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Y. Chen, Murmuring in the Waves : A Rhythmanalysis of the 1970s' Conjunctural Shift in Britain



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SUMMARY

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This PhD thesis closely examines the method of rhythmanalysis as a mode of attending to cultural experiences. It mainly engages with Henri Lefebvre's philosophical discussions of the method and this thesis expands and extends the contribution of rhythmanalysis to historical work in particular. In relation to what the cultural theorist Stuart Hall marks to be a conjunctural shift that took place around the mid-1970s in Britain, I aim to explore the historic rupture by mapping out how rhythmic alliances of social life have changed in the post-war years. While Hall's theorisation of the conjunctural shift is largely based on ideological grounds (especially his writing on Thatcherism suggests a paradigm shift led by a political figure), I tentatively set out to (dis)entangle the kind of rhythms, as ways of sensing, and ways of ordering social experiences, which testify to Hall's theories.

There are two ways of proceeding and I use case studies to illustrate how rhythmanalysis may operate. The first focus is on bodily rhythms such as walking and how it may direct our attention to the material conditions that were undergoing transformations in the East End of London. I also explore rhythms of the postal systems as they were enmeshed in a complex network of communication rhythms such as transport and financial practices. My thesis is both a theoretical contribution to the field of cultural history, as well as providing empirical evidence that complicate and enrich the historical perspective of this conjuncture.