present in the chart for one day each. This is not unique, as 76 of the videos in all shared this quick rhythm. What is special about these news viral videos was that they were distributed in Facebook, and not exclusively in YouTube. One of the news videos, however, stayed in the chart for five days. Its title was "BABY FOUND ALIVE UNDER RUBBLE", and it was the dramatic story of rescue work in the rubble of a ruined house in Aleppo, Syria. Accompanied by loud shouting, energetic, but gentle, rescuers dig out a totally buried baby by hand. The baby is miraculously still alive, and after eight minutes' video it is lifted out of the rubble. The Facebook caption is "Truly amazing MUST WATCH and SHARE! This is a great example that no one can die without God's will. Prayer's out to Syria and may the fighting stop. God Bless this baby and all the other babies who are victim to horrible war" (Facebook 2015a). The pathetic effects of this video are in line with Aristotle's double description: "Our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile" (Aristotle C. 367-322 BC Book 1, chapter 2). One the one hand it is touching that the child is saved, but on the other, quite a few people in the comments seem more inflamed by the captions theological implications than the video's actual content. Based on the many comments in Facebook, it is the pathos that affects the viewers, and not the breaking new-aspects, as the video was already shown in channels in YouTube months earlier, and mass media reported the incident already in late January 2015 (*The Telegraph* 2015).

A presidential statement about police brutality in Baltimore was present in the top-20 chart for two consecutive days, May the 1st and 2nd. The title of the Facebook-distributed video is "If our society really wanted to solve the problem". President Obama addresses this issue during a press conference April 28th 2015. The president's filmed answer to the journalist's question is long, transcribed into almost two pages (*The Wall Street Journal* 2015). It is about violence in the streets in Baltimore as a reaction to the death of a young black man, Freddie Gray, in police custody. It is only the last minute of the video that went viral. The answer as a whole is structured analytically by the president, and from a rhetorical point of view, the logos is there and of quality, and qua Obama's position as respected president of the United States so is ethos; but the portion that has been selected by Facebook-users contains an emotional appeal about "our kids":

> It's just it would require everybody saying this is important, this is significant – and that we don't just pay attention to these communities when a CVS burns, and we don't just pay attention when a young man gets shot or has his spine snapped. We're paying attention all the time because we consider those kids our kids, and we think they're important.

Pathos is certainly present in the clip. Also the 2nd of May there was a Facebook viral video about the riots in Baltimore, and this video brought about this comment: "Thank you for finally showing something other than the violence!" and also: "This is heartwarming" (Facebook 2015b). The video shows a scene in which "Strangers in Baltimore come together to help clean up a CVS that was looted, trashed and burned by rioters". Similar positive reaction to viral footage was caused by "A woman is seen beating a rioter in Baltimore, who many on social media believe is her son", in which a woman chases what may seem to be her son away from the riots, chastising him all along. From the Facebook comments, it seems that this aspect of the riots

was regarded as a family matter, and the upbraiding mother was much respected.

One viral video about the Baltimore troubles is strictly legal in its language and form. It is a one-minute newsflash: "BREAKING NEWS: Baltimore's medical examiner rules Freddie Gray's death a homicide, the state's attorney announces 'probable cause' to file charges against police." (Facebook 2015c), and despite the fact that angry shouts can be heard off-screen from the listeners to this statement, it cannot be called pathetic in any way. As such it nuances the picture of viral news videos as dominated by the rhetorical device of pathos. However, in this survey it is singular and unique. Another example is typical of the pathetic, and in this case quite sentimental, content and narration found in the viral news videos of the survey. It has the long descriptive title: "WATCH: Kids at one children's hospital in Texas got a very special surprise when members of the Austin Police Department SWAT team dressed up as comic book legends and put on a skit for the young patients" (Facebook 15d), and responses in Facebook was not just "Awwww, this is heart warming.", but also expressions of gratitude towards the Texas police "My friends son got a visit from Iron Man that day!!! He came to his room because he wasn't able to walk to the windows to see him!! I love my city!!".

The remarkable and radical change in the function of viral videos that they have become channels of news, as claimed by this article, may demand a second opinion. A survey that was conducted in January and February 2015 and published in "How Millennials Get News: Inside the Habits of America's First Digital Generation" (2015) provides such an opinion. By "Millennials" is meant adults age 18-34. The methods used in the survey were a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative part included online questionnaires, a national survey employing sociological tools with a final number of respondents in a web survey of 1,045 (35-36). Qualitatively, there was the difference from the method used for this article, which is narratological, that it was the respondents that were analysed, not the texts. Qualitative semi-structured group interviews were the first step, and this

was followed up by some of the respondents participating in a self-reflective interview and completing a data diary. The survey supports the conclusions about news of this article, though viral communication is not explicitly mentioned in the survey. Yet, the peer-to-peer sharing and forwarding of online material, in this case news, that is typical of the viral genre is nevertheless stated: "Millennials also appear to be drawn into news that they might otherwise have ignored because peers are recommending and contextualizing it for them on social networks, as well as on more private networks such as group texts and instant messaging" (2), and participating in this form of communication includes "posting news stories, commenting on them, liking or favoriting them, and forwarding them to others" (2). As it was seen in the samples for this article, Facebook has moved centre-stage: "Fully 88 percent of Millennials get news from Facebook regularly, for instance, and more than half of them do so daily" (2).

News is only one aspect of the general online behaviour of Millennials the survey concludes, as they mix "news with social connection, problem solving, social action, and entertainment" (1). This matches the survey for this article, in which entertainment in the form of comedy and humour is a new and general tendency.

COMEDY

Another notable change from the survey from 2010 is the large amount of comedy and humour in the chart. In 2010 this category did not achieve its own position and treatment, though satire was found in some of the samples; but in 2015 it constitutes 16% of the sampled videos. "Emotional Interview with Robert Downey Jr." is a clip from *The Tonight Show*, which has migrated from the mass media into the social media as its viral distribution in Facebook. This selective migration from the mass media is a general tendency, which has already been seen with the news samples. Another tendency, particularly when it comes to viral humour and comedy, is that these videos are produced for professional or semi-professional websites and YouTube channels. "Your Tumblr Dashboard Sings" is a humorous compilation of viral clips with added music

from CollegeHumor. This website and also YouTube channel had a mass media manifestation as it produced a short lived series in 2009 on MTV. "Construction Workers React to 'Wrecking Ball'", also from CollegeHumor, is a parody of Miley Cyrus' "Wrecking Ball" music video. This video is a montage of actual clips from the music video with a group of very masculine construction workers commenting on it, for instance about safety regulation at a demolition site, though a worker expresses the view that the music video is only a metaphor, only to be contradicted by the other workers, who claim that it is a simile. The Gorburger Show, which appears twice in the survey, is distributed in the YouTube channel The Live Room powered by Warner Music. Again we have an example of comedy going viral, and comedy which is professional with roots in mass media and distributed in a YouTube channel. All of this indicates a new tendency in viral communication when compared to 2010.

LEFEBVRE AND THE REIGN OF THE COMMODITY

In Lefebvre's examination of urban space and its relations of power he briefly and critically touches upon digital communication:

> Should we feed all the data for a given problem to a computer? Why not? Because the machine only uses data based on questions that can be answered with a yes or a no. And the computer itself only responds to questions with a yes or a no. Moreover, can anyone claim that all the data have been assembled? Who is going to legitimate this use of totality? Who is going to demonstrate that the "language of the city," to the extent that it is a language, coincides with ALGOL, Syntol, or FORTRAN, the languages of machines, and that this translation is not a betrayal? Doesn't the machine risk becoming an instrument in the hands of pressure groups and politicians? Isn't it already a weapon for those in power and those who serve them? (Lefebvre 2003/1970, 59)

This quite early ideologically critical attitude to digital media and communication must be seen as an expansion of Lefebvre's works on urban and particularly abstract space (Lefebvre 1991/1974; Shaw and Graham 2027) and of his work with everyday life and its rhythms (Lefebvre 1992/2007), and it predates the euphoria about social media, e.g. Facebook, as democratic and popular peer-to-peer communication. When the rhythms of everyday life (30) is digitally mediated in social media they become subjected to what Lefebvre calls "the reign of the commodity" (7). Lefebvre sees a correspondence between media and everyday life, and he writes that "the media enter into the everyday; even more: they contribute to producing it … Producers of the commodity information know empirically how to utilise rhythms" (48). The diagram (figure 4) can visualise how digital communication is not just a symmetrical communication between two peers or more, but a communication that is uploaded and downloaded from a server and its database, and this database is owned and controlled, or disciplined to use a Foucauldian term, by global firms, e.g. Facebook and Google. The viral samples in the survey of this article follow this distribution model. Lefebvre's ideological condemnation of communication or dialogue of this kind has become no less relevant today than when he wrote *Elements of Rhythmanalysis*:

> Never has a handful of property owners dominated the world. There are always associates; they always have numerous auxiliaries with them. Today the technocracy, the specialists for whom communication relays speech and renders dialogue useless. Plus all those who occupy themselves with cultural production, who occupy themselves with things and suchlike. (53)

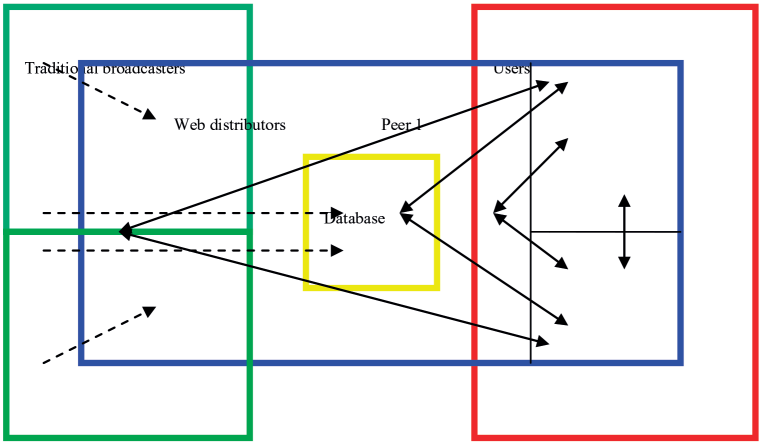

Figure 4. Production and distribution patterns in social media platforms (Hansen and Højbjerg 2013). The dotted arrows illustrate how traditional communication can take place on the internet. The solid double arrows how a peer or user of social media can produce and distribute e.g. a viral video in the social media. It is possible to send it (e.g. mail it) directly to another peer, but as the sample of this article shows, the peers go through the commercial databases, and as Lefebvre puts it into the reign of the commodity.

CONCLUSION: COMMODIFICATION, FAST RHYTHM OF NEWS, PATHOS AND COMEDY

The simple task of finding out how fast or slow the rhythm of change is in the top-20 viral chart has given the simple answer that the rhythm is fast, and it is faster than it was five years ago. Now 76 of the total sample of videos of 95 were only in the chart for one day, and topical events, also sport news were only present one day in the 2015 survey. So the survey carried out for this article has a comparative function, as it has been possible to measure the findings of this survey against an older one. This comparison has afforded a picture of the media history of social media in the five-year interval. The concept of rhythm has proved itself fruitful in this context, as the research question of whether this fre-

quency connects to content and genre has been answered in the affirmative. The most important result of the empirical and analytical work has been that viral communication has moved into the field of news, and it can be established that the fast turn-over of the news in the mass media has influenced the rhythm of viral videos in the social media. There is a more general point based on the quantitative survey and its qualitative analysis that social media has supplemented the function of mass media. Only supplemented and not supplanted, as the survey has also shown that the content, e.g. actual news flashes in video form, has become viral content of the communication in social media. Facebook and to a lesser extent Vine have become viral distribution channels, where YouTube was dominant earlier in the five-year-old survey. YouTube is often the original source of the videos, which then later have been embedded in the social communication of Facebook. Since 2011 there has been the affordance of showing previews of videos directly in Facebook comments (Constine 2011), and there is a rising tendency that videos are uploaded directly to Facebook (Neely 2016). The tendency that Facebook has become a distribution channel for viral communication may be one of the reasons that these viral videos are not as transgressive as the viral communication was in the earlier survey. The gentler humour of the videos in the present survey and their emotional content can serve the social function of connecting and bonding the users – or friends – in Facebook.

Pathos is a common rhetorical device in the samples, and this rhetorical form of appeal is not only found in the many videos about young animals, but also in many of the 18 videos with a news or a topical angle. This result may suggest further research of the rhetoric of news coverage in mass media to see if this tendency is also present there to the same extent as in viral communication. Media events were not absent from the survey. There were two samples in the one week in which the survey was carried out, and this may suggest that media events are still a vital viral genre. The survey suggests that viral communication itself is not as transgressive and perhaps provocative as it was five years ago,

more gentle humour or comedy in channels is a new tendency with its 15 samples. Commercials and marketing in viral forms are not as popular as before; but there is the continuity of the viral dominance of music and music videos, which are not only present in large numbers, but also present for longer periods, i.e. with a slower rhythm so to speak, in the survey. Though there is this continuity, the contemporary changes and developments of viral communication as described in this article are so significant within the field of viral communication in social media that they can become part of recent media history.

As we have seen, viral communication is rhythmical, it is a part of mediated everyday life. The inclusion in the article of Lefebvre's critique of abstract and mediated space has demonstrated how also the mediated part of everyday life has become commodified and subject to control and power. Specifically, this tendency may be said to have become stronger. The viral videos of this survey carried out 2015 is considerably less transgressive and consequently less subversive than the samples in the comparable earlier survey from 2010.

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DRONE RHYTHMS: *EDGE OF TOMORROW*

Steen Ledet Christiansen

Edge of Tomorrow (Doug Liman 2014) is a typical blockbuster science fiction action film that pulses along at breakneck speed, intent on overwhelming its audience and drone out any kind of critical reflection. Based on a Japanese military science fiction novel, the U.S. adaptation reworks a far future story into an allegory of World War II or conceivably any kind of "just war". The pounding audiovisual rhythm of the film suggests a shock-and-awe aesthetics based on acceleration and intensity.

An alien invasion of Mimics has crushed most of Europe, and the sole hope of humanity is a desperate assault on the Normandy beaches. The cowardly but persuasive U.S. press officer Major William Cage (Tom Cruise) is forced to join this assault, despite having no combat training. Brought along with a platoon of hardened veterans, Cage is thrown into the fray of the beach assault, an assault led by Rita Vrataski (Emily Blunt), aka the Angel of Verdun, aka Full Metal Bitch. Within minutes, Cage sees Rita killed by an unusual version of Mimic, seconds before he himself is killed. However, Cage wakes up, 24 hours prior to the beach assault, since the Mimic he killed was a special kind capable of resetting time. Cage has somehow acquired part of this ability and is caught in a time loop not unlike the one facing Phil (Bill Murray) in *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis 1993).

Cage is now faced with the task of breaking this time loop, since

unlike D-Day, which the film so clearly echoes, this time around the assault is a defeat. The Mimics' alien ability to reset the day enables them to replay any event with a different strategy and different actions. Cage now has to do the same in order to defeat the Mimics and move out of the time loop. He can only do this by locating the Mimic queen and defeating her in what is essentially an assault on the Eagle's Nest.

As should be evident from this brief recap, most of the film is structured around repetition and difference; constantly Cage repeats the same day and the same events but he is able to vary this repetition by doing things differently. In a sense, Cage needs to escape repetition by finding the correct variation of events. In other words, Cage must find the proper measure of events, in order to escape the repetition of events. In other words, *Edge of Tomorrow* clearly lends itself well to rhythmanalysis.

I wish to pick up on two rhythms. Most prominently is the time loop rhythm of starting over each time Cage dies. We therefore see the same events over and over, although increasingly elements of difference are introduced. A clear break of the classical Hollywood convention to only show each narrative event once, this type of rhythm is well-known in another popular media form, namely the video game. In video games, starting over when you die is convention. This first rhythm can then be termed the game rhythm. The second rhythm is more straightforward: the three-act structure of beginning-middle-end, with the middle building tension and raising the stakes. Despite the repetition of events, the narrative pacing is still in place, and the further along we get in the film, the higher the stakes get and the faster events unfold. We can term this second rhythm the action rhythm. Together, these two rhythms produce intense interaction that pulls the viewer along.

FILM RHYTHMS

For film, rhythm is particularly located in editing. The length of individual takes, the shot/reverse shot structure, or the continuity tradition of establishing shot to medium shot back to establishing shot; all speak to a rhythm that helps clarify spatiotemporal rela-

tions. Likewise, alternative rhythms may disrupt spatiotemporal relations and so suggest a different experience. For editing, the emphasis is on the interaction between elements.

For Lefebvre, rhythm is fundamentally the "interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy" (Lefebvre 2004, 15). What matters for rhythm is a "moving but determinate complexity" and a "multiplicity of (sensorial and significant) meanings" (12, 32). In other words, the conventional distinction between subject and object is eschewed in favor of their interaction. Rhythm is that which organizes all participating elements into an expressive whole, what Lefebvre calls integration "in a dramatic becoming, in an ensemble full of meaning, transforming them no longer into diverse things, but into presences" (Lefebvre 2004, 22-23).

These presences must be understood as sensations and affects. I take affect to mean, following Brian Massumi, the intensity of the subject-object encounter, before the distinction between object and subject has taken place (Massumi 2002, 28). What matters is the interaction and the energy spent or released in this interaction. Sensation, on the other hand, is "the mode in which potential is present in the perceiving body" (Massumi 2002, 75), or what Lefebvre calls the becoming of presences. To read Lefebvre in this way, into a philosophical tradition to which he might not belong, allows for the recognition that rhythm is a term that cuts transversally across fields. There are rhythms of everyday life, but also cinematic rhythms, other aesthetic rhythms, technological rhythms, and more, all of which converge in the interaction between place, time and energy.

What this conception of rhythm brings to film, then, is the recognition that a film's editing rhythm is not simply a formal feature, but also the production of sensations and affects. The film experience becomes an interaction between viewer and film *before that distinction has taken place*. That is to say, we are not fully in control of the film experience, but are partly produced as subjects with a certain experience, depending on the film's rhythms.

THE GAME RHYTHM

Despite Cage's protests and bargaining, he ends up as a soldier getting ready for the drop on the beaches, the final stand against the Mimics. First, Cage is introduced to his new unit as a coward by Master Sergeant Farell (Bill Paxton), which earns him no friends or help in a helpless situation. Before Cage can bargain his way out of the situation, he has to put on the distinctive exoskeletons of the marines. Dropped from an airship onto the beach, wave after wave of marines attack the Mimics. Cage is in a blind panic and sees Rita Vrataski, hoping that she will save him. However, she is splattered to pieces right before his eyes, after which Cage fires his rifle and kills the strange Mimic, spraying himself with alien acid blood. The next scene is Cage waking up back at the airport, confused and dislocated. Thus begins the time loop. Every time Cage is killed, he wakes up back at the airport, forced to relive the day of his imminent death.

What opens up here is the rhythm of repetition; every day unfolds exactly like the previous version, there is no immediate source of difference. The drop and the first version of the assault on the beaches consists of a battering ram of quick shots, rapid editing, swoosh pans and camera movement in all three dimensions, including zooms and tracking shots. The camera often plunges into space, usually handheld to induce a sense of involuntary movement and rickety balance. The editing is rarely motivated (i.e. it does not match on action) and while the camera often moves with the subject, the shots are rarely more than medium scale, which disorients us because we can never place the characters in coherent space. Alongside a booming soundtrack, filled with a forceful bass from bassoons and rumbling explosions, and high-pitched whines of bullets whizzing past Cage, the impression is one of general confusion and mayhem. In other words, we are placed in much the same position as Cage, not sure of what is going on and no time to learn it in.

When we recognize the time loop rhythm of Cage reliving the same day over and over, we get a better sense of events through narrative repetition. The rhythmic, hyperactive sound-images of

Edge of Tomorrow produce a clear capture of attention and sensation. If we consider the repeating sequences of Cage waking up and being thrown into battle, only to die once more as rhythmic patterns, we are clearly captured by the accelerated soundimages. The intensity of the sequences rivets us to what will happen next, simply to make sense of the action. The time loop is part of this intensity, since we begin to recognize that the sequences are not simultaneous or sequential, but instead repetitions with minor variations. Cage attempts to escape the time loop, learning from Vrataski that surviving a time loop is the only way to get out of it.

These variations slowly allow us to make sense of the story: we learn more about the assault on the beach, we learn more about Cage's character, and we learn more about the Mimics. Equally, however, the sheer audiovisual loudness of the sequences is what produces a sensation of urgency. Everything seems to happening again and again, and while the accelerated camera movements rush us along, we try to make sense of these lines of movement, to figure out where we are going.

Slowly, as the time loop continues with no end in sight, our experience begins to shift. The repetitive nature of the sequence, the containment that Cage undergoes, and the futility of going through the motions, begin to produce a drone rhythm that we can anticipate but do little to change. The same events happening over and over, the fixedness of the endpoint, that the difference we encounter is trivial and not real difference or progression, all combines to induce a concussive sensation. While action film set pieces are always a bombardment, *Edge of Tomorrow's* repetitive rhythm refuses variation in the set pieces, leading even to a peculiar sense of boredom.

We start to wish for distinction, a deep urge for difference. When that feeling kicks in, we shift, Mckenzie Wark would say, from filmspace to gamespace. Filmspace, or the unfolding of actions in a film, have been characterized by Gilles Deleuze as belonging either to the movement-image or the time-image in his two books on cinema. Whether dominated by the unfolding of meaningful actions in a recognizable sequence, or the slow unfolding of du-

ration itself, filmspace generally functions through distinction. Gamespace, unlike filmspace, is characterized by what Wark calls a "competitive striving after distinction" (Wark 2007, 005). Any gamer will be caught, like Cage, in a loop of their own making, unable to break the repetitive replaying of the same level until they step up their game. To some extent, of course, this replaying of a level is part of gameplay and the enjoyment of gameplay. However, too much of a good thing becomes frustrating, playing the same level over and over becomes an exercise in futility and reduces our sensuous engagement with the game.

To say that *Edge of Tomorrow* borrows rhythms from video games is not to say that the film is somehow a game. As Brown and Krzywinska point out, movies are mosaics of differential shots while films are flows (Brown and Krzywinska 2009, 87). The rhythms of each medium are essential to their feel, and film has long depended on what Brown and Krzywinska term a "luxurious submission" (88). We must accept the story and sound-images we are presented with in a film, since unlike with a game, we have no control over what happens or how it is presented. Ideally, this acceptance is a pleasurable experience, otherwise we would stop the film. Conversely, the game player is more in control of the rhythm of individual scenes but is often forced to go back and do-over. There is a different tension between film rhythms, which we must subject ourselves to entirely, and game rhythms, which we participate in producing. The game pleasure of progressive development, practice, and mastery of mechanics and story world are mostly absent from film.

Yet we cannot ourselves determine the rules of the game. As Wark points out, the only way to progress is to figure out what the rules of the game are. There are two ways of understanding the rules of the game. The immediate sense is that every game has certain internal rules, such as in chess where the pawn can move one space forward, while the bishop can move any number of spaces diagonally. The only way to progress is to learn and master these rules. But there is also a different set of rules, when we speak of videogames: the codes that generate the game itself. If we were

to learn these rules, we could reprogram the entire game. Wark's gamer theory plays on this double meaning, but *Edge of Tomorrow* is less sophisticated and only focuses on the first sense of learning the rules. Cage has to learn how the time loop works, and he must go through the motions in order to learn the right combination of moves, actions, and decisions that will carry him forward. In contrast to a game, where this repetition is part of the enjoyment because it depends on growing mastery, in *Edge of Tomorrow*, we can never achieve this degree of mastery, since the sequence is set. We can, however, watch Cage train and learn the rules of the game he is trapped in. This pleasurable game rhythm is different from the repetitive once-again-ness of the beach assault, which, nevertheless can also produce a kind of conditioning: we must follow the only path of pleasure we can find. Repetition must become pleasure.

Such oscillation between video games, cinema, and TV has increased in the past few decades and one of the ways that cinema can update itself, is to borrow from newer media. We can think of films such as *Timecode* (Mike Figgis 2000) that borrows from computer media, *Scott Pilgrim vs the World* (Edgar Wright 2010) that borrows from videogames and comics, and even *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone 1994) that borrows from reality television. The convergence of the cut scene in games, which has always been cinematic in form, and the game repetition loop that *Edge of Tomorrow* inserts into its narrative rhythm, is an example of what Leon Gurevitch has termed the "game effect" (Gurevitch 2010). For Gurevitch, the game effect is a double moment. Firstly, the game effect occurs when video games have become as spectacular to watch as films, and we can enjoy the spectacular graphics of the game's cut scenes and even in-game sequences. Secondly, what also happens is that that moment feeds back into films. Some film sequences resemble cut scenes from games, but may also borrow forms that are more conventional in games. Even though films cannot be literally interactive, they can suggest and embed structures and forms into their narratives that are recognizable to a gaming audience. We recognize the rhythm of repeating a sequence over and over

again, until we have learned how to get out of it. The sequence is also equipped with several devices to increase the sensation of game play, such as inserting heads-up displays and employing subjective point of view shots. Furthermore, Cage starts repeating other people's lines and actions before they happen. In much the same way, video game players also learn to pre-empt actions and events that they know will occur in the game. If I know that an attack will come from the right when I turn the corner, I pre-empt that by crouching around the corner.

There is a discrepancy, however, between the pleasurable mastery that comes from repeating the same sequence over and over again in a game context, where the point is to overcome the obstacles, versus the submission to these repetitions as they manifest in our film experience. While the game rhythm by definition holds a way out, the film rhythm is outside of our control: we are trapped and cannot get outside of it. Of course, as both Wark and Galloway point out in different ways, one cannot truly get outside of game rhythms either. These rhythms function as our only way of engaging with the game. As Wark puts it, "you can go anywhere you want in gamespace but you can never leave it" (Wark 2007, 001). In a sense, then, the distinction between game rhythms and film rhythms is less clear than first assumed.

The cinematic borrowing of game rhythms helps produce a distinctive feeling of entrapment, another version of what Galloway calls the algorithms of control. For Galloway, control manifests when you internalize the algorithm in order to win or succeed (Galloway 2006, 90). Significantly, Cage strains against the repetition by trying to figure out the rules. He trains with Vrataski not only to become a better soldier, but just as much to discover how the time loop works, and how to use the time loop to beat the Mimics. We also strain against the rules, we feel deep frustration and weariness with having to go back again and again, once more from the beginning. While the sound-images keep coming, we desperately crave distinction but can find little. This is what becomes a droning rhythm, a way that the film organizes its events but in turn also organizes our experience of the film. Yet the only

way out of this drone is to learn the rules, to understand the algorithms of control as they are instated by the Mimics.

Consider then the general tone of the sequences that repeat almost indefinitely. They are loud, fast, filled with shaky camera movements, as I have already pointed out. We can regard them as vectors of an audiovisual kind, what Steve Goodman refers to as "affectiles" — vectors of feeling that produce a distinctive, intense rhythm (Goodman 2010, 83). With the sequences repeating faster and faster, not only does that increase the intensity of the film's game-rhythms. The repetitive loudness alongside the sense of entrapment produce a concussive rhythm from which we can only emerge in a dronized sense of being: the film rhythm intensifies to reduce the sensate experience of watching the film. In other words, drone rhythms produce an arrhythmia that function as an anesthetic.

THE ACTION RHYTHM

The more Cage trains, the more the film's narrative moves away from its repetitive structure. The droning game rhythm of repetitiveness slowly gives way to a far more traditional action rhythm. To phrase it differently, the film's narrative transitions into a far more conventional state-action-new state schema, to follow Gilles Deleuze's action image schema from *Cinema 1* (Deleuze 2005). Such a rhythm is the basic structure of most narrative films and easily understood as successive narrative beats. Whereas the droning game rhythm provides a kind of beat, there is little narrative force behind it. Instead, we find at first a concussive rhythm of the beach assault over and over again, only to feel almost liberated when the action rhythm takes over.

This collision of rhythms is perhaps best understood in terms of Erin Manning's concept of preacceleration. As Manning defines it, preacceleration is the intensive, virtual force of movement, that which precedes movement and makes movement possible (Manning 2009, 114). Clearly drawing from Deleuze, Manning's argument is just as much a matter of understanding the affective ground through which our experience emerges before it becomes

actual. What is at stake, then, is the color of movement, so to speak, the way that movement feels. But equally important, it is also a matter of what kind of movement can emerge from a particular form of preacceleration.

If we map Manning's concept on to *Edge of Tomorrow*, we can see how the repetitive game rhythms become the baseline for our sensate experience of the film. When the action rhythm starts, we have already been conditioned by the preacceleration of the concussive game rhythms. The urgency of Cage's actions is inflected with the knowledge that he has finally proceeded further in the game than before. The film begins to feel like we are stuck at the same auto-save point, making every repetition more tense and frustrating. This tension colors both Cage's movement but also the way that we are moved by the film. Any misstep, any wrong move could knock us back to step one, a predicament we wish to avoid.

The tension and suspense of movement is increased by the fact that we never know how many times a given scene has taken place before. Instead, there is a rush of forward momentum, since we never know if a cut signals a return or a continued move forward. The editing pace is fast, yet at times disruptive because we have a hard time orienting ourselves within the plot; things move to fast, all I see is speed. As Enda Duffy has shown in *The Speed Handbook*, speed is modernity's new pleasure (Duffy 2009). New technologies and new forms grew up around the desire for speed and more speed. Everything from the roller coaster, cinematic journeys through mountains, to the car chase are forms of speed. As Duffy goes on:

> To think of speed as a pleasure is to think of it strategically. It forces us to think speed sensationally, that is, how it feeds our sensations, our senses, working on our bodies to produce physical as well as psychological effects. Centrally, it makes us attend to the way speeding changes how we experience space. (18)

We can easily see how this conception of speed is related to Lefebvre's sense of rhythm: time, space, and energy interact differently

at different speeds. Movement and speed are two different things, however. Movement is extension — a matter of how far we travel. Speed, on the other hand, is intensive — a matter of how movement makes us feel. Duffy insists, alongside a host of other theorists, that our sensorium changes alongside new aesthetic forms and technologies. What matters here is the narrative form of *Edge of Tomorrow* and how its narrative speed works on us. As already argued, the concussive game rhythm preaccelerates our engagement with the narrative.

As we segue out of the game rhythm we move across preemptive scenes that have clearly happened many times before, although we never know how many. The film — and Cage — is ahead of us and we are constantly catching up, which adds to the speed of the film. The narrative information is retarded (held back), and suddenly Cage is in a position of knowing more than we do. The narrative speed is one fold ahead of us, since Cage's point-of-view shifts to being anterior to our experience. The already accelerated narrative force picks up even more speed. Such accelerated acceleration is known as a jerk: acceleration becomes unpredictable and the resulting movement may crash. Indeed, rather than a typical narrative trajectory, *Edge of Tomorrow* teeters on the brink of collapse between narrative drive and the reset of the game rhythm.

Such peculiar narrative jerking produces the strange effect that we are in fact completely incapable of asserting which plot events become story and which become reiterated in a different way. The past burns away as Cage progresses through new versions of it. We can form general expectations about how the past story looks like, but we can never know the specifics. In other words, *Edge of Tomorrow* is about the moment adrift: we accelerate beyond any concern with the past; all that matters is forward momentum. One might go so far as to say that speed is all that matters, barely even where we go. Our engagement is elicited by the pleasure of recognition and the enjoyment of novelty of variation. This sense of the same yet different continues much longer than necessary in *Edge of Tomorrow*, especially as the film narrative stops repeating

sequences and simply reiterates over and over that the sequence we have never seen before has happened a multitude of times. Slowly the recognition/variation rhythm dissipates in favor of a more traditional narrative trajectory. What does not dissipate, however, is the urgency with which the film moves.

What we can see from *Edge of Tomorrow's* incessant movement is precisely that we cannot separate time, space, and energy. They all work together to produce a sense of acceleration, an acceleration that is located not solely in the narrative form of the film but also in the energy the film produces in us as viewers. This energy is turbulent because there is never a real equilibrium or stable point of reference from which we can feel confident about the film's rhythms. The stability that we need in order to make sense of what is happening are all generic and intertextual markers.

ACCELERATED RHYTHMS

There are two aspects, then, that are paramount in order to understand the position of *Edge of Tomorrow* in our current environment: the concussive game rhythms of especially the first third of the film and the action rhythm's acceleration of the last two-thirds. With the concussive rhythms preaccelerating the turbulent action rhythm, one can be forgiven for feeling somewhat out of breath by the end of the film. The cinematic rhythm overtakes our bodily rhythms, obeying the constant acceleration that Paul Virilio has identified as our dominant cultural rhythm (Virilio 2012, 27). What rhythmanalysis allows us to see, is the fact that these rhythms are not detached from each other: the game and action rhythms of *Edge of Tomorrow* tie into cultural acceleration, at the same time that the film instantiates a cultural rhythm of acceleration. As Lefebvre phrases it,

> If there is difference and distinction, there is neither separation nor an abyss between so-called material bodies, living bodies, social bodies and representations, ideologies, traditions, projects and utopias. They are all com-

> posed of (reciprocally influential) rhythms in interaction. (Lefebvre 2004, 43)

Our bodies, films, ideologies, and much more interact in mutually constitutive rhythms; we cannot separate these rhythms. As Virilio puts it, "to drive a car is also to be driven by its properties" (Virilio 2007, 43-44). In the same way, to watch a film is to adopt its properties, at least to some extent. Much like we don't become cars simply by driving, nor do we become entirely persuaded by a film's affective thrust, yet our ideological rhythms, our bodily rhythms, our senses interact with the film and new rhythms emerge from that encounter. In this way, films provide indices or representations of condensed social processes, while at the same time that they participate in producing these very processes and thus reinforce and constitute them. It is not that there is no difference between cinematic rhythms and social rhythms, but rather that they interact transductively. It is in this way that Virilio can argue that the image becomes more efficient than the war it is supposed to represent (Virilio 1994, 68). By interacting with our other rhythms, film and other works of art produce new rhythms, intensify or diminish older rhythms, or simply produce unexpected results in their interaction with each other. If we take the film to be an image weapon more efficient than the battles it represents, then it is clear that *Edge of Tomorrow* instantiates a shallowing of cinematic time but also of cultural time. The past is irrelevant, the future is mutable but precarious, all we can relate to is the continuous unfolding of a present that will never go away. This repetition that aligns us with a certain way of behavior and a certain way of feeling is exactly what Lefebvre refers to as the "breaking in" of humans:

> *Humans break themselves in like animals. They learn to hold themselves. Dressage can go a long way: as far as breathing, movements, sex. It bases itself on repetition. One breaks-in another human living being by making them repeat a certain act, a certain gesture or movement. (Lefebvre 2004, 39)*

What *Edge of Tomorrow* accomplishes on a larger scale, then, is the breaking in of a shallow form of time, lessening the need for narrative retention, favoring instead an immediacy that holds no particular interest in the unfolding of a meaningful narrative. The archetypal protagonist, the clichéd narrative form, and the generic re-calling of earlier films all work together to make sure that we recognize and understand the unfolding of events without actually having to pay attention to them. Every single scene in *Edge of Tomorrow* is recognizable without recourse to what has gone before.

The concussive rhythms of the beach assault and the accelerated narrative pacing of the rest of the film are what produces the magical spectacle that Virilio identifies as the primary objective of war. Yet Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis clearly also allows us to recognize that cinema becomes a participant in this "breaking in" or production of a particular sensorium. While Lefebvre never exactly talks about human senses or their training by media forms, it is evident that he would be happy to accept such an argument, considering the way he argues for the way that media technologies structure and align our everyday routines.

The sense of urgency fades; we care less and less about Cage going through another day, another death. The rhythms of movement become more and more limited, future events shrivel into one variation or another of the same event. What started out as a rhythm threatens to flatten into chaos, indistinct and identical. This process is what I refer to as droning: a process which disrupts and distorts perception by blurring and obscuring some perceptions while amplifying others. We know that the outcome will be the same, so we stop paying attention to story, and what is left is the loudness of the sound-images, constantly accelerating, but signifying nothing.

I take the droning concept from Robin James' important discussion of drones. James connects drone aircrafts to drone tones, positing a drone phenomenology where our perceptual limit reconfigures through "droning" - the creation of a consistent psychological timbre (James 2013). As James argues, "Droning rivets you to material conditions, affects, and sensations that compel

you to behave in specific ways, and not in others" (James 2013). In other words, the subject is riveted to the sound-images of *Edge of Tomorrow* in a specific way: it becomes boring. The rhythm becomes a line. Acceleration and loudness become instead a blur. It is not that intensity is lessened — if anything the intensity increases — but simply that our experience is reduced to one feeling and one feeling only.

Virilio, however, goes a step further and argues that media rhythms are integral to the way we are enmeshed in the world. Developed most fully in his *War and Cinema*, Virilio's general argument is that cinema and other visual media produce a logistics of perception. In other words, media rhythms participate as one aspect of our sensory engagement with the world around us. *Edge of Tomorrow* is one example of how our senses are rendered for us. While we are willing participants in the active construction of meaning that the film sets into motion — I would point to especially the aspects of the redemption rhythm — we are less participants of how our senses are articulated, and more the subjects that emerge from the process of the film. Our bodies hum with the rhythms of the film.

While a multitude of films produce a multitude of different subjects and sensations, it is evident to me that *Edge of Tomorrow* connects to a wider trend in cinema: the production of a sensory assault that is extremely energetic, on one hand, but on the other hand employs that immense production of energy to drone out much of our sensory response. Reflection, contemplation, and absorption are all flatly refused by the film. Instead, instaneity and immediacy are the modulations of *Edge of Tomorrow* and contemporary action cinema as a whole. These modulations are all derivatives of speed and acceleration. Contemporary action cinema is clearly an accelerated cinema.

What these films do, on a larger scale, is to prime its viewers to accelerated life. These sensations of accelerated life have much in common with the way that Kracauer, Benjamin, and similar critics theorized life in the early 20th century and their theories of distraction are helpful to unpack the significance of these sensations,

what kind of sensory shields and adaptations we might need or develop in response, but that is a larger matter better left for another time.

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MICRO- AND MACRO-RHYTHMS IN THE SPOOLS, LOOPS AND PATCHES OF JACK KEROUAC AND A.R. AMMONS

Bent Sørensen

Beat poet and novelist Jack Kerouac was famous for espousing a poetics of spontaneity. His writing/composition practice always included a consideration of materiality, in the sense that he would select paper formats that facilitated speed, flow and amount of writing/typing for his spontaneous autobiographical prose (the best known example is the 120 foot scroll of tele-type paper he used for one draft of *On the Road*). Much less known is his apparently contradictory practice of imposing length/size restrictions on his poems or 'sketches' as he called them, using a metaphor from pictorial art. In his 'blues' sequences *Mexico City Blues* and *San Francisco Blues* (the latter is included in the collection *Book of Blues* (1995)) one finds such poems, where the writing on each sheet of paper in a notepad forms a chorus of these 'blues'. The tendency in Kerouac's writing to both seek constraints and to relinquish control over length and size is illustrated also by another volume of poetry entitled *Pomes All Sizes*, encompassing extremely short poems, which Kerouac elsewhere dubbed "Western haikus", as well as rambling "songs" or "poem songs" filling several pages. In this paper I want to compare these two tendencies in Kerouac's writing practice: the expansive and the restrictive forms of spontaneous poetry/prose, and I want to suggest that these two practices form complementary aspects of his poetics, related to the issue of rhythm. One could stipulate that two kinds of rhythm can

be detected in Kerouac's creative practice: On the one hand a macro-rhythm that is expressed in his two manifestos for writing and living, which attempt to set out rules for how a writer can attune himself to a rhythm that goes beyond the disturbances (Lefebvre's "arrhythmia") of everyday life and its hassles and temptations (hence the inclusion of advice to Kerouac's self such as this: "3. Try never get drunk outside yr own house" (in Charters, 1992, 58)). On the other hand Kerouac evinces a constant attention to the micro-rhythms at play while creating/composing/writing each individual piece of poetry or prose. In Lefebvre's terminology this would be, I believe, characterized as a search for a perfect union of isorhythmia (the equality of rhythms) and eurhythmia (rhythmic harmony) – something Lefebvre cursorily rejects as "mutually exclusive" (Lefebvre, 1992/2004, 67) without really producing an argument as to why this would be so.

As a counterpoint to my analysis of Jack Kerouac's micro- and macro-rhythms, I will discuss the practice of another American poet, A.R. Ammons, which features a similar dichotomy. In this comparative endeavour I am indebted to Alex Albright who was the first scholar to regard the poetic forms and choices of materiality of these two writers side by side. Although Albright did not look specifically at Kerouac's poetry in his essay "Ammons, Kerouac, and Their New Romantic Scrolls", but rather compared the novel *On the Road* to Ammons' long poems, I build much of my argument on his insights into the constraints and conditions imposed on these two writers by their material choices. Ammons' long poem *Tape for the Turn of the Year* was written on a roll of adding machine paper, which meant that the line length of each poem was severely restricted (to 4-6 words per line as a maximum), whereas the potential number of lines per daily entry seemed unlimited, at least at the start of the scroll of tape. This choice of medium helped Ammons maintain his inspiration over the full writing period, which turned out to be thirty-six days, ending with the tape running out. This poem therefore also evinces a duality between isorhythmia and eurhythmia, having a macro-rhythm dictated by the total length of the spool of paper, and a

micro-rhythm determined by each day's poetic labor. On the other hand Ammons was also a master of the very short poetic forms, which in his practice resulted in poems which variously resemble aphorisms, epigrams, haiku, or grooks. Some of these poems are collected in *The Very Short Poems of A.R. Ammons*, and form a striking contrast to the tapeworm-like expansiveness of the earlier volume. Interestingly, though, even in the short poems Ammons is often thematically preoccupied with returns, circular forms, and other macro-rhythms – much as the very idea of writing his long poem for the '(re)turn' of the year indicates he was in that project too.

In fact, the preoccupation with continuity and return which for both writers made the potentially infinite scroll an appealing choice, is mirrored by their preferred writing implement and its mechanical structure, specifically the spools carrying the loops of typewriter ribbon whose ink is applied onto the page via the writer's physical labour. Both writers enjoyed improvising on the typewriter, and the typewriter ribbon spooling and un-spooling in infinite loops is in effect the ideal metaphor for the writers and their desire to write without interruption. Since they themselves could not become such spools they transferred the desire for infinite looping onto the paper which the ribbon itself transfers ink onto. Kerouac also experimented with another spool-driven technology of the 1950s, the tape recorder with its winding and unwinding magnetic tape, a technology that also was the prerequisite for recording spoken interviews with writers until well into the 1970s. The spools and scrolls are therefore mechanical manifestations of the writers' desire to eliminate the arrhythmia of constantly interrupting the creative process by having to change paper sheets in a typewriter, for instance. In this respect the looped paper furthers eurhythmia in the writing process. On the other hand, deliberately introduced restrictions could in a broader sense be seen as voluntarily adding impediments to the flow of a system, which would in itself be an element causing arrhythmia.

THE CASE OF KEROUAC – "MAKE FROGS ALLITERATE"

My starting point in discussing Kerouac's micro- and macro-rhythms lies in two quotes from the introductions to his own books of blues, of which he composed a number, all titled after the site of composition:

> NOTE
> I want to be considered a jazz poet
> blowing a long blues in an afternoon jam
> session on Sunday. I take 242 choruses;
> my ideas vary and sometimes roll from
> chorus to chorus or from halfway through
> a chorus to halfway into the next. (Jack Kerouac, *Mexico City Blues*, vii)

> In my system, the form of blues choruses is limited by the small page of the breastpocket notebook in which they are written, like the form of a set number of bars in a jazz blues chorus, and so sometimes the word-meaning can carry from one chorus into another, or not, just like the phrase-meaning can carry harmonically from one chorus to the other, or not, in jazz, so that, in these blues as in jazz, the form is determined by time, and by the musician's spontaneous phrasing & harmonizing with the beat of the time as it waves & waves on by in measured choruses.
>
> It's all gotta be non stop ad libbing within each chorus, or the gig is shot. (Kerouac, *Book of Blues*, 1)

Here we see Kerouac attempting to conflate the two artistic endeavours of writing and playing music. He explicitly wants to do both at the same time, through the creation of a setting for writing that resembles a jazz performance as much as possible. Here the most essential resemblances are found in the element of spontaneous improvisation, or the analogy to a jam session. Of course,

in the genesis of the actual writing Kerouac was always solitary, not part of a group of musicians jamming together, but he tried to make up for this deficit in the creative process by regularly performing the written works with a jazz accompaniment where the selected musicians would be given leeway to improvise behind his voice as the lead instrument. He did not limit this performative practice to his poetry, but also read aloud from *On the Road* and unpublished prose manuscripts during his appearances on live TV talk shows.

In Kerouac's manifesto "Belief & Technique for Modern Prose – List of Essentials" (in Charters, 1992, 58) the first entry in the 30-item list the manifesto consists of summarizes the dichotomy between Kerouac's desire for constraints as well as spontaneous expansiveness: "Scribbled secret notebooks, and wild typewritten pages, for yr own joy". The reference to the 'secret notebooks' echoes Kerouac's description of the system behind the creation and organization of sequences of short poems as choruses in a jazz performance (cited in two variants, above), whereas the 'wild typewritten pages' refer to the practice of non-stop typing he used for several of his early Beat novels. *On the Road*, *Dharma Bums* and *Vanity of Dulouz* were all written in one draft or another on teletype rolls or homemade scrolls glued together from individual sheets. This type of material medium allowed Kerouac to type without interruption from the tedious process of changing paper in his typewriter, and thus he metaphorically produced a road of writing as he was writing about the road, as Allen Ginsberg points out in his introduction to *Pomes All Sizes*.

A vacillation between short and long form is emblematic of Kerouac's writing and of his poetics. In the slightly fuller version of his poetic manifesto, entitled "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose", Kerouac's two first entries describe his poetic practice as much as his prose writing:

> **SET-UP** The object is set before the mind, either in reality, as in sketching (before a landscape or teacup or old face) or is set in the memory wherein it becomes the sketching

> from memory of a definite image-object. PROCEDURE Time being of the essence in the purity of speech, sketching language is undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret idea-words, *blowing* (as per jazz musician) on subject of image.

Thus, in this manifesto, Kerouac likens his writing to not one, but *two* other art forms: painting or drawing as well as the performance of improvisational music, specifically jazz. The words of Kerouac's prose or poetry must therefore vividly paint images of objects, and set these images in motion, or 'flow', much as moving images or film would do. However, it is the sound of the words as much as the images they produce that is important, hence the comparison to the music and the harmonic progression of jazz we quoted in Kerouac's introduction to *Book of Blues*. Nonetheless, it is not until the fourth item in this manifesto that Kerouac explicitly touches upon the phenomenon of rhythm:

> **LAG IN PROCEDURE** No pause to think of proper word but the infantile pileup of scatological buildup words till satisfaction is gained, which will turn out to be a great appending rhythm to a thought and be in accordance with Great Law of timing.

It is clear that Kerouac here conceives rhythm to be secondary – an appendix to thought, rather than a primary choice. Timing is everything, and the frequency used within the sequence is relatively unimportant, as long as the "Great Law" is obeyed. Relating this back to the jazz analogy that Kerouac employs throughout both his manifestos, it is not the rhythm section that plays the starring role here – rather it is the lead improvisational instrument, whether the sax or the piano. In other words, melody is privileged over rhythm.

James T. Jones suggests in his *A Map of Mexico City Blues: Jack Kerouac as Poet* that Kerouac's blues poem sequences may best be read as long poems, and that each 'book' constitutes one such poem,

rather than a sequence of individual pieces. Most critics have, however, preferred to see the books as consisting of sequences, as Kerouac's own description of them as 'choruses' would seem to legitimize. 'Choruses' of course denote a convenient subdivision of individual numbers or songs in a set of blues or jazz music, and it could therefore be argued that each book would consist of several numbers making up a 'set' or a 'gig', as Kerouac suggests in the mantra he ends the introduction to *Book of Blues* with: "It's all gotta be non stop ad libbing within each chorus, or the gig [i.e. 'book' in my reading, BS] is shot." On the other hand, Kerouac's description of himself 'blowing a long blues' (in the singular), 'taking 242 choruses' (of the same number – a bravado feat for any player!) could be read as supporting Jones' claim that the whole book consists of one long poem. A recording of the first 21 choruses of *San Francisco Blues*, which Kerouac made in 1958 (released on Hanover Records in 1959 as *Blues and Haikus*) shows Kerouac pausing after chorus 6, while his accompanying jazz group, featuring Al Cohn and Zoot Sims, also finish their blues number. After a brief silence the musicians resume with a new number (the next blues in their set) and Kerouac reads choruses 7 to 14. The third blues comes after a coda, and over this number Kerouac reads choruses 15 to 21, although he stops after the first segment (7 lines) of chorus 21. Ultimately, therefore, the choice of material constraint for the 'choruses' would seem to suggest that Kerouac saw each chorus as a semi-self-contained entity and only let them form (limited length) chains when the riffing material could not be exhausted within one notebook page (cf. the notion of meaning 'carrying' or 'rolling' from chorus to chorus). The Hanover recording features instances of enjambed choruses, between, for instance, choruses 4 and 5.

The most discussed and anthologised of the thematic chorus sequences in Kerouac's oeuvre is the one eulogising Charlie Parker, which rolls from 239 through 241 of *Mexico City Blues* and thus forms the coda to that particular book, or 'gig', and the recorded version of this piece, featuring Steve Allen on piano, is a tranquil melodic piece. Within the coherent whole of the piece, where Al-

len's accompaniment at first sounds like a slightly be-bop inflected version of a standard tune, there are occasional moments of more staccato nature where micro-rhythmical features are stressed via repetition (Charlie Parker's name invoked twice in the first two lines, "forgive me" and "pray for me" repeated in consecutive lines) and the occasional rhyme, for instance when Kerouac stresses nonsense words such as "blob" and "plop", or via other onomatopoeic words imitating Parker's sax sound ("wop", "toot").

There are numerous other chains of choruses in *Mexico City Blues* with identifiable thematic connections and riffs creating coherence across individual pages. A good example of such a chain are choruses 196 through 201, which arise out of a longer, more vaguely interconnected thematic meditation on Buddhist tenets to riff specifically on the notion of Nirvana, and the application of Nirvana as a shade of lipstick, called "Nirvana No", to barroom girls disturbing or tempting the Buddhist sage in his meditations. On the whole *Mexico City Blues* can be said to thematise the quest for purity of mind and belief in a world full of temptations of the flesh, a world where the speaking and writing subject suffers but seeks help and illumination from selected culture heroes, (Buddhist sages as well as Charlie Parker) and as such the collection takes its place naturally among Kerouac's other confessional works.

The materiality of the poems affects their form and content through the constraint imposed by the size of the notepad pages they are 'scribbled' on, and this effect is carried over into the recorded performances of the poems. Most of the choruses are between 20 and 24 lines long, but some run to as many as 30 lines, while many are considerably shorter, presumably reflecting a sputtering of inspiration, or 'ad libbing'. Certainly many of the short choruses seem to peter out into nonsense language, such as 78, which tries to riff in Spanish on Ortega y Gasset, but ends: "Moda/Fawt/Ta caror/Ta fucka/Erv old/Men", or 73 ending: "Nice clean Cup/Mert o Vik lu/Nut – upanu. */Yes/Sir./Merp/HOOT GIBSON" – both of which make little or no sense, but at least are rhythmically interesting and challenging.

Poems can however run on, onto the next sheet(s) as illustrated by the identification of chains of choruses discussed above. On the other hand there are many examples of apparently prepared run-on lines ending one chorus, but not being picked up in the next. One good example is the last line in the Nirvana sequence which reads "And they claim", but we never learn what it is they claim, as the next chorus seems a self-contained meta-poem starting: "A white poem, a white pure/spotless poem" (202). Fragmentation therefore occasionally dominates over cohesion in the case of *Mexico City Blues*, or put differently: micro-rhythmic play is foregrounded at the expense of macro-rhythmic unity. So, while the composition practice of Kerouac's chains of short poems is predominantly designed to enable flow over time, there are elements of arrhythmia creeping into the practice as well.

AMMONS IN COUNTERPOINT: "MOTION WHICH DISESTABLISHES ORGANIZES EVERYTHING"

This quote from Ammons (a poem of this title appears in his 1997 collection *Set in Motion*) demonstrates his version of the contradictory urges towards constraints and the aleatory, spontaneous principles. It is only through 'motion' – Ammons' master metaphor for the road toward cognition and insight itself – that organisation can eventually re-establish itself. The poet's foremost role, then, is to 'set in motion' the language which in the event of writing becomes poetry.

In an interview intended for *Paris Review* but never published there, Ammons almost forces David Lehman to pose questions about the choice of medium of writing, so that he can say the following:

> My poems begin on the typewriter. If I'm home – and I rarely write anything elsewhere – I write on an Underwood standard upright, manual, not electric [...] I sometimes scribble words or phrases or poems with a pen and pencil if I'm travelling or at work. But I like the typewriter because it allows me to set up the shapes and control

> the space. Though I don't care for much formality (in fact, I hate ceremony), I need to lend formal cast, at least, to the motions I so love. (A.R. Ammons, in an interview w. David Lehman, *Set in Motion*, 88)

Again, the similarities with Kerouac's writing practices are noticeable: While the typewriter is preferred because it gives stability to the layout of pages and generally to the space of writing, sketching ('words or phrases or poems') is still something Ammons occasionally uses. He does however much prefer the staging of a protracted writing event, which to him requires the typewriter and the scroll-like paper formats. Then he can produce long poems in one sitting: "I've always been highly energized and have written poems in spurts. From the god-given first-line right through the poem. And I don't write two or three lines and then come back the next day and write two or three more; I write the whole poem at one sitting" (A.R. Ammons, (interview w. David Lehman), *Set in Motion*, 88-89). While the poems produced via this procedure are usually subject to revision, occasionally undergoing up to 50 rewrites, Ammons still adheres to a credo of 'first thought, best thought', similar to that of Kerouac and other Beat writers, notably Allen Ginsberg. Ammons says: "I believe that my first drafts would indicate that my best poems are almost unrevised" (A.R. Ammons, in an interview w. Jim Stahl, "The Unassimilable Fact Leads Us On…", in *Set in Motion*, 42). Further alignments with Kerouac's ethos of creation can be found in another interview from *Set in Motion*, where Ammons speaks of another scroll poem, *Garbage*:

> By Capote's view, the poem is typing, not writing. I wrote it for my own distraction, improvisationally: I used a wide roll of adding machine tape and tore off the sections in lengths of a foot or more [to create 'pages', BS]. I've gone over and over my shorter poems to try to get them right, but alternating with work on short poems, I have since the sixties also tried to get some sort of rightness

> into improvisations. The arrogance implied by getting something right the first time is incredible, but no matter how much an ice-skater practices, when she hits the ice it's all a one-time event: there are falls, of course, but when it's right, it seems to have been right itself. (A.R. Ammons in *The Best American Poetry 1993*, quoted in Burr (ed.), *Set in Motion*, 125)

Ammons here refers to Truman Capote's snide remark about Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, ("That's not writing, that's typing") and interestingly he embraces the negative label, 'typing', for his own most celebrated long poem, *Garbage*, which won the National Book Award in 1993. Ammons thus aligns himself with Kerouac's gospel of spontaneity or improvisation and also more obliquely Kerouac's idea that literature written for the writer's own pleasure cannot fail but to captivate the audience by contagion, cf. Kerouac's phrase in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose": "Blow as deep as you want – write as deeply, fish as far down as you want, satisfy yourself first, then reader cannot fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning-excitement by same laws operating in his own human mind." (In Charters, 1992, 57) While Ammons more modestly characterises his motives for writing *Garbage* as "my own distraction", in contrast to Kerouac's more orgasmic "satisfaction", he nevertheless seems to have almost fully subscribed to Kerouac's poetics, even down to the use of the scroll-shaped paper, and more importantly to his endorsement of the improvisational, event-based style of writing Kerouac is famous for.

Commenting on his tendency to vacillate in terms of material choice, a dichotomy Ammons is perfectly conscious of, he explicitly sets up a dynamics of control, stating that the constraint aspect is the more important motivating factor for him, rather than the spontaneity factor that motivated Kerouac to choose scrolls and rolls. For Ammons the narrow scroll provides a clear path towards the target set up by the end itself. This, to Ammons, in fact makes the scroll poem function like a prose narrative, motivated by the desire for the end set up by the plot:

> In 1963 when I did the *Tape* I had been thinking of having the primary motion of the poem down the page rather than across. The adding machine tape, less than two inches wide, seemed just right for a kind of breaking and spilling. Variations of emphasis and meaning which make the long horizontal line beautifully jagged and jerky became on the tape the left and right margins. Soon after I started the tape, I noticed resemblances between it and a novel. The point, like and unlike a novel, was to get to the other end; an arbitrary end would also be an "organic" end. The tape itself became the hero, beginning somewhere, taking on aspects and complications, coming to a kind of impasse, then finding some way to conclude. The material itself seemed secondary; it fulfilled its function whether it was good or bad material just by occupying space. In many ways the arbitrary was indistinguishable from the functional. (A.R. Ammons, (interview w. David Lehman), *Set in Motion*, 101-102)

By contrast Ammons can also use the opposite motion to loosen up inspiration and then again start 'motion' by letting the narrow tape margins be replaced by paper sizes that allow the long line: "When poems get too skinny and bony, emaciated nearly into left-hand margin, so highly articulated their syllables crystallize, I go back to long lines to loosen up, to blur the issues of motion into minor forms within larger motions" (A.R. Ammons, in *The Best American Poetry 1988*, quoted in Burr (ed.), *Set in Motion*, 116). Ammons thus deliberately mixed up his material choices and let them decide size factors in his poetic practice. The event of writing poetry to him always required tweaking, manipulation and variation of a material kind, bending the material to his intertwined rhythms of composition.

Tape for the Turn of the Year contains many of the same features as Kerouac's blues choruses. There are passages that descend as far into mockery of foreign languages as any in Kerouac, such as this 'German' stretch of "9 Jan": "today ben / der clouds / down-

waschen / die rainingdrops / und / tickleticklen / der puddle-poolens" (189), or elaborate paraphrases of everyday conversation (usually about the weather), or Ammons' night-time reading in National Geographic. Out of the morass of insignificant subject matter ("good or bad material" being of equal tape-filling value) Ammons distils a portrait of a poetical quest for meaning, beset at all sides by too much indifferent language. The poet must muster all his skills in bringing about the turn of the year, as time itself seems to grind to a halt under the weight of the quotidian garbage of words.

Ammons' smallest poems thematically and formally resemble Kerouac's as much in their own way as his scroll writings resemble Kerouac's spontaneous prose. There is however nothing to indicate that the short poems were produced as sketches or patches, except the off-hand remark quoted above that occasionally Ammons would write away from home in the sense of recording phrases etc. on loose pieces of paper (although in *Tape* he does fantasise: "I'm attracted to paper / visualize / kitchen napkins / scribbled / with little masterpieces", (2)). We do not at all find in Ammons' practice the sketching exercises Kerouac used to produce, for instance, his two Sea poems, capturing the sounds and rhythms of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, respectively. Nor do we find sequences that are named after their place of composition as Kerouac routinely did in his books of 'blues'. Here the "15 Dec" entry of Tape provides a fun contrast. Ammons describes taking the tape out of his typewriter and taking it with him on a family outing, not to type on it in the new location ("York, Pa." (70)), but to safeguard the tape in case a fire should break out in his home while he was away.

We should therefore not extend the comparison between the two writers too far: While Ammons used spontaneity as one of his techniques for setting in motion, he did not extol it as the only valid compositional principle, as Kerouac did in theory (although he did not practice it to the letter, either (see Brinkley's excellent overview on this issue). The constraints aspect of the two writers' use of scrolls, tapes or loops highlights another crucial difference.

Kerouac at the peak of his writing powers desired to eliminate the extraneous disturbances of flow caused by constant attention to the sheets of paper in the typewriter and the labour of changing them. His positive valorisation of 'motion' or 'flow', and of spontaneity and inspiration (which is what makes him a new Romantic to a critic such as Alex Albright), as well as his program of conflating writing and living (Kerouac's poetics, at least, leaves little room for distinguishing between the two activities), however ultimately meant that Kerouac never found the ability to write in peace and quiet and at his leisure after he abdicated as the King of the Beats and got off the road (Brinkley, 119). His quest for a tranquillity on the macro-rhythmic level was frustrated, and the frenetics of micro-rhythmic improvisation could not at length be sustained either. His latter years were dulled by an increased alcoholism and exhaustion of new experience to mine for his works. In Lefebvre's terminology an increased arrhythmia interpolated itself between Kerouac's life and his stated poetics and ideals and ultimately killed him, as a clear case of "morbid and then fatal de-synchronization" (Lefebvre, 68).

Ammons, however, desired and achieved the opposite: a constant reminder of the margins to the horizontal limits of his writing provided by the very narrow adding machine tape, coupled with the vertical freedom as the spool unwound seemingly endlessly into the wastebasket which he used as a container for the portion of the tape he already had covered with writing, gave him rhythmical balance. Ammons actively craved peace and quiet in his compositional environment, his bookish interest in geological 'digging' being a polar opposite to Kerouac's 'digging' in the hipster sense. The two writers therefore met very different ends in their personal lives, as well as in their critical afterlife as poets, where Kerouac is often dismissed for his goofiness, chattiness and lack of serious poetic posturing, whereas Ammons seems to be celebrated for very similar features in his reporting of the quotidian, such as citing the weather report at the beginning of each entry in *Tape for the Turn of the Year*, not to mention the smell of frying pork chops and other scenes of domestic tedium. Ultimately

this arrhythmia in the critical reception of the two poets may be ascribable to the academe's greater willingness to embrace a poet like Ammons who sought refuge in the hallowed halls of Cornell from 1963 to his death, rather than an irreverent self-proclaimed bum such as Kerouac. The rhythms of critical reception have thus not yet shifted entirely towards a more favourable reception of Kerouac as a poet.

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MAPPING WILD RHYTHMS: ROBERT MACFARLANE AS RHYTHMANALYST

Jens Kirk

English writer Robert Macfarlane has published widely across the media on landscape and travel. His books include *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (2003), *The Wild Places* (2008), *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (2012), *Holloway* (2012), and *Landmarks* (2015). Macfarlane is a recognised academic working in the field of English Literature. His *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (2007) deals with the subject of nineteenth century British fiction. Moreover, he is a prolific writer of paratexts, e.g. introductions to and reviews of other books on landscape or wildlife. Lastly, he is also a prolific presenter for radio and television where his thoughts are transformed into speech, sounds, and images.

In *The Wild Places*, he records his attempts at disproving the predominant view today that wild places no longer exist in Great Britain and Ireland. He recognises the wealth of irrefutable evidence that speaks of the disappearance of the wild. Woodlands, hedgerows, pastures and heaths have all but been transformed into farmland, or conifer plantations, or divulged by expanding urban areas. Everywhere, wildlife has vanished or exists at the brink of extinction. He attempts to counter these "obituaries for the wild" (2008, 9, 11) by undertaking a series of journeys across the archipelago in order to find counterparts for his vision of a wild place as "somewhere boreal, wintry, vast, isolated, elemental,

demanding of the traveller in its asperities," in short, somewhere "outside human history" (7).

This outline of his book justifies that Macfarlane is often associated with what a 2008 special issue of the literary magazine *Granta* christened *The New Nature Writing*. In contrast to the old nature writing identified as "the lyrical pastoral tradition of the romantic wanderer," the new nature writers are said to deal with their subject "in heterodox and experimental ways" (Cowley 2008, 10). However, the label the new nature writing has been problematized by a range of critics. Thus, Joe Moran argues that it is exactly the heterodoxy that makes the new nature writers "difficult to categorise" since "[t]heir writings tend to be thematically wide-ranging and stylistically digressive, combining personal reflection with natural history, cultural history, psychogeography, travel and topographical writing, folklore and prose poetry …" (Moran 2014, 49). He, nevertheless, retains the epithet because he finds that the writers stand for "a critical engagement with the rich history of British Nature writing and environmental thought" (50).[1] Similarly, other commentators have problematized the label *new nature writer* and suggested alternative epithets for Macfarlane and his contemporaries. Calling attention to the emphasis on walking in the new nature writers, Stephen E. Hunt prefers the label psychoecology and points to the "strategic affinities with the work of the psychogeographers" (Hunt 2009, 71). More particularly, the writers share "an approach that reinvigorates the quotidian aspects of commonplace surroundings habitually unnoticed due to their familiarity" (72). Also, as mentioned by Hunt, psychogeographers such as Iain Sinclair and Will Self are not necessarily limited to a distinctly urban subject matter. Consider, for instance, Will Self's famous airport walks, that take him through "Bucolic London" along rivers on his way to New York (Self 2007) and

1 A second look at his books on landscape and travel reveals that they are as much about books as they are about landscape. Each chapter in each volume contains numerous references to other books. Each of his books is fitted with an impressive bibliography and a carefully developed index ordering the heterogeneous range of books.

through the desert of the Empty Quarter on his way to Dubai City (Self 2009). Also, Jos Smith argues that the term "archipelagic literature" (Smith 2013) is a useful way of re-framing the phenomenon of the new nature writing. Taking his cue from a suggestion by Robert Macfarlane, Smith shows how the archipelago has been forwarded by several writers as pre- and post-national ways of imagining the cultural "inter-connectedness" (9) of what we used to think of as the UK and Ireland before the devolution of power.

This essay also attempts a reading of Macfarlane's project in *The Wild Places* outside the context of the new nature writing. Moreover, rather than drawing on concepts such as psychoecology and archipelagic culture, this essay looks at Macfarlane's book in the context of Henri Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis of everyday life (Lefebvre 2004). The focus on the everyday is also highlighted by his commentators. Thus, Tim Edensor introduces rhythmanalysis in the context of "human geography and the social sciences" and underlines "how rhythms shape human experience in timespace and pervade everyday life and place" (Edensor 2010, 1). Moreover, rhythmanalysis is presented by Edensor as "a useful tool with which to explore the everyday temporal structures and processes that (re)produce connections between individuals and the social" (2). Rather than merely social, the temporal structures Edensor mentions are rhythms and practices that are cyclical and cosmic as well as linear. Lefebvre writes:

> Cyclical repetition and the linear repetitive separate out under analysis, but in *reality* interfere with one another constantly. The cyclical originates in the cosmic, in nature: days, nights, seasons, the waves and the tides of the sea, monthly cycles, etc. The linear would come rather from social practice, therefore from human activity: the monotony of actions and of movements, imposed structures. Great cyclical rhythms last for a period and restart: dawn, always new, often superb, inaugurates the return of the everyday. (Lefebvre 2004, 8)

Cyclical rhythms, then, Lefebvre associates with patterns laid down by nature. Linear rhythms, on the other hand, are connected to social practice. They are arbitrary structures laid down by culture. Although he is concerned with the study of everyday social relationships, Lefebvre identifies the presence of basic rhythms that we think of as existing outside human history. For instance, his distinction between the everyday social practices in Mediterranean and Atlantic cities is based on the difference between solar and lunar rhythms (91).

According to Lefebvre, the relation between the cyclical and the linear is fundamentally "antagonistic" (8). This basic incompatibility produces unities that form "compromises" as well as "disturbances," but, nevertheless, the two forms of rhythm always work together. As an example he offers the clock face of a traditional watch where "the circular course of the hands … is accompanied by a linear tick-tock. And it is their relation that enables or rather constitutes the measure of time (which is to say, of rhythms)" (8). Cosmic and linear rhythms, then, pervade not only everyday life and place, but form a key aspect of everyday cultural artefacts, too. Polyrhythms are observable in social and cultural processes and products.

This essay is a literary not a sociological study. In contrast to the protocol of rhythmanalysis outlined by Lefebvre, I do not propose to take up a position on a balcony in the centre of Paris (27), or anywhere else, observing the everyday in its entirety as it unfolds. Similarly, I do not fit the image of the stroller or *flaneur* walking among his or her research objects that he offers in an essay co-authored by Catherine Régulier (87).[2] Rather than studying Macfar-

2 Perhaps Lefebvre and Régulier suggest a link between literary studies and sociology in embodying the rhythmanalyst as either a solitary witness or a walker. The former incarnation has rich literary connotations and reminds us, for instance, of the character of Jim Ballard in *Crash,* who studies his surroundings from his apartment veranda (Ballard 1973). Similarly, Hardy's "burgher" in the short story "A Changed Man" is situated in his oriel window, enjoying "a raking view of the High street" and the actions unfolding there (Hardy 1988, 571). The latter partakes of a particularly rich literary and cultural history, too, of course, from the great walkers of the 19th century metropolis to the psychogeographical projects of the 20th and 21st centuries.

lane in his everyday habitat, I analyse and discuss his representation of the quotidian in terms of cyclical and linear rhythms in his book *The Wild Places*. Like Lefebvre's watch, cosmic rhythms as well as social ones overlap throughout his book and become mutually intertwined features in his understanding of wildness that his book documents. I look at Macfarlane's book, then, as a record of a selection of his everyday practices that involve the clashing and co-operation of cosmic and social rhythms. First, I introduce Macfarlane's project from the point of view of rhythmanalysis by looking at the opening scenario of his book. Secondly, I show how the notion of rhythmanalysis is useful in examining the structure of the book before I look at how a particular chapter represents the interweaving of linear and cosmic repetition.

In the opening of the first chapter of *The Wild Places*, Macfarlane tells of an everyday practice of his: tree climbing. More particularly, Macfarlane speaks of his habit of leaving his Cambridge home, heading for a specific wood, climbing a particular tree, and sitting in his "observatory" (2008, 4) thirty feet up. He recalls an example of this:

> From that height, the land was laid out beneath me like a map. Dispersed across it were more fragments of woodland, some of whose names I knew: Mag's Hill Wood, Nine Wells Wood, Wormwood. To the west over corduroy fields was a main road, busy with cars. Directly north was the hospital, its three piped incinerator tower rising far higher than my hilltop tree. A deep-chested Hercules aeroplane was descending towards the airfield on the city's outskirts. Above the road verge to the east, I could see a kestrel riding the wind, its wings shivering with the strain, its tail feathers spread out like a hand of cards. (4)

Climbing his tree forms an image of the basic rhythm of home and away or retreat and return, which constitutes the everyday performed by Macfarlane and recorded innumerable times by his book. But the extract also suggests that Macfarlane figures him-

self, at least implicitly, as a kind of rhythmanalysist, too. From his vantage point, he is able to appropriate the landscape in metaphors and similes that bridge the traditional opposition of nature and culture. Fields are like textiles and the kestrel's tail feathers look like a hand of cards. But more importantly from a rhythmanalytical point of view, his vantage point yields two perspectives on the land. It is envisioned statically, i.e. "like a map," stretching from east to west and northwards and plotted with objects such as fields, woods, roads, and buildings that form the usual entities of representation on maps. However, a strong dynamic aspect is added to the static sense of landscape as map. Cars are moving, aircrafts are descending, and a kestrel is patrolling for road kill. It is a polyrhythmic map dominated by linear and social rhythms exemplified by the movement of cars and aeroplanes, but also charting the intersections with the cosmic, for instance, the seasonal rhythms represented by the recently ploughed fields and the kestrel's feeding or hunting cycles.

Later in the opening chapter, this experiential and polyrhythmic map generated in Macfarlane's observatory is contrasted with the road atlas – the "commonest map of Britain" (10) according to Macfarlane. Road atlases are misrepresentations leading us to believe that the new primary elements of landscape are the roads, asphalt, and petrol rather than its natural features such as "the fells, the caves, the tors, the woods, the moors, the river valleys and the marshes" (10). Maps, Macfarlane holds, are important because they do not passively represent in any straightforward or unproblematic way. They do not mirror or reflect landscape but select and classify information according to particular norms and values. Macfarlane even likens maps to the process whereby the medical treatment of patients is prioritised. Maps, he claims, "carry out a triage of its aspects, selecting and ranking those aspects in an order of importance, and so they create forceful biases in the way a landscape is perceived and treated" (10). The road map is a static map. If it represents rhythms at all, they are the social and linear ones implied by the roads. Cosmic rhythms lasting millennia and resulting in the different forms of landscape are

overlooked. Macfarlane's book is a counter-map – "a map to set against the road atlas. A prose map that would seek to make some of the remaining wild places of the archipelago visible again, or that would record them before they vanished for good" (17). In the terminology of rhythmanalysis, I would say that his map attempts to call attention to the aspects of landscape detailing the pulses and polyrhythms that inform place.

His outing to his observatory a mile from his home figures the fundamental rhythm that informs his book as a whole. Macfarlane suggests that that rhythm is a familiar one:

> Anyone who lives in a city will know the feeling of having been there too long. The gorge-vision that streets imprint on us, the sense of blockage, the longing for surfaces other than glass, brick, concrete and tarmac. (6-7)

Most of Macfarlane's readers would probably agree with him. But more interesting is the rhythmanalysis which is implied. On the one hand, he suggests that we can only take so much artificial cityscape before a sense of imprisonment overpowers us and generates yearnings for authentic contexts. However, the urban and the bucolic are mutually and paradoxically linked, it appears. Cityscapes or streets are not only capable of producing a desire for their more authentic, rural other. They, in fact, appear to exist prior to, or simultaneous with, their other. This is summed up in the notion of "gorge-vision." While it signifies the tunnel vision which streets allegedly produce in city dwellers, i.e. the loss of peripheral vision that needs to be repaired by retreating from the city, *gorge* also denotes surfaces other than the predominant ones in city streets. The city, then, disables and restores. It is at the same time the problem and the remedy. A similar chicken and egg like paradox is found in Macfarlane identification of the origin of his desire for wildness:

> I could not say when I first grew to love the wild, only that I did, and that a need for it will always remain strong

> in me. As a child, whenever I read the word, it conjured images of wide spaces, remote and figureless. Isolated islands off the Atlantic coasts. Unbounded forests, and blue snow-light falling on to drifts marked with the paw-prints of wolves. Frost shattered summits and corries holding lochs of great depth. And this was the vision of a wild place that had stayed with me: somewhere boreal, wintry, vast, isolated, elemental, demanding of the traveller in its asperities. To reach a wild place was, for me, to step outside human history. (7)

Significantly, the moment of origin of his love of the wild is pushed so far back into his personal history that it eludes the social and becomes pre-cultural. At the same time, however, that he is suggesting that we're not dealing with an acquired taste, he grounds his love in or, at least, juxtaposes it to the distinctly social practice of reading.[3] The passage suggests that it is exactly the reading of the word *wild* which is linked to the production of the range of images of wildness that he has always loved and which have had a lasting impact on him. In rhythmanalytical terms, the wild that he has always loved is a landscape formed solely by cosmic and cyclical rhythms great and small such as frost and thaw, winter and summer, glaciation and forestation, but, nevertheless, depending on and related to linear and social rhythms exemplified by reading. He suggests that his love of the wild and the wild are polyrhythmic and include cosmic rhythms which, paradoxically, both predates and relies on social and human ones. Similarly, the traveller – an image of Macfarlane himself – in stepping outside human history, in retreating from the city into its other – always takes a step *inside* human history since the former relies on the latter for its definition. The rhythm of retreat (and eventual return)

3 In Macfarlane's first book *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination*, he links his becoming "sold on adventure" to the reading of Edward Norton's account of the third expedition to Mount Everest *The Fight for Everest 1924* where George Mallory and Andrew Irvine disappear. Compare, Marlowe in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

embodied by the traveller is the rhythm that we associate with pastoral. According to Terry Gifford, in fact, it is the fundamental rhythm of pastoral (Gifford 1999). But in Macfarlane's analysis, it is suggested that the traveller's pastoral pattern of repetition, back and forth between the city and the wild, is polyrhythmic and paradoxical. To Gifford, pastoral is a major device - "an ancient cultural tool" (Gifford nd, 7) – for mediating and negotiating "our relationship with the land upon which we depend and the forces of nature at work out there in 'outer nature,'…" Macfarlane relies on this cultural scheme or method for the structure and content of his book but in a manner which juxtaposes linear and cyclical rhythms systematically.[4]

The idea of polyrhythmic retreat and return is visible in the frame structure of *The Wild Places*, too. The book consists of 15 chapters of which the first and last chapters – identically entitled "Beechwood" – form the frame and are set in his Cambridge surroundings of work and family almost two years apart.[5] The opening "Beechwood" frame begins in the early spring of 2005 while the concluding frame closes in the late winter of the following year. His travels and retreats from Cambridge are delineated in the thirteen chapters between the opening and closing frames.[6] The events in between the two frame chapters are narrated chronologically with constant references to weeks, months, seasons, equinoxes, and solstices, e.g. "early summer" (22), "early December, three weeks after…" (88), "the autumn equinox was close…" (271). In this manner, the plot produces an idea of repetition that is polyrhythmic with reference to social and linear repetitions and also solar, calendric and cyclical ones.

The frame structure of *The Wild Places*, then, dramatizes the pastoral rhythm of retreat and return. This structure is also apparent

4 In Gifford's terminology, Macfarlane would exemplify the "Post-pastoral" (Gifford 1999, 146-174).

5 Biographical knowledge, for instance, concerning the death of his friend Roger Deakin allows a specific dating of the events to the years 2005-2006.

6 Diagrammatically, the frame structure looks like this: (1{2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, 11,12,13,14}15)

in the individual chapters. With the exception of the frame chapters, each chapter repeats the pastoral pattern and takes Macfarlane from his home in Cambridge to various places in Britain and Ireland in his effort at refuting the eulogies of the wild and producing his alternative map. The discourse does not slavishly and chronologically narrate each of the instances of retreat and return in the individual chapters. Rather, it reminds us of the existence of this basic cultural framework by occasionally singling out specific returns for representation. At the beginning of the chapter entitled "Forest", for instance, Macfarlane's return from Rannoch Moor – the topic of the previous chapter, is sketched out in some detail. Thus, we hear of his practice of bringing back "found objects" (87) – in this case "dolphin-shaped piece of wildwood pine" – to his collection of relics and mementoes in his Cambridge home. Having outlined Macfarlane's return to Cambridge, the "Forest" chapter subsequently falls into eight unnumbered sections outlining the fundamental pastoral rhythm of retreat and return.[7] Thus, with the exception of the first section, which outlines both his return to and departure from Cambridge, sections II, IV, V, and VII are concerned with returns, and sections iii, vi, and viii deal with Macfarlane's visit to the Black Wood of Rannoch, *Coille Dubh*. The structure of the chapter, then, is: I, i, II, iii, IV, V, vi, VII, viii. The retreat sections narrate chronologically his experiences over a couple of days in early December in the Scottish Highlands. The Black Wood is a place where the last remnants of the ancient northern pinewoods can be found (88). The return sections, on the other hand, concern the "tree-lore" that he has acquired through reading. In the following, I begin by outlining the retreat sections. Then I turn to the return sections before I comment on the conclusion of the chapter.

Macfarlane sets out on his pastoral retreat in a manner that is steeped in polyrhythmic images: "So in early December, three weeks after the first redwings had arrived in East Anglia, and

7 In the following, I refer to the individual sections using lower and upper case Roman numerals.

when the hawthorns near my house were glossy with plumb fruit, I travelled north again" (88). Cyclical rhythms in the form of the migratory birds and the seasonal colouring of the fruit are juxtaposed to Macfarlane's own pastoral practice of retreat in a manner that suggests a relationship between the cosmic and the social. After his arrival in the Black Wood, diurnal or circadian rhythms and patterns are conspicuous. References to morning (88, 95), dusk (89), the position of the sun (89), afternoon (111), night (91) abound. Similarly seasonal and rhythms are apparent, too. Winter (88, 111), and snow (89, 90, 91, 95, 107, 111) is referenced constantly. Moreover, Macfarlane records how he sleeps rough, following the rhythm of darkness and light. Tuning into the diurnal cosmic rhythms leads to an epiphany. Immediately before sleeps overtakes him, he feels "accommodated" by the Black Wood and "watche[s] it move into night: the dark settling like a fur on every object, the dropping snow, the quick adroit movements of birds between trees" (91). Characteristically, this moment of cosmic rhythm triggers the idea of the social and linear. Again, the reference is to reading:

> I thought of what Nan Shepherd, the Scottish novelist and poet, had once written of the Cairngorms: 'No one knows the mountain completely who has not slept on it. As one slips over into sleep, the mind grows limpid; the body melts; perception alone remains. These moments of quiescent perceptiveness before sleep are among the most rewarding of the day. I am emptied of preoccupation, there is nothing between me and the sky.' (91)

The very moment where Macfarlane retreats into the cosmic rhythm of nightfall is also a moment of return to the social and to reading and quotation. The cyclical and the linear form a paradoxical polyrhythm.

Linear rhythms, however, are also obvious in the retreat sections, typically in the form of Macfarlane – the traveller – who is walking through the forest. He is "tacking back and forth, follow-

ing rides, moving through" (89) the Black Wood, leaping streams and passing over sponge-bogs. Similarly, he ascends and descends "the summit of the crags" (95). But other linear rhythms dominate the landscape, too. Forestation and deforestation are governed by the linear logic of capital rather than any natural cycle. Thus, having reached the summit, he is able to see how "patches of plantation forest had been clear-cut, so that the hill resembled a skull that had been shaved in preparation for an operation" (96). Similarly, his vantage point allows him to observe that the landscape is completely dominated by "conifer plantations" that seem "unnatural" to him and make the land look "like a war-zone" (107). The images of war and anaesthetization emphasise Macfarlane's dislike of the dominance of linear rhythms in the Black Wood. The signs of the great cyclical rhythms have all but been erased and replaced by social ones. In fact, if it weren't for the information Macfarlane has been outlining in the return sections, we wouldn't even know that they existed and continue to do so.

In the return sections, Macfarlane presents the "tree lore" (99) he has steeped himself in before his visit. By reading extensively (and by talking to his friend Roger Deakin – an expert on trees, wood, and forests), Macfarlane identifies cosmic rhythms that remain extant in the Black Wood and elsewhere. Concerned with the notions of "ice-time" and "tree-time," these sections map rhythms and cycles of forestation and deforestation in the British Isles stretching decades, centuries and millennia. He takes his beginning at the end of the last glacial period some 12.000 years ago when the archipelago and forests – the "deepwood" – emerged in the wake of the retreating glaciers (II, 92-94). He records the systematic deforestation undertaken by human beings from the advent of farming 6000 BP to the twentieth century where the deepwood is no longer a part of the archipelago, but still figures importantly in its art (IV, 96-100). He outlines the history of the elm, including its presence in paintings by John Constable, and the Dutch elm disease, which has driven it almost to the brink of extinction, and concludes by summarising Roger Deakin's prediction that the elms will return eventually (V, 100-6). Lastly, he tells

the story of deforestation in the Great War in the light of the biography of English poet and composer Ivor Gurney (VII, 107-111). In rhythmanalytical terms, the return sections establish the Black Wood as a polyrhythmic place after all. Only apparently, or in the short term, do the linear cycles of capital dominate the landscape. Simultaneous with the growth and harvest of conifer plantations are cosmic cycles of forestation and deforestation.

The "Forest" chapter and the sections dealing with the Black Wood end with a couple of striking images that invite a rhythmanalytical reading. Leaving the Black Wood, i.e. at a liminal point between retreat and return, Macfarlane comes across six crows apparently engaged in some sort of play. They are

> hopping from the low branches of a pine down on to the snow and then flapping back up again, chattering to one another in a familial manner. On the ground, they walked with their distinctive nodding motion, their feet wide apart, as if trying to keep their balance. They tilted their heads, and watched me watching them. (111)

The scenario of the crows moving up-and-down the pine tree recalls the opening image of *The Wild Places*, i.e. Macfarlane's practice of tree-climbing and evokes the retreat and return structure of the book. Moreover, they are also cast as walkers and assigned subjectivity and curiosity. They are engaged in observation, too. In short, they become the mirror image of Macfarlane's pastoral practice of walking and watching. The repetition engaged in by the crows is linear – it is identified as play – rather than cyclical. It apparently takes place outside the cyclical rhythms that circumscribe wild-life. Crows, it seems, enjoy polyrhythmic existences, too. Their everyday lives involve the intersection of linear and cosmic rhythms, as well. Macfarlane links man and bird even further when he mentions that corvids only arrived in Britain because of the deforestation caused by Neolithic man's clearance of the deepwood. This he refers to as "an ancient inter-animation of the human and the wild." This idea of mutuality governs the con-

cluding image of the chapter where we learn that "the two young crows walked out into an area of fresh snow, and began to circle one another playfully, each keeping a steady distance from the other, like opposing magnets, or kings on a chessboard" (111). Or, you could say like the pattern of retreat and return, or the cyclical and the linear rhythms on Lefebvre's watch.

In Macfarlane's own words, *The Wild Places*, his prose counter-map intended as a corrective to the road map, documents his growing understanding of "wildness not as something which was hived off from human life, but which existed unexpectedly around and within it: in cities, backyards, roadsides, hedges, field boundaries or spinnies" (226). My reading of Macfarlane's book has arrived at a similar conclusion. Approaching Macfarlane's book from Lefebvre's idea of rhythmanalysis as an analytical protocol designed to throw light on the interference of cyclical and linear rhythms in the everyday, I have tried to show how rhythmanalytical ideas offer an alternative avenue into Robert Macfarlane's *The Wild Places* and by extension into writing usually classified as new nature writing, archipelagic writing, or psychoecology. To Macfarlane the everyday is constituted by a basic rhythm of retreat and return taking him to various wild places across the archipelago and back to Cambridge where he lives and works in his attempt to create a substitute for the omnipresent road map. However, rather than forming opposites exhibiting distinct cosmic and social rhythms, he finds that retreat and return are mutually and paradoxically constituted by both. The wild places of retreat are consistently linked with the social and the place of return. Retreats are always already textual; figments of the reading imagination. Conversely, the place of his returns reverberates with and is circumscribed by the cyclical rhythms that escape notice in the places of retreat. Both retreat and return, then, are polyrhythmic places where the linear and the cyclical intersect. Similarly, Macfarlane's everyday practice of pastoral retreat and return, while a manifest example of linear repetition, is consistently juxtaposed to cyclical rhythms of, for instance, migrating birds. Moreover, besides showing how the rhythm of the retreat exists "unexpectedly

around and within" the return, I would add that he also shows how – much to our surprise – apparently arbitrary and linear cycles are included within the cosmic rhythms of the everyday life of the retreat.

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THE PULSE OF NATURE: GARY SNYDER AND THE SHAMANIC BEAT

Camelia Elias

When you tear down a forest to build a city, what do you do with the goddess of the forest? Replace her with something else. But is that enough? And how are we going to go about it? Would a procession do, singing and dancing in the streets with an icon, as depicted on frescos on the walls of the grand buildings of civilization, showing humans carrying around the nature gods, now turned into things? What's all that trumpeting we're hearing even today, when we take a stroll in such places as the Schifanoia Pallace in Ferrara, Italy? Can our depictions of rhythmic processions replace the real sounds that a forest can make? These are some of the questions that most poets of 'natural' common sense pose.

Long before there was any eco-critical awareness around, which now peppers the rising and falling tones of nature poetry and other contemporary odes to the lost gods of rhythmic perception, there was awareness of how, with each procession, we may remember the cosmic singing of the stars, as they go around in constellations forming symmetries around nature cycles and our heartbeats. Perhaps one could argue that what we now call 'eco poetry' is really nothing but the echoing of the thundering sounds of the old myths that can still teach us something about what needs to be done in a world that has forgotten its gods.

The Italians use the word 'trionfi' – 'trumps' – to refer to the act of 'carrying of the gods', or the age-old practice of going in a

rhythmic procession whose aim was to trump progression by displaying all the natural, archetypal virtues of the gods.

The allegorical frescoes from 1470 at Schifanoia represent man in search of a god to carry. These are done in the Renaissance tradition that includes the magic of Giordano Bruno and Marsillio Ficino, who, in their promoting the idea of a theater of memory through rhythm, indicate the necessary return to how we can imagine and visualize ourselves free of cultural dogma and in tune with nature.

Rhythm is not only vital for our isorhythmic and eurhythmic cycles – to use two of Henri Lefevbre's concepts of rhythm related to the body – but it also acts as a prompter to remembering connections with nature that we have forgotten (Lefevbre 2013, 86). It is due to this disconnect that we have come to experience ourselves as being off beat with all the natural cycles, and hence suffer from all sorts of arrhythmic disorders, ranging from pathology to more mental, or soul related deficiencies.

What we find in contemporary eco poetry is an attempt to recover a better sense of feeling the pulse of the earth in accordance with our modern pacing. We also find traces of the rules of composition developed by Ficino (2006) in terms of astrology, psychology and modal ethos in some of Beat poet Gary Snyder's poems that account for the importance of assessing rhythm not only as it relates to the pulse in words, akin to heartbeats as drumbeats, but also to verbal beats in the words that conjure the harmonics of sensual experience, where we have the five senses on par with the physical articulation of words that invoke the hermetic law of correspondence: As above, so below.

But first let us get a sense of the Neoplatonic thought, and map Ficino's ideas unto Lefevbre's taxonomy, so that we can get a sense of what is at stake in the poetry of the Beat generation poets when they pinch the same nerve. What was for the Neoplatonists an alchemical project of integrating the gods and stars into the self, through the eradication of the self – an idea imported from Eastern (Buddhist) philosophy, became for the Beats a project of figuring out how to get a god to be seated in oneself via expres-

sive communication. But whereas the Neoplatonists managed to stretch their goals beyond language – for instance, via song and dance, and the ritualized body – the Beats stopped at exploring the language of desire, thus falling short of the actual unification of self and the universe at stake that was the core of all Neoplatonic thought.

Says Ficino in his *Book of Life:*

> The first rule is to inquire diligently what powers in itself or what effects from itself a given star, constellation or aspect has - what do they remove, what do they bring? - and to insert these into the meaning of our words, so as to detest what they remove and approve what they bring. The second rule is to take note of what special star rules what place or person and then to observe what sorts of tones and songs these regions and persons generally use, so that you may supply similar ones, together with the meaning I have just mentioned, to the words which you are trying to expose to the same stars. Thirdly, observe the daily positions and aspects of the stars and discover to what principal speeches, songs, motions, dances, moral behaviour, and actions most people are usually incited by these, so that you may imitate such things as far as possible in your song, which aims to please the particular part of heaven that resembles them and to catch a similar influx (in Voss 2006, 154).

What Ficino is talking about here is vital power as universal rhythm, which we can think of as eurhythmia , timeliness as isorhythmia, and intention as arrhythmia. What needs fixed is the intention. Lefevbre uses the metaphor of an orchestra conductor holding a magic wand in his hand, redirecting the isorhythmic associations between the beats of the body and those of the world around us, but we can also take the poet as magician and look at how he understands the universal language of rhythm through the idea of carrying a particular nature God inside of him. Again,

what is at stake is a process of integrating arrhythmia so that it aligns with eurhythmia or isorhythmia.

It is my contention that what we understand by the concept of 'carrying a god' and 'theater of memory' is no better developed in our contemporary setting than by the Beats. Here I find very apt Allen Ginsberg's proposition in an interview for *Playboy* magazine in 1969 that we must regain freedom from an oppressive culture that has forgotten its gods by doing exactly what the Neoplatonists have been proposing, namely, a return to the golden age of magic through alchemy and harmonics of thought:

> Are Americans reduced to regaining liberty by violence? I'm convinced there's another way: organized chanting, shamanistic magic, ghost-dance rituals, massive nakedness, distribution of flowers (Ginsberg in Carroll 1969, 81-92).

What Ginsberg suggests here is in fact a simple method of opening the gate to a forgotten nature, both human and otherwise. The Neoplatonists regarded such shamanic methods a key to the return to a golden age, namely the age of connecting ourselves through poetry to the experience of love, beauty, death, and the gods (Ficino, for instance, held ecstatic séances in his palace with view to experiencing shifts in consciousness). I see the same idea at work in the poetry of the Beats, and more particularly in the non-anthropocentric approach to nature that we find in the poetry of Gary Snyder.

Snyder sees the poet as a shaman magician (Snyder 1978). But what kind of a shaman? Traditionally shamans were divided into two groups: those who practiced healing and those who practiced sorcery. Giving the general assumption that the poet is a magician of sorts, being able to seduce and mesmerize with his words, one could assume that what Snyder means with his shaman is a similar thing. Through words, the poet heals, but he needs rhythm to make the magic tangible. What interests me here in connecting the poetry of the Beats to older forms of ritual and oracular narrative

is the idea that carrying a god in a triumphant procession relies very much on reviving an age-old magical tradition that has the healing of nature through poetry as part of its program.

But how do we define magic, and how does it impact on the way in which we use magic to understand what needs to be done about nature at a collective level? As anthropological and eco-philosophical studies have shown, shamanism is community-oriented, and we find a very clear relation between shamanism and activism in the eco-critical discourse that has such activities as permaculture, or permanent culture in the high seat. For instance, in his influential book, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (1997), David Abram advances the argument that our perception acquires a character according to the sensual aspect in the language we speak. As this sensual aspect of language is tightly bound with our own flesh, the nature around us and the environment, it discloses rhythmic patterns of firm connections with the earth or pathologies of disconnected and scattered fragmentations of the self. But who is this self we are talking about? The idea of an 'ecology of magic' – the first chapter of the book – banks on perception as the result of experiential phenomena, calling our attention to the fact that if there is a self in our perception, it is there because of an act of surrendering to the bodily nature of language (Abram 1997, xii).

Zen and shamanic oriented poets such as Snyder, continuing a long tradition of discussing the magic in existence, would call the 'self' a drumbeat in nature, devoid of hierarchical control and agency, but resonating through flesh and actions, and responding to the call of nature and its breath. It is for this reason that he believes that much of his poetry is an exercise in going back to pre-linguistic thought-processes – through gesture – that enable us to learn, or rather, re-learn through visual impact, inasmuch as the visual impact harmonizes rhythmically with our sensuous self in context. Here it can be argued that much of the very backbone of the Beat generation thought relies on the insistence that it is only through the performative gesture that one can get a glimpse into the awareness 'beyond' language – language, of course, being

very much part of this awareness already. So if the Beats 'sang' their poetry, creating intentional vibrations and mantra recitations, they did it because they wanted to ride the horse of the 'already'. It is only in such interstitial adverbials, in the 'already' and the 'meanwhile', that we get to know realty beyond conventional linguistic conditioning.

Incidentally, in the first pages of Abram's book, Snyder endorses the work with these words that disclose the core of his own poetics: 'This book by David Abrams lights up the landscape of language, flesh, mind, history, mapping us back into the world'. Invoking Eastern religion and Native American cosmology here, we could say that Snyder is covering the four corners of the universe with his emphasis on four essential existential concerns with the mind/body/soul triad as it unfolds through history.

The implications of this type of thinking that aims at considering the role of the poet in society is that by looking for the sensuous in language one discovers precisely what gods of nature one carries within. In this sense, Snyder is not just metaphorically a poet of liminality, situating his discourse at the edge of culture and in conversation with the beings of nature that are not human. He is very much a sorcerer or magician capable of putting a spell on the world, healing it from its discontent.

Socially speaking, to turn the world around and make it aware of the need to heal itself from the disease of materialism can in itself be considered a magical endeavor, with many folks wishing good luck to the old and new hippies who still think that by chanting and undressing one can invoke the return of the golden age of love, community, and poetry. But magic can also be regarded as symbolic action with intent. Gary Snyder develops this definition in terms of a naturally balanced rhythm in his seminal thought about myths and texts:

> As a poet I hold the most archaic values on earth. They go back to the upper Palaeolithic: the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power-vision in solitude, the terrifying initiation and rebirth, the love and ecstasy of

> the dance, the common work of the tribe. I try to hold both history and the wilderness in mind, that my poems may approach the true measure of things and stand against the unbalanced and ignorance of our times (Snyder 1978, viii)

While the passage above can be taken as an approach to critiquing materialism, what it does more is make an implicit statement about what the function of magic through poetry is, namely to carry the god in the word, and feeling the pulse of divine connection. What makes a world magical is not what we claim it is but what we experience it is. And this has little to do with the position of the poet as such. Yet the poet has the obligation to sit on the fence, as it were, and from there pass judgment on what is going on, prophesying future trends and inclinations in society. In Snyder's view, being involved with producing and performing poetry as a spell is part of the tradition of living with paradox: The more you can detach from being involved with the ways of the world, the more powerful you are. The real challenge is to change a society by positioning yourself above dualist solutions, and issue a message of compassion from a nondualist perspective. Essentially this is a Buddhist idea that we can trace throughout the 60s poetry scene.

Insofar as the shamanic poet, or the poet for whom everything has a soul, is with one foot in the world of *logos* and the other in the world of *mythos,* the only task he has, if he is to succeed, is to watch his step. Which is not the same as saying that he must act out of a 'moral' intent to begin with or presume that through his own effort and will he can achieve anything worth the while. What Snyder is suggesting here is that the poet who holds history and the wilderness in mind operates from within a space of grace. And this has very little to do with what we make of it, culturally speaking.

Now, most critics see Snyder as the eco-poet par excellence, or the Beat poet who has gone on to live the magic he was talking about when he wrote *Riprap* (1959) in a most consciously activist way (Murphy 1990). That may be so, but what I want to suggest

here is that we can also see how, through the experience of nature as magic, we can dissociate Snyder's intent to save the planet from his more Zen approach to living through the abrogation of the self that can accomplish things through personal effort. In Snyder's Zen world-view, life just *is.* There is nothing right or wrong that one does. One can speak with a certain force and authority. One can even speak on behalf of the planet, animals, and other inarticulate beings, but at the end of the day, the discursive power of speech will be nothing but a reflection of what is available to the poet in terms of a speaking position. Speech is not a reflection of what life is. Snyder knows this. In contrast, he knows what silence signifies. He also knows what a ritual of burning an offering means (see the discussion of the poem 'Through the Smoke Hole' shortly).

In this sense, Snyder is not merely an eco-moralist, but a poet who takes his cue from his shamanic spirit guides. It is through being in communion with the elements that the poet knows what to say and what to do. The triumphs of the Gods over human amnesia manifest in the sacrificial pact between the poet and nature. The poet sacrifices words to the gods in order to receive the gift of forging a poetic argument that makes a global impact. Nowhere is this better expressed than in Snyder's poem, 'Burning Island,' where, instead of incense, we actually get to witness the poet's procession through town while carrying the gods of the four corners of the universe on his back.

This poem is almost an ekphrastic representation of what we see in the famous frescoes at the Palazzo Schifanoia. The God of Water, the Fire God, the Sky God, the Earth Mother, the Moon, and then all the gods taken together, are carried by the poet in an invocation that conjures a blessing for matrimony. The representation of the Water God and the Fire God Vulcan comes close to what we see depicted in the 1470s Italian fresco. While Snyder gives us an Eastern take on the theater of memory, we still see in his words the Western esoteric idea of the triumphs of the gods at work, as virtuous nature gods beyond challenge.

O Wave God who broke through me today
  Sea Bream
  massive pink and silver
  cool swimming down with me watching
            staying away from the spear

Volcano belly Keeper who lifted this island
  for our own beaded bodies adornment
  and sprinkles us all with his laugh—
            ash in the eve
  mist, or smoke,
  on the bare high limits—
        underwater lava flows easing to coral
            holes filled with striped feeding swimmers

O Sky Gods cartwheeling
  out of Pacific
  turning rainsqualls over like lids on us
  then shine on our sodden—
        (scanned out a rainbow today ~~at the~~
            cow drinking trough
                sluicing off
      LAKHS of crystal Buddha Fields
      right on the hair of the arm!)

Who wavers right now in the bamboo:
 a half-gone waning moon.
          drank down a bowlful of shochu
              in praise of Antares
          gazing far up the lanes of Sagittarius
              richest stream of our sky—
 a cup to the center of the galaxy!
          and let the eyes stray
 right-angling the pitch of the Milky Way:
          horse-heads rings
          clouds too distant to be
          slide free.
                on the crest of the wave. (Snyder 1970, 23-24)

After participating in the 60s explosion of the normative and conventional codes, Snyder goes with advocating for the 'permanent culture'. The tonal point in the poem above stresses not only what can be accomplished in the act of invoking the gods, but also that it may be a good idea to let ourselves be possessed by the gods. What we have here is no less than an act of enticing to draw down the moon, a magical practice that goes all the way back to the Presocratics (depicted on a Greek vase dated to the second century BC), whose aim was the achievement of personal gnosis and control over navigation and fertility.[8]

The old grimoir and spell of freedom, the law of the few and not the law of the many, as Ginsberg would have it (2001), becomes the law of the green book, the magician's book of shadow full of recordings and recipes for how to use the natural cycles in harmony with the celestial bodies. Snyder's beat enabled a shift from looking at the world as a world populated with dead objects to looking at all things as being alive. This is an old animist world-view. When he proclaims in *Regarding Wave* that every poet should learn some form of magic, he suggests that the words must mirror affinity with nature before they perform invocations. A poet should know:

> all you can about animals as persons.
> The names of trees and flowers and weeds.
> Names of stars, and the movements of the planets and the moon.
> Your own six senses, with a watchful and elegant mind.
> at least one kind of traditional magic
> divination, astrology, *the book of changes,* the tarot;
> dreams. (Snyder 1970, 40)

We can see how he endows magic with a certain kind of agency. If for Ginsberg love is the magician, for Snyder, nature is the magician. Nothing new under the sun.

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8 See the Thessalian tract referencing release and freedom from conventions (Ogden 2009, 238).

In a famous passage, Marsilio Ficino also declared the following:

> Why do we think love is a magician? Because the whole power of magic consists in love. The work of magic is the attraction of one thing by another because of a certain affinity of nature. (Commentary on Plato's *Symposium of Love* 1985, 125)

What the Beat poets had in common with the Neoplatonists is the alchemy of senses as manifested through perceiving balance. Having the right ingredients, and knowing how to mix them is magical already, but within the context of declaring one's love of nature with the intent of preservation, the poet's words must recall a basic rhythmic symmetry between his will and that of nature.

In Snyder's poetry, as in the poetry of many of the other Beat poets, what is interesting to note is the preoccupation with knowing one's place. What tribe does one belong to? For Snyder this is important, as belonging brings forth an awareness of ancestral voices. Who does the magician poet invoke, if he has no sense of where he belongs? In talking about 'The Great Subculture Tribe', Snyder offers good advice for identification. As he puts it:

> You recognize the people belonging to this tribe not by their beards, long hair, bare feet, or beads; the signal is a bright and tender look, calmness and gentleness, freshness and ease of manner. (Snyder 1969, 116)

Ideally, for Snyder, people should sit in circles, in a tipi, smoke pipe and have visions. One of Snyder's most shamanic poems that uses smoke as a vehicle for rhythm is 'Through the Smoke Hole':

> There is another world above this one; or outside of this one; the way to it is thru the smoke of this one, & the hole that smoke goes through. The ladder is the way through the smoke hole; the ladder holds up, some say, the world

> above; it might have been a tree or pole; I think it is merely a way.
>
> Fire is at the foot of the ladder. The fire is in the center. The walls are round. There is also another world below or inside this one. The way there is down thru the smoke. It is not necessary to think of a series.
>
> Raven and Magpie do not need the ladder They fly through the smoke holes shrieking and stealing. Coyote falls thru; we recognize him only as a clumsy relative, a father in old clothes we don't wish to see with our friends
>
> It is possible to cultivate the fields of our own world without much thought for others. When men emerge from below we see them as the masked dancers of our magic dreams. When men disappear down, we see them as plain men going somewhere else. When men disappear up we see them as great heroes shining through the smoke. When men come back from above they fall thru and tumble; we don't really know them; Coyote, as mentioned before. (Snyder 165, 120)

In this poem we see at work the idea that every time one undergoes a shamanic journey, a new myth is born. Snyder entangles a form of structuralist relations to the world following the esoteric axiom 'as above, so below' with a sense of flow in space where everything is rhythmically connected. But because the shaman has a method, the spirits he recognizes are always meaningful. Some are heroes and some are tricksters. The poem's rhythmic structure establishes symmetry, patterns, balance, and binary oppositions (though not in a linear fashion). The importance of place is also emphasized through a reference to the middle world, the world or the earth, where we all belong. The pattern of the natural smoke mirrors our existence. Sometimes we fall down, sometimes we go up, and sometimes we are insignificant to others. Above all, we wear masks.

The Shaman poet uses language to first register a loss of power and then to try to regain it through reestablishing a connection to the natural world. The underlying grammar of most shamanic texts is transformation: going from one state to another, one world to another, one shape to another.

Snyder's poetry goes for the heartbeat. Is the heart attuned to the forces of nature? Then one is power-full. Things go right. Is the heart disconnected from hearing the universal pulse? Then one is power-less. Things go wrong. In this sense, what Snyder tries to do in his poetry is not to state how *things* should be, but rather how *we* should be. The way of the shaman is a simple way. If one is disconnected one should go talk to a tree. Look at a stone for 20 minutes after having posed a question to it, and then marvel at the answer that it gives. Or indeed, smoke some grass, and have a chat with the trickster gods that fall through the rabbit hole with you.

Allowing nature to speak while you listen is one of the most poetic acts. It is in this act that we get to know what god exactly we carry, and what endeavor we succeed in. We may call it succeeding in eco-poetry, but we may also just call it succeeding in combining the beat of the zeitgeist with the beatific nature. The performance of magic is always aligned with what we expect. In walking between the worlds, if we expect to see monsters, we'll see monsters. But if we expect to see a web of relations that's fixed, then we can all see ourselves participate in the mending of the *wyrd,* the fate, or in tending to the natural weaving of relations between man and nature. When nature poets such as Snyder advocate for paying attention to the pulse in all living beings around us, they sing a song attuned to the alchemy of sounds and senses. They hear clearly a percussive punctuation of the Game of Go.

Although I know nothing about percussion, a few years ago I found myself taking a master class in frame drumming with the best magician of them all, Zohar Fresco from Tel Aviv. I wanted to know more about the poetry of sounds as a continuous rhythm that engages our bodies, our pulsating heart, and our though-processes at the level of language as a sensuous body. Fresco's al-

chemy was simple. The poetry or rhythm consists of measuring equally between these four elements: pulse, color, energy, and spirit. As I read these beginning lines from a poem in *Riprap*, I can imagine the poet breathing into a drum made of horse skin and riding towards the acceptance of this truth: when we allow ourselves to breathe in harmony with nature, we understand that rhythm simply means being in eternity.

> Lay down these words
> Before your mind like rocks.
> placed solid, by hands
> In choice of place, set
> Before the body of the mind
> in space and time:
> Solidity of bark, leaf or wall
> riprap of things:
> Cobble of milky way,
> straying planets,
> These poems, people,
> lost ponies with
> Dragging saddles --
> and rocky sure-foot trails.
>
> The worlds like an endless
> four-dimensional
> Game of Go.
> ants and pebbles
> In the thin loam, each rock a word
> a creek-washed stone
> Granite: ingrained
> with torment of fire and weight
> Crystal and sediment linked hot
> all change, in thoughts,
> As well as things (Snyder 1959, 32)

We find the heart of the beat in this very last line, 'As well as things,' which sonorously spells out Snyder's refined understanding of ancient core shamanism and its animist philosophy as it contrasts with the Western type of soul work, the 'beating down to the soul', the notion of carrying the gods and their virtues in a parade, which living side by side with the sensuous more-than-human world around us is all about.

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RHYTHMS AT SEA: LEFEBVRE AND MARITIME FICTION[1]

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In popular imagination, especially during the period spanning from the oceanic turn around 1500 until the first half of the 20th century, ship life was shrouded in romantic ideas of unlimited freedom, unbounded movement, and unconditional escape, but also in more realist notions such as hard work, brutal violence, and claustrophobic space.[2] The sea for its part was (and still is) admired and feared at one and the same time for its formless sublimity, chaotic rage, and mysterious depths. It is as if ship and sea are empty containers into which we can pour whatever liquid content we want. They are endowed with hyper-metaphorical potential and as such they can signify this and that, kiss and cat, but also these and those, bees and nose. Examples? Well, in "Genesis" the ocean is initially associated with primeval chaos and later, when materialized as the flood,

1 Parts of this article take their lead from an article previously published in Danish, parts of it are entirely new.

2 When I use the term "oceanic turn" here I am not referring to the increased attention towards the ocean during the last couple of decades within academia from natural sciences to the humanities – this has also been labeled an "oceanic turn" in line with previous turns such as the linguistic turn and the spatial turn. Instead, I refer to the actual worldly practice of sailing the seven seas, the historical shift taking place around 1500 that Carl Schmitt has described as "the elemental turn towards the ocean" ["der elementaren Wendung zum Meer"] (Schmitt 1981, 40).

with punishment for sin ("Genesis" 2016, 1.2, 6.5-17, 7.17-24); to Horace, the sea represents an earthly reminder of the "sacred bar" between gods and humans and between different peoples, hence his idea of *oceanus dissociabilis* (Horace 1882, 1.3); in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1599-1602) the ocean off the cliffs at Kronborg (Elsinore) is associated with and thought to trigger madness (Shakespeare 2006, 1.4); in Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie* (1820) it is the condition of possibility for international trade, societal development, and personal *Bildung* (Hegel 2003, 268); and in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) the ocean is described as the "great sweet mother" and likened to the Ur-womb (Joyce 1995, Book 1).

As for the ship, two authors as close to each other in history as Tobias Smollett and James Fenimore Cooper had very different notions of what a ship represented: the first likened it in *Roderick Random* (1748) to a miniature version of a corrupt society, but also to a decaying health institution smelling of rot and a prison whose inmates were plagued by fleas, tormented by the whip, and controlled by evil and incompetence (Smollett 1999, 150-51, 157-60, 189-90), whereas the latter – replacing a neoclassical mindset with a romantic one, and thus also mirroring Hegel's more positive notions of sea and ship – looked upon the ship in *The Red Rover* (1827) as the incarnation of graceful movement and endowed it with a potential for heroism in its rivalry with the elements (Cooper 1991, 150, 168, 255-56, 397, 398-99, 414).[3] If we return to Horace and the stoic sensibility, he saw the ship as the material symbol of human nemesis and haughtiness – "a luckless bark" he calls it – since it was the vehicle facilitating the transgression of divinely sanctioned borders (Horace 1882, 1.14, 1.3). Historically closer to us we have Jens Bjørneboe, to whom the steam ship is likened to a patient "suffering from a combination of heart disease and asthma," whereas the sail ship is endowed with erotic qualities and su-

3 For a comparison between Smollett and Cooper, see also Philbrick 1961, 5-6, 72-78.

preme beauty (Bjørneboe 1992, 125, 26). As this little historical survey shows, there is no end to the semantic and metaphorical potential of the sea and ship.[4]

But how can we get closer to the concreteness of maritime existence, understand the workings of the sea, and grasp how the ship functions? How to embrace the conflicting forces of monotony and rupture, expansiveness and confinement, and nature and culture of maritime life? It seems to me that Henri Lefebvre's concept of rhythm and his method of rhythmanalysis as they are developed in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (the French original, *Éléments de rythmanalyse: Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes*, was published posthumously in 1992) are privileged points of departure if we seek a firmer grasp of what it means, or, rather, how it *feels* to be onboard an ocean-going ship. The method is not enough, though, we also need a proper medium to provide us with the empirical data, and here we will turn to literary history and authors such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Joseph Conrad, and Jens Bjørneboe. These authors may have fuelled the popular imagination with both romantic and realist images of life at sea – that is, a semantics of the ocean and the ship – but they have also provided us with some of the most aesthetically convincing, thematically complex, and existentially concrete depictions of maritime existence. And this is the purpose of this article: not to discuss the ship's role during the different accelerations of globalization; not to interpret how many symbolic meanings the ocean has been ascribed in literary and cultural history; not to analyze the ocean's vital role for the future of our anthropocene planet; not to deconstruct the roles of gender in sea fiction; but, rather, to come closer, with the help of literary works by the

4 See also my "Litteraturhistoriske fragmenter: Billeder af havet" (Fragments of Literary History: Images of the Ocean) in which I trace the major semantic shifts in our historical conception of the sea – first a shift from a theocentric to an anthropocentric view around 1500, then the replacement of the latter by a technocentric view around 1850, and then again a shift from a technocentric to a geocentric view during the second half of the 20th century.

likes of Coleridge, Conrad, and Bjørneboe, to an understanding of what maritime existence actually is – concretely, physically, emotionally, and phenomenally – through the concept and phenomenon of rhythm.

Inherent in this approach, and in Lefebvre's method, is an implicit quarrel with hermeneutics and the primacy of meaning in the humanities; or, at least a supplement to our constant urge to interpret every detail, object, or phenomenon in more and more dubious ways. In that sense, Lefebvre's method – his attention to the rhythmic (and arrhythmic) character of life – stands in opposition to the majority of the Western philosophical tradition, in which concepts such as representation, meaning, and interpretation have been dominant. Plato comes to mind here, but in the modern world Descartes's sharp distinction between body and mind and his prioritization of the cogito are also examples of this tradition. Contrary to this, the rhythmical has to do with the body and the senses and does not possess a primary dimension of representation. A rhythm does not refer to anything but itself, which is also why it should not be interpreted. It does not stand for, *re*-present, some hidden and deeper level of meaning. If anything, it must be sensed and felt (which does not exclude that a rhythm can affect us mentally) – and, subsequently, analyzed in its relationship to other rhythms and in its sensuous and bodily effects on us.

If we instead of looking back on philosophers such as Plato and Descartes confine our attention to the narrower time frame of the last four or five decades, then we also realize that the rhythmanalytical method may offer us a third way in relation to what have been two of the most dominant paradigms in literary studies and in the humanities in general, namely deconstruction and cultural studies (see also Gumbrecht 2011, 8-10). Both paradigms agree that literature is first and foremost a medium that attempts to represent reality. But to deconstruction this project is basically a *cul-de-sac* as a consequence of its radicalization of the Saussurean philosophy of language. Cultural Studies for their part operate with a relatively unproblematic relationship between language and reality.

This results in a toning down of the problem of representation in favor of questions that are more concerned with (identity) politics. However, since both paradigms operate with a literature ontology in which representation is central (either as a problem or as something unproblematic), literature must be interpreted. Literature *stands for* something else, and this very *re*-presentational structure calls for a semantic determination of literature's statements about reality. In that sense, Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis – with its predominantly descriptive instead of interpretative approach – offers a more sober and objective alternative to the immanent tendency of relativism and subjectivism in hermeneutics. This does not imply that we can or should abandon hermeneutics completely, but focusing on rhythms means that we connect with other dimensions of reality – and, in our case, with other dimensions of literature and its portrayal of maritime existence.

Arguably, rhythmanalysis is a method that does not offer us new knowledge in the way we traditionally conceive of this phenomenon, that is, as meaning understood as something immaterial, yet essential, that lies hidden behind the surface of phenomena, and which it is the task of humans to dig out through an effort of consciousness. Knowledge production on these terms is the task of hermeneutics. Rhythmanalysis instead points to the fact that the conditions for the production of knowledge can be different from how we usually conceive them. This is because rhythmanalysis situates the body and the mind of the analyzer *in* the world instead of mentally-consciously ex-centric to the world, and the world is not considered a surface that hides a series of semantic deep levels, but as a phenomenal world of biological, cosmic, social, and cultural practices, phenomena, and energies that interact. The common denominator for all of those is that they are each defined by their specific rhythm and their interaction happens through these rhythms that either enter into compromises or conflicts. Rhythmanalysis entails a shift in attention from the immaterial, the semantic, and the mental to the sensuous, the affective, and the bodily. Through rhythmanalysis we are linked more directly with the reality, which we – from the Renaissance

and onwards, and with different degrees – thought we had lost. Rhythms are not subsumed the paradigm of world representation; rather, they belong to the reality of the world.[5]

Besides addressing the questions of rhythm, meaning, and knowledge I will also discuss – tentatively rather than extensively – the pedagogical challenges of Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis as well as the challenges it poses for the analyzer in terms of communicating his or her findings. In other words, how are we supposed to teach if we are discouraged from interpreting, and how will our meaning-hungry students react if we suddenly decline to always serve up the meaning of a text for them? And how are we supposed to write our analyses if meaning and interpretation are no longer our main concern? The questions of knowledge, pedagogy and style will be addressed at the end of my article, whereas the first and major part of the article will deal with rhythms at sea exemplified through literary examples from maritime fiction. Here the aim is to demonstrate 1) the analytical relevance of rhythmanalysis to the domain of maritime literature and culture and 2) that ship and sea are privileged and obvious places to examine the rhythmic character of human existence and the non-human world.

RHYTHMANALYSIS AT SEA

A significant aspect of rhythm and rhythmanalysis – and an additional argument for their relevance – is their unique capacity to embrace three general, but to a certain degree also incompatible approaches to

5 For a similar line of thought, although rhythm is replaced with *Stimmung*, see Gumbrecht 2011, 34. It would be too big a task in this article to go deeper into a discussion of the differences and similarities between rhythm and *Stimmung*, but it is perhaps worth noting that a conceptual evolution can be traced in Gumbrecht's work from rhythm (Gumbrecht 1988) to presence (Gumbrecht 2003) culminating with *Stimmung* (Gumbrecht 2011). What is important here is that they are all part of Gumbrecht's ongoing attempt to propose alternatives to representational thinking and hermeneutical approaches. In terms of analytical operability, I would say that rhythm is a better and handier concept than *Stimmung*, at least in the way Lefebvre unfolds and uses it. The vagueness of *Stimmung* in terms of analytical operability is evident if one reads the concrete analyses in Gumbrecht's *Stimmungen lesen*.

the world, the phenomenological (the world as sensed through the body), the discursive (the world as imagined and mediated through language and culture), and the aesthetic (the world as mediated in an artistic form). In line with this tripartition Lefebvre claims that rhythms can be 1) cosmic, natural, and biological, 2) social, cultural, and constructed, and 3) aesthetic, formal, and stylistic. Cosmic rhythms (e.g., seasons and tides) are independent of man (although Bruno Latour and others with him have convincingly shown how infiltrated the natural and the man made are in each other,[6] it can benefit us analytically to operate with the two spheres as distinct), but humans themselves create socio-cultural rhythms (e.g., meals and working hours), just as they employ aesthetic rhythms in art (e.g., metre in literature, tact in music, and patterns in visual arts).

Although rhythms are sometimes man-made and socially or culturally constituted it is important to bear in mind that they are fundamentally something, which humans sense. As Lefebvre remarks: "The *sensible*, this scandal of philosophers from Plato to Hegel, (re) takes its primacy, transformed without magic (without metaphysics)" (Lefebvre 2004, 17). Humans experience rhythms sensuously through the body, and in that sense the rhythmical is linked with something both pre-conceptual and worldly immanent. Lefebvre again: "To grasp rhythm and polyrhythmias in a sensible, preconceptual but vivid way" ["Pour saisir de façon sensible, préconceptuelle mais vive, le rythme et les polyrythmies"] (Lefebvre 2004, 79; Lefebvre & Régulier 1985, 196).[7] Note here that Lefebvre does not use interpret (*interpreter*), but grasp (*saisir*). It is also worth noting that with the English translation (grasp) the physical dimension in

6 See e.g. Latour 1991. Claude Lévi-Strauss already stressed the fragile distinction between nature and culture in *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949) and in several of his other works. See also Jacques Derrida's discussion of Lévi-Strauss in "La Structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines" (1967). The rising significance of "the anthropocene" in the humanities is part of the same argument.

7 The original French article quoted here does not feature in *Éléments de rythmanalyse: Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes*, the original French book, but a translation of this article is incorporated into the English book.

Lefebvre's choice of words is underlined, but with the French *saisir* it arguably becomes even more evident that Lefebvre links the physical "to grasp" (or seize) directly to a dimension of knowledge (*saisir* not only means "to grasp," but also "to understand") – that is, knowledge is linked with something we can physically grasp with our fingers, not something we achieve through a mental process of consciousness (interpretation). However, I have actually left out the last part of the sentence. Here Lefebvre himself provides us with methodological legitimacy in terms of applying rhythmanalysis to maritime fiction and sea life: "To grasp rhythm and polyrhythmias in a sensible, preconceptual but vivid way, it is enough to look carefully at the surface of the sea."

Rhythms may be coded with a (cosmic or cultural) form, but they are, at least initially, not coded with meaning. They do not come to us from a world whose (visual, tactile, aural, olfactory, or gustatory) appearance hides a meaning beyond the appearance, which one must, at all costs, decipher or interpret (therefore "without metaphysics"): a rhythm "signifies" nothing, it simply "is" (which is one of the reasons why rhythmanalysis promises a descriptive alternative to the interpretational practice of hermeneutics and its immanent intellectual relativism); a rhythm has no (immediate) semantic effect on us, instead it has what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls a "presence effect": it affects us through its physical-sensuous constitution and acts (immediately) on and through our body (Gumbrecht 2003, xiv-xv, 2, 18, 49, 106-117).

The rhythmanalytical method rests on basic assumptions, which from the Renaissance onwards have been marginalized in the Western philosophical tradition: first, humans are not ex-centric to the world; second, humans are not purely intellectual and thus bodiless creatures. The separation between mankind and the world as well as the creation of the ex-centric man as an observer of a world of which it is no longer an integrated part laid the foundations for Western man's inclination to see the world as a surface that demands to be interpreted and for the idea that it is only humans themselves who can produce knowledge. Regarding the later emergence of the new self-conscious observer, Gumbrecht remarks:

> If the observer role that arose in early modernity as a key element of the hermeneutic field was merely concerned with finding the appropriate distance in relation to its objects, the second-order observer, the new observer role that would shape the epistemology of the nineteenth century, was an observer condemned – rather than privileged – to observe himself in the act of observation. The emergence of this self-reflexive loop in the form of the second-order observer had two major consequences. Firstly, the second-order observer realized that each element of knowledge and each representation that he could ever produce would necessarily depend on the specific angle of his observation. He thus began to realize that there was an infinity of renditions for each potential object of reference – which proliferation ultimately shattered the belief in stable objects of reference. At the same time, the second-order observer rediscovered the human body and, more specifically, the human senses as an integral part of any world-observation. This other consequence coming from the new observer role would not only end up problematizing the pretended gender-neutrality of the disembodied first-order observer (this question can indeed be regarded as one of the origins of feminist philosophy); above all, it brought up the question of a possible compatibility between a world-appropriation by concepts (which I shall call "experience") and a world-observation through the senses (which I shall call "perception"). (Gumbrecht 2003, 38-39)

The answer from Western philosophy and literature to this problem concerning the relationship between concept and experience, on the one hand, and sense and perception on the other, was most often that mankind had now lost the world or at least it had lost its immediate access to the world. The inherent attempt in Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis to overcome metaphysics and circumvent the age of the (linguistic) sign should in this line of thinking be considered an attempt to recuperate the world and the world of things

in that rhythm can be said to combine world-appropriation and experience (we grasp the world through rhythms) with world-observation and perception (the grasping is not hermeneutical or reflective, but perceptual and immediate).

In regard to maritime life it is interesting that the principal manner humans according to Gumbrecht relate to themselves in a presence culture is through the body. They also consider themselves part of the world, not ex-centric to it. Life onboard a ship is also a bodily rather than a reflexive existence, and the sailor is radically *in* the world and subject to the rhythms of nature. As one of the characters in Cooper's *The Red Rover* exclaims: "What is to happen will happen bodily" (Cooper 1991, 207-08). If we can speak of meaning in a presence culture, and of course we can do that, then Gumbrecht claims that this meaning is not produced by man through an act of world interpretation. Instead, meaning is here something that reveals itself – something that just happens. The maritime equivalence to this is, as we shall see, the epiphanic moments of bodily (and therefore also mentally) bliss, which ship life sometimes offers. Apart from this, it is also characteristic for a presence culture that space and not time is its primary dimension. Finally, Gumbrecht argues that physical violence (primarily understood as bodily obstructions in space, but also understood in a more traditional way) is not a tabooed but a normal phenomenon among people in presence cultures.[8] It is well known that life onboard a ship can be extremely brutal and violent, and combined with the ship's threatening surroundings and its architecture, which facilitates a life form where bodies obstruct other bodies in space, it emphasizes the claustrophobic and thus very spatial constitution of maritime existence (claustrophobia does not stand alone, though, since life at sea also entails a dimension of almost sublime freedom due to the vast space of the ocean).

If Edward Casey is right when he claims that places endow us with stability, memory, and identity (Casey 2009, xv), I will add that it is exactly rhythms, which not only produce but also stabi-

8 For a discussion of the differences between a presence culture and a meaning culture, see Gumbrecht 2003, 78-86.

lize places by giving them a memory and a continuous identity. Rhythms act as a resistance to formlessness and pure fluidity. The main reason for this is their dependency on repetitions, but contrary to the so-called "dead" or "naked" repetitions (Deleuze 1968, 37), the return of the self-identical, rhythms are defined by their subtle dose of movements and differences within the very rhythm of repetition. Rhythm is form that becomes form over time, a changing structure that realizes itself in time as Émile Benvéniste pointed out in the first volume of *Problems in General Linguistics* (1966).[9] But, since our objects of investigation are the sea and the

9 See Benvéniste 1971, 281-88. Benvéniste actually considers the concept of rhythm as one that manages the "vast unification of man and nature under time" (281). And Benvéniste, like Lefebvre, mentions "the regular movements of the waves of the sea" as a possible etymological impulse in "rhythm," which originally meant "to flow" (281). However, looking closer into this connection, Benvéniste reaches the conclusion that the link is morphologically possible, but indeed semantically impossible, because the sea does not actually flow. In fact, rhythm was used in ancient times as a synonym for "form," which may be said to be the opposite of "to flow." However, Benvéniste returns to etymology claiming that what was wrong was merely that we used the wrong sense of "rhythm", that is, "to flow" instead of "form." His next step is now to connect those two, because "form" is not to be understood as "fixed form," but rather as "form in the instant that it is assumed by what is moving, mobile and fluid, the form of that which does not have organic consistency; […] It is the form as improvised, momentary, changeable" (286). "Rhythm" literally means, says Benvéniste, "the particular manner of flowing" (286). Behind this notion lies the Heraclitean worldview of fluidity, which infuses the very conceptual framework of its contemporaneity: "There is a deep-lying connection between the proper meaning of the term *ῥυθμός* [rhythm, S.F.] and the doctrine of which it discloses one of its most original notions" (286). Benvéniste's final step consists in bringing in Plato in order to make the ends between "form" and "flow" meet. "We are far indeed from the simplistic picture that a superficial etymology used to suggest, and it was not in contemplating the play of waves on the shore that the primitive Hellene discovered 'rhythm'; it is, on the contrary, we who are making metaphors today when we speak of the rhythm of the waves. It required a long consideration of the structure of things, then a theory of measure applied to the figures of dance and to the modulations of song, in order for the principle of cadenced movement to be recognized and given a name" (287). "Order in movement," "a configuration of movements organized in time," and "cadenced movement" (287) are then Benvéniste's final definitions of rhythm.

ship, and based on Casey's thoughts on place, could we not ask, with Benvéniste in mind, if rhythm is not primarily a temporal rather than a placial phenomenon? Lefebvre says both yes and no:

> concrete times have rhythms, or rather are rhythms – and all rhythms imply the relation of a time to a space, a localised time, or, if one prefers, a temporalised space. Rhythm is always linked to such and such a place, to its place, be that the heart, the fluttering of the eyelids, the movement of a street or the tempo of a waltz. This does not prevent it from being in a time, which is to say an aspect of a movement or of a becoming. (Lefebvre 2004, 89)

Rhythms also have the ability to destabilize and insert amnesia and rupture in a place, though. Lefebvre labels this phenomenon arrhythmia, and it happens when rhythms break down and circumvent synchronization. Lefebvre compares arrhythmia with a pathological condition, with illness; in addition, he claims that we are normally not aware of rhythms until they become irregular. Rhythms thus consist of both continuity and contrast, of identity and difference, and of change and repetition, just as each one of them is characterized by their own tempo, their own phase, and their own durability.

Whether we speak of rhythm or of arrhythmia, rhythmanalysis can contribute to describe life onboard a ship in a concrete and material way. In the beginning of *Typhoon* (1902), Conrad characterizes the seaman's life as being both "uninteresting," not without a "mysterious side," and "so entirely given the actuality of the bare existence" (Conrad 1950b, 4). Rhythmanalysis is able to contribute to a description of maritime existence because rhythms are closely connected to – in fact they constitute – both the "uninteresting" (monotonous) and the "mysterious" (epiphanic) sides as well as "the actuality of the bare existence," and this latter consists for its part of the sensuous and the fleshy, smells and odors, colors and lights, moods and atmospheres. What occupies or fills "smooth space" is, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari remark,

"intensities, wind and noise, forces and sonorous and tactile qualities" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 528). Life onboard the ship is thus an extremely bodily existence where the human body in a manner of speaking is dressed in the material texture of life and the everyday, a texture that is constituted by biological, psychological, natural, and social rhythms.

In such a world the sailor's body becomes a metronome, a contact zone where linear-social and cyclical-biological rhythms interact, converge or diverge:

> Cyclical repetition and the linear repetitive separate out under analysis, but in *reality* interfere with one another constantly. The cyclical originates in the cosmic, in nature: days, nights, seasons, the waves and the tides of the sea, monthly cycles, etc. The linear would come rather from social practice, therefore from human activity: the monotony of actions and of movements, imposed structures. Great cyclical rhythms last for a period and restart: dawn, always new, often superb, inaugurates the return of the everyday. The antagonistic unity of relations between the cyclical and the linear sometimes gives rise to compromises, sometimes to disturbances. (Lefebvre 2004, 8)

The point is not only that rhythmanalysis is a fruitful and well-chosen method with which to examine ship life. No, the ocean-going ship is also a privileged place to analyze rhythms. Rhythms in relation to nature, the elements, and the "natural" body as well as in relation to the socio-cultural and the "cultural" body become very "visible" and tangible when employing the perspective of the ship since nature's ferocity and man's fragility on the planet are so obvious and so obviously felt out on the ocean. The calm rhythms of nature, the rhythm of the sailor and the ship in relation to nature, and the socio-cultural rhythm onboard the ship – that is, the necessity of a mutual rhythm in order to navigate in relation to the rhythms of the planet – are therefore evidently of vital significance for ship life.

COSMIC AND CULTURAL RHYTHMS AT SEA

In *The Ship Sails On* (orig. *Skibet gaar videre*, 1924), Nordahl Grieg compares the novel's steamship with "a warehouse that moves about from port to port" (Grieg 1927, 2), and in Conrad's *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897), the ship is described as "a high and lonely pyramid" and as an "enormous aquatic black beetle" (Conrad 1950a, 27). Earlier, Cooper had likened it to "one of the bubbles of the element" (Cooper 1991, 248), that is, a mere water bubble. These are merely a tiny-tiny fraction of the striking metaphors that have been used by authors to emphasize the ship's intense exposure to the cyclical and cosmic rhythms of nature. The cosmic rhythms – days and nights, sunrises and sunsets, months and seasons, waves and tides – occasionally contribute to make life onboard the ship an appeasing, satisfying, and rewarding experience. This happens for example in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* when "the serene purity of the night enveloped the seamen with its soothing breath, with its tepid breath flowing under the stars that hung countless above the mastheads in a thin cloud of luminous dust" (Conrad 1950a, 14-15). Implied here is the full-blown symbiosis between firmament and ship ("enveloped"), and with "soothing breath" and "tepid breath" Conrad stresses the fundamental rhythmic and synchronic nature of the situation. In *Typhoon*, we learn that "every ship Captain MacWhirr commanded was the floating abode of harmony and peace," and in relation to the captain it says that he "could feel against his ear the pulsation of the engines, like the beat of the ship's heart" (Conrad 1950b, 4, 66).

In *The Sharks: The History of a Crew and a Shipwreck* (orig. *Haiene: Historien om et mannskap og et forlis*, 1974), the protagonist Peder Jensen tells us how he and the other crew members "heard the clear, almost transparent lapping of water and waves around the ship's bow and along her sides" (Bjørneboe 1992, 18). This experience of safety and harmony, which is mostly aural, is supplemented a few pages further on with a genuine epiphanic moment of synchronicity and joy:

> It's no exaggeration to say that I trembled as I first gribbed the mahogany wheel. […] Carefully I eased her a quarter of a point off to windward, just to feel the contact, to feel how she minded her rudder. And I felt it, the faint quivering – she too trembled at my touch! A tall flame of happiness went through me, from my feet to my fingertips I felt the trembling of her, of this oneness of hull and rigging – of body and soul, of ropes and wind. It was a great, rushing music: the sea, the ship, and the wind. (Bjørneboe 1992, 26)

Irritation and a feeling of losing one's sense of direction if rhythms are experienced as being too monotonous can replace the rhythmic wellbeing. In *Typhoon*, the narrator thus refers to the captain as being "exasperated by the continuous, monotonous rolling of the ship" (Conrad 1950b, 26). In Malcolm Lowry's *Ultramarine* (1933), Dana Hilliot loses his sense of time because of the repetitious character of ship life: "Today, or was it yesterday? Two days ago. All the days were the same. The engine hammered out the same stroke, same beat, as yesterday. The forecastle was no lighter, no darker, than yesterday. Today, or is it yesterday? Yes, two days it must be. Two days – two months – two years" (Lowry 1969, 16). Notice the displacement from "was" to "is" in the repetition of "Today, or was/is it yesterday?" The displacement – or, perhaps we should rather speak of an oscillation between past tense and present tense – subtly emphasizes Hilliot's temporal disorientation on the level of form.

Nature and the cosmos also possess destructive forces that expose the fragility of the ship's construction and constitution. Consequently, and out of necessity, the ship answers to these threats by creating more mechanical, rigid, and linear rhythms – that is, cultural organizations – that stabilize the ship. Think of the monotony of certain actions and movements such as the crew's conventional behavior towards the officers, the mustering of the crew, or the stoker's feeding the boiler with coal. These actions or movements have to do with what Lefebvre calls "dressage," that is, a

schooling or a breeding of the human body that is internalized and "puts into place an automatism of repetitions" in order to fill "the place of the unforeseen" (Lefebvre 2004, 40). Dressage is a phenomenon whose necessity onboard ships is legitimized by the exposure of the ship and its crew, and in regard to the schooling in being able to step in as buffer or even bulwark against all kinds of unexpected incidents it is not wrong to claim that dressage is a phenomenon, which implicates that culture comes extremely close to biology. Dressage or the disciplining of the human body is often more intense onboard military ship than mercantile ships, even though the militaristic discipline is a general condition according to Bjørneboe:

> Life at sea is indeed a military world, built on total obedience and submission on the crew's part. The captain is the government's deputy, he has the law on his side, and he is absolute dictator in his little society. He can be brought to trial for brutality or abuse of power, but only when he is back on land. Until then he is sovereign and must be obeyed.
>
> The class difference between officers and crew is an unbridgeable gulf. […]
>
> Each has his precisely allotted rank and role. Their dictates are harsh, both for crew and command. (Bjørneboe 1992, 205)

Enforced temporal, spatial, and social structures such as shifts, compartmentalizations, and hierarchies also contribute the territorialization of the ship. Hence, it is not just that "Each has his precisely allotted rank and role," each action also has its specific time onboard the ship, just as each object and person has its carefully allotted place.

When the two types of rhythms, the cosmic and the cultural, converge in a condition of compromise – what Lefebvre calls

"eurhythmia" – "the bundle of natural rhythms wraps itself in rhythms of social or mental function" in a metastable equilibrium (Lefebvre 2004, 8-9). But compromise cannot always be counted on, sometimes conflicts occur, whether due to de- or accelerations, unpredictable as well as predictable, in nature, or to disturbances in the social (atmo)sphere. Onboard the ship, such arrhythmia, or de-synchronization, can have a potentially fatal and morbid outcome.

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL RHYTHMS

In relation to the ship we can also speak of external and internal rhythms. External rhythms are more cosmic and have to do with the relationship between the vessel and such rhythmic components as the sky, the ocean, the wind, the waves, the stars, the sun, the moon, the horizon, the rain, the sea creatures, and maybe even Heaven and Hell (superstition is an unavoidable part of ship life and maritime fiction). Internal rhythms are more social and have to do with the relationship between officers, crew, work, and ship. External rhythms generally play a bigger role onboard sailing ships than steam ships because of the sailings ship's closer and more collaborative connection with nature, especially the wind. On a steam ship, being more independent of nature – at least relatively speaking – the internal rhythms, especially those between man and man, are of greater significance. Whether we speak of internal or external rhythms there usually is a hierarchy, that is, a determining rhythm or an original and coordinating aspect, which not unlike a conductor regulates the whole ensemble of rhythms.

At the time when Conrad began writing *Typhoon* in 1899 it was not so much the depiction of the storm that caused problems to his creative temperament. The challenge consisted rather in the need to come up with "a leading motive that would harmonize all these violent noises, and a point of view that would put all that elemental fury into its proper place" (Conrad 1950b, vi). Conrad's solution to this problem is the invention of the character Captain MacWhirr who throughout the novel can be said to act as a center of gravity in the midst of chaos. During the absolute climax of

the storm it is thus MacWhirr's voice that has a reassuring effect on the mate: "And again he heard that voice, forced and ringing feebly, but with a penetrating effect of quietness […] bearing that strange effect of quietness like the serene glow of a halo […] in the enormous discord of noises" (Conrad 1950b, 44, 46, 44). The calming effect of the voice has nothing to do with meaning: It is not *what* MacWhirr says, but *how* he says it – that is, it has to do with rhythm, sound, intonation, and the bodily rather than with the intellectual effects of the voice.

In general, the voice as a physical as opposed to a semantic phenomenon plays a significant role in much sea fiction where it functions as a rhythmical epicenter and either coordinates a potentially polyrhythmic confusion of rhythms, or, as in this case, opposes itself the arrhythmia caused by the typhoon. The crew's song during demanding tasks is another example of the voice being a coordinating, but also collectivizing force. During rhythmic communal singing the crew becomes one body.

Language can also work in a heterogenising and cacophonic way as when several national languages coexist onboard the ship. Cacophony does not automatically exclude a tolerant form of polyrhythmia. According to Lefebvre, "[p]olyrhythmia always results from a contradiction, but also from resistance to this contradiction – resistance to a relation of force and an eventual conflict" Lefebvre 2004, 99). However, it often happens that the maritime heteroglossia leads to strife, violence, and murder since the cacophonic surface covers deeper-lying conflicts. In *The Sharks* Peder Jensen is amazed "that there was so little cohesion, so little solidarity in the forecastle. There was incessant hostility and bickering, eternal factional battles – between group and group, man and man, between races and colours" (Bjørneboe 1992, 102). To paraphrase the old parlor game, the ship is loaded with race conflicts, nationalistic chauvinisms, disciplinary mechanisms, gender role patterns, sexual desire, homophobic anxieties, brutal enforcements of law and order, hierarchical segmentations of space, and endless risks of mutiny.

Without MacWhirr's timely deeds and cold-blooded inaction,

and without his magnetic voice that is able to introduce a determining and stabilizing rhythm in the midst of the violent storm, *Nan-Shan*, its crew, and its cargo would undoubtedly have been a victim of what Robert Pogue Harrison has called "the sea's irresponsibility, its hostility to memory, its impatience with ruins, and its passion for erasure" (Harrison 2003, 14). In other words: Rhythm is a precondition for life, and chaos and formlessness threaten as rhythmless conditions life itself. If chaos and death constitute one end of a scale with rhythm, "cadenced form" (Benvéniste), and life in the middle, then there is in fact also another phenomenon at the opposite end of this scale, which threatens life: pure stasis. On the ocean this life-threatening phenomenon manifests itself as calm sea. This can be illustrated like this:

Death ⇦ Storm (Chaos) ⇔ Rhythm ⇨ LIFE ⇦ Rhythm ⇔ Calm sea (Stasis) ⇨ Death

Calm sea can immobilize the sailing ship for several days and create an even more oppressive atmosphere on an otherwise already claustrophobic ship.

As already mentioned, movement is a precondition for rhythm, but during a calm sea movement is completely absent, and even the mechanized, linear, and monotone hammering of a steam ship engine would feel like a liberation and a resumption of life itself. In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" (1798) we come upon a description of such a dead calm scene:

> Down dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down,
> 'Twas sad as sad could be;
> And we did speak only to break
> The silence of the sea!
>
> Day after day, day after day,
> We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
> As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean. (Coleridge 1911, II: 6 and 8)

In his use of repetitions Coleridge formally mimes the stasis of the situation – pay especially attention to "down dropped […] dropped down," "sad as sad," "Day after day, day after day," "nor […] nor," and "a painted […] a painted." The potentially rhythmless scenario is disturbed by sounds that interrupt the monotony, though. The rhythms and rimes of the stanzas also contribute to disturb the dead calmness.

RITUALS

Rites and rituals sometimes constitute the determining rhythm of ship life. According to Lefebvre they "have a double relation with rhythms, each ritualization creates its own time and particular rhythm, that of gestures, solemn words, acts prescribed in a certain sequence; but also rites and ritualizations intervening in everyday time, punctuating it. This occurs most frequently in the course of cyclical time, at fixed hours, dates or occasions" (Lefebvre 2004, 94). In that sense rituals can be seen as temporal incisions into a possible monotonous everyday life. Onboard the ship they imprint an *extra*-everyday rhythm on the everyday, that is, a rhythm that stands outside of the everyday. The rituals only interrupt the everyday momentarily, though. In general, and whether we speak of religious, political, or social rites, they function as a centripetalizing force, which contributes to strengthen the alliances and compromises between the different rhythms onboard the ship. "Burial at sea" is one example of a ritual that takes up a privileged period on the ship, and we encounter it in many sea stories. Since the ritual of burial is usually an event that trumps all other occupations and doings, and because it is surrounded by much reverence, we can characterize it as a coordinating and determining conductor.

In Jack London's *The Sea-Wolf* (1904) we come across such a burial scene, but here the ritual is trumped by an even stronger determining rhythm. His name is Wolf Larsen, and he is the captain of *Ghost*. In connection with the burial of a crew member Larsen fails to respect the rituals associated with a burial at sea. On a general level, these are "gestures, solemn words, acts prescribed

in a certain sequence," on a more specific level these are reciting appropriate passages from the Bible and devoting an appropriate time frame for the ceremony to be completed properly and for the deceased sailor to be honored in a decent way. Wolf Larsen, whose primary rhythm is governed by a ferocious mix of Spencerian biologism and economism – that is, a rhythm that is first and foremost linear and one-dimensionally focused, especially in relation to what concerns personal survival and wealth – takes leave of his deceased crew member with the following words: "'I only remember one part of the service,' he said, 'and that is, 'And the body shall be cast into the sea.' So cast it in'" (London 2000, 28).

At first, the crew is confused because of the short duration and irreverence of the ceremony, which means that a risk of arrhythmia and conflict exists, but Wolf Larsen immediately throws himself verbally upon them and orders them to get rid of the body. The voice as a physical phenomenon with an instructing effect that makes any hermeneutic activity superfluous is also in this case of great significance: "They elevated the end of the hatch-cover with pitiful haste, and, like a dog flung overside, the dead man slid feet first into the sea. The coal at his feet dragged him down. He was gone" (London 2000, 28-29). The short duration of the ceremony is here mimed on the literary-formal level by the shortness of the last sentence: "He was gone."

What is most striking to the narrator is the "heartlessness" of the event and also the fact that the dead sailor immediately was "an episode that was past, and incident that was dropped" (London 2000, 29). The sealers, apparently unaffected by the situation, thus laugh of a story while "the dead man, dying obscenely, buried sordidly," was "sinking down, down –" (London 2000, 29). Later in the novel the body of Wolf Larsen is transferred to the sea with exactly the same words – "And the body shall be cast into the sea" (London 2000, 279) – after which the novel laconically and without any illusions repeats (with the not insignificant difference that the humanizing and individualizing "He" has been replaced by the reificating and anonymizing "it"): "It was gone" (London 2000, 280). Burial at sea proves to be a special and often privileged

ritual with its own unique rhythm in much sea fiction. Another famous example is the execution and the subsequent burial of the eponymous hero Billy Budd in Melville's novel. In contrast to London, Melville's captain, Edward Fairfax Vere, respects the ritual, and Billy's bodily sinking is supplemented with images of his soul's resurrection (Melville 1986, 376).

INTERNAL ARRHYTHMIA

An example of arrhythmia between man and man can be found in Conrad's *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* where an atmosphere rules onboard the ship that reminds one of a pathological, dysfunctional condition. The novel is characterized by Conrad's sharp distinction between the era of steam and the disappearing era of sail. This dichotomy's conflicting structure – among others including the tensions between money calculation and mystery, iron and wood, mass and individual, ugliness and beauty, clumsiness and grace – reverberates throughout the whole novel and dictates its fundamental rhythm, which largely can be described as an arrhythmia threatening to paralyze the crew and therefore also the ship. As Singleton – the incarnation of the old-fashioned, conservative sailor – remarks: "Ships are all right. It is the men in them!" (Conrad 1950a, 24). Singleton's remark is a reminder to us about the character of the conflict onboard *Narcissus*. It has psychological dimensions since it is a conflict between men.

The decisive tension – the one that results in longer periods with arrhythmia and thus threatens the ship's functionality and seaworthiness – is the tension between egoism and community, especially in relation to work. Two individuals are the cause behind this tension: James Wait, the so-called "nigger" referred to in the title, and Donkin. Wait is suffering from lethal tuberculosis and with Donkin as his prime accomplice he manages to involve the entire crew emotionally in his disease. Conrad insinuates that the crew's sympathy with and altruistic behavior towards Wait is basically motivated by purely egoistic feelings and purposes covering a deeper-lying and at sea very dangerous inability to become reconciled with suffering and death. Their apparent hu-

manitarian sympathies are founded in their need to feel redeemed and to consider themselves as good human beings. However, this philanthropic misunderstanding is also the psychological rhythm that threatens the health of the ship since it negatively influences the work ethic and therefore also the crew's true feeling of community. Early on, Donkin is designated as the primary villain:

> He was the man that cannot steer, that cannot splice, that dodges the work on dark nights; that, aloft, holds on frantically with both arms and legs, and swears at the wind, the sleet, the darkness; the man who curses the sea while others work. The man who is the last out and the first in when all hands are called. The man who can't do most things and won't do the rest. The pet of philanthropists and self-seeking landlubbers. The sympathetic and deserving creature that knows all about his rights, but knows nothing of courage, of endurance, and of the unexpressed faith, of the unspoken loyalty that knits together a ship's company. (Conrad 1950a, 10-11)

Gradually, piece and mutual trust are shaken onboard *Narcissus* as a result of the crew's ambivalent reactions to Wait and his disease, torn as they are between suspicion and pity, and finally they succumb to the corrupting pity. At the end, *Narcissus* regains a sort of eurhythmia, but before it does that, Conrad needs to test the crew in a storm, an event that proves to be their chance to become reconciled with death through collaborative work. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* is not exceptional in terms of showing how significant the internal, psycho-pathological rhythms are when it comes to danger and potential shipwreck. In Jonas Lie's *The Pilot and His Wife* (orig. *Lodsen og Hans Hustru*, 1874), the pilot and captain, Salve Kristiansen, is challenged one night at sea by the forces of nature, but the main reason for Salve's ultimate shipwreck is not so much these natural forces as it is his jealousy and rage, which leads him into navigational hubris and blindness (Lie 2009, 236-57).

KNOWLEDGE, PEDAGOGY, AND STYLE IN RHYTHMANALYSIS

The above represents the dual attempt to show 1) that life at sea is a privileged place to examine cosmic and social rhythms and 2) the benefit of reading sea fiction with rhythmanalytical glasses. This benefit has to do more specifically with getting closer to the concreteness of maritime existence through a shift in focus from an interpretation of the multiple meanings of the sea and the ship to an understanding (i.e., grasping) of how it feels to be onboard an oceangoing ship. The remaining part of the article will be devoted to a discussion of 1) what type of knowledge is produced by rhythmanalysis, 2) the problems related to implementing rhythmanalysis in the classroom, and 3) the challenges we face when we set out to write a rhythmanalysis.

Besides contributing to a more nuanced understanding of what it means and how it feels to be onboard a ship out on the ocean, the analysis of maritime rhythms has suggested a possible way forward in regard to "reading" literature and cultural artifacts in new and more rhythmic ways – ways that have more to do with and show greater sensibility toward materialities, moods, bodily effects and affects, and the immanent rhythm of physical things. In other words, what has motivated the approach has been the experience – understood as immediate, sensuous perception (*Erlebnis*)[10] – of the world's thingness and of culture's preoccupation with this experience rather than semantics and hermeneutic demands. As a method, rhythmanalysis does not necessarily have as its main objective to produce new, positive knowledge or revise traditional knowledge (this is the chief objective of hermeneutics, as when a literary scholar proposes a new interpretation of Henrik Ibsen's conception of marriage or James Joyce's conception of love). Instead, the epistemological project of rhythmanalysis con-

10 In English the word "experience" covers both the reflective afterthought, the mental processing and ordering, of something one has experienced, as well as the actual experience, which is more immediate and sensuous. In German there is a specific word for each one of them: *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* (so too, in Danish: *erfaring* and *oplevelse*).

sists in a rethinking and reconfiguration of the very conditions of knowledge production within the humanities. According to Lefebvre, the aim is "nothing less than to found a science, a new field of knowledge" (Lefebvre 2004, 3). Again: not new knowledge, but a new field of knowledge. It is a *saisir*, a *savoir*, and a *connaissance* through the sensuous intrinsic to the world, not through any conscious hermeneutic activity extrinsic to the world. The analysis of "the bundle" of natural and social rhythms "consists in opening and unwrapping the bundle" ["consiste à ouvrir et à défaire le paquet"] (Lefebvre 2004, 9; Lefebvre 1992, 18), not in interpreting it. If we insist on knowledge and new knowledge, then we at least must differentiate between knowledge as interpretation and semantic meaning and knowledge as grasping and understanding. If we shift our attention from the epistemological to the existential, it is an additional benefit of rhythmanalysis that the experiential-perceptual approach to the things of the world (including cultural artifacts) in their preconceptual "thingness" will reactivate an increased sensibility towards the bodily and sensory dimensions of our existence.

The knowledge produced by rhythmanalysis is not so much a conscious-mental knowledge, that is, an intellectual or semantic knowledge of an object's – a city, a text, a building – essential meaning. The rhythmanalytical knowledge instead arises through the senses and the human body, and it has less to do with what something means than with how something works and what effects something has on us and the other participants in the rhythmic constellation. In that sense, rhythmanalysis has more to do with force fields, energies, conflicts, compromises, and synchronicities, a sort of Nietzschean world of active and reactive forces, than with semantics, meaning, significance, and interpretation. The analyzer observes, listens, feels, tastes, and smells, and he or she has an eye for the phenomenal world's lengthy processes and becomings – even the rhythmic movement of the inorganic objects. I mentioned earlier that rhythmanalysis counters the inherent relativism and subjectivism in hermeneutical interpretation and thus represents a more sober and perhaps even objective alternative to

hermeneutics. However, rhythmanalysis is in fact also inherently perspectival as its starting point is the analyzers own subjective, rhythmic, and bodily constitution. But still we are right to uphold a difference between hermeneutics and rhythmanalysis. The inherent subjectivism and perspectivism in rhythmanalysis – "Man (the species): his physical and physiological being is indeed the measure of the world" (Lefebvre 2004, 83) – is more directly and immediately connected to the world than in hermeneutics. Our ears, eyes, and hands are not passive receivers of impressions, but co-contributors to the world, and are, according to Lefebvre, less arbitrarity in their grasping than in the mental-conscious interpretation.

I will now briefly touch upon the pedagogical consequences of rhythmanalysis. This is because it challenges the way we traditionally act in the classroom when teaching our students. The problem is related to my next and last issue concerning our style of writing. Those of us who have ventured into the rhythmanalytical practice will probably agree that there is an immanent danger of one's analysis – whether it is developed in the classroom or in a text – becoming a bit boring. The epiphanic moments of our students and ourselves most often relate to the eye-opening experiences we have when digging out new knowledge and meaning through our interpretations. In many ways, this dimension is ideological and political and has to do with the message of the author and the text. I am not saying that this dimension is not important, but rhythmanalysis operates in a different way, seeks something else: the sensuous dimensions of the text and the organization and mediation of these dimensions and rhythms. Our challenge is then to make our students receptive to the aesthetic qualities of art and be less obsessed with ideology, ethics, and semantics (without discarding them completely).

In the same way that rhythmanalysis may be felt to be inadequate in the classroom it can be felt to be strangely inadequate when we write our scientific articles and books. One reason for this is that rhythmanalysis is fundamentally descriptive and to a much lesser degree interpretative, or at least interpretative in a

different way than we are used to. And as we all know, description is a discursive practice whose value is debated. In a way, description is a stranger when it comes to academic texts whereas it more naturally belongs to textual practices associated with fiction. Many readers of novels simply skip the descriptions, driven forward as they are in their reading solely by the plot, by what Salman Rushdie once called "what-happened-nextism" (Rushdie 1995, 39). And, come to think of it, why return to a discourse that Balzac, Tolstoy, and Eliot elevated and perfected in the 19th century?

But what does Lefebvre have to say about the matter? He rarely touches upon the style of rhythmanalysis in his book, but the issue features a little more prominently, but still relatively sporadic and undeveloped, in the article on the Mediterranean cities written with Catherine Régulier, which is included in both the French and English book. In the article they describe the method as inevitably transdisciplinary and add that its ambition is to unite the scientific and the poetic – or at least to separate as little as possible the two forms of knowledge and genres (Lefebvre 2004, 87; Lefebvre 1992, 98). Towards the end of the article they address a potential objection that could be raised against the article's conceptually very high level of abstraction. However, according to Lefebvre and Régulier this conceptual abstraction was a necessity since the rhythmanalytical method found itself in an initial phase of conceptual development at the time of writing (the article was a forerunner for the book that was never completed by Lefebvre). Lefebvre and Régulier claim that they could easily have avoided these possible objections if they had wanted to – and here comes the important phrases – "either by painstakingly describing a known and privileged place – or by throwing ourselves into the lyricism that arouses the splendor of the cities evoked" ["soit en décrivant minutieusement un lieu privilégié et connu – soit en nous lançant dans le lyrisme que suscite la splendeur des villes évoquées"] (Lefebvre 2004, 100; Lefebvre 1992, 109).

So, Lefebvre and Régulier here open up for a rhythmanalytical discourse that either poetically and lyrically can arouse splendor

or, through a descriptive approach and style, can capture a city's, a place's, or a text's rhythmic and sensuous dimensions and make them comprehensible, that is, graspable. *Saisir* and *susciter* instead of *interpreter*. Now, I cannot blame anyone for thinking if this is our worst nightmare. Are we now supposed to be authors in the artistic sense of the word? No, I do not think this is what Lefebvre and Régulier are aiming at. What they are suggesting, perhaps implicitly, is an expansion of our academic discourse catalogue, just as they urge us to work seriously with our own style and to challenge the traditional academic discourse as a discourse that exclusively interprets and analyzes. We academics are also allowed to bring back the world in our writings.

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Rhythms abound today, in a time where all manner of rhythms intersect and amplify each other. Rhythmanalysis enables us to discuss lived experience, both in terms of the constraints of contemporary society, but also the affordances (social, technological, cultural) that we all have access to, in different ways. By focusing on rhythms, we recognize how multiple, different forms inform both our experience but also culture and society as a whole. Rhythmanalysis allows for close attention to the particularities of each rhythm, while also recognizing the combined effect. In this way, rhythmanalysis can be seen as an productive supplement of constructivist thought, thus illuminating critical theory, poststructuralism, and most other branches of cultural theory.

Revisiting, discussing and revising Henry Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis, this volume thus contributes to rhythmanalysis by outlining a methodology for others to adapt, while at the same time providing specific instances of how rhythmanalysis can work as an analytic tool, but also shows how rhythms manifest in a multitude of ways.