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**Murmuring in the Waves:
A Rhythmanalysis of the 1970s' Conjunctural
Shift in Britain**

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This thesis is submitted to University of Sussex in fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other University for a degree.

Parts of Chapter 3 have previously been published as a journal article in *Culture Unbound*, 5, 2013, pp. 531-549, Linköping University Electronic Press.

Yi Chen

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEXYi ChenPhD in Cultural StudiesMurmuring in the Waves: A Rhythmanalysis of the 1970s' Conjunctural Shift in BritainSUMMARY

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.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Without Guarantees - Portraying the 1970s'

Conjuncture

This thesis takes on Henri Lefebvre's conception of rhythmanalysis as a philosophy as well as a methodology that posits practical consequences for the study of cultural experiences. The loosely and often lyrical discussions on 'rhythm' and how rhythmanalysis contributes to a heightening of lived experience (an essential step into exploring all possibilities of life), open up a field of inquiry that reserves much space for imagination and expansion. It is foremost an inventive method that does not exhaust itself in its attention to the contingency and complexity of social phenomena. Inspired by Lefebvre, as well as other writers who do not elaborate on the theme to the same extent (or whose works are not stamped as 'rhythmanalytical') but who nevertheless share similar cultural attentions, I set up a project of my own that intends to achieve two aims. One is to formulate in-depth theoretical discussions that address the philosophical orientations of rhythmanalysis. Such an effort is to foreground the potentials of new conceptual tools that direct empirical research. For instance, concepts such as polyrhythmia, arrhythmia and eurhythmia have crucial methodological implications for the rhythmanalyst. The second aim is to put rhythmanalysis to work as a methodology that testifies to a particular conjuncture of the 1970s' Britain to which the cultural theorist Stuart Hall points out that this period has proved to be a historic turning-point in post-war British political and cultural life (Hall, 1988). His conception of this conjunctural shift is largely based on debates and theorisations of Thatcherism.¹

It is in the oscillation of exploring methodology and empirical discoveries, which I suggest are mutually informative, that the project comes to shape itself. The introduction

and the first chapter of the thesis are theoretical contributions to the field which set up a number of themes pursued by the thesis and they explain how rhythmanalysis operates as a methodology for cultural research. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 are two case studies that present the empirical works of using a rhythmanalytical approach to conjunctural analysis. They are exceptionally different types of empirical works, both in their thematic concerns, and more importantly in their ways of manifesting how rhythmanalysis as a method of conjunctural analysis bears the potential of conducting varied range of research. Based on the empirical case studies, the conclusion provides in-depth reflections on the method and it evaluates the methodology in its general application for conjunctural analysis and for the one that Hall marks out specifically.

1. Conjunctural Analysis and Thatcherism

In Britain, the late 1970s is a conjunctural shift of that kind. What I thought was that Thatcherism was really the end of one configuration the post-war settlement and the beginning of something else. We're not going to go back to what was before it, so that's why I'm interested in thinking the values that we hold in terms of the present. But about my sense of that break, people do ask me, 'How do you know of that?' I can't tell them that. It's not a precise methodology; it's not something which I apply outside to it. It's interpretive and historical. I have to feel the kind of accumulation of different things coming together to make a new moment, and think, this is a different rhythm (Hall, 2009: 665).

This passage is taken from a conversation between Stuart Hall and Les Back in Hall's North London home in 2007. It had been around thirty years since Hall first attempted to theorise Thatcherism as an ideological force that directly confronts and reverses the post-war social-democratic reform. It is a historic conjuncture which Hall calls 'ruptural crisis', 'conjunctural shift' and 'new times'. To Hall, Thatcherite ideologies and policies epitomise the conjunctural shift from the mid-1970s onward. The significance of Thatcherism as a political force lies in its 'radicalism' and 'novelty' (Hall and Jacques,

1983: 9-10). According to Hall, the ambition of Thatcherism is much more than mastering the electoral polls. Instead, this particular historic conjuncture is seen as a hegemonic project which has a long-leash impact on the relationship between labour, capital and the state. Its novelty is manifested by the distinct tonality and rhetorical strategies of the political discourse. Hall's extensive writing on Thatcherism, the dismantling of the post-war settlement and the new configurations of society arising from that historical specificity, are widely acknowledged in shifting terms of debates and not least as a form of political intervention (Sparks 1996, Grossberg 1996, McRobbie 1996, Phillips 1998, Gilroy, Grossberg and McRobbie 2000).

My thesis is driven by the curiosity of Hall's sense of a conjunctural shift at the level of rhythmic orchestrations. He feels the onslaught to post-war consensus around the mid-1970s had taken on a different pulse, that 'the "natural" swings and roundabouts of the electoral pendulum, along with many of the other regular rhythms of post-war politics, have been deeply interrupted' (Hall and Jacques, 1983: 9). I intend to explore and concretise the 'accumulation of things going on' that Hall mentions, as forming a plethora of rhythmic bundles which call for negotiations. I am interested in the relationship of a rhythmanalytical study of history, one that gathers and animates historical phenomena, and an ideological account of conjunctural analysis which condenses those phenomena to broad themes and concepts: enterprise culture, rolling back of the welfare state, the erosion of public life and so on. To what extent can rhythmanalysis make critical arguments towards the conjunctural moment in its mode of attention that differs from discursive critique? In other words, what kind of 'enunciation regime' (Latour, 2003: 144) can be produced that perhaps liberates historical discussions from a tautological exercise (one that starts with fixed discursive concerns defining the realm of investigation). Could the findings and conclusions of rhythmanalysis galvanise the confrontations and contradictions of social forces that Hall proposes?

There are no pre-conceived rhythms of history. In order to locate those supposedly interrupted rhythms, the emphasis of a rhythmanalytical mode of conjunctural analysis is placed on the actualisation of a conjuncture, of how changes are brought about by a different pattern of relating social agents in their temporal-spatial orderings. Before conducting further discussions of how rhythmanalysis may operate to contribute to the analysis of the 1970s' conjuncture, I shall closely examine Hall's position of using conjunctural analysis as a general methodology for studying epochal shifts.

Hall was influenced by Marxist philosophers such as Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser who were interested in the moments of rupture in history.² In *Prison Notebook*, Gramsci (1992) suggests the symptomatic function of 'crisis' at a conjuncture whereby old social relations struggle to be maintained and consequently they have to be replaced by new political configurations.

A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration meant that uncurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves...despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making efforts to cure them within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts form the terrain of the conjunctural and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organise (Gramsci, 1992: 178).

In his article 'Gramsci and Us', Hall argues that the Gramscian way of thinking invites us to ask the right kind of questions about the political problems of 1980s' Britain. The revolutionary character of a conjunctural shift is that 'there is no "going back". History shifts gears. The terrain changes. You are in a new moment' (Hall, 1987: 16). Therefore, we shall be directed to look at those reversals of ground rules, of social alliances and the new value judgements. To Hall, the responses to structural contradictions are equally

suggestive of how a conjuncture is marked out. In particular, he directs our attention to those diverse spheres of social forces (e.g. the economical, political and the cultural) which are recomposed, rebalanced and fuse to a new set of relations. In the essay, 'The Great Moving Right Show' (1979) (one of the earliest essay to analyse Thatcherism in the framework of conjunctural analysis), Hall elaborates on Gramsci's formulation of conjunctural shift based on its generative potentials.

They will be *formative*: a new balance of forces, the emergence of new elements, the attempt to put together a new 'historical bloc', new political configurations and 'philosophies', a profound restructuring of the state and the ideological discourses which construct the crisis and represent it as it is 'lived' as a practical reality; new programmes and policies, pointing to a new result, a new sort of 'settlement' - 'within certain limits'. These do not 'emerge': they have to be constructed. Political and ideological work is required to dis-articulate old formations, and to rework their elements into new configurations (Hall, 1979: 15, *italics in original*).

Hall emphasises the constructive nature of a conjuncture, that the new elements, political configurations and the new kinds of settlement do not appear out of thin air; they have to be constructed. For instance, the radical right was committed to dismantle and rework the post-war consensus towards its interests. In the post-war settlement, the economic policy of Keynesianism, the ideological leanings of conceiving state-citizen relationships and a number of socialist discourses of the post-war period mark a different conjuncture from the one that is characterised by Thatcherism. Hall argues that the anti-collectivism, anti-statism philosophy of the radical Right was refurbished and popularised through discourses aligning to Monetarist principles which crept into conventional ways of thinking: 'the restoration of competition and personal responsibility for effort and reward, the image of the over-taxed individual, enervated by welfare coddling, his initiative sapped' (*ibid*: 17).

The established post-war consensus is indeed the main reference point from which Thatcherism works from. The success of Thatcher's campaigns was based on the ideological re-constructions that appropriate populist discourses to the convenience of her own arguments. Hall notes that ten years ago, the adoption of 'parent-power' and 'parental involvement' in the school, 'belonged securely to the discourses of "permissive education", de-schooling and the libertarian wing' (Hall, 1988: 144). The radical Right then re-articulated parental roles as guarantors of enforcing and restoring social order, discipline and educational standards. On the theme of welfare state, the post-war social provision was reworked to its discursive opposite by the new Right as one that gives away wealth to the undeserving, a state that produces the 'welfare scrounger' whose parasitic values are alien to the self-reliance of the ordinary people (ibid:145). There was a revival of discussions on law and order, tougher policing in relation to the issues of race and immigration, to which Hall summarises as the magical correlations established between conservation of British values, national images and immigration control. The re-articulation of different social fronts composed a picture of a new era in which the old ways of common-sense making was undermined of its assumptions, values and expectations. Hall emphatically addresses the systematic nature of discourse reconstructions demonstrated in these social campaigns - 'a field of discourses in which the interpellations of the one summon up and condense series of others' (ibid). His broad theorisation of a conjunctural shift and the remarkable output of writing on Thatcherism (which he sees as a galvanising force of the 1970s' conjuncture) was mainly conducted in a mode of analysis that are premised on the fields of ideological struggles.

Hall proposes the 'the accumulation and condensation of contradictions' as one of the defining features of the conjuncture (Hall, 1988: 130). The sharpening of contradictory currents were not only found across ideological enemies but they were also shown as irreconcilable in the highly paradoxical subject-positions Thatcher stood from. The British historian Raphael Samuel notes the double coding of Thatcher's career exhibits.

At one moment she was the Little Englander, proclaiming the virtues of splendid isolation, or speaking up for old-fashioned sovereignty; she was a globetrotter at the next, making the world her oyster, and trying out the part of statesman on an international stage. In one role, sniping at the mandarins of Whitehall and Westminster from her Downing Street redoubt, she was the insider playing the system against itself; in another, speaking up for 'ordinary people'...Victorian Values were similarly double-coded, a programme for the future disguised as a narrative of the past. The watchwords may have been conservative, but they were used for subversive ends, to de-stabilise established authority... (Samuel, 1998: 343).

Hall suggests that the crisis of the Left leaves a space for re-articulating the meaning of things and through which the contestation of social classes may be obscured. He notes the rhetorical tactics of 'constructing the people into a populist political subject...a populist unity' (Hall, 1983: 31). At the level of political discourses, Thatcher strategically mobilised ordinary people's aspirations and popular discontents around a right-wing solution to the political and economic crisis. Her success was achieved by re-articulating popular sentiments, morality and common sense in line with the dominant political discourse. This particular kind of re-alignment is coined by the term 'Authoritarian Populism' (Hall, 1983: 10). For Hall, it encapsulates the essence of the rightward drift of British social life which was directed by the Thatcherite discourse. He defines the term as follows:

Its novelty lies, in part, in the success with which this 'populist' appeal was then orchestrated with the imposition of authority and order. It managed to marry the gospel of free market liberalism with organic patriotic Toryism. 'Free market, strong state, iron times': an authoritarian populism (*ibid*).

On the one hand, the word 'authoritarian' is suggestive of the general climate in the late 1970s of introducing coercive and tougher social disciplines which took the form of open repressions and policing strategies. On the other hand, 'populism' centres around what

individual freedom means in relation to the market and the state. Hall argues that the Thatcherite's strategy of winning over popular consent is to give promises of empowering individuals through free market participation. British scholars of Thatcherism Jessop *et al.* sum up the chain of equivalences which map out the internal logic of 'populism' and they emphasise the danger of turning Thatcherism to an abstract linguistic scheme: 'Hall now sees Thatcherism in terms of its mobilization of popular support through a chain of equivalences of the kind: market = free choice = freedom and liberty = anti-statism = put an end to creeping collectivism' (Jessop *et al.* 1984: 37).³

Although the term 'Authoritarian Populism' is interpreted by Hall as implying 'a convergence between the demands of those in authority and the pleas of the populace for the imposition of a solution to the current crisis' (*ibid.*: 35), the elasticity of the term also posits an internal contradiction of Thatcherism which promotes individualism (empowering of individual citizens) in the context of heavily centralised authority which circumscribes the meaning of race, discipline and social order. While Jessop et al. rightly point out the ambiguity of the term (its coupling of 'authority' and 'people' and seeing them as two groups of ideological constructions), the term does incorporates and condenses a large number of interpretive schemes which resonate in the discourse of Thatcherism.⁴ To Hall, the Left failed to combat Thatcherism's popular appeal and this could be attributed to a tendency of the Left to graft emerging experiences to the world of ready-made politics so that they were unable to discern and let alone discuss people's concrete and everyday needs (Hall, 1988).

While suggesting that 'the histories and time-scales of Thatcherism and of New Times have certainly overlapped' (Hall, 1996: 230), he acknowledges the ambiguity as to the causal relations of what brought about the conjuncture. Was the ascendancy of the Thatcher government the decisive force in galvanising a new conjuncture of the late

1970s or could it be that Thatcherism should be regarded as the product of longer and deeper changes in the economic, political and cultural arena (*ibid*)? Hall suggests that Thatcherism was formed on a set of precipitating conditions: 'the growing contradictions of Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s, the "crisis of authority" of 1968-1972, the onset of recession in the mid-1970s, and the turn towards a Labourist version of 'monetarist realism' (Hall, 1988: 1-2). Then, if there are material forces which shape 'new times' over a longer period of history, what are the agents that materialised cultural and economical conditions which are conducive to the exploitation of the radical Right? Hall offers a less decisive account of Thatcherism in relation to the conjunctural shift.

These changes, it is suggested, form the necessary shaping context, the material and cultural conditions of the existence for any political strategy, whether of the right or the left. From this position, Thatcherism represents, in fact, in its own way, an attempt to harness and bend to its political project, circumstances which were not of its making, which have a much longer history and trajectory, and which do not necessarily have a 'New Right' political agenda inscribed in them (Hall, 1996: 223).

How are the 'new' times conceived in relation to the 'old' and what is resolutely new about the conjuncture? To complicate a dovetailing of the conjunctural shift with Thatcherism, Hall detects those germs of structural contradictions that had manifested prior to Thatcher's administration. Particularly, Hall alerts us to 'the temptation to exaggerate the new and to represent it one-sidedly, without taking full account of the enormous unevenness and ambiguities that characterise the process of change' (Hall, 1989: 13). For instance, the economic crisis was well installed before the late 1970s as Britain's industrial weakness had shown in the immediate aftermath of the post-war boom. According to Hall,

The 1960s are marked by the oscillations between recession and recovery, with a steady underlying deterioration. These effectively destroy the last remnants of the "radical programme" on the basis of which Wilson won power in 1964, and to which he tried to harness a new social bloc. By the end of the 1960s, the economy

has dipped into full scale recession - slumpflation - which sustains the exceptional "Heath curse" of 1971-4, with its head-on collisions with organized labour. By the mid-1970s, the economic parameters are dictated by a synchronization between capitalist recession on a global scale, and the crisis of capital accumulation specific to Britain - the weak link in the chain (Hall, 1989: 15).

Informed by Gramsci's analysis on 'hegemony', a concept that emphasises how capitalistic relations are inseparable from formulations of ideology, Hall avoids analysing cultural politics which centres on a singular facet or setting up a deterministic relationship that designates a hierarchical order of forces (e.g. economic relations determine cultural choices). The fusing of different levels of society is central to an analysis of a conjuncture. He states that 'otherwise, you could get an unresolved ideological crisis which doesn't have immediate political connotations, or which you can't see as being directly related to a change in the economy' (Hall and Massey, 2010: 59). He suggests to attend to the processes of alignment - of how people's opinion-making gradually converges to the dominant political discourse, in their daily moral judgements, calculations and cultural consumptions, so that commercial imperatives and ethical inclinations reinforce each other for instance. Then there is a phase of condensation and an accomplished conjunctural shift. Thatcher's Britain, the epitome of the conjunctural shift marked out by Hall is a new era whereby Thatcherism was appropriated ideologically (socialism is dead, the market determines everything), materially, and culturally (the launching of entrepreneurial culture) (Hall, 1989).

Hall alerts us to the super-positions of social changes, as each acquires its own temporalities of change, thus forming various time-spans appropriate for analysis. There are different levels of expressions of power and consent: the political, ideological, cultural and the economy. He illustrates how these realms of experiences may move at different tempos. 'Political time, the time of regimes and elections, is short: 'a week is a long time in politics. Economic time, sociological time, so to speak, has a longer *durée*.

Cultural time is even slower, more glacial' (Hall, 1996: 230). Political decisions take only a short period to be implemented, whereas the economic cycles and cultural habits may need a longer time frame to be transformed and detected. Therefore, the kind of ideological shift pioneered by the rhetoric of the Thatcher government certainly had taken hold of much longer trajectories of development than the immediate election of a new Right government.

It is central to his definition of a conjunctural crisis that 'these "relatively autonomous" sites - which have different origins, are driven by different contradictions, and develop according to their own temporalities - are nevertheless 'convened' or condensed in the same moment' (Hall and Massey, 2010: 60). I argue that it is productive to tease out the various cultural processes and to suggest the appropriate timespan to explore changes of the economic, the cultural and the political, so that the conjunctural moment is not reduced to a homogeneous time. However, I question the demarcation of social fronts that mark out terrains of the political, economic, cultural and so on, not least how such categorisation may be productive to analyse cultural processes. Although we can portray a picture of infiltration and interaction of seemingly separate social arenas at the level of conceptualisation (to align one's political interest with that of the economic or cultural background for example), I argue that this approach of analysing 'hegemony', risks exerting another kind of hegemonic bending, that is to abstract the diversity of experiences into categorical expressions. Although the structuralist framework of historical analysis does alert us to the dominant events and discourses keenly represented and recounted by media representation, yet it can set up causal relationships which conflate, for instance, the prevalent ideologies and the plurality of lived experiences.

I pick up Hall's idea on the 'the much longer trajectory and history' of Thatcherism (a

point that is not elaborated elsewhere in his writing on the conjunctural shift), and I suggest that one way of doing it is to direct our attention to the process of ruptural formation as opposed to an abstract system of cultural analysis (Hall, 1996: 223). Raymond Williams is the cultural historian who proposes a recognition of the dynamic interrelations of social forces (the ‘social’ is used here to include all realms of experiences), of ‘movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance’ (Williams, 1977: 121). He underlies a historical attention which is necessary for the study of any cultural conditions, to which he enunciates as the ‘dominant, residual and emergent’ (*ibid*). The ‘dominant’ refers to the most prevalent features and elements of culture, a coherent set of which defines an epoch. Equally important in the analysis of cultural processes, if not overtly manifested, are the effective elements of the past that are still active in the dominant terrain of cultural history. The ‘emergent’ is also integral to the actualisation of culture by which Williams means the new practices, meanings and relationships that are continually created out of the ‘dominant’ and the ‘residual’. Williams emphasises the intertwining of the three currents of history rather than a relaying nature of progression (*ibid*).

I argue that Williams’ analytical framework of the ‘dominant’, ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ are informative for conjunctural analysis. While the ‘conjuncture’ is interpreted as crisis, a rift between two opposing trends of ideologies and material currents, that draws our attention to the ‘dominant’, those moments of post-war settlement (certain trajectories of movement may deserve historical work of a longer time span) and the conciliatory relations emerging out of the contradictions, are also woven to the fabric of a conjuncture. By conceiving conjuncture as a process, one inevitably attends to the pleats of history as it consists of a multiplicity of temporalities. In this framework of analysis which deals with the multiple currents of historical changes, I shall also explore those ‘unruly elements’ that elude hegemony and the discourses derived from it (Hall, 2009: 665).

If the focus of conducting a conjunctural analysis is shifted from that of a systematic interpretation of meaning, that is to construct discourses of family, work, state and so on to a meaningful totality, to one that insists on the process of change as much as what had been changing, the ‘how’ of that convening and condensing requires much investigation. What are the phenomenological manifestations of a conjuncture that convenes and condenses diverse experiential forms? What kind of methodology is effective in accounting for an actualisation of a conjuncture? The diversity of experiences as not always conforming to the ‘dominant’ call forth a mode of conjunctural analysis that captures the complexity of historical shift (the definition of a conjuncture hence needs reconsideration). To avoid a conflation of Thatcherism and the concrete changes to ways of living, a transformation that demands analytical attention to address its ambiguities and unevenness, I argue that rhythmanalysis as a method of undertaking conjunctural analysis, captures those materialities of conjunctural shift. It facilitates to translate the abstract discourses of Thatcherism and to uncover the multiplicity of the constitutive procedures which render senses of new rhythms that characterise the conjuncture. By reinstituting the interactions of social agents, it is a kind of effort which prevents taking theories of Thatcherism as an impasse which imposes preconceived struggles and causalities upon empirical research. Therefore, the discursive concerns need to be in contact with empirical works that are materialist and phenomenological.

2. A Rhythmanalytical Study of the Conjunctural Shift

In his final book *Rhythmanalysis*, the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre moves beyond the paradigm of Marxist critique of capitalist societies. The concept of ‘rhythm’ establishes the central theme of the book. It characterises forms of experience in their temporal-spatial ordering. Lefebvre’s theorisation of ‘rhythm’ draws upon the fields of the biological, sociological and psychological and he demonstrates the pervasive nature of rhythms as organising principles that underlie all spheres of experiences. The focus on ‘rhythm’, or rather the enactment of rhythms which are materialised in the interactions of

social agents, that is to perceive rhythmic enactments as forms of interrelating the world of things, is much as studies of concrete phenomena (such as that of bodily rhythms, institutional rhythms, communication rhythms, intellectual rhythms and so on), as turning the concept of 'rhythm' into a new field of knowledge - rhythmanalysis. Ben Highmore notes the suggestive and experimental nature of its operation as rhythmanalysis is not aligned to a political position - 'it is purposefully unsystematic in its approach to its topic' (Highmore, 2005: 145). However, there are practical consequences of using rhythmanalysis as a methodology and a modality of exploring cultural experiences to conduct historical research, not least because of its specific attention and ways of operating to overcome dualities of the singular/general, the phenomenological/ideological, and the emergent/static. It is a prism of analysis that accentuates and recuperates realms of experiences.

Lefebvre claims that we need to explore a history of rhythms and the rhythm of history (Lefebvre, 2004). There are not yet substantial discussions that address the lacuna of knowledge that the philosopher advocates. I argue that cultural experiences of disruptions and chaos are symptomatic of rhythmic discordances, and they illuminate a possibility of pursuing a rhythmanalytical project of history. In particular, the idea of crisis can be seen through the notion of rhythms.

Disruptions and crises always have origins in and effects on rhythms: those of institutions, of growth, of the population, of exchanges, of work, therefore those which make or *express* the complexity of present societies. One could study from this perspective the rhythmic changes that follow revolutions. Between 1789 and 1830 were not bodies themselves touched by the alternations in food, gestures and costumes, the rhythm of work and of occupations? (Lefebvre 2004: 44)

Implied in Lefebvre's sentences are the two-fold processes in the rhythmanalysis of historic rupture - crises originate from rhythmic disruptions and 'revolutions' in turn

produce rhythmic shifts. There is not always a clear lineage that traces the origins of crisis and its genesis may be obscured by the entanglement of rhythms in the murky waters of history.

Lefebvre argues that the study of rhythms can proceed in two ways. One can start from a broad concept and looks at its specificity or to start with the singular and the concrete to arrive at general conclusions (Lefebvre, 2004). Hall's theorisation of Thatcherism distinguishes the most explicit themes and events and they are informative for setting up specific inquiries that orchestrate the morbidity of rhythms. If Hall (1979, 1983, 1988, 1989) mainly explores the 1970s' conjuncture in the domain of ideological constructions and contestations, a rhythmanalytical study of it looks at the constitutive processes that gave rise to the acclaimed ideological shift. Such an attempt substantiates, enriches or even challenges conjunctural analysis posited at the level of concepts. I argue that configurations and interpretations of the conjuncture do not remain at the immediate level of electoral rhetoric. Instead, it is through exploring the experiential forms of disruptions and transformations of rhythms that we can understand 'how these conjunctural twists and turns relate to, in fact are rooted in, deeper trends and tendencies in the society' (Hall, 1988: 87). In order to grasp the accumulation of things going on at the intuitive level that Hall remarks, I propose that rhythmanalysis is a methodology that phenomenologically makes explicit and testifies to that 'sense of break' as how they manifest in the temporal-spatial ordering of experiences. Therefore, it is a kind of procedure that aims to uncover the specificity of the conjuncture; albeit such a proceeding of phenomenological investigations may very well begin with discursive frameworks. The two ways of conducting rhythmanalysis suggested by Lefebvre set up a dialogue between ideological and materialist accounts of history. Hall's theorisation of the conjuncture does not necessarily preclude a rhythmanalytical method of capturing such a shift (he embraces a rhythmanalytical attention when he suggests the conjunctural shift is felt to be a different rhythm), nor does the adoption of rhythmanalysis expel

opportunities of abstract analysis.

In relation to Hall's theorisations of the 1970s' conjuncture with which he conceives Thatcherism as the driving force of a ruptural formation, I argue that there is rather a multiplicity of forces that galvanised the conjuncture. The attention of rhythmanalysis follows lines of arguments that hones in ways of politicising issues rather than seeing them as given. The French sociologist Bruno Latour elucidates that 'politics is not some essence; it is something that moves; it is something that has a trajectory' (Latour, 2007a: 814). In the article 'Turning Around Politics' (2007a), Latour calls for a pragmatism which respects the '*type of situation*' at hand, as it works from the complex and erratic relationships of social agents.

The radical departure pragmatism is proposing is that 'political' is not an adjective that defines a profession, a sphere, an activity, a calling, a site, or a procedure, but it is what qualifies a *type of situation*. Instead of saying: 'Define a procedure and then whatever will go through will be well taken care of', pragmatism proposes that we focus on the objects of concern and then, so as to handle them, produce the instruments and equipment necessary to grasp the questions they have raised and in which we are hopelessly entangled (2007a: 814).

Rhythmanalysis centres on this pragmatism as it directs us to those movements and trajectories which produce political situations. The '*type of situation*' can be interpreted as rhythmic bundles. Rhythm is enacted through a pattern of ordering materiality. Whether it is bodily rhythm which consists of a myriad of rhythmic co-ordinations, of breathing, blood circulation and so on, or the institutional rhythms which include social agents that form alliances and refusals in their temporal-spatial relationships, or that of cyclical natural rhythms, Lefebvre emphasises the interactions of rhythms which form rhythmic bundles. Social phenomena are of such rhythmic bundles which Lefebvre calls '*polyrhythmia*', the effects of their rhythmic orchestrations are what make political

bodies such as the ‘state’. Often eluding fixed sites of intervention, rhythmanalysis claims that the power of the political lies in the reconciliation of rhythms, the rhythm of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Lefebvre, 2004).

Lefebvre emphasises political power as the know-how of time-space utilisation. In the prism of rhythmanalysis, political interventions operate as manipulations of rhythms. He claims that ‘the authorities have to know the polyrhythmia of the social body that they set in motion. It is the extreme case, revealing simultaneously official and empirical – political and military rhythmanalysis’ (*ibid*: 68-69). To the rhythmanalyst, what qualifies as a type of political situation is a polyrhythmia and the rhythmic relationships that configure it. The idea of polyrhythmia refuses any centrality of power generation. In the analysis of Mediterranean towns, Lefebvre asserts that:

It is not that the imposed rhythms of the political state (e.g. enforcement of law) are resented as the rhythm of the ‘other’, but ‘it is the idea of centrality that is refused, because each group, each entity, each religion and each culture considers itself as a centre. But what is a centre, if not a producer of rhythms in social time (*ibid*: 98)?

Thus the rhythmanalytical attention renders an optic through which Thatcherism is not only explored by its ideologies and policies (which are reflected in the conflictual interests of different social groups), but also in the changes of materiality that produce re-alliances of rhythmic relationships. Thus rhythmanalysis complicates the perceived sweeping shift of social conditions based on political discourses. Its pursuits are not content with condensing historical transition as an ‘ism’ but to explore its manifold organisations of temporal-spatial relations.

The concept of ‘arrhythmia’ is important for analysing the interruptions of post-war

settlements and the re-configuration of social relationships at the 1970s' conjuncture. According to Lefebvre, arrhythmia occurs when fatal de-synchronisation causes morbidity. He designates the phenomena of arrhythmia as interruptions of social alliances which lead to contradictions of rhythms. Even more crucially, he emphatically addresses that rhythms are enacted in the way social agents interrelate with each other.

Once one discerns relations of force in social relations and relations of alliance, one perceives their link with rhythm. Alliances suppose harmony between different rhythms; conflict supposes arrhythmia: a divergence in time, in space, in the use of energies (2004: 68).

Hall conceives the conjunctural shift as a point of 'crisis' for the Left, as structural contradictions of capitalistic productions, as an onslaught of post-war consensus. I suggest that a rhythmanalytical approach takes such a historical moment and explores the emergent social phenomena as alliances of rhythms. The notion of arrhythmia directs our attention to those disruptions of the temporal-spatial correspondences of diverse rhythmic centres. There are divergences of timing-spacing practices that are exercised by social agents who produce discordant rhythmic centres in relation to others. They initiate refusals of rhythmic interconnections which result in disorder (e.g. bodily rhythms could form tensions with industrial rhythms). In practice, one can start from those events, chaos, revolutions which are the centres of struggles, and to investigate the many trajectories and circulations of social agents which are aligned in different ways. In other words, the 'morbidity' of a conjuncture can be taken as a rhythmic bundle condensed by a multiplicity of rhythmic orderings. It needs to be unpicked by the rhythmanalyst who looks at each rhythm which transforms itself in relation to that of the 'other'.

In the article 'No Light at the End of the Tunnel' (1988), Hall argues that Thatcherite ideologies are rooted in multiple currents of social realities - the thrust towards privatisation and deregulation; the breaking down of traditional skills; the introduction of

more part-time and flexible working; the decentralisation in the sphere of employment; the new 'home working', the penetration of new technologies; the internationalisation of capital accompanied by the opening up of new financial markets; de-industrialisation and the emergence of the service sectors; harness of new information technologies; the prospering of enterprise culture, anti-union legislation and so on (Hall, 1988). He concludes that a sense of collectivity was being undermined. More specifically, the fragmentation of the social milieus and an immense process of individualisation are signs of 'new times' in British society.

He offers a rather condensed view as to the emergent features of experiences and how they jostle against each other. It is useful for conjunctural analysis to discuss those distinct historical moments that are novel and demonstrative - the issues of industrial democracy, the rapid development of financial services in the City, privatisation of the public sector, restructuring of economic sectors, and so on. Yet what a rhythmanalytical approach aims to do is to 'explode' these moments and to see how these changes are materialised at the level of the rhythmic ordering of social agents. If the success of Thatcher's campaign lies in her 'purchase on practice and how they are shaped and written into materiality (daily realities of competition and individualism)' (Hall, 1979: 20), I argue that despite political allegiances, rhythmanalysis facilitates to 'recognise the new ground or understand the new world that was being made' (Hall, 1989: 15). The task of a rhythmanalyst is to demonstrate the concrete rhythmic relationships which underlie broad concepts such as the fragmentation of social milieus or individualism. I argue that the emergent experiences of a conjuncture summarised by Hall, can be translated to a series of questions: What are the rhythmic ordering of part-time and flexible working for the individuals as well as for the organisation of industrial rhythms? What rhythmic interventions are exercised by new information technologies to communication rhythms? What are the pace of change for de-industrialisation and the rise of financial service sector? Are there rhythmic orchestrations to the perceived currents of individualisation

and fragmentation? What kind of rhythms underpin enterprise culture?

Hall proposes to examine the autonomous sites and social frontiers of a conjunctural shift - economy, culture, ideology, common sense, in order to map out a holistic picture of the conjunctural shift. Yet the question of how to integrate and connect these changes remains to be answered. He expresses the conundrum in the following sentences.

If we take the 'New Times' idea apart, we find that it is an attempt to capture, within the confines of a single metaphor, a number of different facets of social change, none of which has any necessary connection with the other. In the current debates, a variety of different terms jostle with one another for pride of place, in the attempt to describe these different dimensions of change (Hall, 1996: 223).

The facets of social change that Hall talks about, are often delimited by the research attentions which construct autonomous topics of discussion. When studies of public services are undertaken, the conventional approach would be to set up areas of investigation based on consumptions of transport, housing, policing, health, education services, refuse collection, care for the young and the elderly, and so on. For instance, the transport service under the Thatcher government underwent changes such as the privatisation of public services (of the railway network for instance), the surging investment in road building schemes and land use planning which works to the interests of car users. The questions of access, route, frequency and reliability of modes of mobility are often confined to the discussions within the framework of analysis called 'transportation'. When the issues of housing are being looked at, classic themes include the rights of tenants in both public and private housing, the achievement of equality and emancipation through user control. (Newman and Thornley, 1996; Allmendinger and Huw, 1998; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). The various facets of social change may not necessarily connect to each other when they are formulated as categories of social

problems.

I argue that the boundaries between different areas of social provisions and consumptions are much more permeable than assumed. Rhythmanalysis promotes researching the connections of social experiences. It offers perspectives and ways of studying social changes that phenomenologically explore the experiencing of changes. In other words, the method foregrounds the temporal-spatial organisations of dwelling, moving to places, learning, caring for each other, and so on. The rhythmic entanglements of these experiences are given primary attention. The abstract demarcation of social fields is collapsed in the rhythmanalytical mode of analysing changes of the conjuncture. Rhythmanalysis does not start from the ‘cultural’ or the ‘political’, rather it looks at the concrete social relations and exchanges exercised by the timing-spacing practices of social agents. Attentions are directed at how social agents make rhythms when they circulate, cohere and form assemblages and configure temporal-spatial relations. There are no generalised areas of studies which could delimit the trajectories of materiality. A rhythmanalytical approach to conjunctural analysis accentuates the interconnection of experiences and the circulation of materiality. While the ideological mode of historical analysis lodges the centre of change in the constructions of discourses, I argue that the agents who perform material changes are being obscured. In other words, we need to at least fill in the ‘subjects’ in Hall’s sentences to clarify where the actions are coming from.

The way that rhythmanalysis operates also addresses the issue of ‘scope of analysis’ of the conjunctural shift. As there is no preconceived time-space, the method does not engender scalar divisions of the local/central or that of national/global. Spatial analyses are not defined by geographical boundaries. ‘Space’ is lived and configured by movement, circulation and exchange of social agents that also have a temporal dimension. The issue is not one of how local rhythms changed over the years, or how

global rhythms were imposing on local rhythms. Instead you might have a locality which is a polyrhythmic centre. Patrick Wright is a writer on British cultural history and his writing on the street of Dalston Lane and the wider reaches of East London, refracts the cultural realities of Thatcher years. Wright takes the area as a rhythmic centre, a prism through which other social rhythms are also present: 'I'm just going to stick with this small stretch of street, and I'm going to use it as a measuring stick for the things that seem to be happening around here' (Wright, 1998: 29). He explains the method of walking down a street, to perceive and to describe the physiognomy of a street.

I used to walk down Dalston Lane twice, three, four, five times a day, and yet I had never really noticed it, except I suppose in accordance with the usual welfare state perspective of deprivation, etc. And then I looked and realised, well, here we are in this absolutely modest and ordinary stretch of East London, with its rotting Victorian buildings, its hard-pressed shop keepers, its chaotic bus-stops, its hobbling public library and its famously corrupt police station; and this huge transformation called Thatcherism is taking place, shaking things out of their customary affiliations (*ibid*).

Wright conducts a microcosmic study of Thatcherism as he carefully describes and makes vivid of a street. I suggest that it is a mode of cultural exploration that is useful for rhythmanalysis. The ambition of a rhythmanalyst is to use these descriptions of cultural phenomena (they are important 'data' for analysis) and to map out those explicit and hidden social relationships that produce and orchestrate rhythms. For example, a rhythmanalytical task could then explore the experiential realms of dwelling rotting Victorian buildings, the commercial lives of those shopkeepers, the ways libraries are used and the patterns of getting to places from those chaotic bus stops. They initiate points of further empirical work which proliferate from those terrains of experiences so that one can weave constellations of movements and trajectories.

I am particularly interested in the relationship of social transformations and the way that

things are shaken out of their customary affiliation. I argue that such an attention teases out a method of pursuing a materialist study of history which rhythmanalysis adheres to. Contrary to the understanding that rhythms only belong to the animate and the living, inanimate things also generate rhythmic relationships in their patterns of temporal-spatial arrangements. As I shall discuss in detail in Chapter 2, it is necessary to move beyond an anthropocentric analysis of social changes. Nigel Thrift is a British scholar who emphasises the role of the inorganic, or the inanimate things in the production of time-space (his understanding of time-space is equated with rhythm) (2001). Thrift foregrounds materiality as rhythm forming agents and he explains that there is 'an order of ceaseless connection and reconnection which refuses the border between the organic and inorganic by emphasising actor networks which are circulations, rather than entities or essences' (2001: 27). Or to put it emphatically, the productions of rhythms, that is 'time-space', are the effects of interrelating materiality. The question of materiality directs us to the agents of rhythmic changes. From roads and inner-city motorways, to the provision of post office counters, to the ownership and standards of housing, the processes of aligning materiality order temporal-spatial relationships. Their ways of affiliations and divergences are crucial for the attentions of rhythmanalysis.

In the book *TimeSpace*, Thrift and May (2001) invite us to consider the diverse strands of development which mutates our sense of time-space: 'The picture becomes more complex still if we consider the different domains through which a sense of TimeSpace is rendered and the differential development of the various networks associated with each' (Thrift and May, 2001: 18). I argue that Hall's conception of a conjunctural moment strikes similarities when he suggests that the structural contradictions of different origins develop according to their own temporalities which nevertheless were condensed in the same moment (Hall and Massey, 2010). Hall reflects on the notion of 'conjuncture' with a sensitivity to the multiplicity of cultural processes which galvanise a moment. He notes

the multiple temporalities of a conjuncture and it directs us to explore the unevenness of pace with which the diverse social transformations take place. This thesis attends to the uneven pace and intensity of change and it aims to complicate the unifying image of ‘the great moving right show’ as the prism of rhythmanalysis enables to thicken a historical conjuncture into various folds in (Hall, 1979). I unpick Hall’s characterisation of the conjuncture as the ‘condensing of contradictions’ through rhythmanalysis and I tentatively propose that following from this a conjuncture could be seen as a jarring of rhythms which had not been able to re-conciliate and hence reaching an intensity of irresolution.

There is no guarantee of ideologies being faithfully translated to the materiality of rhythms, and vice versa. By formulating the ‘origins’ of social transformations as centres of time-space productions, I argue that rhythmanalysis is an effective methodology that traces the polyrhythmic origins of change. To facilitate a tracing of the conjuncture that is uneven, and that has unruly elements, the idea of rhythmic bundle is productive. By disentangling the polyrhythmia of conjuncture, one asks if there could be de-synchronized development of conjunctures (those of bodily rhythms, rhythms of work, of learning and so on), and to see whether the conjunctural moment for each rhythmic centre necessarily coincided. This thesis sets out to establish case studies of rhythmic bundles, and more importantly to analyse the kind of interactions that configure and transform them. Can we use rhythmanalysis to claim and to complicate the statement that ‘there is nothing slow, glacial or ‘passive’ about the Thatcherite revolution, which seems by contrast brutally abrupt, concise and condensed (Hall, 1996: 230)? These questions are awaiting to be discovered and discussed by empirical work.

3. Rhythmanalytical Case Studies of the Conjuncture

To complicate and enrich Hall’s theories of the 1970s’ conjuncture based on Thatcherism,

I shall set up two case studies of rhythmanalysis. Each of them has their own focus while they work centripetally or centrifugally to weave the polyrhythmia of the conjuncture. The first case study as presented in Chapter 3 is about the gestural rhythms and more specifically of walking rhythms. Bodily rhythms as a site of attuning to capitalistic rhythms are recurrent concerns for Lefebvre. As biological rhythms are also social, explorations of such allow 'the push-pull exchange between the general and the particular, the abstraction of concepts and the concrete analysis of the mundane, starting with the body...' (Elden, 2004: viii). The body is at once singular and multiple as the philosopher states: 'the crowd is a body, the body is a crowd' (Lefebvre, 2004: 42). The walking rhythms thus serve to be a point of reference from which we can draw out the myriad of forces that imprint corporeal experience. Lefebvre emphatically addresses the site of bodily rhythms as a field of knowledge that contributes to cultural critique.

One could reach, by a twisty road and paradoxically beginning with bodies, the (concrete) universal that the political and philosophical mainstream targeted but did not reach, let alone realise: if rhythm consolidates its theoretical status, if it reveals itself as a valid concept for thought and as a support in practice, is it not this concrete universal that philosophical systems have lacked, that political organisations have forgotten, but which is lived, tested, touched in the sensible and the corporeal? (Lefebvre, 2004: 44-45)

My rhythmanalytical case studies of walking rhythms start from consciousness of those abstract trends of the Thatcher years. In particular, the project of regenerating the Docklands area in London and the racial tensions which blighted the streets of London (both more or less concurs with the conjuncture) establish the focus of my research. Instead of positing Thatcher and the ethos of her hegemonic project at the centre of the conjunctural shift, the rhythmanalytical approach complicates the historical perspective by looking at the extent to which bodily rhythms can be hegemonised and interrupted.

My interest in a rhythmanalysis of walking is evoked by the structural film *Fergus*

Walking which was produced by the film maker William Raban in 1978 - the year before Margaret Thatcher was elected to be the Prime Minister. It was shot on Bromley Street in the borough of Tower Hamlets of London. The film shows a man walking down the street with a consistent pace of strides while the 'background' against which his movements were enacted is brought 'alive' by the editing technique used by Raban. The viewers are presented with rhythmic relationships of the pedestrian and the street signs, house doors and windows, cars passing by, and so on. Even though the viewer is tempted to infer from images of the derelict landscape, the film does not set out to conduct a historical study of the East End of London. What it really does to the viewer is to sensitise them to a different angle of perceiving such a mundane practice. Pedestrians do not glide over the surface of the street but they walk *with* the material surroundings. The body walks but it does not solely form the centre of actions.

As a form of phenomenological inquiry, the film can be seen as a study of bodily rhythms that calls for a further sampling of walking rhythms as these moments of pedestrian experiences may connect to each other and establish rhythmic bundles in some ways. The first case study explores the pedestrian movement of the residents in Wapping. Due to its lack of provision of public transport and local amenities, it is an area of London's Docklands where people relied heavily on walking in the 1970s. The rhythm of walking bleeds into other daily activities. Decisions about the time and place to do one's shopping or meeting relatives for instance, were constrained to the poor facilities and transport networks in Wapping; rendering a pattern of social interaction, that are the rhythms, which were inherent to the community of Wapping.

The decline of the local manufacturing industry withered the hope of inducing economic investment that would benefit the community. The area of Wapping was an easy target for an experimental base for Thatcher's vision of a 'new' Docklands - one that favours

private investment and encourages hedonistic consumption. The London Docklands Development Corporation exploited the river front development to the advantage of the wealthy new comers, enacting a physical segregation of the Wapping community. Problems arise when there are refusals of rhythmic alliances, as old rhythms were fragmented and even inhibited by the new. Bianchini and Schwengel (1991) are scholars of urban culture who comment on the fragmentation of social milieus in the observation that 'the 1980s' city-centre developments tended to view the urban fabric as a collection of fragmented, discrete and autonomous spaces' (1991: 214). They suggest that in the 1980s, the emphasis on the designing of individual buildings exemplified an attitude to social experience which no longer values the collective needs of the wider social project. The fragmentation of experience is illustrated as moving between contrasting rhythms which creates a sense of disequilibrium and vertigo.

A rhythmanalytical method serves to situate ideological claims in relation to concrete experiences of rhythms. It seeks to testify to a period of crisis through mapping out jarring centres of rhythms (the pedestrian embodies such centres in this case study). The changing landscape of the Docklands and the clashing of multiple rhythms exemplified this fragmentation of experiences. How was the intricacy of social relationships made explicit in the choreography of bodily movement which were then being affected by the changing face of Wapping? The method of rhythmanalysis eschews the compartmentalised and static view of social transformation. One walks with the material environment, hence walking rhythms are also part and parcel of other rhythmic centres that underwent negotiations in the Thatcher years (the international financial investment injected into the Docklands took over the industrial rhythms that were indigenous to the people of Wapping).

The second case study of walking rhythms looks at the pedestrian movement in Brick

Lane. Since the mid-1970s, there was a surge of blatant racial violence against the influx of Bengali immigrants and they were prevalent on the streets of Brick Lane. There is a geography as well as a history of organised racism in the East End of London. I am interested in finding out the ways in which racialised tensions were inscribed in the gestures and orientations of bodily practices such as walking. Researching from the historical archives of Brick Lane, I focus on the materials that narrate experiences of walking (they do feature substantially in the narratives). I attempt to weave a polyrhythmic picture of how the racist groups and the anti-racist groups contested with each other through the rhythms of movement and stasis. The racialised issues of 'immigration' are then analysed in the prism of polyrhythmia and arrhythmia. More specifically, Lefebvre addresses an attention to the alliances and refusals of rhythms which configure power relationships of different social groups (Lefebvre, 2004). In a climate of violence and fear of racial attacks, the restrictions and interruptions of bodily movements produce a staccato rhythm. Sara Ahmed posits a phenomenology of racial tension which focuses on the stasis of bodily rhythms - 'bodies being stopped' (Ahmed, 2007: 161). The Bengali community organised a number of sit-down protests in the weekends to reclaim their right to the street. The physical appropriation of the street by the Bengali patrol groups, the police and the white racist groups, staged a multiplicity of bodily rhythms in one of the most heavily policed area in the country. The alternating presence and absence of crowds of pedestrians marked out a rhythm to Brick Lane. I shall use descriptions from oral history archival materials to illustrate the rhythmic fervour that infused the streets of Brick Lane on Sundays when there were stand-offs between local youth group, Bengali youth groups, police and the anti-racists.

Chapter 4 sets up a rhythmanalytical study of the mediums of communications. I define 'communication' in the broad sense of enacting polyrhythmic trajectories of movements. In other words, the focus is on the temporal-spatial organisations of social agents and the interdependence of their rhythmic orderings. I take the approach of entangling rhythmic

assemblages of various mediums by looking at the rhythms of the postal service. There are temporal-spatial ordering to the postal medium and they are enmeshed in a constellation of communication rhythms which form relationships of alliance and refusals to that of the postal medium. I argue that social relations are phenomenologically established through rhythmic formations. The weaving of a network of rhythmic interconnections amongst various mobility systems provides an angle of analysis that traverses the boundaries of social arena which is abstracted in ideological discussions (economic, cultural, moral attitudes, etc.). The alliances and refusals of rhythmic connections invite empirical and imaginative work of mapping out the multiplicity of rhythmic formations which underlie seemingly unrelated social institutions. The rhythmic interrelationships of mobility zones such as the postal network, are sites of time-space productions. I argue that these communication assemblages, in their rhythmic organisation of social agents, should be foregrounded in the study of cultural experiences.

I start my investigation with the significant decline of social mail traffic in the mid-1970s. It was a conjunctural moment for the postal systems in terms of its circulation of letter traffic and service orientations. The Post Office had in response, re-positioned itself as a medium of providing financial and commercial communication. By bundling postal rhythms to that of financial practices and transport developments for instance (while each has their own history of rhythms), I shall explore the rhythmic entanglements which gave rise to the phenomena. The integration of these mediums in their timing-spacing practices direct us to the long timespan of communication history. I suggest that the discerning of each rhythmic bundle to which the postal medium was connected to, while analysing their transformations (how social agents come together differently to form rhythmic assemblages) in relation to those of others, is a method of bringing history alive by looking at the cultural processes of the broader conjunctural shift marked by Hall. The notions of polyrhythmia, eurhythmia and arrhythmia add complexity to perspectives of

conjunctural analysis that are based on causal relationships as rhythmic relationships are dispersed and dynamic. Such prisms of investigation also foreground the various pace and accents of conjunctural shift, thus defying a unified definition of historic conjuncture.

In a climate of declining social mail, the Post Office had the financial incentive to generate postal traffic beyond its traditional role. Of all the premium and innovative postal services developed in the late 1970s, which aligned the communications of commercial practices ever closely to that of the postal operations, I shall explore the distinct phenomenon of Direct Mail which constituted the majority of postal traffic since the mid-1970s. As a form of advertising, the various formats of adverts (letters, samples, videos) entered into the homes of targeted customers in Britain. Direct Mail allows greater segmentation of the consumer market (enabled by the adoption of postcodes in the 1970s) and it is a medium of advertising that integrated with other communication assemblages such as TV and press. I argue that the selectivity of a medium such as Direct Mail and its extended and organised nature of reaching consumer markets need to be discussed beyond their commercial context, that they form important realms of cultural experiences. Informed by Raymond Williams' writing on TV as a cultural form (1974), I suggest that it is how we attend to information that mark out rhythms of the bodily (how advertising infiltrate and construct our attention span), and they may also create patterns of consumption that rhythmise the circulation of commodities.

Related to the Direct Mail service was the rise of a new form of mail order shopping that was developed in the late 1970s. The novelty of 'shopping by post' shall be analysed in the long timespan of intertwining the history of retailing and mail order shopping. There is a multiplicity of rhythmic bundles which are inherent to the new shopping practices and they are made vivid by rhythmanalysis. I explore two main characteristics of this

trend and an understanding of them spins out rhythmic connections that underlie the trend of home shopping facilitated by the postal medium. Firstly, the provision of credit took on a different rhythm to the ways of organising hire purchase in the beginning of the twentieth century. Secondly, the agency of mail order businesses had been taken over by the postal medium in the late 1970s. They render a rhythm to home shopping (which are self-reliant activities) that poses a contrast to the community based operations undertaken by sales agent. I intend to map out the two features of shopping by post as orchestrating new rhythmic alliances of social agents.

Despite the popularity of shopping in the privacy and comfort of one's home, the polyrhythmia of shopping practices in the 1970s (of those out of town retail centres and local shops in villages) were entangled in rhythmic relationships that I shall discuss in the last section of the chapter. The Post Office counters had offered a vast network of public services (e.g. Giro banking, telegram services, TV licence, driving license application, savings certificate, premium bonds, rail cards/ senior travel cards) and mostly importantly, they undertook the agential role of welfare distribution. The contraction of the sub-post offices network was brought to public debates in the late 1970s. As the post office had undertaken important agential roles for governmental services in post-war years, the contraction of counter services are analysed with a focus on the temporal-spatial organisations of the welfare state. I intend to foreground the array of rhythms that were weaved into the closing down of sub-offices - those of road transport, money circulation, and shopping practices in rural places and beyond.

This chapter on communication rhythms seek to establish a dialogue with discourses of the conjunctural shift (especially those of Thatcherism). By entangling the different trajectories of encounters and exchanges, it offers multiple perspectives of how communication rhythms had gone through transformations in connection with each other.

There is a proposed complexity to this kind of research. If the new conjuncture marked by Hall is seen as an overturning of the old, that of the post-war settlement, the attentions of rhythmanalysis posit that historical research are not necessarily conducted in a chronological order. There are continuities and resistances within social changes and the different paces at which things attune to new rhythms are given particular attention.

Nevertheless, this approach of entangling communication rhythms aims to testify to the following thematic concerns of Thatcherism. On the discourses of enterprise culture, Hall notes the remarkable success of Thatcherism at 'forging a connection between the popular aspiration for greater freedom from constraining powers and the market definition of freedom' (Hall, 1988: 218). The meaning of terms such as 'choice', 'freedom', 'community' and 'competition', as John Corner and Sylvia Harvey argue, 'have been at times bitterly contested in the 1980s' (Corner and Harvey: 1991: 1). I wonder if the re-accentuation and redefinition of meaning, the promotion of economic libertarianism as principles of personal freedom for example, have rhythmic origins and manifestations. What were the temporal-spatial orderings of individualistic consumption and the communication rhythms that intersect with it? To what extent could we argue that the closer rhythmic alliances between the postal rhythm and that of circulation of capital had rendered an experiential account of the abstract claims made about the conjuncture. By drawing out the rhythmic implications of an expanding postal service targeted at entrepreneurs and business corporations on the one hand, and a contracting Post Office network which hinder welfare-oriented public service on the other, the chapter unravels the mobile and material conditions which propelled the 'possessive individualism' and 'mass participation through personal consumption' (Hall, 1988: 213). How did patterns of relating social subjects materialise a conception of 'enterprise culture' that was the backbone of Thatcherism - self-starters, princes of industry who build things and create jobs; ownership and independence, sovereignty of the consumer in the market place. How can we explain the empowering and disfranchising of certain interest groups

through rhythmic alliances? What can then be arrived at from a rhythmanalysis of the postal system, in light of Hall's claims on the rolling back of a welfare state?

Before proceeding with the applications of rhythmanalysis to explore bodily rhythms and institutional rhythms, I shall firstly situate the method in various intellectual currents in Chapter 2, and by doing so, its specific attentions and ways of operating are brought to light. This section is threefold. The initial focus is on Lefebvre's writing on 'moments' which I argue presages his later thoughts on rhythms and rhythmanalysis. Secondly, the philosophical heritage of phenomenology is reviewed. It is not a strictly bounded theory as such but a mode of inquiry and analysis. The main tenets of phenomenology propose the experiential over essence, description over abstraction and interrelatedness over the absolute divide of subjects and objects. Rhythmanalysis is as much informed by the philosophical tradition as being a method that illustrates and expands a phenomenological understanding of history. Thirdly, I will be setting up a dialogue between a rhythmanalytical study of things and some of the theoretical themes put forward by the New Materialist and a rhizomatic figuration of thing relationships. I address how the act of rhythmanalysis transforms everything into presences and consequently allow things to be released from merely human projections (ideology), and also how things are transformed into a dramatic becoming in the act of rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 2004). The question of the agential capacity of things in the making of rhythms is discussed in depth. The underlying convictions shared by these approaches are that the social is not made of either agency or structure, a conundrum which social scientists failed to simultaneously address, but rather of being made up of processes, emergent relations, circulations and alliances (Latour, 1999). To recuperate the complexity of materialisation, emphasis is placed on the generative capacity of things, which present themselves as irreducible to political discourse. I propose that the potential of change lies in rhythmic formations which are embodied in things. By reflecting on rhythmic phenomena of which a myriad of agents (especially those that

are non-human) gather, interrelate, often in unpredictable ways, we might be able to illuminate a complex unfolding of historical transitions.

¹ Hall is clearly interested in the social history of the 1970s and the long timespan of this conjunctural shift. In the following discussions, there are associations of the decade with Thatcherism and what I shall be looking at is a set of emergent characterisations that lead to Thatcherism (given that Margaret Thatcher was elected in 1979).

² Louis Althusser's definition of 'revolutionary situation' as accumulation of forces fusing into ruptural unity is akin to Hall's definition of a 'conjuncture', see Althusser, L. (1965), *For Marx*, London: Verso.

³ Hall explores the connections between various facets of identification as a way of demonstrating change. In the edited text 'Thatcherism-Rolling Back the Welfare State', he remarks on the following, 'and if you can connect the sexual identity with the welfare identity with the education identity with the economic identity with the political identity you can construct a set of possible positions which are not false consciousness' (1983: 18).

⁴ Jessop *et al.* address the unifying character of Hall's analysis of Thatcherism. They suggest to 'analyse the specific mechanisms by which specific groups were mobilized behind the general campaigning themes of "resolute government", the "national interest", patriotism, union bashing, etc., rather than concentrate on those empty (or over-full?) phrases themselves' (Jessop *et al.* , 1984: 38).

Chapter 2

Rhythmanalysis as a Philosophical Method

This chapter extends Lefebvre's theories of 'rhythms' and his formulation of rhythmanalysis as a methodology of cultural research. The discussion sets rhythmanalysis in dialogue with three philosophical ways of thinking which help to elucidate the presumptions, priorities and procedures of the method. Firstly, I revisit Lefebvre's theories of 'moments' and I suggest that his conceptions of 'moment' as a 'constellation' and a level of analysis that deserves attention in its singular and multiple forms, has crucially informed his writing on rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, [1961] (2002)). 'Moment' is a microscopic phenomenon, a presence that inflects trajectories of rhythms and their interactions. For the second part of the chapter, I argue that rhythmanalysis is a form of phenomenology. I shall explore the philosophical tradition of phenomenology as a style of thinking and a methodology for cultural research. By focusing on perceptual relations which places the body in the world of being which interrelates, phenomenology configures the concept of rhythm as a sensual register and the metamorphoses of which forms the basis for historical investigations of cultural experiences. The emphasis on dwelling and living as inhabiting worldly things accords with the New Materialist philosophy, a school of thought that designates ways of rethinking the nature of materiality, agency and materialisation. I suggest that close analysis of New Materialist philosophy concretised 'rhythms' as temporal-spatial relationships which are enacted by the capacity of things in their alliances. In other words, 'things' make rhythms and how they work deepens our understanding of rhythmic phenomena and the attentions of rhythmanalysis. The three sections all arrive at rhythmanalysis with different accents yet they converge in their philosophical concerns. Rhythmanalysis as a methodology of exploring social change, of historic rupture in particular, are the underlying currents that run through the chapter.

1. Constellation of ‘Moments’ and ‘Rhythms’

The second volume of *The Critique of Everyday Life* was published in 1961. It continues with Lefebvre’s passion for everyday life as a field of theoretical investigation. The philosopher outlines the necessary instruments of analysing everyday life and the volume examines some of the philosophical ground works that are critical to the proceeding of cultural analysis (e.g. ‘the concept of totality’, ‘the idea of level’ etc.). Written in a prose-like manner which is at times poetic albeit not without its rigour of sober reflections, one could already see a train of thoughts that prelude his last book *Rhythmanalysis* which anchors on the idea of rhythms and everyday life. One of the themes that strongly resonates in his writing on rhythmanalysis is his theorisation of the concept of ‘moment’.¹ In other words, Lefebvre’s theories of ‘moment’ pave the way for a particular mode of thinking that facilitates our understanding of the idea of rhythm and how it matters to the tradition of cultural critique. This section discusses the traits of ‘moments’ and the pertinence and potency of this concept for the definition of rhythms. I argue that the discerning of ‘moments’ in their ways of involution allows for critical recognition of rhythms of everyday life. The theorisation of ‘moments’ is also that of temporality, history, and the nature of change. To analyse the characteristic of moment as involutionary, as a higher form of repetition, there are practical implications for the intervention and transformation of everyday life.

How is ‘moment’ as a concept being conceived and grasped? Our day-to-day usage of the word suggests that ‘moment’ implies a certain length of time and it often involves a description of its content and value. ‘Moment’ corresponds to lived experience as affective states; or it describes a circumstance, a meaningful differentiation of conditions – a moment of concentration, a moment of happiness, a moment of fury, a moment of rest. The broad concept of ‘moment’ nonetheless has a specificity that

Lefebvre insists on, that of a specific philosophical understanding. The grasp of the concept is crucial for taking a phenomenological understanding of the realm of everyday life and its rhythmic characteristics. Rob Shields, a scholar of Lefebvre's theories remarks on the necessity of elevating moments out of everyday life as an important experiential form.

Moments are themselves essential forms in which everyday contents are arranged in recognisable patterns. As such, they are experiences of detachment from the everyday flow of time, or *durée*. Thus he defines 'moments' as 'modalities of presence', which are in themselves but glimpses: 'Partial totalities, I see them as "points of view" reflecting totality' (Shields, 1999: 60).²

We cannot draw up a definitive list of 'moment' as it is always possible to constitute a new moment. Therefore the theorisation of 'moment' examines the indexes and criteria of 'something' counting as 'moment'. Searching for its key characteristics, Lefebvre questions 'how and why should we classify any particular activity or "state" as a moment' (Lefebvre, 2002: 344)? To distinguish 'moment' out of the equivocal and ambiguity of everyday life is not without difficulty. Lefebvre suggests that 'the moment is constituted by a choice which singles it out and separates it from a muddle of confusion, i.e., from an initial ambiguity' (ibid). A moment appears to be ephemeral and transitory and it cannot endure as it inevitably exhausts itself. Desire, growth and deterioration, everything has its own time and momentum. Moments differentiate themselves as they break, sometimes quite decisively (at point of crisis for example), whereas other times they initiate other moments in subtler ways (transitional states from wakefulness to sleep). Whilst acknowledging the singularity of a moment, it never stands alone and it always echoes with the other. One of the central tenets within the theories of moment is implied in the phrase - 'the constellation of moments' (ibid). According to Lefebvre, a 'moment' can only be singled out in relations to others: 'Each place and moment has no existence except within the ensemble, by the contrasts and oppositions which link them to the other places and moments they are distinguished

from' (Lefebvre, 1970: 53-54, cited in Elden, 2004: 146). For example, the cyclical repetition of moments garners a constellation: the dawn, the crescendo of a wave, the state of exaltation, the moment of hunger, repose and thinking.

Based on a relational understanding of 'moment', its constellation enables a certain structure of everyday life. The linking together of moments is a rhythm. The returning and undulation of moments are the structural elements of a rhythm. The recurring of distinct moments establishes a cyclical repetition which facilitates the recognition of a rhythm. Moments and rhythms are the experiential measures of temporality. Lefebvre claims that,

the 'moment' thus conceived of has its memory and specific time. Repetition is an important aspect of this 'temporality'. The repetition of moments forces us to refine the concept of repetition. It frees itself from psychology or metaphysics (Lefebvre, 1989: 653; cited in Elden 2004, 173).

There are two categories of repetitions distinguished by Lefebvre which allow the linking of moments: the cyclical and the linear. Examples of linear repetition are the blow of the hammer and falling of rain drops; as for the cyclical, there are indestructible rhythms of the cosmos, the seasons, alternation of day and night for instance. Though they do not fully present the complexities of repetition, nevertheless, they serve as a guideline to connect moments as fragments of a whole. Rhythm is moments lived in their totality. 'Rhythm preserves both the measure that initiates the process and the re-commencement of this process with modifications' (Lefebvre, 2004: 79). The everyday is a category of analysis that results from the cyclical repetition of activities and desires as they correspond to certain moments. Within the cycle of the everyday, moments of intellect, play, sleep and so on form an alignment that produce a myriad of linear and cyclical repetitions which generate and constrain each other. A moment exists in relation to the constellation of moments. Theories of 'moment' and 'rhythm' foreground a modality of

experiencing that is inherently historical. Moments commences and recommences as their fulfilment punctuate the organisation of experiences. Each moment is inscribed in those of the past and it is already in expectation of future returns.

Not only repetition but moments of differentials are important in the marking out of rhythms. For instance, the repetition of dusks as a moment of the day marks itself out of moments of dawn. The rhythmanalyst maps out constellation of moments that repeat and differentiate in order to separate the ‘amorphous muddle we know as the everyday in all its triviality’ (Lefebvre, 2002: 344). Certain rhythms are easily distinguished when moments of habits and routines establish recurrences in their obdurate ways. There are those less palpable rhythms that only come to surface when one traces a dialectical relationship of ‘strong times and weak times, recurring in a recognisable way, stops, silences, blanks, resumptions and intervals in accordance with regularity, must appear in a movement’ (Lefebvre, 2004:78). Thus the rhythmanalyst attends to the ordering of moments and the way they resonate to each other. It is through the repetition of moments, of which differentiation inheres, that certain determinable relationships with the ‘self’ and ‘other’ can be recognised.

To recognise a moment in its lived diversity is essential for rhythmanalysis. The task of the rhythmanalyst is to focus on the vitalities of moments (manifested in their formations of constellations) and to follow how they structure and restructure everyday life. The involutionary nature of moments and their becoming are fundamental to understanding of how ordering and transformations of experiences are embodied in the working of moment and rhythms. Prior to such an analysis, we need to clarify one way of defining ‘moment’ that Lefebvre emphatically addresses. He sees moment as ‘the attempt to achieve the total realisation of a possibility’ (Lefebvre, 2002: 348). According to Lefebvre, ‘moment’ is not a definite decision or situation; instead, it is perceived as

an inaugural act, a constitutive action that realises a totality. There is an emphasis placed on ‘moment’ as a generative state, a point of initiation which has the capacity to repeat, reinforce or diversify itself to give birth to a new moment. For Lefebvre, a philosopher of Marxist tradition, the ‘moment’ offers a chance of transgression; that it inaugurates a decisive act of refusing the colonisation of everyday life (a theme that runs through the three volumes of *The Critique of Everyday Life*). He states: ‘It is equally in the everyday that the inaugural decision is made by which the moment begins and opens out. Takes it in charge and becomes committed to it unreservedly’ (Lefebvre, 2002: 351). ‘Moment’ as a level of lived reality and a plane of cultural analysis is inductive. The individual and accidental presence of moments draw out infinitely rich social relations. In the foreword of his first volume of *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre points to us the possibilities brought about by the simplest moment: a woman buying a pound of sugar. There are tangling of reasons and causes that penetrate and generate this moment: ‘the woman's life, her biography, her job, her family, her class, her budget, her eating habits, how she uses money, her opinions and her ideas, the state of the market, etc. Finally I will have grasped the sum total of capitalist society, the nation and its history’ (Lefebvre, 1991a: 57).

Moments are paroxysmal: they do not initiate a linear path of realisation in a continuum of progression. There are intervals of ‘other’ moments. This crucial feature of a moment is reminded again of its inability to endure as it ‘reaches crisis point when the inevitability of its own demise becomes fully apparent’ (ibid: 345). The very conception of moments as undulatory refutes the view that the evolutions of experiences take the form of linear progressions. Involution characterise the working of ‘moments’. A singular ‘moment’ temporarily stands out and calls upon attention. It always has a reference, to repeat another moment, to be picked up or to be contrasted with. One only needs to listen to the waves of the ocean to understand how involution of moments produce the many degradations of experiences. As each wave reaches into a crescendo

and descends onto the sand, it is comparable to the death of a moment. There is an intermission when the wave recedes into the sea until the next roar resumes. Waves at different stages of life spring forth concomitantly and the constellation of which produce a symphony of sound. As how a receding wave meets the crest of another, the constellation of moments collide and intervene.

Michel Serres, the French philosopher who is enthused with uncovering the possibilities of becoming, writes about the ordering of experiences in the book *Genesis* (1995). Amongst the ambiguity of everyday life, ‘moment’ is seen as an inaugural act and the idea is illustrated in this passage of Serres’ whereby he conceives such an action as akin to the working of a fluctuation, an echo, a background noise. The following passage produces a dialogue with Lefebvre’s conception of moments.

A fluctuation appears, it is lost in the desert or the packed-fullness of background noise, either through lack of reference, or through excess of difference. It vanishes, it gets buried. In order to be or to make an appearance, it needs a reference, it needs an analogy... It thus needs an other, it needs a same, it needs an echo. The echo alone is discernible here. Either through its position or through its redundancy... Everything begins on the threshold of the echo (Serres, 1995: 119).

The involutionary nature of moments suggests neither a continuous evolution nor a sudden rupture of history. It is rather a process that laminates moments which sets up the history of rhythms or rhythms of history. The very involution of experience is essentially rhythmic. Involution is a higher form of repetition as it does not merely suggest a successive passage of returning but it accentuates the reverberation of moments. Lefebvre points out that the returning of a moment is not opposed to its becoming. Indeed, the repetition of moments analysed in their phenomenological state refines the concept of repetition. Echoing an inaugural moment, a fluctuation or a

disturbance, the involution of ‘moments’ does not reproduce itself mechanically (‘dawn always has a miraculous charm, hunger and thirst renews themselves marvellously...’ [Lefebvre, 2004: 73]). The reverberation of moments generates a kind of repetition that induces and produces renewals and change. When variations are introduced in the repetition, new trajectories of moments create another path of involution as they re-organise constellation of moments and rhythmic interrelationships. More than mere fluctuations, moments are also resolute in their power to initiate or to interrupt an established rhythm - those very distinct moments of suspense, disturbance, crisis and so on. They culminate from an accumulation of cyclical repetitions. The philosopher John Dewey, who theorised on the nature of experience, makes the remark that ‘moments are charged with accumulations of long-gathering energy’ (Dewey, 1934: 24),

when a flash of lightning illuminates a dark landscape, there is a momentary recognition of objects. But the recognition is itself a mere point in time. It is the focal culmination of long, slow processes of maturation. It is the manifestation of the continuity of an ordered temporal experience in a sudden discreet instant of climax (*ibid*).

The totality of moments enacts experiences that are rhythmic. The constitutive elements of rhythm are the ordering of moments in their cyclical repetitions and their involutionary becoming. Rhythmanalysis is foremost a sensitivity to ‘moment’, to distinguish their singular existence as well as to recollect and restore them to a constellation, and to follow their paths of involutions. Lefebvre notes on the referential relations of moments and their value for the work of rhythmanalysis.

A memory? Yes, in order to grasp this present otherwise than in an instantaneous moment, to restore it in its moments, in the movement of diverse rhythms. The recollection of other moments and of all hours is indispensable. Not as a simple point of reference, but in order not to isolate this present and in order to *live* it in all its diversity (Lefebvre, 2004: 36, *italics in original*).

Moments of presence are not incarcerated in the conscious reflection of a subject. A moment refracts a determinable relationship with others in its cyclical repetitions and rhythmic enactments, and more importantly through the interconnection of diverse rhythms. The identification of a moment in its constellational formation helps to recognise a rhythm - a totality of moments in their pattern of relating (not always adhering to a rigidity of linear or cyclical repetition). Rhythmic interrelationships then help to yield a moment. The moment is a point of condensing, of a rhythmic consciousness that orders the interrelating of social agents. In other words, the task of a rhythmanalyst is to disentangle the forces of polyrhythms that produce the singularity of a moment. To make critiques of everyday life, Lefebvre argues, is to study the interactions of diverse rhythms. Diverse rhythms are interlocked when a multiplicity of moments and their cyclical repetitions form a unity of polyrhythmia - the cosmic rhythms, the biological rhythms, the rhythms of capital circulation and so on. For example, he posits the tensions and harmonies of the rhythms of industrial society and nature. He suggests an examination of 'the defects and disquiet this as yet unknown and poorly understood interaction produces' (Lefebvre, 2002: 49). Moments of defects and disquiet, are these then not the culmination of rhythmic interactions, a dissonance of the body, of the organisation of production and consumption and of the cosmic? These moments of outbreak are symptomatic of an arrhythmic organisation of other moments. They call for an examination of the intervals: the alternation of moments in the rhythms of work and rest for instance. This dissonance could result from a lack of contrast of moments or extending a moment beyond its natural duration - the imposition and intervention of a rhythm of the 'other' that make certain moments impossible. Conversely, the moment of disquiet is of a rhythm that is unsustainable; the initial moment being unable to repeat itself and that the trajectory of its involution is inevitably disrupted; or that rhythmic alliances are interrupted so that the possibility of 'moment' is frustrated thus producing moments of defects and disquiet. The everyday

for Lefebvre is a site of intervention of different rhythms and their relationship can be thus politicised.

How would the complete control of nature, i.e., the complete metamorphosis of everyday life, be expressed? By an arrhythmic individual and social time which would render any specific action impossible at any specific moment? By a transitory or durable group freely inventing its own rhythm? By the invention of new rhythms (of which the working day without breaks would be the blueprint) (*ibid*)?

Moments of rupture, the demise and invention of moments are useful for the signification of a conjuncture. Those new experiences and not least the organisation of experiences, of new rhythms, construe the history of modernity. For instance, Lefebvre calls for a historical examination of the moment of ‘rest’ in relation to the era of modernity.

In this day and age we are witnessing the formation of a moment: *rest*. Within many ambiguities (non-work, leisure) and many technologies and techniques (such as ‘relaxation’ and ‘autogenic training’), modern man - because he needs to - is making an effort to live rest as a totality in itself, i.e., as a moment. Up until now, very little distinction used to be made between rest on the one hand and play and everyday life outside work on the other (Lefebvre, [1961] 2002: 354).

In another instance, Lefebvre discusses the integration of technological devices as conjoining moments of action, as rendering a structure of experience. For they enhance the productivity of human labour, at the same time ‘they also split things up; they truncate, they make mincemeat of everyday life; they leave margins and empty spaces...On the horizon of the modern world dawns the black sun of boredom’ (*ibid*: 75). For him, the moment of boredom is endowed with a negativity that associates it with passivity and a corruption of agency in the face of technological colonisation of

everyday life. I argue that a more complex analysis of boredom is required: not a question of bestowing a value upon it, but ‘boredom’ as a lived moment of historical importance that bears rhythmic change. What are the criss-cross of rhythms at work, of concentrated attention, sleep, relaxation and so on (the spatiality of these moments are integral to the construction of rhythm), that generate times of excitement and quietude, and finally which reserves possibility for a moment of boredom which is not merely empty as Lefebvre suggests, but initiate moments of other kinds and producing rhythms that align social agents in different ways? What are the rhythmic agents that generate new rhythms which enchant modern life? Such are the questions that theories of ‘moment’ in their relation to rhythmanalysis, posit ways of conducting social critique.

As previously discussed of how moments involute to generate growth through repetition, the metamorphosis of everyday life has an inherently historical consciousness. The emergence of modernity seen as a form of historic conjuncture is formulated as a constellation of moments of crisis and creation, which echoes, continues with that of other moments, and yet forming distinct content and modalities of experiences. The insurgence of those moments of disquiet and defects signify the advent of a conjuncture as their power of lightening illuminates the murky waters of history. Yet their long-accumulating energies require attentions not only to the moments of climax, but also to the process of change which takes place through the repetition of moments and the inscriptions of them to the rhythms of everyday life. What can historians do with ‘moments’? The philosophy of involution is a constitutional theme in a number of Serres’ writings on time and history. Steve Connor is a scholar of Serres’ works and he clarifies how historians could make use of ‘moments’,

In the folding and refolding dough of history, what matters is not the spreading out of points of time in a temporal continuum, but the contractions and attenuations that ceaselessly disperse neighbouring points and bring far distant points into proximity with one another (Connor, 2002: n.p.).

The fusion and dissipation of moments are important tasks for conjunctural analysis. Theories of ‘moment’ and its involutionary nature suggest that the analysis of a conjuncture is not only concerned with the immediacy of a situation.³ That one should not only focus on the ‘moment’ of climax: a particular event, revolution or protest. Nor was a moment (e.g. economic depression, political election) in its own trajectory of involution sufficient for the instigation of a conjuncture. Hall defines a conjunctural shift as the condensing of a multiplicity of moments - ‘relatively autonomous sites of experience which develop according to their own temporalities which are nevertheless “convened” or condensed in the same moment’ (Hall and Massey, 2010: 59-60). The work of the rhythmanalyst is of such folding and unfolding of history, as one takes these points of breaks and ruptures of a conjuncture and sees them as ‘impossibilities’ of negotiating rhythmic relationships. The definition of a ‘conjuncture’, according to the political theorist Gramsci who wrote about the concept, is a crisis that ‘consists of precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear’ (Gramsci, 1971: 276). What we need is a phenomenology of crisis, that is to explore the overlapping of moments in their various phases of development and how cessation of certain repetitions inaugurates other moments. The morbid symptoms of a conjuncture compel an investigation of those rhythms of dissonances (the concept of arrhythmia) that disturb the constellation of moments and make certain moment impossible. We have the totality of ‘moments’ in rhythms and the production of moments in their rhythmic development. Thus the theories of ‘moments’ serve to be an instrument of analysis that are informative to the marking out of a conjuncture and a rhythmanalytical angle of approaching such a conjuncture.

2. Rhythmanalysis and Phenomenology as Methods

Phenomenology as a philosophical tradition proposes ways of attending to experiences. Martin Heidegger (2001) is one of the major philosophers of this tradition who proclaims that ‘the expression “phenomenology” signifies primarily a methodological conception. This expression does not characterise the what of the objects of philosophical research as subject matter, but rather the *how* of that research’ (Heidegger, 2001: 50). As a mode of inquiring, not burdened with pre-existing beliefs, values and the meaning of things, I intend to set up a dialogue between phenomenology and rhythmanalysis in the way it is practised and as ‘a manner of style of thinking’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: viii).

The philosophical tradition of phenomenology has much to offer rhythmanalysis. Phenomenology concerns the lived experience and by drawing out the rhythmic qualities of experience, I argue that rhythmanalysis is a form of phenomenological inquiry that enriches our understanding of cultural experiences. Comprehensive debates on the theoretical development of phenomenology go beyond the scope of this discussion and an overemphasis on conceptual arguments betrays the spirit of phenomenology. Of all the aspirations and orientations phenomenology proposed, three themes particularly pertinent to rhythmanalysis are put forward. Firstly, both rhythmanalysis and phenomenology subscribe to ways of conducting research that resist abstraction and ideal simplification. The works of neither are restricted to disciplinary categories; instead they invite noises, murmurs and things in plain sight to become the centre of attention. Secondly, the binary logic subjectivism and objectivism is made problematic in light of both methods. Rhythmanalysis and phenomenology pay close attention to the ways of relating social agents through perceptual experiences. Bodily cognition sutures the divide. Merleau-Ponty is one of the philosophers who addresses the intertwining of beings - ‘the phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears (Merleau-Ponty,

1962: xx). Thirdly, the reinstating of sensual experiences is central to the operation of both rhythmanalysis and phenomenology. I argue that perceptions of rhythms achieve the phenomenological unity of the senses. Lastly, I am interested in what Steven Connor calls ‘a different form of historical attentiveness’ offered by the possibilities of a ‘historical phenomenology’ (Connor, n.d. n.p.). The phenomenological and rhythmanalytical exploration of cultural experiences are inherently historical. Instead of conducting historical research which always ‘operated in the end in the order of the “they”; with what is public, external, formalised’ (*ibid.*), Connor posits a historisation of perceptions that follows the experiences of ‘elevation, uprightness, exposure, interiority, visibility, plurality, magnitude, height and weight’ (*ibid.*). I seek to further his claims by suggesting a kind of historical attention that materialises in the mapping out of rhythms (a meta-sense I argue that synthesises perceptual experiences). In relation to conjunctural analysis as the main concern of my work, I argue that a rhythmanalytical form of phenomenology eschew the generalised, represented and structural readings of historical shifts. What it does promote is a localised attention to those implicit experiences which are tangential to the cacophony of social changes. Lastly, I adopt both Lefebvre and Dewey’s conceptions of ‘change’ as an essential feature of rhythms. A digressional analysis of change in the phenomenological sense, problematises the definition of conjunctural shift as not being linear but as convoluted.

2.1. Phenomena of Rhythms

Phenomenology as a philosophical tradition explores forms of experience.⁴ As Merleau-Ponty puts it, phenomenology seeks to restore the richness of the world as experienced (Moran, 2002: 2). By being attentive to ‘how things are experienced’, philosophers of phenomenology oppose to the intellectualism of abstracting and reducing phenomena to any preconceived structure (Moran, 2000). Rhythmanalysis is inherently a form of phenomenological investigation since the apperception of rhythms is irreducible to the analytical mind. In fact, Lefebvre sees the method as a ‘preparatory

discipline for the perception of the outside world' (Lefebvre, 2004: 20). Rhythm is neither a concept nor an object but a characteristic of experience. Rhythms are enacted and actualised through our mode of being and relating to the world. In his book *Art as Experience* (1934), the philosopher John Dewey points out the inherently rhythmic ordering of an organism's perceptual experience.

Experience in the degree in which it *is* experience is heightened vitality. Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events. Instead of signifying surrender to caprice and disorder, it affords our sole demonstration of a stability that is not stagnation but is rhythmic and developing (Dewey, 1934: 18).

The 'heightened vitality' that Dewey talks about presupposes an interconnectedness of perceiving and experiencing - a non-solipsistic mode of being. It is no longer the human subject who forms the site of experiences with his thought and feelings. The realm of the experiential lies in the interlinking of social agents. Each being is a unity of diverse relations. How the world of phenomena inter-penetrates poses the question for the phenomenologist as well as for the rhythm analyst. Lefebvre remarks on the clear if not self-evident relationship, 'once one discerns relations of force in social relations and relations of alliance, one perceives their link with rhythm' (Lefebvre, 2004: 68). The infant calls for the mother's care in the cycles of feeding and sleeping; the mother's day is punctuated by the infants' needs and those of her own. The mother relates to her child phenomenologically through rhythmic attunements. Through adaptation, a harmonious relationship establishes to render a state of eurhythmia when neither of them suffers.

Concentric to the rhythms of the home, forms of rhythmic imbrications are diverse when aggregates of social agents enact a multiplicity of rhythms which manifest as order or chaos. A person's daily commute on the bus for instance, is directly linked to

the schedules and routes of the bus network, which is interdependent upon those of other vehicles on the road. There are also the less immediate rhythms associated with the bus journey, the world of work and entertainment and education (their rhythms also intertwine) punctuate the ordering of public transport. We also need to include the ‘concealed’ rhythms that nonetheless are constitutive of the rhythms of travelling - the power and energy network, the virtual events of personal communication which supplement or obliterate the need to travel and so on. Polyrhythmia is the true phenomena of all experiences as each one’s rhythms are perpetually orientated to and are negotiated with those of Others. It suffices to start with the analysis of the bodily rhythms which nonetheless are a unity in diversity, whose rhythms are composed by the polyrhythmic bundle. Rhythmic relations are imbricated so that one can only temporarily prise out a particular rhythm before restoring its development within multiple sites of time-space relations.

The viscosity of rhythms make up the opaqueness of experience. It is not without difficulty that rhythms can be perceived distinctly (especially when a harmonious relationship defines a polyrhythmic bundle). The simultaneity and intertwining of rhythms overwhelm the rhythmanalyst. There is a long way from observation to the grasping of rhythms. Lefebvre considers the possibilities of reproducing and studying rhythms by recording them. Descriptions of phenomena are one of the ways that enable the analyst to be seized, grasped by and to reflect on rhythms. The rhythmanalyst performs phenomenological descriptions of things when he or she is present or to follow experiential accounts of things provided by other people. Edmund Husserl frequently speaks of phenomenological description as ‘clarification, illumination, enlightenment, even as conceptual analysis’ (Moran, 2002: 1-2). It is often the triviality and the taken-for-grantedness of ordinary life that capture the imagination of the rhythmanalyst (an imaginative capacity to attend to phenomena that may be concealed or linked). The physiognomy of a street, a courtyard, a district and so on are of great interest to the

analyst who draws up contours of a temporalised place. The rhythmanalyst's attention is more akin to that of an artist who remembers fleeting moments and presents his impressions through vivid descriptions. A curious account of the appearance of weekly cycles is narrated by the psychologist William James.

An ingenious friend of mine was long puzzled to know why each day of the week had such a characteristic physiognomy to him. That of Sunday was soon noticed to be due to the cessation of the city's rumbling, and the sound of people's feet shuffling on the side walk; of Monday, to come from the clothes drying in the yard and casting a white reflection on the ceiling...probably each hour in the day has for most of us some outer or inner sign associated with it as closely as these signs with the days of the week (James, 1950: 623).

The rhythmanalyst is also a documentarist who not only hears the 'cries' but also the 'murmurs' that characterises a place. The French writer George Perec, in his book *An Attempt to Exhaust a Place in Paris*, indiscriminately recorded everyday life in the Place Saint-Sulpice in Paris over three successive days. His minutiae account of life on the street, its movements and repose are not dissimilar to the work of a rhythmanalyst or a phenomenologist. Imagine we amplify the 'breathing' of traffic lights, wheels of the buses, soles of the shoes pedestrians are wearing, the humdrum of an ordinary street orchestrate a living symphony. From the diary entry he made on the 18th, October 1974, Perec wrote 'tens, hundreds of simultaneous actions, micro-events, each one of which necessitates postures, movements, specific expenditures of energy' (Perec, 2010: 10). He documents what passes through his vision.

An 87 passes by. People, in waves, still, continually

A priest returning from a trip (there is an airline label hanging from his satchel)

A child slides a toy car along the windowpane of the cafe (slight noise)

A man stops for a moment to say hello to the big dog of the cafe, peacefully stretched out in front of the door

An 86 passes by... (ibid: 15)

Rhythmanalysis goes beyond descriptions of experiences; similarly phenomenology is not reduced to the study of the appearances of things. The emphasis on the descriptive approach by no means excludes analysis and interpretation. Heidegger specified the kind of interpretative work as ‘carried out primordially not in a theoretical statement but in an action of circumspective concern’ (Heidegger, 2001: 200). What does Heidegger mean by the action of circumspective concern and how does it operate? In what ways does a rhythmanalyst share such an attitude? The philosopher demands a closer look at what phenomenology does in relation to phenomena. He claims that ‘phenomena are never appearances, though on the other hand every appearance is dependent on phenomena’ (ibid: 53). Heidegger clarifies the conceptual differences between mere appearance (or semblance) and phenomenon by emphasising the non-manifest dimension of experiences which needs a ‘bringing forth’ - ‘the announcing- itself by something which does not show itself’ (ibid). ‘Appearance’ (in the most colloquial use of the term) can only qualify itself as phenomena when appearance is also the ‘emanation of something which hides itself in that appearance - an emanation that announces’ (ibid). He illustrates phenomenology as a bringing-forth of the hidden in the example of illness.

In a certain kind of lighting someone can look as if his cheeks were flushed with red; and the redness which shows itself can be taken as an announcement of the Being-present-at-hand of a fever, which in turn indicates some disturbance in the organism (ibid: 54).

I argue that the ‘circumspective concern’, an attentiveness and careful response to the way one relates to other beings, also underlie the work of the rhythmanalyst. The very nature of the analytical work is that of announcing the temporal-spatial co-ordinations of social agents in the manifestation of various forms of rhythmic relations - polyrhythmia, eurhythmia and arrhythmia. Rather than condensing experiences to

abstract ideas, the analyst of rhythmic phenomena seeks to peel off the layers of experience that at times are implicit or glossed over by the abstractions of colloquial expressions. The adjectives we use to describe a situation can be unpicked as temporal-spatial relationships that subsist the polyrhythmic bundle. What is the ‘busyness’ of a street if it is not a heterogeneous bundle of rhythms, of cars, traffic lights, pedestrians each imposing its rhythm upon others, that are discordant to the bodily rhythms of observers. What is it that makes a place ‘relaxed’ and ‘homely’? It could be that how things are arranged induce minimal bodily tension, thus initiating a choreography of the body, which along other materialities produce eurhythmia, - a cup, a desk at hand for instance. The method of rhythmanalysis explores a network of material entities to make explicit their active weaving of rhythms. Lefebvre makes note of the architectural features of stairways in its interlinking of rhythms in the city of Venice.

Through the nuances and contrasts common aspects come to light...A link between spaces, the stairway also ensures a link between times: between the time of architecture (the house, the enclosure) and urban time (the street, the open space, the square and the monuments). It links particular houses and dwellings back to their distribution in urban space. Now is the stairway not a localised time par excellence? Don't the steps in Venice rhythm the walk through the city, while serving simultaneously as a transition between different rhythms (Lefebvre 2004: 97)?

The human body is a site of materiality which has a bundle of biological rhythms which nevertheless are intersecting with other rhythmic assemblages. A concerning with how the body inhabits the world via rhythms is addressed in the following discussion.

2.2. Sensing Rhythms

Without claiming to change life, but by fully reinstating the sensible in consciousness and in thought, he would accomplish a tiny part of the

revolutionary transformation of this world and this society in decline (Lefebvre, 2004: 26).

The formation of perceptual experience is a recurrent theme in the history of phenomenological investigations (Moran, 2000). At the heart of the debate is the rethinking and reconfiguration of the relationship between that of the cognitive body and its worldly existence. Phenomenology as a philosophical tradition overturns the very demarcation of ‘subjectivity’ (without the ‘I’ as a conscious entity, things cease to be perceived. It is only the subject who conjures up the world) and ‘objectivity’ (how things are perceived are invariant of who is perceiving) as ways of describing experiences. What these two seemingly opposing stances have in common is the presupposition of a division of the mind and the body (Smith, 2007). Philosophers of phenomenology reinstitute the subject in its bodily reckoning with the world; that we do not think about the world, but we *are* of the world. Merleau-Ponty asserts that instead of focusing on the subject’s mental conception of the world, one is caught up and is bound to the world through his or her bodily perceptions. He offers a view of the body in its two dimensions of existence, that it is both ‘touching’ and ‘tangible’ (Baldwin, 2004: 247). The body is ‘both a form of experience (tactile experience) and something that can be touched’ (*ibid*). Merleau-Ponty illustrates the welding of the phenomenal body to the world as ‘chiasm’ (crossing-over),

The body unites us directly with the things through its own ontogenesis, by welding to one another the two outlines of which it is made, its two laps: the sensible mass it is and the mass of the sensible wherein it is born by segregation and upon which, as seer, it remains open (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 136).

Rhythmanalysis also operates in the effacing of the subject/object divide. Instead of envisaging material entities as having distinct identities, the focus is rather on the affective qualities of things solicited on singular cases. Things align themselves in a state

of rhythmic seizure as they become each other (e.g. feet tapping to the music, trees that move in the wind). The enactment of rhythms bridges over the Self and Other as organisms are clustered into meaningful assemblages (it is the analyst's task to intuit such assemblages) of which things are mutually constituted. The rhythmanalytical perspective of conceiving things curiously chimes with Merleau-Ponty's idea that what is being looked at lines the looks and the hands, the enactment of rhythms suture the Self and the Other in the lining and aligning (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

A state of immersion is required of the rhythmanalyst who works at his or her best without preconceptions or conclusions of where a rhythm lies. The rhythmising consciousness (a bodily matter) is brought forth when the intensity of such phenomena takes hold of the analyst. Senses of rhythms murmur to our consciousness. One needs to be situated simultaneously inside and outside as Lefebvre suggests - 'in order to grasp and analyse rhythms, it is necessary to get outside them, but not completely' (Lefebvre, 2004: 27). To bring about the characteristics of bodily rhythms, descriptions of how it reaches out in movement makes a good start. A rhythmising consciousness emerges as the psychoanalyst Nicolas Abraham reflects on his train journey.

A moment ago, I perceived the monotonous sound of the wheels, and my body was receiving the same periodic jolts; but in the interval between the sounds, I was taken hold of by a tension, an expectation, which the next shock would either fulfil or disappoint. And so the jolts, which were merely endured before, are now expected; my whole body prepared to receive them (Abraham 1995: 70).

Abraham is exercising a phenomenology of sitting on the train. The periodic sound of a jolt, the tensing and relaxing of the muscles establish a bodily protention of the jolt in its retention. He is also practising rhythmanalysis by attending to the punctuation of the senses. Our perception is not of isolated instants but a synthesis of moments that are of contrasts and recurrences. The sensing of the phenomenal body is not solipsistic (i.e. 'I feel...') because the body perceives with the world of things. In this case, the

body attaches itself to the jolting train in their rhythmic alliance. The experience of travelling on the train does not often invite such reflexive accounts as an eurhythmic relationship forms between that of the body and the moving train. Our bodily knowledge is built upon the sensing of rhythms in the retention-protection of senses. Merleau-Ponty points out that the bodily knowledge is implicit in its familiarity with the world.

My act of perception...takes advantage of work already done, of a general synthesis constituted once for all; and this is what I mean when I say that I perceive with my body or my senses, since my body and my senses are precisely this familiarity with the world born of habit, that implicit or sedimentary body of knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 238).

The analyst calls upon all senses to grasp the relations of beings in their rhythmic orderings. Lefebvre reminds us that ‘smells’ trace out rhythms - ‘odours of the morning and evening, of hours of sunlight or darkness, of rain or fine weather’ (Lefebvre, 2004: 21). There are also the supplementary sensations, those which do not correspond to a particular organ: humidity, texture, softness, and so on are also part of rhythms. The walking movement for example exemplify the complex bodily engagements with its surroundings. There are the alternations of footsteps in their tactile connection with the pavement, sluggish or agile; the swinging of the arms measure the nearness and farness of things to regulate paces, breathing quickened by the strong wind and so on. It is through a rhythmic sensing that the body is welded to its surroundings and becomes possessed by their qualities. Rhythmanalysis does not see the body as an object moving in the world; it is rather seen as ‘the potentiality of this or that part of the world, surges towards objects to be grasped and perceives them’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 106).⁵

I argue that senses of rhythms operate at the level of meta-sense. In other words, sensations undulate and their contrasting relations establish rhythms (e.g. contrast of temperature, movement and rest); more importantly, a sense of rhythm transcends all

sensations as it unifies them as an implicit form of experience. The work of the analyst is to mark out and synthesise those punctuating senses that produce intervals, pulsations and shifts of accents. The conception of ‘rhythm’ as being a meta-sense accords with Deleuze’s attention to the relation between sensation and rhythm. On the material forces of works of art, he points out the vital power of rhythms which is integral to the aesthetic experience.

But this operation is possible only if the sensation of a particular domain (here, the visual sensation) is in direct contact with a vital power that exceeds every domain and traverses them all. This power is rhythm, which is more profound than vision, hearing, etc. Rhythm appears as music when it invests the auditory level, and as painting when it invests the visual level. It is diastole-systole: the world that seizes me by closing in around me, the self that opens to the world and opens the world itself (Deleuze, 2003: 42).

If rhythms are thought of as the uniting and structuring forces of the senses, and Hall remarks that the conjunctural shift is felt as a different kind of rhythm, what are then the possibilities of setting up historical work in the prism of rhythmanalysis and how may such kind of works be carried out?

2.3. History in Rhythms

In his book *Art as Experience*, Dewey suggests that experiences are neither total chaos nor complete stagnation, but they unfold in rhythms. He defines rhythms as ‘ordered variation of changes’ (Dewey, 2008: 158). His understanding of rhythms accords with that of Lefebvre who claims that ‘rhythm preserves both the measure that initiates the process and the re-commencement of this process with modifications, therefore with its multiplicity and plurality’ (Lefebvre, 2004: 79). A sense of order is preserved in the cyclical repetition of day and night, of seasons, rituals, in the world of habits and

routines. Recurrences sum up and carry forward experiences and each return impregnates possibilities of new and unexpected elements which give rise to changes. Thus the repetitions that constitute rhythmic experience are never identical and it is through the reverberation of experiences that changes take place. Instead of conceiving changes as the result of linear progression of events, as an abrupt denial of moments that have ‘gone by’ and not returning, our rhythmic experience reminds us that changes have an underlying cyclical, or an echoing dimension which deepens, haunts what they seek to undo. Dewey illuminates the point as he emphasises the interlinking of experiences as fundamentally rhythmic.

Relationships rather than elements recur, and they recur in differing contexts and with different consequences so that each recurrence is novel as well as a reminder. In satisfying an aroused expectancy, it also institutes a new longing, incites a fresh curiosity, establishes a changed suspense...(Dewey, 1934: 169).

As change and renewal always grow out of repetition, the process of which delineates rhythms as the fundamental experiential form, how does rhythmanalysis contribute to an understanding of historical change, an issue at the heart of conjunctural analysis? Should we not also heed to the recurrences, reverberations and the percolations of cultural experiences? Would not the interest in the direction of temporality, one that Heidegger explains ‘this phenomenon has the unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been’, makes it difficult for historians to mark out a decisive conjunctural shift (Heidegger, 2001: 374)? What are the agents of change that break the cyclical patterns of ordering, out of which destructions, interruptions and inventions of rhythms occur? I argue that these questions invite re-thinking of what history is and the implications they have for historiography.

In the second volume of *The Practices of Everyday Life* (1998), Luce Giard turned her attention to the mundane practice of cooking. While acknowledging the routinised nature

of culinary practices, the savoir-faire of which gets passed down from one generation to the next, she is also attending to those gestural transformations which fine-tune the bodily movement to the wider changes of material conditions. Gestures as a ‘body technique’ becomes obsolete and gets reinvented ‘in tight symbiosis with one milieu and its retinue of technical objects (Giard, 1998: 203). Her phenomenological descriptions of grocery shopping capture the imaginations of the rhythmanalyst who is interested to explore the dying out of certain bodily rhythms in the birth of new ones.

The gestures and practices of the buying woman have had to be transformed in order to adapt to new market habits. In the past one had to learn how to look at things, to not be distracted by the vendor's stream of words, to estimate the quality of a cut of meat in the wink of an eye, to smell the almost too-strong odour of cheese, and to notice the yellow colour of butter past its prime. Today, one must know how to read and trust no longer in a personal and empirical savoir faire that comes from a traditional structure, acquired through long apprenticeship, within the familiarity of an elder, but in a collective scientific knowledge, codified in regulatory statements and transmitted anonymously (ibid : 209).

The rhythmanalyst is informed and inspired by phenomenological discoveries and yet his or her effort goes further to pursue the entangled social relations woven into the historical moment. To the rhythmanalyst, the bursting moments of phenomena are always inductive. The method of rhythmanalysis serves to guide the phenomenologist to bring forth a set of hidden phenomena - those non-manifest dimensions of a ‘moment’. Alterations of bodily rhythms are the immediate discoveries when certain gestures are chased away. The analysis of rhythms may start with the bodily and eventually weaves a complex network of interlocking movements. Does not the advent of supermarket shopping imply a whole questioning of changes in the logistics of food, labour, vehicles and so on? How do the rhythms of industrialisation and mechanisation impose themselves onto those of the cook in the kitchen? Rhythms that delineate the house, market, airport, greenhouses infiltrate and constitute each other. The ordered variations

of social habits proliferate from one sphere of experience to another. Certain rhythms may be jolted by a sudden cessation of repetition and generate new experiences. For instance, the introduction of electric kitchen equipments obliterate the need for gestural sequences that are no longer energy saving. Instead he or she supervises the machine and integrates their gestures to its working. Other movements persist in the kitchen to produce obdurate bodily rhythms. The rhythmanalyst must heed to rhythms which are symptomatic of destruction and creation. The rhythmanalytical understanding of ‘change’ as ordered variation rather than linear progression offers alternative ways of doing history. We not only need a history of rhythms (a phrase that is tautological since historical consciousness is installed in the rhythmic phenomena) - an archive of bodily rhythms and greater assemblage or rhythms on the level of the institutions and so on, but also a ‘rhythm of history’ (Lefebvre, 2004: 51), of how changes gather its pace and brought about new cultural experiences - the rhythms of change. Lefebvre illustrates on the point:

In historical time, what is the role of history in the forms of memory, recollections, and narratives? Are there not alternative to memory and forgetting: periods where the past returns—and periods where the past effaces itself? Perhaps such an alternative would be the rhythm of history (*ibid*).

3. Rhythmic Things

This section looks at the contributions of a philosophy of ‘things’ towards analysis of cultural history and the notion of a conjunctural shift in particular. The ways of formulating, conceiving and perceiving things in the mode of New Materialist thinking are central to the discussion. There are several key themes (which echo and interlink with each other) I aim to address within the philosophy of New Materialism: the question of agency, the affective materiality of things, and the notion of ‘assemblage’. I argue that rhythmanalysis in its conceptual and practical affinity with New Materialism

finds forms of clarification particularly around these themes. As methodologies of cultural research, they share similar priorities and procedures. In other words, explorations of 'thing' philosophies help to crystallise some of the presuppositions and operations of rhythmanalysis. I intend to draw on the implications of looking at things rhythmically in relation to the tracing of a conjunctural shift and to uncover the constitutive elements of the 'political' in general. Centred around discussions on the efficacy of things, impersonal affects and the notion of 'distributive agencies' (Bennett, 2010: 31), I emphatically address the skewed balance of attributing political forces to human agency.

At the crux of any debates of cultural politics are the issues of agency and ways of explicating their operations. It is tempting to analyse the processes and outcomes of political struggles by leaving 'things' out of consideration, for they do not 'talk' to us directly or contend with the various forms of historical record. Conjunctural analysis, if configured as a point of crisis of the economy, ideology and polity are particularly prone to an investigation that is centred around human activities. 'Causality' as a mode of investigation offers resolute relationships of agents and it instigates habitual ways of conducting research that accounts for historical events as functions of causal relations. Jane Bennett is a scholar of the New Materialism tradition who reflects on the causality framework of analysis (Bennett, 2010). She advocates a kind of retroactive approach to historical research which involves detecting and tracing social agents in their contingent development. She explains: 'these sources are necessarily multiple, made up of elements unaffiliated before the "crystallisation" process began. In fact, what makes the event happen is precisely the contingent coming together of a set of elements' (2010: 34). The complexities of historic events are proposed (for instance, a conjunctural moment crystallises social changes and it requires a kind of pre-conjunctural analysis). I shall illustrate in the theoretical and empirical discussions of the thesis that rhythmanalysis is a method that invents new ways of 'tracing' elements.

In the article 'The Cultural Gap', (1984) the growth in mass consumption of 'things' in the post-war years of Britain are observed by Stuart Hall. With purchases of TV, video and computer or simply modes of shopping of daily essentials in the supermarket, he points out that the circulation of mass commodities had set up profound changes of everyday life rhythms in the ordinary household.

One can find evidence of this in a hundred everyday ways - in the new kinds of modern conveniences which found their way into ordinary homes; in the changes in patterns of leisure, entertainment, holidays; in shifts in patterns of drinking and entertainment, or food consumption (Hall, 1984: 18).

Though the downward spirals of the economic conditions (culminated in the mid-1970s) put constraint on the level of consumption, Hall argues that there had already been an underlying cultural drift that shaped people's expectations, aspirations and ways of leading everyday life. The daily experience of the market as provider, strengthened by the freedom of personal consumption in the mass market was jostling with, if not overtaking the provision of the welfare state. In his 1984 article 'The Culture Gap', Hall claims that the Left has not recognised how the cultural face had been revolutionised in the advent of consumer culture. The political project of the Left omitted those 'popular and democratic elements of daily life' such as the emerging cultural concerns with body maintenance, and the questions of health and exercise (Hall, 1984: 20). He notes that consumer capitalism had refashioned the perceived and lived social relations such as that of a citizen and the state. He suggests that a Labour movement shall not fail to identify 'what is concrete and material in these popular aspirations', and it shall not lose touch with the desires and pleasures brought about by consumerism (*ibid*). What needs to be analysed and drawn into political calculations of the Left, according to Hall, is to produce 'a more loosely-textured, more diffuse and diverse daily experiences (not, for that reason, a less exploited one)' (*ibid*, 19). In order to make contacts with those changes

of experiences which had been underpinned by the trend of mass consumption, Hall emphasises a mode of analysis (to which he did not elaborate in the article) that does not centre around commodities *per se*; instead, the focal point is the drawing out of social relationships.

What is at issue here isn't a matter simply of goods, commodities and technology. It is also a matter of attitudes and practices. Culture has never consisted of things - only of particular pattern of relations established through the social use of things and techniques (*ibid*, 20).

Hall's statements have practical consequences for conducting historical research. The shifting attitudes and common sense making towards the new Right, featured in the conjunctural turning of the 1970s, shall not be solely analysed around political discourses. To make case for a cultural-political conjuncture revolved around things and social relations, a methodology is required to capture the diffuse and diverse nature of experiences through a materialist approach. The attention to 'things' matters greatly in the philosophies of New Materialism and it has its unique angle of analysis, but how does rhythmanalysis as a form of conjunctural analysis relate to it? To facilitate a connection of the two methods (I propose New Materialism is a method of cultural research) and to unravel their pertinence and potency for conjunctural studies, there is much ground clearing work to do.

3.1. Rethinking Things

New Materialism starts with the humble yet radical question - what constitutes materiality? As opposed to the New Materialist's thinking, the tradition of materialist philosophy assumes a dichotomy: that is to take objects as materiality and opposed to it is the realm of immateriality (such as language, consciousness, thoughts and feelings). The inherent problems of such a conception of materiality is that although 'matter' is

given primary attention in the materialist tradition, the superiority of human subjectivity over ‘objects’ remains to be the foundations of such a way of thinking. Matter is there, detached and distanced from the human subject as they only need to be thought about, ordered, represented and analysed. They are always at hands. Refuting this divide, Martin Heidegger (1967) proposes that if the analysis of things and subjects are tended to differently, there is a new horizon of conceiving a non-subjectified world of things.

In *What is a Thing?*, Heidegger claims that his quest is ‘a transformed basic position’ of existing positions towards things - ‘a change of questioning and evaluation, of seeing and deciding’ (Heidegger, 1967: 50). He argues that the issue of how subjects relate to things, of how ‘things’ move beyond its existence and drift into signification is a historical one. For instance, he relates practices and thoughts of determining matter to the modern science’s attempt to measure things, to give them a quantifiable definition and these determinations are then often considered as the ground and basis of all things (*ibid*). The invention of the ‘subject’ is also to be seen historically, as a by-product of the birth of metaphysics and a quest for securing one’s existence. In this vein of analysis, the world of things, as perceived being out there lying before the subject, can thus be represented and guarded by self-consciousness (of what Heidegger calls the ‘over-againstness’ of the object [1967: 165]). Heidegger argues that these ways of interrogating matter have profound influence on how we relate to things, to which he explains: ‘what most holds us captive and makes us unfree in the experience and determination of the things’ (*ibid*: 51). How else can we then relate to things differently? He pinpoints a crucial dimension of things as ‘presence’, or a presencing that activates a world of living. Things are rather more precisely defined as a verb, a ‘thinging’ or a gathering of presences within which the humans inhabit (Heidegger, 1971: 178). The conviviality of things in their capacities to conjure phenomena makes their definition - ‘only what conjoins itself out of the world becomes a thing’ (*ibid*: 180).

Lefebvre's writing on the rhythmanalytical approach to 'things' struck accord with that of Heidegger's as he made clear of his refusal to appropriate things as representations of the mind (the thing is not an image as he claims) and the of proposition to bring forth things as an ensemble of presences. Looking out of his garden, Lefebvre invites us to look longer and listen attentively- 'you thus perceive that each plant, each tree, the flowers, the seeds and fruits, each have their own time and place, with its recent past and a foreseeable and distant future' (Lefebvre, 2004: 31). For him, the presence of 'things' are manifested in their temporal-spatial characters, or the way they interrelate through temporal-spatial relationships.

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.⁶ 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 (*ibid*: 23).

I suggest that this paragraph written by Lefebvre encapsulates some of the key themes which clarify what a 'thing' is and what rhythmanalysis makes out of 'things'. Particularly, I am intrigued by the ways in which things may be integrated as an ensemble and how they are transformed into a dramatic becoming. Before addressing these themes, I shall make a digression. If rhythmanalysis is practised by a human subject, one might have the question that do we then not fall into a conundrum of subject/object division? That once again, things are being analysed by the subject's consciousness? In other words, what is the particular stance taken by a rhythmanalyst amidst the ensemble of things, who attempts to conjoin the worldliness of things?

Lefebvre makes a provisional portrait of the rhythmanalyst. He outlines the essential

qualities a practitioner of rhythmanalysis should possess - attentiveness, attunement to the surroundings, concerns with temporalities and so on. It is the mode of attention and the way one listens to the world that are being emphasised. He or she hears the world, the cries as well as the noise and murmurs: the wind, the rain, the forest, the stone and the profusion of minuscule life forms. No details elude the attentive observation of the rhythmanalyst since 'for him, nothing is immobile' (Lefebvre, 2004: 20). His or her own body is a garland of rhythms (e.g. heartbeat, blood circulation, breathing), which embodies a whole range of rhythms which negotiate with the bodily rhythms. He or she inhabits the world of things since the bodily rhythms conjoin themselves out of a world of rhythms. The boundary of where rhythm resides is often fluid. At times, the rhythmanalyst may unwittingly incorporate rhythms 'outside' his or her own self, while actively produce other rhythms. The bodily rhythms mark a site for the analytic consciousness - a bodily consciousness. Lefebvre suggests a way of integrating the 'self' and 'other' - 'he should come to listen to them *as a whole* and unify them by taking his own rhythms as a reference' (ibid: 20). Rhythmanalysis is a reflexive as well as a creative practice.

For the analysis of rhythms is always referential, his or her attention oscillates amongst an ensemble of rhythms. 'A certain exteriority enables the analytic intellect to function. However, to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by it; one must let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration' (ibid: 27). The rhythmanalyst is seized by and intoxicated by the multiplicity of rhythms. In his book *Genesis*, Michel Serres (1995) writes on how phenomena are brought forth (their ordering and disordering) by discussing the concept of 'multiplicity' and he problematises any 'objective' epistemological position in regards to the study of phenomena. Serres' depiction of a poetic scene presents to us the pertinent modes of exercising rhythmanalysis - self-effacement, ceaseless questioning of where the boundary of things lie, and a much nuanced and descriptive mode of recording. Taking a

paragraph from the book *Genesis*, I am quoting at length of Serres' reflection on 'multiplicity'. Is not his way of relating to the world, of being suspended from a bounded self, of being in a state of reverie, the apposite condition for a person to conduct rhythmanalysis?

The multiple as such. Here's a set undefined by elements or boundaries. Locally, it is not individuated; globally, it is not summed up. So it's neither a flock, nor a school, nor a heap, nor a swarm, nor a herd, nor a pack. It is not an aggregate; it is not discrete. It's a bit viscous perhaps. A lake under the mist, the sea, a white plain, background noise, the murmur of a crowd, time. I have no idea, or am only dimly aware, where its individual sites may be, I've no notion of its points, very little idea of its bearings. I have only the feeblest conception of its internal interactions, the lengthiness and entanglement of its connections and relations, only the vaguest idea of its environment. It invades the space or it fades out, takes a place, either gives it up or creates it, by its essentially unpredictable movement. Am I immersed in this multiple, am I, or am I not a part of it? Its edge a pseudopod takes me and leaves me, I hear the sound and I lose it, I have only fragmentary information on this multiplicity (1995: 4-5).

3.2. Rhythmic Agents

New Materialist's philosophy demands a rethinking of materiality and the dynamics of materialisation. What kind of 'things' materialise cultural experiences and how do we account for the capacities of 'things' as social agents? It is a question of discerning and recuperating those agents which are excluded from the attention of cultural research and to re-orientate oneself to a New Materialist mode of analysis that reinstates the vitality of things. As discussed in the previous section, a conceptualisation of materiality goes beyond the demarcation of human and non-human, or of the passivity of inanimate and the activity of the living forms, for such a way of thinking about materiality does not attend to a relational understanding of how 'things' are brought forth as phenomena. In giving materiality its due, Coole and Frost summarise the shared concerns of some of the scholars of New Materialism.

They often discern emergent, generative powers (or agentic capacities) even within inorganic matter, and they generally eschew the distinction between organic and inorganic, or animate and inanimate, at the ontological level. Jane Bennett has provocatively labelled this an ‘enriched materialism’: ascribing agency to inorganic phenomena such as the electricity grid, food, and trash, all of which enjoy a certain efficacy that defies human will (Coole and Frost, 2010: 9).

I argue that while New Materialism directs our attention to the non-human agents in the process of social interactions, its radicalism in the description and explication of cultural phenomena lies in the way of addressing *how* materialities work in relation to each other. In other words, the defining of ‘materiality’ is inseparable from understanding the process of materialisation (how ‘things’ realise and change experiences). In attempt to explicate such processes, I am particularly interested in two concepts which cohere around a New Materialist mode of analysing ‘things’ and the question of agency. One is of what Jane Bennet calls ‘impersonal affect’ which posits ‘affects’ as materiality (Bennett, 2010: xi). The other one is Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ‘subjectless individuation’ which configures the identity of ‘things’ as being organised around affects and its particular emphasis on the open formation of materiality as ‘assemblages’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 266). Their understanding of the emergent nature of ‘things’, of their gathering, interactions and distributions, I argue, clarify the materiality of rhythmic phenomena and the agency of making and transforming rhythms.

Drawing on the notion of ‘affect’ (in the Spinozian conception of the term) ‘which refers broadly to the capacity of any body for activity and responsiveness’ (Bennett, 2010: xiii), Jane Bennett makes the constitutional claim that affect is equated with materiality rather than a force that enters a physical body (Bennett, 2010). Or rather, she means that affective forces are materiality. These forces are not intrinsically stable, but they present themselves in ways that are not always foreseeable depending on their interactions with others. In her study of positioning materiality in political discussions, Bennett experiments with

narrating events that position non-human actors as affective agents; as bodies that compose an assemblage with other bodies which animate a situation that is not necessarily outside the control of any particular body, with which she employs a 'congregational understanding of agency' (ibid: 20). Within the assemblage of things, their power of effectuation may not be distributed unevenly; some parts may be incumbent, but they form an assemblage (a term invented by Deleuze and Guattari), a meshwork, a network or any new ways of designating 'the kind of relation obtaining between the parts of a volatile but somehow functioning whole' (ibid: 23). For instance, Bennett recounts an event such as a disruptive black-out in North America and she formulates and highlights the electrical power grid as an assemblage.

It is a material cluster of charged parts that have indeed affiliated, remaining in sufficient proximity and coordination to produce distinctive effects. The elements of the assemblage work together although their coordination does not rise to the level of an organism. Rather, its jelling endures alongside energies and factions that fly out from it and disturb it from within (ibid: 24).

Deleuze and Guattari (2005) radically re-formulate 'things' (though they use the term 'subject') as they are perceived to be forms of affects. They propose a conception of materiality that does not necessarily belong to or affix to tangible objects. 'Things' are rather named as 'accidental forms' which are always open to construction and composition. The degrees and intensities of light, heat, speed individuate and they enter into a relationships with those of others to form another individual. Affect as materiality have the capacities to effectuate and to align with each other. This very peculiar mode of attention to materiality is expressed by Deleuze and Guattari.

For accidental forms are susceptible to *more and less*: more or less charitable, but also more or less white, more or less warm. A degree of heat is a perfectly individuated warmth distinct from the substance or the subject that receives it. A degree of heat can enter into composition with a degree of whiteness, or with another degree of heat, to form a third unique individuality distinct from that of the subject. What is the individuality of a day, a season, an event (Deleuze and

Guattari, 2005: 253)?

As I discussed earlier in this chapter that rhythm is a kind of meta-sense that registers and integrates a whole range of intensities with which one can conjoin oneself in the world by setting up a rhythm that relates to others, then, is not this way of reckoning with the world, a meta-sense, also a kind of intensity that perfectly individuates itself from others, thus putting itself forward as a materiality that has the capacity to affect and induce patterns of relating? 'Bundles, bouquets and garlands of rhythms' are composed by way of appropriation, of those material affects that cohere and strengthen their vibrations (Lefebvre, 2004: 20). One can list the many rhythms of a summer day: the smell of the melting tar, the sweating of the body, the noisy streets in contrast to the idleness of plants and animals.

I suggest that Bennett's attention to affective assemblages is particularly useful for exploring power relations of systems and structures of social reality. The working of material agents are explored in their alliances of rhythms and they are seen as ongoing processes of affective negotiations. Deleuze and Guattari envision a bringing forth of a constellation of affects which circulate and cohere, traversing the discreet identities of objects (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005). A composition of affects is an assemblage which designates certain kinds of atmosphere that environs and circumscribes social interactions. By positing 'affects' as subjects, the identification of forms of subjects are by no means totally rejected. Coole and Frost explain the transitions of non-form to form: 'It is in these choreographies of becoming that we find cosmic forces assembling and disintegrating to forge more or less enduring patterns that may provisionally exhibit internally coherent, efficacious organization' (Coole and Frost, 2010:19).

I argue that the focus of New Materialist thinking on the agential capacities of things, of

the affects of materiality and ‘affects’ as materiality, facilitate an understanding of how ‘things’ are essentially rhythmic making agents and that the analysis of rhythmic phenomena as temporal-spatial co-ordinations are premised on the ordering of things in their dynamic becoming. First of all, Lefebvre’s definition of rhythms needs to be revisited. He asserts that ‘all rhythms imply the relation of a time to a space, a localised time, or if one prefers, a temporalised space’ (Lefebvre, 2004: 89). For him, rhythm is the product and process of timing-spacing practices which bring the metaphysical division of time and space to a unity. The materialisation of things, in their active role of producing social relationships, are central to those timing-spacing practices. Time-space are rhythms, and they are always in the process of making. The French theorist Bruno Latour advocates a sociological attention to the power of ‘things’ (often non-human and inanimate), to which they are named ‘actants’ (Latour, 2007b). He discusses the centrality of ‘things’ in the making of time-space, and his interpretation of timing-spacing accords with Lefebvre’s assertion that the concrete reality of rhythms is ‘signalled only through mediations, through indirect effects or manifestations’ (Lefebvre, 1991b: 205). He refutes two opposing stances of perceiving time-space. It is neither a construction of a subjective sensorium often understood as subjective apprehension of lived time and space, nor *a priori* framework that the mind imposes on the world in order to make sense of it. He argues that the question of time-space begins with ‘*other entities*’ (Latour, 1997: 183).

We never encounter time and space, but a multiplicity of interactions with actants having their own timing, spacing, goals, means and ends...Long before we talk of space and time, it is these sorts of connections, short-circuits, translations, associations, and mediations that we encounter daily (Latour, 1997: 181).

Indeed, everyday life is teemed with movements and exchanges that are choreographed by the way things align to each other. The artist Richard Wentworth reflects on a banal street scene in which a set of things make social relations as they mark out distinct

rhythms.

I know why the dry cleaners are by the bus stop, while ten doors down would not be a good site. I am sure that particular dry cleaners legitimatise the incompetence of the bus service, so that people feel better about the wait, because there is a potential to do something in that space. It is not a traceable thing but I am sure that part of the sense of waiting for the bus, the inconvenience of travelling by bus in London, is matched up with the idea 'well that is all right because I can combine it with going to the dry cleaners', so that the two things are in a symbiotic relationship (Wentworth, 2002: 392).

Here we have an assemblage of 'things' at the bus stop: the people who wait for the bus, the dry cleaners, the bus stops and the traffic of vehicles. Each of them practices timing-spacing in relation to the other (the proximity of dry cleaners and the bus stops is a result of this pattern of relating). Also there is an ordering of movements which may or may not be directly observed. For instance, we can map out the intersecting rhythms of waiting for the next bus to arrive while going to the dry cleaners, but the experience of waiting for the bus may be enmeshed in rhythmic centres (the rhythms of the roads are always multiple) that cannot be immediately observed. One's sense of waiting and discontent *is* thus a rhythm which is concretised in the temporal-spatial relationships of things. I suggest that the New Materialist's attention to 'things' as a gathering and presencing of social actants, a happening rather than a representation, that 'things' hold patterns of links and connections, radically alters understandings of 'time', 'space' and the conceptualisation of rhythms. Rhythms do not merely imply cyclical and linear repetitions; topological relationships of things enable timing-spacing which produce rhythms.

The symbiotic relationships of things pointed out by Wentworth are particularly important to rhythmanalysis. The movement around the bus stop is part of a multiple assemblage of thing relations which are interdependent and susceptible to mutual

adjustments. By thinking of things as enabling agents of social interaction which are caught up in trajectories of movements, that is by a weaving of material assemblages, the rhythmanalyst envisions a polyrhythmia of cultural phenomena. Latour gives an example of how everyday life is teemed with opportunities for assembling things and analysing the implied rhythmic phenomena. The setting up of a mouse trap conjures a whole set of agents, seemingly incommensurable, of diverse timing-spacing assemblages - the purchase of the mousetrap, the cheese from the Alps, the production of the device by labour from the Far East, the export and import of such devices and the routes they travel until they reach the hardware shop, whose collective organisation is condensed in a single moment (Latour, 1997). Things evoke cultural history. I argue that by following things as agents which produce trajectories of movements and interconnections, the philosophy of positing 'things' as presencing is crucial for a rhythmanalytical research of cultural phenomena.

3.3. Materialisation, the Becoming of Things and History

For materiality is always something more than 'mere' matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable. In sum, new materialists are rediscovering a materiality that materializes, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us to think of causation in far more complex terms; to recognize that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces and to consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency (Coole and Frost, 2010: 9).

The New Materialist and the rhythmanalytical conceptualisation of things lend cultural researchers a radical position to capture and analyse the vitality and complexity of social reality. They foreground 'things' as affective agents, or rather 'things' are defined by their capacities to affect. The evocative gathering of things is a presencing which forms assemblages, and the alignment of things in their timing-spacing practices hold

patterns of relating as well as generating changes and renewals. What then can be suggested by a 'becoming' of materialities? Deleuze and Guattari (2005) emphasise how things enter each other in their composition of an assemblage which is an event, a becoming rather than a congregation of distinct subjects and forms. Their emphasis on the 'subjectless individuation', that is affects (they call it 'degrees of intensity') standing in for 'things', meant that in no way is 'becoming' suggesting the mere transformation of forms or substance. In the becoming of plants for instance, we are not looking at the becoming of flower buds to petals; rather, it is a becoming in relation to other material agents, in its reception of heat, moisture, pollination and so on (Colebrook, 2002). Ansell-Pearson, a scholar of Deleuze and Guattari's works, remarks on the 'passing on of affects' as underlying the concept of 'becoming'.

Affects communicate on the level of becomings...This is a sensation conceived as a zone of in-discernibility or indetermination in which 'things', such as beasts and people, reach the point that proceeds any 'natural differentiation', achieving a dissolution of forms (1999: 179).

The animal, for example, has to invent, by merging with its environment or by entering into symbiotic complexes, the 'becoming of the evening', say, for example, to stalk at five o'clock in the evening (*ibid*: 181).

The changing relations of affects introduce new assemblage constructions. Things are always 'thinging' by assembling material agents. The becoming of 'things' are the dynamic process of re-aligning thing relations, thus they generate diverse timing-spacing possibilities. Therefore, the attention to 'things' as producing emergent relationships of temporal-spatial assemblages point us to the alliance of rhythms within the polyrhythmic ensemble. The eurhythmic assemblage is composed of materialities coexisting in harmonious relationships. Lefebvre configures the functioning of the body as a rhythmic assemblage which is kept in 'metastable equilibrium' in a state of health.

Conversely, a disturbance to the rhythmic assemblage characterises the body of arrhythmia which manifests pathological states (Lefebvre, 2004: 20).

Finally, I propose to translate the philosophy of New Materialism and its ways of informing the method of rhythmanalysis, to a plane of conjunctural analysis that has practical guidances for the study of historic conjuncture. The concept of the conjunctural shift, largely understood as a paradigm shift of social, culture and political forces (see the Introduction of this thesis), is a moment of crisis which prompts new configurations of material assemblages. I argue that the phenomena of arrhythmia characterise the interrelationships of things/rhythms at the historic rupture. Arrhythmia suggests interruptions of habitual patterns of relating things which orchestrate as dissonant, non-synchronised and disruptive rhythmic alliances. The New Materialist's mode of cultural analysis emphatically attends to the materialisation of things, that is the emergent compositions of assemblages. Thus a conjuncture can be tentatively conceived as the re-assembling of material agents, be it the re-assembling of a 'haecceity' - a way of individuation defined by its affective capacity, in Deleuze and Guattari's sense, or the re-structuring of systems and institutions in their trajectories of movements (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005). Instead of positing a wholesale transformation of cultural experiences, materialities have the agential capacities of both urging and resisting changes. Thus a New Materialist account of historic conjuncture sets out to portray the complexities of change by differentiating the capacities and pace of re-assembling materialities (the speed of re-assembling may vary) within the polyrhythmic bundle of a conjuncture. It does not attempt to attribute hierarchical relations to materiality, though they manifest in differential degrees of intensity, but to locate social change within a relational development of temporal-spatial co-ordinations. The British Marxist geographer Doreen Massey re-imagines historic-political issues in terms of rhythmic relationships as she proposes analysis of multiple trajectories of materialisation that negotiate with each other.

For this has to be an intervention into a constellation of trajectories which, though interacting and undoubtedly affecting each other, have very different rhythms...that any politics catches trajectories at different points, is attempting to articulate rhythms which pulse at different beats (Massey, 2005: 158).

The two chapters that follow are case studies of bodily rhythms and communication rhythms. They demonstrate how conjunctural analysis may be illuminated using the method of rhythmanalysis. I shall be directed by the theoretical discussions on the philosophy of the method and apply their attentions and ways of operating (which differentiate from the ideological conceptions of conjunctural shift) to piece together a sensing of the conjuncture: as a moment that reverberate to others, as experiential form of knowing, and finally as re-individuation/re-organisation of the materialities of history.

¹ When ‘moment’ is in single quotation mark, I designate the term as a concept and a modality of presence.

² For the quotes from Lefebvre, see his book *Le Somme et le reste*, ‘Preface’ by René Lorau, Paris: Mériidiens Klincksieck.

³ The immediacy of an economic or political situation is defined by the notion of a conjuncture: ‘the conjuncture is the set of immediate and ephemeral characteristics of the economic situation . . . Study of the conjuncture is thus more closely linked to immediate politics, to “tactics” and agitation’ (Gramsci, 1971: 177).

⁴ Phenomenology, as a new way of doing philosophy was first formally announced by Edmund Husserl in the Introduction to the Second Volume of the First Edition of his *Logische Untersuchungen (Logical Investigations)*, 1900–1901). When discussing the need for a wide-ranging theory of knowledge, he speaks of the ‘phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing’ (Moran, 2000: 1).

⁵ Merleau-Ponty gives an example of how the subject relates to object perceptually. ‘The subject when put in front of his scissors, needle and familiar tasks, does not need to look for his hands or his fingers, because they are not objects to be discovered in objective space: bones, muscles and nerves, but potentialities already mobilised by the perception of scissor or needle’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962 : 106).

⁶ Prior to the paragraph quoted, Lefebvre distinguishes the two concepts 'present' and 'presence'. By 'presence', he suggests a phenomenological understanding of images-'a presence survives and imposes itself by introducing a rhythm (a time)', whereas the 'present' 'is a mere simulation, imitation and representation of phenomena' (2004: 23). He suggests that the 'present' simulates the 'presence' in the form of portrait, a copy, a double, a facsimile, etc. The rhythmanalyst, he claims, can bring the present into presence by 'having confidence in the photo, painting and drawing' (2004: 22).

Chapter 3

Walking *With*: Conjoining Bodily Rhythms in London's East End

And the more the ease of these gestures was lost under the influence of invisible powers, the more life became indecipherable (Agamben, 1993: 137).

This chapter explores walking practices as a case study of bodily rhythms, which I argue are points of contacts with cultural and biological rhythms. Henri Lefebvre emphasises that the rhythmanalytical project has never lost sight of the body (Lefebvre, 2004). Rhythmanalysis of a singular body does not preclude the concatenation of rhythms which compose and are composed by bodily rhythms. How our bodies function and attune to other social entities could be the initial point of investigation and the aim of which is to unravel the multiplicity of rhythms at work. The philosopher asks 'but is there a relation between these physical flows of movements and gestures and the culture that shows itself (and yells) in the enormous murmur of the junction' (Lefebvre, 2004: 33)? This question proposes a method of cultural analysis that concerns with bodily gestures and movements. I address the primacy of movement as a mode of engaging with the world. It is through 'muscular consciousness' (Bachelard, 1964: 11) that walking becomes a form of experiential knowing, feeling, connecting and protesting.

The walking movement composes diverse materialities and thus produce affective experiences that interrelate social agents. Walking is a way of sensing and inhabiting, and a phenomenological investigation of this mode of movement focuses on the uniting of senses which gives a rhythm to one's body. The French philosopher Michel de Certeau sees 'walking as a space of enunciation' by which he means that pedestrian movements temporalise-spatialise the make up of the city (de Certeau, 1984: 98). It is the swarming of singularities that renders rhythmic tonalities to a historical moment. In

relation to Hall's theories of the late 1970s' conjuncture, I argue that close observation and description of the walking body are 'theoretical' in the sense of arriving at the abstract through the concrete. A rhythmanalysis of walking practices facilitates conjunctural analysis when Hall calls for 'finding another way in', and to 'break into the confusing fabric that the real apparently presents' (Hall, 2009: 665). I shall demonstrate how explorations of walking on London's inner city streets operate on 'a scale of magnification', that they break into the social fabric of race, inner city decline, law and order, and so on (*ibid*: 664)

If the body is seen as a microscopic site of historical exploration, what are the hidden relations and their rhythmic orchestrations, that work through one's walking rhythms? I intend to test out a rhythmanalytical method of historical research, that is to disentangle the rhythmic bundles of cultural experiences and to explore how they are orchestrated in bodily rhythms. Rhythmanalysis does not make hierarchies or dialectics of the general and the specific, or of the levels of social analysis (e.g. local versus national). I argue that the rhythms of pedestrians are imbricated in trajectories of movement so that the walking rhythms are at once singular and polyrhythmic. Our attention is directed to the wider shift of alliances of materialities that shot through experiences of walking. It is to explore the extent to which bodily practices refract those temporal-spatial organisations of materialities and the assembling of which incorporate bodily rhythms.

One way of doing this, is to begin with theorisations of the conjunctural shift, so that we are informed by the general tendencies and ideologies of Thatcherism. Then I shall look at the sensual registers of these broad tendencies and more specifically the bodily movement and gestural rhythms that are receptive to the bundles of materiality which presumably took another affiliation in the conjunctural moment. For instance, how would bodily rhythms manifest (if at all) what Hall defines as the crucial feature of

Thatcherism, that of ‘authoritarian populism’? Or how did one walk in the blighted industrial cities during the transition and re-composition of the British economy, when the pace of de-industrialisation had quickened by the policies that promote the banking and financial services? In what ways can we enter the social fabric of racial tensions through looking at how the immigrant communities walk on the pavements at a time of intense anxiety around ‘alien culture’ (Hall, 1979)? What was the kind of atmosphere invoked on the street?

It must be noted that bodily rhythms such as walking could elude official discourses, that there are plural practices of such, and there is a limit to which bodily rhythms can be regulated. Therefore, there is always ambiguity as to identifying the rhythmic assemblages that orchestrate in bodily experiences. In the pursuit of conjunctural analysis, the tensions of bodily rhythms as a materiality that elude discourses of hegemony add complexity to such an investigation. For instance, phenomenological explorations of bodily rhythms such as walking are useful for illuminating the nature of historical conjuncture. To what extent are walking practices obstinate in their resistance to other rhythmic changes so that a conjunctural shift of bodily rhythms may occur at a slower pace, lagging behind certain groups of rhythmic transformations? Or could it be that the experience of walking was mostly susceptible to specific material interventions (if that is the case, what are the dominant changes that characterise the conjuncture?)

I shall look at the crisis and contradictions of a conjunctural shift in the lens of bodily attunements. My interest in the nuance of walking was initially evoked by the structural film *Fergus Walking* which was made by the film maker William Raban in 1978. What the film does is to redeem the ordinary experience of walking by de-familiarising the viewers to the process of watching someone walking past. The asceticism of structural film making, its refusal to use films as tools of representing reality, and its preference

for showing the world as it is, render such form of artistic practice an apposite means of conducting a phenomenological inquiry and rhythmanalysis. It is rather the means of sensitising the viewer to the temporal-spatial relationships of Fergus' movement and the world of things he was walking with. Pavements, road crossings, traffic lights are no longer a stationary backdrop of a place but they actively structure one's preference of routes and other habitual patterns of engaging with the surrounding. The bodily rhythms, which are seen to incorporate those forces of materiality not delimited by the body, establish the centrifugal attention of viewers and it is apt for directing a political examination of walking practices. It highlights the generative capacity of material affordances which are integral to the formation of walking rhythms. As the film sensitises the viewer to an alternative perceptual experience of walking, I shall then explore the movement of pedestrians in the nearby districts of East London.

The two case studies of walking in the Borough of Tower Hamlets sample pedestrian experiences around the historic conjuncture distinguished by Hall. I shall firstly look at practices of walking in relation to the radical transformations of the Docklands' landscape in the late 1970s. I suggest that such transformations were experienced by its residents as negotiating alternative ways of navigating the streets and ordering daily routines. I argue that the Conservative flagship project pioneered by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) can be seen as a series of rhythmic interventions in the community of Wapping. The second case study of walking sets out to investigate the spiralling fears that were felt at the conjunctural shift (Hall, 2009). The street of Brick Lane and the surrounding area form the primary focus. Mounting racial tensions and violence were orchestrated as a rhythm of stasis - bodies being stopped, searched or attacked, the pedestrians who paused their ambulatory movement to buy National Front newspapers and the anti-racist groups who occupied the corner of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road every Saturday night to keep away the National Front's menacing presence.

1. Walking as Inhabiting

The bipedal ambulatory movement engenders a rhythm of essentially two alternating beats. One foot may support more weight than the other and the extreme case of which is found in a limping gait. The walking rhythms are punctuated by the strides. An accent forms when a stride presses the ground with more force than the other. With one leg swung into the air, our bodily tension accumulates as the upright body is on the verge of falling. To maintain the momentum, one foot needs to touch the ground and let the other leg stride forward. The coordination of body parts is crucial (for instance, the eyes intermittently check the ground and the immediate horizon). There are bundles of rhythms at work - heartbeat, breathing, swinging arms and the less visible operations of muscles, joints and blood flow. The accumulation and relaxation of bodily tension generates a habitual rhythm with which minimal consciousness is required to perform such a mundane operation. Toddlers who learn to balance bodily weight or adults who walk in unfamiliar environment are less fluent at doing so. Walking prepares one to encounter a situation and to enact perceptual relationships.

A pedestrian is woven to the world through visual and auditory perceptions, olfactory and haptic engagements, as well as other nuanced sensual registers such as speed, warmth, humidity (and other nameless sensory faculty) which constitute a rhythm of walking that may operate at the periphery or beyond conscious reflection. Our limbs reach out to the world and the potential differences of their haptic experience are being reminded of by the British anthropologist Tim Ingold: 'how does the feel of a surface differ, depending on whether the organ of touch is brought down at successive spots, as in plantigrade walking, or allowed to wrap around or slide over it, as can be done with the fingers and palm of the hand' (2011b: 45)? The term 'muscular consciousness' invented by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1964:11) is unpicked by Ingold as he notes that 'as people, in the course of their everyday lives, make their way by foot around a similar terrain, so its paths, textures and contours, variable through the seasons,

are incorporated into their own embodied capacities of movement, awareness and response' (2011b: 47). It is a way of experiencing temporality whereby sensual impressions are deposited in anticipation of being retrieved upon in the future; thus proposing a bodily consciousness that is rhythmic. Whether it is switching on the bathroom light at night, walking up the stairs of the front door or formulating a pace that is sufficient till the traffic light changes, our everyday life is replete with experiences of rhythmic attunements.

The cultural theorist Erin Manning creates the term 'causal efficacy' which suggests the activation of movements through a bodily memory - 'the stage of perception that refers to the immanent relationality of all experience' (Manning 2009: 54). Without the capacity of 'causal efficacy', the overwhelming sensual information become the 'infinities of nuance' which makes the body immobilised (*ibid*: 57). She argues that:

Through causal efficacy, we immediately feel our connectedness to the world in its present appearance. This explains why for most of us, taking the next step is not an issue. We know the ground is there: we trust our capacity to gauge space. We walk easily with the implicit knowledge of the intrinsic relation between body, ground and space time...we intuitively know how to field space-time because space-time appears to us as a fold of relation' (*ibid*: 54-55).

The English historian Paul Carter (2009) emphasises the rhythmic property of muscular consciousness. He argues that 'rhythm is the formalisation of the eido-kinetic intuition, organising the chance marks we make on the world into a memorable pattern' (Carter, 2009: 272). The term 'eido-kinetic intuition' is explained as 'the inherent sense mobile subjects have of their relationship with their surroundings...it is the capacity to intuit directly the nearness of things and to have measure of them. It seems to stem from our capacity to see the components of our world under the aegis of movement' (*ibid*: 268). Notions of 'muscular consciousness', 'causal efficacy' and 'eido-kinetic intuition'

underline the intertwined nature of bodily cognition and the social world one inhabits. A temporal awareness in the study of movements is inherent in such notions. Moments of twitching, elevating, stillness are not to be perceived in isolation but they presume spatial-temporal relationships that are rhythmic. The peripatetic being can no longer be considered as a solitary walking figure enclosed in private thoughts. A whole world of historical thing-relations participates in the making of one's walking rhythms. The person on the move is making intimate contacts with the rich fabric of social formations which are sedimented in the street corner, a road junction or a deserted lane. His or her walking movement activate these relations so that they become alive and revealing.

The singularity of a person's ambulatory rhythm bears a multiplicity of social rhythms. Lefebvre and Régulier point out the centripetal actions of diverse rhythmic agents which interact and work on bodily rhythms: 'this human body is the locus and center of interaction between the biological, the physiological (nature), and the social (or what is often called the "cultural"), with each of these levels or dimensions having its own specificity and therefore its own time and space or, if you will, its own rhythm' (Lefebvre and Régulier, 1999: 11). Various bodily functions such as breathing cycles, heart beat and the flow of the blood coordinate to a state of eurhythmia. Or if such rhythmic connections are broken or disrupted, in the case of arrhythmia, the discordant rhythms produce disorder and morbidity. Bodily rhythms attune to the material conditions of its surroundings which imprint sensual memories, gestural orientations and a physiognomy of the body, and the analysis of which posit the body as a measurement of other bodies and entities, or as a referential point in the constellation of rhythms. Lefebvre notes that 'we know that a rhythm is slow or lively only in relation to other rhythms (often our own: those of our walking, our breathing, our heart). This is the case even though each rhythm has its own specific measure: speed, frequency and consistency' (Lefebvre, 2004: 10).

It is the rhythmanalyst's task to find assemblages of materiality that generate bodily rhythms. For instance, the writer's body is also that of his or her chair when patterns of gesticulation sunk in, producing a temperament, a rhythmic quality that may be differentiated from that of a gymnast. The body and the chair form a rhythmic assemblage. Bodies inhabit a world of things, rendering a viscosity of rhythmic connections. Bodily rhythms are composed by light, air, the climate and a whole realm of affective agents. Deleuze and Guattari's non-essentialist notion of the body, one that is not confined to fixed 'subjectivity' or 'identity', chimes with the mode of analysis that explores bodily rhythms. They posit an inquiry of the dynamism of being, by saying that it 'should not be thought that a haecceity consist simply of a decor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground....taking a walk is a haecceity' (Deleuze and Guattari, [2005]: 262-263). The bodily rhythm is one of the referential points that bring a constellation of rhythms into relationships. Therefore, a polyrhythmia is being attended to when the rhythmanalyst has an interest in the body, when the disciplinary boundaries of the biological, the social and the historical cease to distinguish. The concept of 'rhythm', as Lefebvre claims 'passes from vague and confused representations to a grasp of the plurality of rhythmic interactions; to diverse degrees and levels: from corpuscles to galaxies' (2004: 42).

The dressage of bodily rhythms, that is the imposition and intervention of how bodies move and relate to others, may suggest the cultural-political relevance of rhythmanalysis that starts with the body. From the familial training of babies and young children, to the educators' punctuation of intellectual activities, to the military regulations of bodily gestures, Lefebvre argues that the corporeal is the concrete site of contestation whereby the political resides. What are the centres of rhythms that interrelate and intervene bodily rhythms? The rhythmanalyst attends to these negotiations of the Self and the Other, as ways of addressing the concrete manifestations of political power so that the abstract idea of 'power' is understood as asserting or regulating bodily gestures, movements and

rhythms. The case studies in the following discussion show that power does not operate in one direction, from that of the authority to the disciplined for instance, but it can be dispersed in the polyrhythmia of bodily experiences. The initiation and resistance of power can be achieved through bodily rhythms.

A rhythmanalytical study of walking does not preclude inanimate things. The constituted action of the alliance of agents (pedestrian, vehicles, wind, rubbish bins, a ticketing machine, a traffic island, stairs and so on) continually weave street rhythms. Rhythmanalysis calls for an attention to the study of things in their aligned formations. The enactment of rhythms is always initiated by material agents which according to their ways of interrelating, mark out 'a localised time, or if one prefers, a temporalised space' (Lefebvre, 2004: 89). Arguing for the centrality of 'things' in the analysis of rhythms, Carter notes that 'things arranged spatially as possessing a rhythm, as spatio-temporal relations' (Carter, 2009: 274). The transitory and precariousness of material agents in their relational mode of being prompts timing-spacing practices that render rhythmic relations. Muscular consciousness is rhythmic as it is formed through interacting with the material affects of things which are then translated to intervals of motion and repose.

The movement of the body is in constant negotiation to the material affects of the surroundings, prompting a range of bodily gestures that mutate and reinvent the rhythmic formations of walking. The rhythms of a pedestrian are never metronomic nor monotonous. Slow paced strides may be altered immediately by an unpredicted downpour as one scuttles off looking for shelter. A pavement cluttered with street furniture or ongoing construction work may impede the freedom of movement. One's gestural rhythms invariably change so as to navigate one's way through. From the asphalt pavement to the cobblestone lanes and to the pebbled beach, the ease of trudging

through varies; hence the transformation of walking gait and rhythms. In the case of treading through industrial ruins, Tim Edensor illustrates that it is likely to 'take on a stop-go character, a staccato rhythm rather than a repetitive pulse' (Edensor, 2008: 127). Contingent bodily adaptations are required to 'tackle the risks of slippery timber, loose floorboards, protruding nails, trap doors, rickety stairs' (*ibid*: 129). It is the pedestrian's somatic experience of relating to things (as opposed to other modes of mobility such as driving and flying on the plane) that makes the walking body an important site of exploring rhythms.

Traffic lights, yellow lines, parking meters, road signs and zebra crossings are interspersed in the cityscape and they are the rhythmic agents of the metropolis. As the ownership of cars quadrupled between the 1950s and 1970s, the presence of street furnitures took on the role of regulating movements between pedestrians and motor vehicles. For instance, 'bollard' is a generic name given to a variety of posts erected on the ground. The distance between the bollards demarcates an area designated for certain use. A pedestrian area is enclosed and marked off from the flow of traffic so that strollers feel secure to roam around with fluid paces, forming a contrast to those controlled rhythms of walking across traffic lights. By exploring the rhythms of urban pedestrians, we would invariably take into account the entangled interrelations of entities which conduce to a singular attention to the study of walking. The practice of walking is essentially a way of interrelating material entities. Ingold uses the metaphor 'meshwork' to capture such a mode of perceiving the world (Ingold, 2011a: 71).¹ The 'meshwork' is materialised in the concatenation of rhythms which inter-penetrate and configure each other. The transmission, interaction and exchange of rhythms on the street comprise the dynamic of the meshwork.

I argue that the notion of 'atmosphere', often considered to be elusive and intangible,

can be grasped in rhythmic terms. For a project that explores everyday walking experience of the inhabitants of l'Arlequin (a new town on the outskirts of Grenoble), the French sociologist Augoyard seeks to map out the ways of how his neighbours used the passages, streets and parks. He is interested in the sensory impressions of a place and its atmosphere, the forces of which help to discern certain styles of being and inhabiting. Augoyard asks:

Yet how many avoidances, how many redundancies are there in one's walks; how many stops and stays are explained by the pregnancy of a site's atmosphere. How does one avoid for long a site that is nevertheless deserted, where the striking event that has marked it no longer has timely relevance? Why persist in besieging a site into which one cannot really penetrate? Is the obstinate repetition of certain trips just a constant treading over the same ground, when weather and light are always changing, be they ever so slightly (Augoyard, 2007: 116)?

The pedestrians' movements and pauses, their pursuit or flight, are punctuated by the auditory, the visual, the tactile and olfactory sensual experiences. There are also the variegated and nuanced affects that one retains as windiness, raininess, fearfulness and so on, all of which are synthesised and operate on the level of a gestalt sense - a kind of meta-sense that is rhythm. One is lured into a tempo, a cadence of movement in correspondence with affective tonalities (that is also a kind of rhythm) - ecstasy, indifference, depression boredom, paranoia, rage, paralysis, joy and so on. The affective responses we have are translated into bodily rhythms forming harmonious or discordant relationships which intensify or mutilate the atmospheric construction of polyrhythmia. Thus the rhythms of a pedestrian's bodily rhythms are assimilated by those of the surroundings. In the rhythmanalytical mode of thinking, the walking figure is not delineated by an environment, that he or she *is* the environment. Rhythmanalysis can start with concrete descriptions of senses and then arrive at a materiality of atmosphere. For example, one could map out the rhythmic ensembles which generate air of intimacy,

belonging or that of alienation and aversion.

Atmosphere is the contagion of rhythms across bodies (not only referring to the human bodies). The concept 'atmosphere' presupposes a symbiotic social relationship whereby affects attune to each other and a sense of wholeness that includes multiple forces which jostle with each other. With no exchange of words, the others' gestural movements enforce an exchange that is communicated beyond the symbolic realm. Peter Ackroyd, the author of *London: The Biography*, makes a remark on the exhilaration and drama of mingling with the crowd as the collective experience allows one to 'enter if only for a moment the lives and emotions of those who pass by' (Ackroyd, 2000: 775-776). For Kathleen Stewart, atmosphere is the sensing out and attending to the unfurling of events and their possibilities- a 'collective saturation of the senses' (Stewart, 2011: 8).

In any worldling, we can ask how things come to matter and through what qualities, rhythms, forces, relations and movements...The way they are at once abstract and concrete, ephemeral and consequential, fully sensory and lodged in prolific imaginaries. The way they stretch across scenes, fields and sediments, attaching to the very sense that something is happening. These are the qualities of an atmosphere attuned (*ibid*: 7).

Seasons of trading, market times, secular rituals and traffic rhythmise the flow of pedestrians, rendering a physiognomy to the street. They mark out atmosphere distinct to the different neighbourhoods of densely lived cities. The British writer Jonathan Raban portrays contrasting urban scenes of Earl's Court and Islington in his book *Soft City* (1974). Lives in the two quarters of London are carefully described by the author. Raban observes the transience, fecklessness and the pastiche qualities of atmosphere that characterised London's Earl's Court, as it was given away in the 'dramatic seasonal population shift', 'the directionless locomotion of the nomad' and 'the isolated, deathless stare of returned transatlantic yachtsmen not sure if this is land or where the horizon

ought to be' (Raban, 1974: 190). Islington in contrast had a relatively stable history of neighbourhood; that it had its own rhythms taken from the five-day week, eight-to-six working day and the fixed opening hours of shops. These rhythms 'commands a form, a way of thinking and feeling, quite different from that of Earl's Court' (*ibid*: 200).

The history of a place is orchestrated as a distinct set of rhythmic formations on the street and they render an atmosphere to a place. Ackroyd notes the recurrences of gestures on the streets and that 'certain activities may seem to belong to certain areas, or neighbourhood, as if time itself were moved or swayed by some unknown source of power' (Ackroyd, 2000: 774). He writes about how people's gestures are responses to the materiality of a street and the importance of this attention to ways of exploring history; that when someone walks on the street, he or she is bringing out the history of a place. Ackroyd remarks in an interview:

I truly believe that there are certain people to whom or through whom the territory, the place, the past speaks ... Just as it seems possible to me that a street or dwelling can materially affect the character and behaviour of the people who dwell in them, is it not also possible that within this city (London) and within its culture are patterns of sensibility or patterns of response which have persisted from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and perhaps even beyond (Ackroyd, cited in Hugill, 1994: 3)?

The patterns of response or patterns of sensibility that I am interested in are the gestural rhythms of bodies, of the walking gait for instance. More importantly, it is the rhythmic relations of different bodies which form the focus of my case studies. While bodily rhythms may persist in the long time span of history, a rhythmanalysis of the conjuncture hones in the interruptions of bodily rhythms and the arrhythmic relationships of different bodies. If the decade of the 1970s is seen as a point of crisis in the post-war years, the question that rhythmanalysis asks is whether the reformulations of social relations are

concretised in the experiences of walking. It is worth exploring the materiality of social change as having an ‘atmosphere’ which originates from bodily practices such as walking. In a way, it could be that the orchestrations of rhythms on the street put forward sensibilities of things going awry. They are eloquent messengers of a historical turning point that perhaps arrive before any articulations in the political discourse. Highmore points out the mood of discontent in the late 1978 and early 1979. The trash in the street and the odd sighting of vermin was ‘the atmospheric alibi that is used time and again to explain the “inevitability” of Margaret Thatcher, who became Prime Minister in May 1979’ (Highmore, 2013: 10).

2. Fergus Walking

My interest in the mundane practice of walking is evoked by the structural film *Fergus Walking*. The film is part of the trilogy *Autumn Scenes* (1978) which was made by the film maker William Raban. It was not only an experiment on the materiality of the film medium, but also of the perceptual relationship between the viewer and the moving images. Firstly, I shall carefully describe the scenes of Fergus walking down Bromley Street in the East End of London. Secondly, I aim to analyse the major tenets of the structural film movement and to suggest the potential of using moving images in the heightening of rhythmanalytical perceptions. In comparison to the mainstream commercial productions, I argue that structural films comment and contribute to the exploration of cultural history in their own ways; that they show the temporal-spatial arrangement of materiality (structural film makers experiment and they are reflexive on the materiality of film in showing relationship of things). They render a way of experiencing the rhythms of historical phenomena by inviting the viewer to construct perceptual relations to the them.

The film shows images of a deserted street with derelict houses and they may be

interpreted as having socio-political connotations. However, it is worth pointing out that the film does not set out to conduct a socio-historical study of the East End of London. What it really does to the viewer is to sensitise them to a different angle of perceiving such a mundane practice. The body walks but it does not solely form the centre of actions. Pedestrians do not glide over the surface of the street but they walk *with* the material surroundings. Raban remarks on the central concerns of his film making.

The time element of film, and its relationship to the actual time of filming, has been a central concern in my work. More recently, I have been finding ways to incorporate the space that is filmed too; space perception and time perception being shown to be absolutely related in film (Raban, 1978: 130).

I took the length of the street... their length was related to the standard roll of film stock you've got, so I knew I wanted Fergus Walking to be 100 feet of film, because that's the standard roll size. 100 feet of film is 2mins 45secs and so I drove down that street at walking pace (Raban, 2012).

It is a grey autumn day as we first notice the raindrops on the window of a moving vehicle through which Fergus is observed. In and out of the frame, there is a man who walks. His movement carries a constant rhythm; the swinging of the arms and the stride he made are steady. For what is more unusual of an urban pedestrian, the eyes do not wander in search of excitement or danger. Indifferent to his surroundings, Fergus marches along in a mechanistic manner as if his body is a metronomic device that marks the passage of time. One may be reminded of the minimal settings in the motion studies of Muybridge, yet the street scene is far from a monolithic background. There is not much associative meaning that can be derived from Fergus' walking practice. Instead, the film enacts a temporal-spatial consciousness in tension with our habitual perceptions. It is not long before we notice something baffling is going on.

In order to decipher the relations of movement that render a skewed sense of time-space, one has to pause, rewind and fast forward the lingering images deposited in the memory. Our eyes dart back and forth between Fergus and his surroundings. Although the strides he made render an illusion of progression and normality, other perceptual data gleaned by the viewer quickly inflicts a contradictory experience of observing people walk. Fergus walks in relation to a number of things: a window, a black car, a door, etc. Instead of 'leaving them behind' as he marches on, they re-appear ahead of Fergus. He walks past the street sign 'Bromley Street' and in the next few scenes, the sign is seen to 'jump' in front of him. Is he walking backward in space when the body propels itself forward? What estranges us from our habitual perception is not Fergus' movement but the shifting order of perceptual relationships. So viewers wonder at the repeated appearances of the same daubed brick walls, street signs, cars passing, house doors and so on. A clashing sense of progression and regression resonates in the vicarious experience of the viewer. The edge of the car window frame is shown (as the shot of the interior of the car eclipses parts of the street scenes) so that the viewer is reminded of his or her vantage point - one that is mobile. The orchestration of rhythms on the streets are interposed with that of the moving vehicle. As we see him going in and out of the frame (sometimes he is in the centre of the frame whereas other times he is abruptly positioned right at the edge of the car window), the viewer is again puzzled by the vehicle's positioning in relation to Fergus. Could it be that the car is driven at an erratic speed and if so how do we reconcile the spatial-temporal relationships of not only Fergus and the car, but also the domain of objects that shape the dynamism of the streets?

There is no recourse to audio information. The viewer cannot hear the rhythms of the clattering footsteps nor the traffic noise that reverberated on Bromley Street. The effort in making sense of the rhythmic interplay in the film relies on our memory, anticipation and imagination. One is provoked to question how relations of movements are

conceived in time-space. Left foot, right foot; the consistent beats of the steps evoke a kinetic rhythm which intoxicates the viewer. The rhythmic interchange of images aligns itself to the pace of Fergus' movement. The pulsation of the graffiti on the brick wall, 'Homes not Hotels', 'Stuff the Queen' and '25 Yrs of Poverty', becomes a visual poem as the words dance and beckon for attention. One's attention is appropriated to the cadence of Fergus' footsteps thus participating actively in the construction of an experiential temporality.



Figure 1. Screenshot *Fergus Walking* (DVD)

The editing technique Raban used is predicated upon the linearity of the film strip and the illusion of continuity afforded by it. He makes a cut of the film strip in about every eighteen frames when Fergus makes a maximum stride (given that Fergus is walking at roughly a constant speed hence of calculation of frames) so that when the film is projected from the end to the beginning, one could hardly notice the discontinuous movement of Fergus whereas the perception of the surrounding environment is fragmented in time and space. Starting with a concept or a system of cutting strategy but also allowing chance to intervene (when Raban did not catch the stride of Fergus), the

resultant 2min 45 sec film teases our habits of looking. There is no intention to do visual tricks nor to enchant the viewers with a fantastical world of images. On the contrary, through de-familiarising the visual experience, the moving images disclose what is hidden from sight and the taken-for-granted.

William Raban is one of the leading figures in the London Film-Makers Co-operative (LFMC). The LFMC was founded by a group of film makers who pioneered the production and ethics of structural films in the 1970s.² The LFMC had a collective approach to their practices - the completion of a film usually involved more than one person's effort (many films were printed with the help of the others and there was shared information as to grading on the printer, purchasing stock from cheap sources, testing out effects in groups etc.) (Gidal, 1989). Collective ownership of equipment, production and distribution meant that there were cross-pollinations of ideas which shaped the ethics and practices of the group. Their productions are concerned with the formal practice of film and its associated political implications, often working in opposition to the mainstream commercial and documentary film making practices. Gidal saw the LFMC as an operating centre for materialist experimental work and in his 'Film as Film' essay, he clarifies such a tendency of film making as 'it is a film's concrete existence which must interest; its possibilities of militating against transparency; its presentation/formation of processes of production which have as their uses meanings constructed by, through, and *for*' (Gidal, 1989: 20).

Often theorised under the term 'structural films', the central concern of their practices is to foreground the film medium through a reflexive examination of the film making process. The manipulation of recording devices - the shutter of the camera (controlling time-exposure releases), or the aperture, or the framing of the composition or the use of tripod or of tape recorder, is a primary strategy for exploring the properties of cinematic

representation (Hein, 1979). The materiality of film making, its apparatus, light, the conditions of viewing and the perceptual experience and so on are the central themes of the genre. For instance, the film strips are worked on directly as a way of exploring its material constitution, or the deliberate showing of the grains and sprocket-holes of the film strip reminds viewers of the actual film material. Multi-screen projection is another important tactic for structural film makers as it can show various filmic processes simultaneously, breaking the illusion created by the single film-image (*ibid*). What distinguishes this genre of film from the mainstream feature films is the privileging of form, structure, materiality of the medium to its representative function (plot and narrative); it attends to how experience is formed rather than ‘expressing experience derived from the world’ (Le Grice, 1975: 185). It is the focus on the processes of film production, the ‘presentation of the material construction of film’ that posits structural film making a foremost materialist practice (Heath, 1981: 165).

Structural film is anti-illusionist since its aim is to lay bare the configuration of the image in the process of the film apparatus. The images themselves are often banal and repetitive thus denying any facile meaning making on the part of the viewer. Gidal asserts the asceticism of materialist film making by saying that in the case of an empty acetate running through the projector gate without any images, ‘the “empty screen” is no less significatory than “carefree smile” or “murderous chase”’ (Gidal, 1989: 119). Tracing the history of European avant-garde film movement in the 1920s, the film theorist Siegfried Kracauer offers a general discussion on the practices of experimental film in his book *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1997). He draws attention to the question of the ‘shot’ and ‘sequence’ to which Lucien Sève explains the contrasting approaches adopted by experimental films and narrative films. The focus on the single shot (or at least the non-connection of them) favoured by anti-narrative films ‘tends to isolate itself and attract an attention of the inquiring variety’, whereas the adoption of narration presupposes a ‘sequence which creates a definite unity of meaning

between the shots and arouses in the spectator an intense desire for continuation' (Sève, 1947: n.p., cited in Kracauer, 1997: 176). Therefore, for narrative films, every single shot is instrumental in the construction of a sequence of shots in the transmission of meaning and emotions. The priority of decoding and identification with the moving image inculcate a habit of film viewing comparable to that of novel reading - 'a quest for intentions rather than shapes, an intense desire for drama, not gestures' (*ibid*: 177).

In the book *Questions of Cinema*, the British film theorist Stephen Heath emphasises the disjunction of spectatorship as an important feature of structural films. 'What is intended...is a spectating activity, at the limit of any fixed subjectivity, materially inconstant, dispersed in process, beyond the accommodation of the reality and the pleasure principle' (Heath, 1981: 167). Structural films induce a kind of 'confrontational' reaction by asking the audiences to actively engage, that is to constantly anticipate, or to 'intervene' in the film with his or her states of perception. For instance, what we see on the screen is delimited by the capacity of the body's visual mechanisms (the intervals of time that allows the continuity of vision for example) which is constituted by the projection process. Integral to the anti-illusionist ethic of structural films is the insistence among the film makers on the 'durational equivalence' (one-to-one correspondence between duration of the event and the shooting time). This practice opposes to the contrived continuity often found in the narrative cinema (in which case there seems to be a natural flow of events, a disguise of all procedures of editing).

The anthropologist Arnd Schneider (who looks at the parallel of experimental film making to anthropological research) argues that structural films are about what they *do* to the viewer as opposed to a mimesis of a life world which designates the representational functions of the medium (2011). For instance, he points out that structural film makers produced flicker films which are reflexive of the very process of visual perception in the

construction of moving images (the exploration of the 'afterimage' that persists on the retina). With narrative films, however, the progression of a storyline is often held together by images and words which elicit the viewers' identification with the protagonist. Devoid of narrative contents, structuralist film making refuses to present a constructed world of emotions and connotations. The kind of viewing experience activated by structural film also defines its ethical tenet. Instead of being absorbed in the film's plot, the viewer becomes attentive to the unfolding of a phenomenon as he or she makes sense of his or her own sensual-cognitive development in the duration of viewing. The discontinuous flow of moving images as shown in the case of *Fergus Walking*, thrusts our perceptual experiences (which come from memory and does not solely rely on the eye but also on the other sensibilities). The very habit of distinguishing a foreground figure from its backdrop is challenged by the film. To make sense of the temporal-spatial structures of Fergus' walk, the viewer needs to the details of things in order to map out the interrelations of them. Kracauer notes on the peculiarity of the film medium in exposing the physical minutiae of an object. He suggests that 'the motion picture camera has a way of disintegrating familiar objects and bringing to the fore - often in just moving about - previously invisible interrelationships between parts of them' (Kracauer, 1997: 54). One's reflexive awareness of daily experiences and their temporal-spatial dimensions are captured by the film apparatus.

Raban's cutting strategy enables the viewer to reflect upon the possibilities of the film medium in unveiling the spatial-temporal dimensions of experience. His practice is firmly rooted in the belief that 'making films is about showing people things, not telling them how to interpret the world' (Lux Online Archive, n.p.). The ways that structural films can be used as experimental tools in the exploration of cultural phenomena are akin to Merleau-Ponty's (1964) conception of film. He stresses that films are primarily to be perceived. The philosopher refutes the tale-telling function of the film medium, those that signifies or exposes ideas. Instead, the joy of all art forms including film, 'lies

in its showing how something takes on meaning - not by referring to already established and acquired ideas but by the temporal or spatial arrangement of elements' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 58). The experience of watching *Fergus Walking* heightens our attention to the interrelationships of things; how the body relates to the pavement, the house doors and street signs and their temporal spatial arrangement renders rhythms. The experience of viewing tells an important and if not consciously reflected thought: one walks with bundles of materiality and that is the bodily rhythm of one's walking. I argue that structural films discern and articulate daily experiences through the manipulation of the film medium. I argue that this kind of film making is a cultural practice, a form of phenomenological study, or even a modality of rhythmanalysis.

Fergus did not walk in a vacuum but in the unfolding of temporal-spatial relations circumscribed by material agents. Walls, house doors, street signs, cars parked on the side of the road, configure a mundane street scene; yet the estrangement of their relations to the pedestrian (due to the cutting strategy employed) sensitise the viewer to the dormant functions these objects operate in our day-to-day experience. The inanimate objects jerk about with the moving body and the striking perceptual effects make the viewer to look afresh at the seemingly separated existence of the animate and the inanimate. The graffiti, the pavement and other material affinities beckon our attention as they constitute the rhythmic bundle of walking. Are rhythms of bodily movement conjoined by other things on the street worthy of attention for cultural-historical research? Or is it just a trivial pursuit on the periphery of the big political issues such as class, race and equality?

Indeed, these are the questions that can be tangentially addressed by *Fergus Walking*, a film that challenges our perceptual architecture. The art form of the film and the effects conveyed to the viewers are explicable in what Highmore terms as 'the metapolitical

pedagogy', by which he means how cinema, photography and other visual art forms are also the 'training ground, sensitising us to the textures and tempos of the daily' (Highmore, 2011: 51). Thus the value of artworks does not reside in their representational role in relation to the everyday, but in 'the aesthetic regime of artworks on our senses, on the sensate world we perceive and experience, and in doing so gives new significance to the ordinary, as well as transforming our experience of the ordinary' (*ibid*). *Fergus Walking* heightens our attention to the ordinary practice of walking and it brings to the fore of the bundle of materialities which are part and parcel of bodily rhythms. The ordinary practice of walking then weaves a multiplicity of rhythms. The pedestrians are indexical of social rhythms and such an attention renders a way of exploring cultural experiences that begins with the body. I suggest that structural films can become experimental ways of conducting research on perceptual relationships hence its pertinence to rhythmanalysis. The film *Fergus Walking* sensitises me to explore the bodily rhythms of walking in the East End of London around the time it was made.

3. The East-West Road Campaign

In East London, broken-backed dockers of a certain age possess that distinctive hunch which, when they walk, makes them roll from side to side, like the ships they once serviced; these days they can be observed sitting in fold-up chairs on little squares of grass, gently nodding to the rhythmic thud of pile-drivers (Schwarz, 1991: 83).

A revision of planning policies for the Borough of Tower Hamlets (the Borough was formed in 1965) shows that up until the early 1980s, the majority of the people in Tower Hamlets did not own cars and they were often on their foot for their everyday needs. The public transport system did not meet the reasonable requirements for a decent level of service ('Tower Hamlets Borough Plan', 1982). The conditions and provisions of pedestrian pavement, children's play areas and parks were anachronistic to the

development of the motorways and flyovers. I shall tentatively map out how walking practices punctuate the daily lives of the residents which define the community with a distinct set of rhythmic assemblage. For instance, there were shared experiences of women having to walk long distances to get their shopping due to the lack of public transport, or children who had to walk across a dangerous highway to go to school and so on. A series of campaigns were organised by the locals for pedestrian safety and access. The East-West Road Campaign was initiated and participated by the residents of Wapping as they opposed the proposal for building a trunk road that would cut through the centre of Wapping (which would effectively disintegrate the close-knit community). By exploring the walking rhythms which were imbricated in the rhythms of transportation and the pace of corporate development, for instance in the prism of bodily movement and rhythms, I shall demonstrate the tensions between economic restructuring, which brought with it a rhythmic assemblage that are of global resonances, and the spatial-temporal make-up of a community. I shall be looking at the campaign and the walking practices in Wapping at the time, as a case study to explore the contestation of bodily rhythms with those of wider forces of change which were affecting the lives of the community.

The physical landscape of London's Docklands went through vast transformations by the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The St Katharine and London Docks closed in 1968 and as the industrial activities moved downstream, the local economic plight turned Wapping into a series of derelict industrial sites surrounding a population of some four thousand people. As activities of the local manufacturing industry had been declining over the years and the dereliction sites awaited private investment, every attempt was composed to efface the history of the docks and the lives of the dockers. The private enterprises projected a future plan for the Docklands as a place of leisure and hedonistic consumption.. The young and economically active Wappingites were moving out of the area to find new jobs, leaving behind those who were unable to find suitable

employment. The low level of public services in the region was partially attributed to the decline of the working population. The area of Wapping was 'one of the very few in Docklands (Surrey Docks is another) in which land for large-scale renewal is immediately available' ('A Local Plan for Wapping', 1976: 1). What should happen to the renewal of what became known as the Docklands (which included Wapping but extended for miles downriver on both sides of the Thames), was at the heart of strategic concerns of five local authorities, the Greater London Council (GLC), and central government. More significantly was the question of who should have the determining role in shaping the future for places like Wapping. In whose interest was Wapping to be transformed, and whose needs would be met in the process? The rights of its inhabitants were felt to be neglected and constant battles took place with authorities which ignored the voice of those who lived there.

A sense of struggle was clearly conveyed in the commentary from the Wapping Parents Action Group (WPAG):

Plans for the future of Wapping have been floating down river from Westminster, Chelsea and the Home Counties for thirteen years.³ The latest to be washed ashore comes from the Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) (WPAG Questionnaire, 1983, n.p.).

In 1981, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was created by the government as an organisation that oversaw the regeneration of the Docklands area. It had a clear vision of the pace and type of development that were required by market forces. London's Docklands became a testing ground for the Conservative government's urban policies envisaged by Margaret Thatcher. Designed to attract interest and investment from commercial private enterprise, the LDDC was set up to transfer planning controls from the five elected Docklands local authorities to an appointed private sector body. A widely held view shared by local authorities, residents and local

trade unionists was that 'the Government is seeking to solve the wrong problem by setting up the LDDC' (Joint Docklands Action Group, 1981: n.p.). The LDDC embodied the Thatcherite vision of gentrification through privatising public resources. For the people of Wapping, they were denied access to the Thames river which was at the heart of the community. All the riverside sites were gobbled up by the private sector. As a result of selling off publicly owned land (most of the industrial sites were owned by the Port of London Authority) to the hands of entrepreneurial developers, who turned dockside properties to marina, luxury hotels and commercial centres, the wealthy lived in close proximity to and yet they were separated from the recently rehoused poor and a rooted community.

The influx of wealthy outsiders coincided with the running down of the community's essential services. 'Once an area surrounded by the river, Wapping is now surrounded by corrugated iron and juggernaut lorries. The people who rent the land can go back to their nice home at night, they can sleep, but we can't, we listen to their dogs barking half the night' (Wapping Parents Action Group Film, 1974). The re-composition of an economy, from locally based industrial activities to globalised financial services was manifested in the syncopation of regeneration rhythms and those of the Dockland's old community.

Cultural Historian Bill Schwarz describes the pace of change bearing a week-to-week physical transformation of the landscape as 'inducing in some of us who have witnessed it a queasy vertigo'(Schwarz, 1991: 85). The pedestrians had to adjust their walking practices in negotiation with a different set of material relations, and this in turn, generated new rhythmic characters to the area's social interactions. Schwarz emphasises the parallel existence of the new rich to the dispossessed onlookers in the Docklands - 'the old dock walls may have been demolished but at every turn one discovers that "the edge situation" has diligently been privatised, allowing only the most limited public access...the alarms and electronic surveillance, the dogs and private guards' (ibid: 89) .

The geographical and social isolation of Wapping from the rest of the borough meant that the close-knit community in Wapping was delineated not only by its geographical position but also by the high degrees of social interactions, networks of relationships, shared sentiments and attachments. Wapping was a small place with its amenities and neighbourhoods in close proximity. One side of Wapping was bounded by the river Thames and the other by the St Katharine and London Docks. A chain of deep water enclosures was formed which separated it from the 'mainland'. Passage to 'the other side', as it was commonly referred to, was via bridges which opened to allow ships into, across and out of the water basins. The Highway, then as now an inner city motorway (along with the commercial development and empty docks) marked the northern boundary of Wapping, forming as much of a barrier between Wapping and the rest of Tower Hamlets as the docks themselves. A strong white working class community had grown up within this isolated area. They lived in a mix of local council, Greater London Council (GLC) and private rented accommodation. The closure of the Docks brought an influx of working class tenants onto the GLC estates from other parts of London.

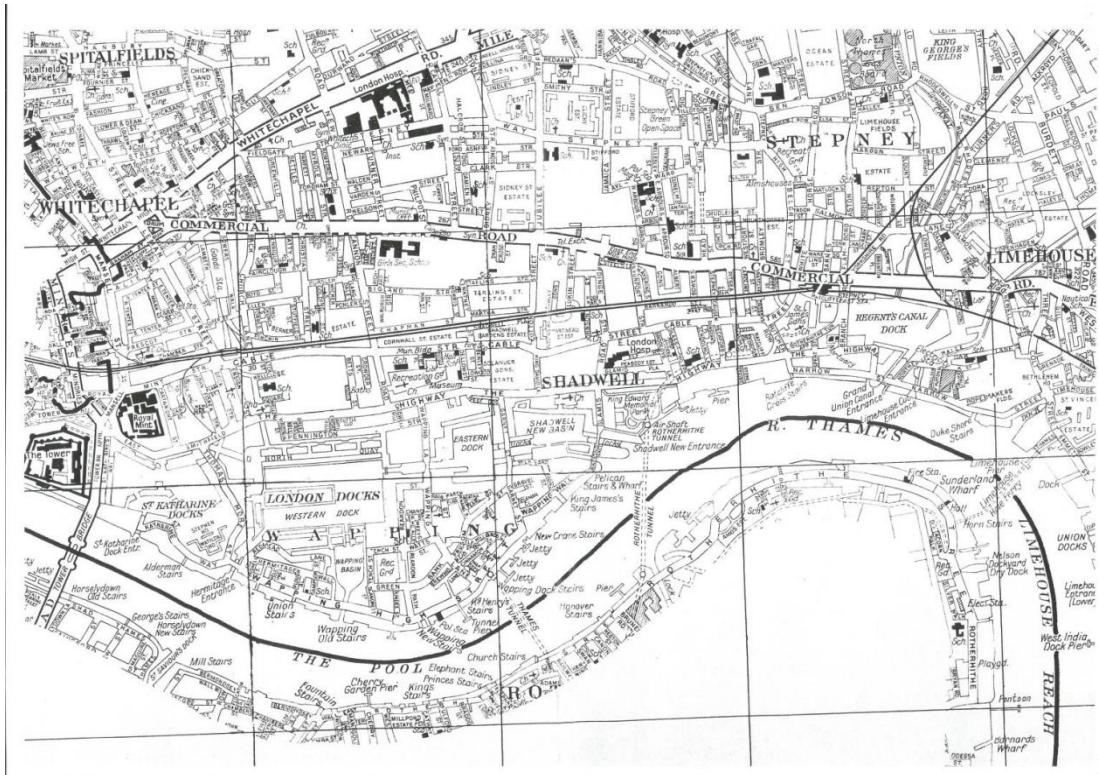


Figure 2. A 1972 Map of Wapping (Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives)

There was the necessity to travel out of Wapping in order to get goods of necessity and beyond, and the frustration and fatigue of walking long distances were integral to the experience of its residents. When the docks closed, there were two church primary schools but other essential facilities such as supermarkets, secondary schools, a doctor's surgery, and a pharmacy were non-existent in Wapping. To the elderly who could not walk a long way to get out of the area, Wapping had the air of a prison. Once children reached secondary school, they needed to get across The Highway to get to school every day- either elsewhere in the borough, or for those going to grammar or Catholic secondary schools, to the other side of London. With no traffic lights, only one zebra crossing and no pelican crossing, this was a dangerous daily exercise. Women mostly walked to the local shops and only a bus ride could get them to the nearest shopping centres and supermarkets in the Borough of Hackney (there was transport links to Watney Street market which was the most used shopping centre) (A Local Plan for Wapping, 1976: 14). The inconvenience of getting to places outside of Wapping was exacerbated by the lack of public transportation and the low level of car ownership (there was only one bus line operating in the area which passed through Wapping on a circular route from Stamford Hill). It did not run on Sundays which meant that old people who relied on bus service to go to one of the markets or to visit younger friends or relatives living outside the area, were confined by the lack of convenient transport.

Walking is the mode of movement that connected people and places in Wapping, creating a pace of life peculiar to the community. Their scheduling of the day may be configured or confined by the temporal-spatial arrangements of amenities and public provisions which could structure their modes of mobility. The practice of walking may form a persistent pattern of relating to things and people that defines a community in rhythmic terms (though it does not suggest a unified rhythm). Compared to travelling on the bus or on the car to reach a place, the reliance on walking to get to places initiates a different kind of rhythm. Walking as a mode of mobility created a symbiotic relationship

of a range of social encounters. It is more likely that the woman who walks to do her shopping would also drop by her neighbours for a chat or have other things planned on the route. Few walks in Wapping would be uninterrupted, as people would invariably meet, greet and conduct conversations. Bodily adaptations to the specificity of Wapping's physical landscapes, such as the cobbled streets, the high prison-like walls that delineated the docks, the basins, warehouses, bridges and bollards, steps and so on, structured preferred routes, sensual anticipations and sequence of movements. The objects on the street which appeared to be a random collection of things to the outsider were rhythmic way-finders to the children who went a long way to attend and return from schools. They would have to gauge the time sufficient to cross The Highway by learning to listen to the traffic, a skill if failed to grasp could lead to fatal accidents. The final local plan drafted by the Borough's council indicates that pedestrian routes were virtually non-existent. The Highway, with its swiftly flowing traffic caused numerous road casualties, flagging the need of any plan for Wapping to improve footpaths throughout the area and to provide access to open space along the river banks which had been denied for generations (A Local Plan for Wapping, 1976: 15).

The despair of pedestrian access to the pavements and their concerns with safety were to be seen in the wider shifts of priorities in building transport infrastructure. The Beeching Report in 1963 had initiated the closure of many branch lines of the railway network and it set up a trend that preluded Thatcher's championing of the 'great car economy'.⁴ For instance, the Greater London Council (GLC) drew up plans to improve the network of roads which may regenerate the city's industry and ease traffic congestion with three five-year phases envisaged (Guardian, 1978: 2). Multi-million pounds of investment from the European Economic Community (EEC) commission were ready to be injected to the road building scheme by 1980. 'Studies were conducted to identify the main beneficiaries of the cash injections which included the M25 Motorway, London Docklands Southern Relief Road (which required two tunnels under

the Thames), the Liverpool ring road and the A45 route to the Essex ports of Felixstowe and Harwich' (Guardian, 1980: 3).

Letter correspondences between the Greater London Council, Tower Hamlets Borough and Limehouse and Ratcliffe Road Action Group reveal the anxieties of the negative impact of the Docklands Northern Relief Route on the communal activities in the area. In 1979, the Greater London Council planning committee gave its approval to the Docklands Southern Relief Road despite strong protests and the foreseeable consequences of house demolition, job displacements and loss of open space. The discontent with both the local and central government's scant regard for the community's needs spawned numerous local action groups throughout the 1970s and 1980s. They included the Wapping Parents Action Group (WPAG), the Isle of Dogs Action Group (IDAG) and later the East End Dockland Action Group (EEDAG), the Limehouse Action Group, and the Spitalfield Action Group. These formations were part of a long established local campaigning tradition. Angered by the LDDC's apparent ignorance and contempt to the needs of ordinary working people, these groups provided a focus for resisting to the policies and practices of the LDDC (Foster, 1999).

In a letter addressing to all Tower Hamlets councillors, the Joint Docklands Action Group urged a rejection of the LDDC's proposals in the document 'The Future for Wapping'. The plan received strong opposition since it pre-empted the authority for the Tower Hamlets Council and this undermined the democratic rights of the residents to be involved in devising and implementing local plans. Furthermore, the proposal did not set out to meet the needs or to reflect the views of the Tower Hamlets residents. A letter was sent to all Tower Hamlets councillors in 1983 and it states clearly the attitudes of Joint Docklands Action Group towards LDDC's plan. There were demands to have control over the planning of Wapping in the hands of its inhabitants - 'another way of

looking at the future of Wapping through the eyes of those who already live here' (WPAG's commentary in response to LDDC's Future Plan for Wapping). When big ideas were conceived by the LDDC to gentrify the area, there was scant regard to the trickle-down effects on the local community. Protests had already begun to hit the headlines when the new Docklands Partnership Scheme declared that new roads could attract industry back to East London. The shape of things to come was that 'if there are to be bigger and better roads to keep traffic flowing across and around London, the latest proposals suggest that TH [Tower Hamlets] will have to bear the brunt of them' (Jempson, 1978: 13).

The Wapping Parents Action Group (WPAG) pinpointed what had been left out in the grand vision envisaged by the LDDC, that is the daily conduct of an ordinary Wapping resident.

We need safer zebra or pelican crossings. There should be traffic lights at every junction with roads into Wapping. Speed restrictions and double-parking bans must be enforced...In other parts of London which have been 'gentrified', complex traffic restrictions have been introduced, from 'sleeping police-men' to road closures and one-way systems, and bollards. While time and money are always spent on protecting and assisting the motorists almost nothing is done for pedestrians. An urgent study is needed to make sure that Wapping will become a safe place for those without car ('Wapping Parents Action Group', n.d. :6).

On public transport the LDDC has little to say, on the horrors of the Highway there is nothing, but plenty of thought has been given to the parking problems of the future (Wapping Parents Action Group, 1983: n.p.).

The women of Wapping had always been at the forefront of battling against adverse changes to the area. Prior to the East-West Road Campaign, waves of protests organised

by the parents in Wapping were triggered by the accidents of two nine-year-old girls run over by police cars. Young women and mothers organised a sit-down protest which diverted traffic from Wapping Lane to draw attention to the issue. The strategy of road blockade was later appropriated in several campaigns that advocated pedestrian security and accessibility to walking space (Jempson, 2012). For instance, on the 13th June 1978, traffic halted for the pram-pushing and banner-waving mums (one of the banners said 'we want traffic lights') and their presence formed a blockade on the Highway which brought rush-hour traffic to a standstill.

The East-West Road Campaign was an organised protest against re-routing a road that would have sliced the community of Wapping in half. It was designed to cut through Wapping in the direction of East to West and to provide two-way bus services, access for private cars and for industrial and tourist traffic. Mike Jempson is a journalist who recorded the meeting between Tower Hamlets Director of Development and the architects employed for the proposal. In the report, Jempson reveals their consensus to have some form of East-West road connection cutting across Wapping (Jempson, n.d.). The requirement of an East-West access to Wapping was aimed at boosting economic development of the Docklands. The impact of building the East-West Road was to be felt by the majority of the residents. According to an unpublished record, the residents of Wapping gave a much detailed account of how such a road may disrupt the rhythms of a community,

The road runs between both parks in Wapping (the widening of the road Green Bank would require a loss of a strip of park to accommodate a new pavement), between all the schools, and alongside numerous listed buildings, as well as through the middle of two major existing housing areas, beside St. Patrick's Church and right through the existing site of Norfolk Newlay Eggs ('Wapping Plan', n.d. n.p.).

A questionnaire that consulted Wappingites for their opinions on the proposed East-West

Road shows that few residents believed in the promised benefits of building such a road. Given the route of the planned East-West Road, the alignment of corners and junctions would involve the road coming very close to existing houses, shops and amenities. As one resident expressed in the questionnaire - 'roads are my main concern. The Highway must be the worst road in the East End. The new road will come right past my door' ('Wapping Items', 1983: n.p.). Major objections to the proposal included noise and pollution that might disturb existing residential areas and the fact that the East-West Road would run alongside two school playgrounds which might endanger the safety of children crossing roads (*ibid*). In the letter written by members of the No East-West Road Group (a broader coalition set up by the WPAG) addressed to the Environment Minister Peter Shore, they pointed out that the route of the road would involve a costly alteration to a new all-weather football pitch which shall adversely affect the surrounding buildings (Jempson, 1978).

The planning of the East-West Road bears greater ambitions which was to carve Wapping up into a series of valuable and less valuable land. The report produced by LDDC shows that the traditional North-South routes in Wapping would largely give way to the new East-West Road with feeder-roads branching off it ('The Future for Wapping', 1983). At the time of the proposal, Wapping High Street was the only East-West connection road at the time. It was then a cobbled road parallel to the river, with no shops, houses or workplaces. The result of having a motorway driving through the centre of the council estate while pedestrianising Wapping High Street would be that all the land to the south of the new road would be immensely valuable; making it an attractive site for offices and expensive riverside homes. Building a new road would spare Wapping High Street for exclusive riverside development. A public consultation was unlikely to be conducted as the Council was granting itself permission. Such was the cause which precipitated the East-West Road Campaign. 'All that will stop it is to create sufficient public outcry to embarrass the Council into changes or get the Minister to "call

it in" and make the decision himself' ('Wapping Plan', n.d. n.p.). In 1981, a series of campaigns (the first one started in May) were organised by the Association of Wapping Residents - a loosely knit group fronted by 'old Wappingites'. They followed the tactics originally used by the WPAG. On several occasions they blocked The Highway at inconvenient times (including rush hours) so that traffic was redirected down the planned route of East-West Road. The protest effectively simulated and magnified the effects of having busy traffic in the heart of Wapping's estates.

Early one morning, led by many of Wapping's elderly residents, people marched in an unending stream across a pedestrian crossing on the Highway, the main thorough-way for heavy vehicles north of the Thames to the east of Tower Bridge. Highly organised and using walkie-talkies to co-ordinate events, demonstrators successfully blocked the road for several hours, forcing heavy traffic down through streets along the designated path of the new trunk road. Traffic soon came to a halt, and was held there long enough to give the press the opportunity to document events and the community to tell their side of the story, which had hitherto failed to be taken into account (cSpace n.d. n.p.).⁵

The East-West road proposal was abandoned as a result of the campaign and it heralded a whole series of protests in the Docklands over the next ten years. The East-West Road Campaign took place amidst radical transformations of the Docklands. The inhabitants relied primarily on walking as the mode of mobility to conduct their daily routines hence they were acutely aware of the looming rhythmic fragmentation and disruptions of their community life if the inner city motorway was to be built. The tactic of using bodily presence to disrupt traffic rhythms was used effectively because the residents were most familiar with the temporal-spatial organisation of the area. The intricacy of social relationships in Wapping were presided in the choreography of bodily movement and they would be affected in the face of a ruthless surgery to the make-up of the community. With the decline of local industry in the docks and global money moving in, the flagship project of the Conservative government, pioneered by LDDC, foresaw a 'systematic centralisation of power and erosion of local autonomy' (Bianchini and Schwengel, 1991:

224). As the economic base of Wapping was caught up in the gap of regional decline and selective regeneration which favoured those with consuming power, the rhythms of macro-strategic capital mobilisation had set up arrhythmic relationships to the bodily rhythms of the indigenous population. By focusing on the pedestrian experience in Wapping in the prism of rhythmanalysis, it is plausible to draw out relations of forces which show 'how national and global rhythms increasingly pulse through place' (Edensor, 2010: 3). The method of rhythmanalysis eschews the compartmentalised and static view of social transformation. The assemblage of rhythms, those of bodily rhythms and institutional rhythms and their ongoing negotiation, propose a way of cultural analysis that looks at the concrete lived experience.

4. Brick Lane

The relationship of the townsman to his own (to his neighbourhood)...it is on the one hand a relation of the human being with his own body, with his tongue and speech, with an ensemble of gestures (Lefebvre, 2004: 95).

For Stuart Hall, one of the defining features of the conjunctural shift is the expanding 'black presence' in Britain and the political discourses organised around 'race' after the mid-1960s (until then political debates were always based on 'class'). He suggests that in relation to the mass arrival of the blacks, 'black politics' was emerging as an autonomous political movement and debate (Hall, 2009: 675).⁶ As opposed to political discourses organised around 'class', he points out the specificity of 'race' as a category of analysis that demands critical attention by the public and scholars. This category of attention is useful in relation to his conceptions of the conjunctural shift:

[...] but they didn't understand that the black presence within Britain would be a transformatory social and political presence, that it was going to expand, that it was part of the first tip of a wave which was going to follow in much expanded numbers after. They didn't see it was a change of conjuncture (*ibid*).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the influx of large number of immigrants from the former colonies of the British Empire and their social relationships with the native communities could no longer be marginalised in the cultural landscape of post-war Britain. Since these immigrants were moving to the disadvantaged and depressed industrial urban areas where high levels of poverty were dominant, the provincial communities associated the newly arrived as causing problems of housing shortages, limited job opportunities and the contraction of public resources.

Recalling the period just before the Notting Hill Carnival riots in 1976, Hall observes the great deal of simmering racism that ‘finally erupts in the straightforward open aggression and violence. It’s a moment like Powellism in 1968, when people can say and do on the street what they’ve been careful not to say and do until that moment’ (Hall, 2009: 672). Street crime, policing and racial hatred were visceral and acute fears were spiralling up in the 1970s. Hall *et al*’s seminal work *Policing the Crisis* (1978), conjures up the street as a racialised venue whereby issues of race and social crisis intersect. Waves of concentrated marches, demonstrations, sit-in protests, riots and battles with the police swept the streets of large industrial towns blighted by swift social and economic decline. In 1978, the first industrial action against racist violence took place as more than eight thousand workers stayed away from work. Workers of shops, factories, restaurants were on strike. (South Asian and Kenyan Asian women organised controversial strikes outside Imperial Typewriters in 1974 and the Grunwick Film Processing Plant in 1976). The Black Caribbean youth were repeatedly coming into conflict with the police in and around a range of recreational venues. Riots erupted in places such as Chapeltown, Handsworth, Brixton, Moss Side, Southall and St Paul’s. Brick Lane, Ladbroke Grove and Railton Road became notorious venues over this period (Procter, 2003).

The spatial dimensions of racialised discourses were foregrounded so that attentions are directed to the manifestation of racial tensions in its bodily movements on urban streets. For instance, Hall suggests that the defensive and inward looking attitudes of both the migrant and indigenous groups were exemplified in walking movements such as patrolling and walking in groups:

the strips of territory patrolled by white youth - the ‘caffs’ and street corners and pubs. Through these hostile areas coloured youngsters walk in groups and avoid trouble. Our cities are full of young coloured citizens of Britain trying to tiptoe through society (Hall, 1967: 9-10).

James Procter writes on the spatial politics of racial tensions in the 1970s in his book *Dwelling Places*. He talks about the shifting locus of racial confrontations in the 1970s as shifting from indoor spaces to the city’s public venues - the pavements, clubs, cafes and shop floors (Procter, 2003). He cites the authorities’ attitudes towards bodily presence on the street which were markedly different in the aftermath of two succeeding riots on the streets of London.

In the aftermath of the Notting Hill riots in 1958, Lord Justice Salmon sentenced nine teddy-boys, claiming that ‘everyone, irrespective of the colour of their skin [has the right]...to walk through our streets with their heads erect free from fear’. In 1979 after insurrection in Southall and the death of Blair Peach at the hands of an SPG (Special Patrol Group) officer, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner claimed in 1979, ‘if you keep off the streets in London and behave yourselves, you won’t have the SPG to worry about’ (Procter, 2003: 75).⁷

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the tangibility of heavy policing was of a critical intervention to the territorialisations and confrontations on the streets. Lord Scarman’s official report on Brixton riots foregrounds the street (a racialised venue

where the black community was mobilised) as causing crime and disorder thus calling for surveillance. He advocates that pedestrian movements are to be regulated,

It is vital that the law and order implications of environmental and social planning should be taken into account at the earliest stage. A good illustration of the need for this is provided by the Stockwell Park Estate, whose garages, pedestrian walkways and numerous small recesses, though a planner's dream, have provided opportunities and escape routes for thieves and vandals, and create major policing problems (Scarman, 1981: 160).

Saturation policing employs SPG officers in the Brixton area of London. Stop and search policing allowed police to stop, search and detain anyone suspected of intending to commit street crime. The Criminal Attempts Act 1981 confers power to the police to arrest without warrant suspicious loiters (Scarman, 1981). The humiliating experience of being repeatedly stopped and searched was a fact of life for young black men in particular, in some parts of London at least. Surveillance strategies such as SWAMP'81 were a highly intrusive form of policing introduced days before the Brixton riots. According to the police, its aim was to 'flood' the streets of Brixton and to carry out as many stop and searches as possible (Procter 2003).

The politics of 'race' and policing were vividly manifested as disrupting and stopping bodies moving. Sara Ahmed elucidates a phenomenology of racialised tension as 'bodily and social experience of restriction, uncertainty and blockage, or perhaps even in terms of the despair of the utterance "I cannot"' (Ahmed, 2007: 161). She comments further on the act of being stopped, whether out of coerced forces or involuntary obedience.

Such bodies are stopped, where the stopping is an action that creates its own impressions...A phenomenology of 'being stopped' might take us in a different direction than one that begins with motility, with a body that 'can do' by flowing into space (*ibid*: 161).

Bodies being stopped, involuntarily by the enforcement of law and order, or voluntarily when physical presence staged a form of protest by blocking the arterial flow of the city, characterised the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. If the 1970s' conjuncture is seen by Hall as a morbid state of disruptions, then the pathological rhythms of stasis testify to a period of crisis. There was a clash between the desire to linger, to occupy and to reclaim the streets by refusing to move on, and the lawful functioning of the street as facilitating transit and flow. The marching crowds, the sit-in protesters, the loitering youths, the carnival crowds transformed the streets of inner cities from sites of 'dispersal and mobility' to those of 'gathering and dwelling' (Procter, 2003: 77).

The focus on pedestrian experiences of the 1970s and 1980s as cultural phenomena materialises the kind of spiralling fear that dominated the mood of the conjuncture. I argue that space and territories are effects of rhythmic entanglements that are weaved by the movement of pedestrians and other forms of street dwellings. To conduct a phenomenology of people walking, as I suggest in the previous discussions, that these experiences embody a relationship to others (whether it is another social group or the materiality of the street), helps to unfurl the politics and the psychogeographical aspects of social unrest. Thus it is a potent mode of analysis which allows an exploration of the conjuncture via bodily rhythms. The eruption of open aggression and violence on the streets that Hall talks about can thus be explored in the orchestration of bodily experiences - those bodies marching in groups, the vigilant gait of patrolling, and so on. Explorations of styles, orientations, rhythms of walking and the interactions of social groups in their peripatetic encounter, I argue, are methods of 'historical imagining' which 'transports oneself to that moment' (Hall, 2009: 675).

It might well be the sensual registers of walking, a rhythm that is ‘other’, that mark out those newly arrived immigrants as ‘foreign’. Procter portrays the black body that slouchingly propped up against the walls and lamp-posts, marking an alternative pedestrian posture in the 1970s (Procter, 2003). William Fishman is a historian of the East End of London who describes the walking postures of Bengali men who immigrated to Brick Lane.

In the imagination, as in reality, the small, thin figures, skull-capped and ill at ease in their dark Western suits, forming a garrulous chattering ensemble on the side walks or quietly plodding on their way in pairs or groups, a gentle people, starkly convey to the discerning onlooker a sort of reincarnation of the lost world of the Yiddish ‘greener’. Only the colour of their skin betrays them (Fishman, 1979: 92).

Our attention is directed to the pedestrian bodies as well as to how the rhythms of a community were structured around walking practices which rendered them a distinct identity; and not least, of how the relationships between various communities are to be perceived through rhythmic alliances and refusals. Hall emphasises that we need to understand the nature of interchange between the immigrant community and the host community, ‘the mutual interrelations of both groups’ (Hall, 1967: 3). I suggest that the issue of ‘race’ as a political category of the 1970s can thus be formulated as the interrelationships of rhythms. The phenomena of such polyrhythmic interactions become the focus for the method of rhythmanalysis. The question of ‘Black politics’ that Hall raises as a critical moment of the conjunctural shift could then be transformed into a kind of attention to the politics of rhythms. It is useful to borrow Lefebvre’s arguments on this issue,

How does *each party* (individual-group-family, etc.) manage to insert its own rhythms amongst those of (different) others, including the rhythms imposed by authority? In this insertion of rhythms ‘of the self’ into rhythms ‘of the other’, what is the role of radical separation and compromises, of tolerance and violence (Lefebvre, 2004: 99)?

The street of Brick Lane and the surrounding area are the focus of my research. By looking at the compromises, congeniality and conflicts of experiences, rhythmanalysis unravels the mysticism of Brick Lane as historically a transitional place of immigrant settlements whereby the multiplicity of the temporal-spatial arrangements of its inhabitants intersect and influence each other. From the eighteenth century's Huguenot weavers to the Jewish refugees of the 1880s, to the establishment of the Bangladeshi community in the late twentieth century, it is a place where successive waves of immigrants settled and moved away from. A rich array of rhythmic interactions characterise the place, not least orchestrated in the religious rituals and daily routines. During the 1970s, the incoming Bangladeshi's who arrived in Brick Lane to find work in the textile trade required a place of worship. The mosque on the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street (which was once the Great Spitalfields Synagogue) opened in 1976. The rhythm of the street was layered with worshippers going to the Mosque during the five set prayer times which adapt to the sunrise and sunset. On Fridays and throughout the months of Ramadan, it might have been impossible to move around Brick Lane when the mosque empties out - 'thousands of men dressed in white robes pour out of the building, filling the pavement and spilling on to the road' (Lichtenstein 2007, 86). The cessation of trading on Saturdays was due to the Sabbath when there was no one around and every shop was closed up. It was a rhythm that persisted even though the Jewish immigrants had mostly left the area by the 1970s. The Sunday market had been a place where people on low wages could buy goods cheaply. This tradition of trading had a distinct rhythm to which Alan Dein (an oral historian of London's East End) records that, 'it only existed for one morning every week. Come two o'clock it was just washed way like it was never there' (Lichtenstein, 2007: 315).

The rhythms of religious rituals and trading practices of different groups were intertwined. Street life on Brick Lane was far from being peaceful in the 1970s. It was a

notoriously seedy, impoverished and violence ridden place. The introduction of the 'Special Patrol Group' made Spitalfields the most heavily policed area in the country (Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council, 1978). 'A tense and potentially explosive atmosphere' framed the experience of walking down the place (*ibid*: 17). On Sundays, there were intense conflicts which seized the streets when the anti-racist groups, the police and the National Front members confronted each other. At a time when racial conflicts and violence were rife, an exploration of how pedestrians embodied a climate of fear which is orchestrated as bodily rhythms become central to the analysis of walking.

The arrivals of the first South Asian visitors and settlers date back to four centuries ago when the lascars working for the British Empire's merchant jumped ship and settled near the docks (Ullah and Eversley, 2010). During the three decades after the Second World War, the scale of migrations from South Asia to Britain reached an unprecedented level when the population of these settlers had a dramatic increase from 1951 to 1981. The increasing demand for labour in the devastated post-war Britain welcomed immigrants who could work in the manufacturing industries (particularly low-skilled jobs), public services such as the newly created National Health Service and the public transport system (Fisher *et al.*, 2007). First waves of migrants were entirely male dominated who were later joined by their wives and children. The kinship network of families and friends in their home country produced chains of migration that formed geographical patterns of different South-Asian communities. For instance, the Pakistanis settled predominantly in the textile mill towns of northern England, the Sikhs were in West London and the Midlands, and the Bangladeshi immigrants were mainly living in East London.

It was not until the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s that a large number of male

Bengali immigrants started to move to Brick Lane. There was the Bangladesh Liberation War which broke out in 1971 and it led to immigration to Britain on a big scale. Those earlier settlers of Bengal were mostly fleeing to East London for employment in the rag trade as factories were closing up in the north of England. The clothing industry (producing women's outer wear, dresses and coats) had been having its base in the East End since the inter-war period and it was mainly dominated by the Jewish workers. Fishman offers a vivid account of the garment industry which had been at the heart of life in Brick Lane over the decades: 'but in the side streets of Brick Lane... can still be heard the endless hum and whirl of tailors' machines, just as it was when the great Jewish chronicler walked these same streets a century ago' (Fishman, 1979: 90). The industry was heavily damaged by the Blitz and a lot of skilled labourers, who were often Jewish workers doing pattern cuttings for example, moved out of the East End into purpose built factories. Gradually the immigrated Bengali men became employed as unskilled workers, machinists and pressers doing jobs that were at the least valuable end of the industry. They would rent machines and work on garments at home (Eversley, 2006). Alan Dein had presiding memory of Brick Lane in the late 1970s of 'people going about their work, which was mainly in the rag trade' (Lichtenstein, 2007: 110),

There were bits of cloth everywhere, people carrying fabric to be made up, cardboard patterns on street corners, with piles of material fragments and lots of tailoring shops on the street (*ibid*).

Apart from the settlers who were uprooted from the Indian sub-continents, the influx of involuntary mass immigrants from East Africa also arrived in Britain in the early 1970s. They are colonial subjects of South-Asians who were recruited during the heyday of the British Empire, working on tea, rubber and sugar plantations in East Africa. They were expelled from Uganda in the early 1970s when the new President decided to pursue a policy of Africanisation (Fisher *et al.*, 2007). Their arrival was of a time when experiences of racism were exacerbated by hostile anti-immigration procedures and

discriminated access to housing, employment, education and other social services. Terry Fitzpatrick was a champion of fighting anti-racism for the Bengali community. He recalls the organised occupation and marching as forms of protest against racist social service provisions.

Varden Street and Nelson Street were owned by the London Hospital but we had about a good 150 people in the two streets. Tower Hamlets was going to buy the site, but they said to the London Hospital, 'We want vacant possession', meaning for the London Hospital, 'You've got to kick the Bengalis out'. So we then occupied the council chamber when there was a housing committee meeting going on in 1976. We all assembled in the gardens by Bethnal Green. About 100 people marched up to the Town Hall which was in Bethnal Green then. And we got the council to back off (Fitzpatrick, 2006: n.p.).

Mark Adams, an anti-racist activist, addresses the acute problems of housing which was seen as one of the driving forces of racism in the late 1970s,

because on the one hand you had the fascist, on the other hand you had the City of London and office developers wanting to move in and on the other hand there were very oppressive housing policies, which was trying to break up the vast of community around Tower Hamlets and deny them housing (Adams, 2006: n.p.).

Stocks of empty housing blocks damaged by the bombs during the war had not been replaced and those that remained were left in diabolical conditions unsuitable for living. With a short supply of housing stock, the Greater London Council (GLC) was under pressure to find new homes for thousands of South Asian tenants who lived in the worst slums in Spitalfields. The housing authority decided to offer immigrant families council homes a long way out of the area. As they were allocated across the Borough of Tower Hamlets, people did not feel safe as they were being removed from the kinship network of Spitalfields. These families were frightened out of their council flats because of the frequent racist attacks on those estates (Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council,

1978). Particular estates were ‘no-go areas’ because of their reputation for racist intimidation. The frequency and scale of racist attacks were making the daily life of the Bangladeshi immigrants unbearable. Glass windows and doors were repeatedly being smashed after repair. Children were not able to play outside nor near the windows for fear of smashing glass. Parents were unwilling to leave the flat unoccupied because it was very easy to break in. Landing lights leading to the flat were destroyed so that it was total darkness as the Bangladeshis approached home (*ibid*).

The GLC faced another major crisis when hundreds of South Asian families who had been rehoused to a number of estates across the Borough of Tower Hamlets were desperately asking to be transferred back to the main centres of Bangladeshi settlement. They would come back to squat in and around Brick Lane because they felt safer if they were closer to the mosque, to their shops and friends. John Newbigin was a youth and community worker involved in working with a growing number of Bengali youths at the time. He recalls the great deal of squatting that was organised by the youth workers at the time,

Pelham building just round the corner from here was an entire block of flats, which he (Terry Fitzpatrick) squatted in one go and that was housing for probably 80 families...We spent a lot of time helping people to squat flats, breaking into flats, changing a lock, putting in a gas cooker, connecting the gas. So by the time the housing authority came, if you are in your flat and if you have key on the door, they couldn't chuck you out (Newbigin, 2006: n.p.).

The squatting movement swept the cities of Britain in the 1970s. If we take the movement literally as a kind of bodily appropriations of a place, that they were enacted by bodies in stasis, it adds a rhythmic tonality to the politics of housing.

With the arrival of East African Asians and the peaked membership of the National Front around 1975, tensions had been mounting between the National Front and anti-racist

groups. Street violence was rife in Brick Lane. The Borough of Tower Hamlets was one of the areas in London where National Front organised its activities to confront the immigrant communities. The strong physical presence of its members was most visibly at the top of Brick Lane (particularly on Bethnal Green Road). 'Every Sunday morning gangs of skinheads wearing braces and Doctor Marten boots would stand there, waving Union Jacks and selling fascist papers, spitting and hurling racist abuse at any Asians that walked by' (Lichtenstein, 2007: 45). The streets were the stage for the NF to provoke racial tension. Terry Fitzpatrick recalls,

One of the things that I remember about the 1970s was these huge violent confrontations on the streets... the National Front could put a thousand people on the street for a march.. Racial attacks did not directly, very often, came about as a result of National Front itself. It was the National Front's influence that created a climate of fear, if you like (Fitzpatrick, 2006: n.p.).

The Bangladeshi community lived under a state of siege. There were racist slogans daubed across flats and stickers were put up at bus stops; petrol soaked rags lit up, old furniture stacked against one home was set on fire, street lamps were setting places alight trapping young families. People had bricks hurled through their windows, burning paper and excrement were put through their letter boxes; clothes drying on the line would be cut with razors, cars would be damaged.⁸ Recurring incidences of physical abuse made walking foremost an activity of surveillance and intimidation. Akikur Rahman was a young community activist in the late 1970s and he gives an account of the kind of harassment received by the Bangladeshi, 'if you walk in the street, they would say to us, "look at this, look at this, sniffing with the fingers on their nose' (Rahman, 2006). Those who were able to learn to drive made a priority to buy a car so that they could travel safely to work, to go to school and not risking being attacked on the street. In 1976, members of the (Bangladesh) Youth Association began to organise vigilant patrol groups looking for gangs of racists. The activities of vigils patrolling in the weekend punctuate the rhythms of those nights as Forrester Peters (who was an

anti-racist activist) vividly narrates.

We used to have vigils at Brick Lane. We stayed at Brick Lane every weekend. The Nazrul restaurant used to be open for us to go and have a cup of tea all through the night. We weren't there to fight but it was peaceful vigil. It was all through the night right until the following morning. It was quite vibrant in those days (Forrester, 2006: n.p.).

The temporal-spatial ordering of one's walking on the street was configured by other daily rhythms which set the Bangladeshi community apart from those who were native to Brick Lane. For instance, the school children were allowed to be out of school early in the day and their mothers were walking in groups to avoid being ambushed (Sandhu, 2003). If a woman was seen walking up and down, she would be likely to be treated as a prostitute. Women hardly left their houses as they would not choose to walk down Brick Lane (Thakor, 2006). The accumulation of fear solicited by the state of things on the streets, had overtime produced patterns of response and set up ways of interrelating to others that marked out rhythms of the Bangladeshi community which were discordant to those of the racists. The report produced by the local council states that,

The barrage of harassment, insult and intimidation, week in week out, fundamentally determines how the immigrant community here lives and works, how the host community and the authorities are viewed, and how the Bengalee people in particular think and act (Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council, 1978: 3).

As racist attacks were common occurrences on a daily basis, walking became an act of venturing, of testing out territories of safety, of realising possibilities and interdictions. Pathways and street corners were not passed by without imprinting a memory of its atmosphere. Walking had produced a map of bodily orientations and consciousness that configured a psychogeographical map of Brick Lane. Areas such as the north of Cheshire Street where NF members congregated in pubs were seen as no-go zones for

the Bangladeshis. Kenneth Leech (who was a priest and community theologian in Central and East London) comments on the fascists' territorialisation of Bethnal Green 'it was almost as if there were two Brick Lanes' (Lichtenstein, 2007: 45).

Once you cross the railway bridge and Bethnal Green, you are in an area where the racists are organising; and you hardly ever saw Bengalis except in groups of about 10 or 12 going to English classes of the Bethnal Green Institute. So I don't feel most Bengali would have wanted to go to the Bethnal Green at all, they have to go there for English classes, but they went in groups (*ibid*).

On the junction of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road, members of the National Front party were distributing inflammatory newspapers and magazines around Sunday markets. They would then meet in pubs before going out to attack anyone who looked like non-National Front supporters. Fear was induced simply by knowing that once a Bangladeshi person crossed the road, they would meet National Front members who were standing there wearing military uniform and inflammatory symbols.

The segregation of Brick Lane into 'anti-Nazi' end and the National Front end had also resulted from 'stop and search' policing strategies. Quite early on in 1979, the application of the Sus law (which was previously applied to Black African Caribbean youth) was used to stop and search Bangladeshi youths. The police were stopping people on the street, though not necessarily charging them. Despite the role of policing in preventing racist attacks and the politics of it, the two ends of Brick Lane were distinguished by the disruption or the non-disruption of walking rhythms.

When people passed from what I shall call the Anti-Nazi end of Brick Lane to the National Front end, they were diligently and assiduously searched by police for weapons. But when they moved back from the National Front end to the Anti-Nazi end, there was no similar interest to ensure that offensive weapons were not being carried. That occurred

several times with people moving from one end of the road to the other. If that account is true, is it any wonder that people have doubts about the way in which the area is being policed (Latham, 1978: n.p.).⁹

Racial violence peaked with the murder of a machinist Altab Ali on the local election night in May 1978. He was stabbed on his way home and the killing took place in St Mary's park near Whitechapel. The incident mobilised the Bangladeshi community and the anti-racist groups to initiate waves of protest against racial violence. Unlike the older generations, the Bangladeshi youths were prepared to fight for their peace and to strike back against racial violence on the streets. Jamal Hassan who was a community youth worker in the East End, regards the late 1970s as a turning point for the Bangladeshis of Brick Lane and those who lived elsewhere in Britain. 'In 1978, Brick Lane became the focal point for all anti-racist people all over the country. There were hardly any anti-racist organisations that did not participate in this movement, either by their physical presence and/or through their publicity materials' (Hassan, 2006). Processions and sit-down demonstrations organised by the Anti-Racist Committee of Asians in East London were significant moments for expressing their afflictions. The tactic of bodily appropriations of the street helped the Bangladeshi people to reclaim their belonging to Brick lane. John Newbigin gives an account of the sit-down protest.

Everybody just sat down in the street and it was a clear statement to the fact that the community felt that the police was not taking seriously of really basic issue of the safety of the community...I think there were lot of Bengali people were frightened to be on the street, the street did not belong to them. So the sit down in the middle of Bethnal Green Road on as busy Sunday (Saturday?) afternoon was an incredible powerful statement to say, 'We have a right to be here' (Newbigin, 2005-2006: n.p.).

Leech was intrigued by the recurring patterns of 'anti-alien' agitation, from the British

Brothers League who mounted soap boxes in the early 1900s to the Black shirted British Union of Fascists, he traces the long history of racial violence in Brick Lane and he concludes that 'there is a geography as well as a history to what happened there in 1978' (Leech, 1980: 5). In the late 1970s, the taking of the street (at the top of Brick Lane) by the National Front members to incite fear and violence were mostly a Sunday phenomena. The intense atmosphere of threat and fear was most vividly illustrated by Kenneth Leech,

On Sundays, particularly the Sundays was the worst day for racial violence; because that was when the National Front used to turn out in force and take a whole park or pavement, and they would abuse verbally and sometimes physically, not just Black people, not just Bengali people but anybody who looked different, who didn't look as if they were National Front supporters (Leech, 2006: n.p).

The presence of various social groups on the pavement weaved a clamouring of rhythms that were intensified on Sundays. The anti-racist activist Mark Adams recounts,

I used to go to Brick Lane on some Sunday mornings and there used to be a stand-off between local youth group, Bengali youth groups and anti-racists...We used to be standing on this side of Brick Lane and they stood down on the other corner; the traffic lights are at the top. Then the police would be in the middle and it was an incredibly busy market on the Sunday. There used to be shouting across and so on. There were scuffles and it was quite nasty a lot of the time, but most of it was shouting and chanting and standing off (Adams, 2006: n.p.).

To deter the heavy presence of National Front members and their incitement of racism (the National Front members distributed racist leaflets and newspapers such as National Front News and Spearhead), the anti-racists groups made a mission to occupy the street. For six months, supporters of the anti-racist movement had gone to the top of Brick Lane to occupy their Sunday market pitch to push them out. Since the police set up the 'first come first serve' policy, sometimes the place was occupied from Friday evening

until Sunday. Ken Leech recalls such occasions,

There was a meeting at the Montefiore Centre about the presence of the NF at the corner of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road and the intimidation and the violence. About four hundred people came. It was a very angry meeting. There was police officer, who said in an unguarded moment, ‘we can’t do anything about the NF because they are not breaking any laws, but if anti-racists don’t like them there I suggest you turn up first (Lichtenstein, 2007: 45).

The Sunday occupation eventually grew to the scale of almost four thousand people at one time. Knowing that the NF would turn up at eight and the police would be there from seven, the anti-racist protesters organised themselves to occupy the site at five in the morning and took it over. Leech looks back on the actions of anti-racist groups and continues: ‘It was only when anti-racists non-violently occupied the site that anything was done, but it did change things, particularly when the Bengalis joined in - that’s when the atmosphere really changed’ (Lichtenstein, 2007: 47-48). The occupations of Brick Lane eventually drove out the National Front members. It was achieved through a series of battles wherein bodily rhythms formed tensions in relation to the polyrhythmia of life in Brick Lane. The success of anti-racist groups made some peace for the Bangladeshi community in Brick Lane.

5. Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the bodily rhythms of walking. I argue that the focus is at once singular, that the gestural and sensual patterns of bodily practices are at stake, yet bodily rhythms are also measuring and attuning to a polyrhythmia of social rhythms. My interest in a rhythmanalysis of walking is evoked by the film *Fergus Walking*. The film belongs to the 1970s’ structural film tradition which fundamentally reflects on the material conditions of film practices and the relationships between viewers, the film apparatus and the world of things. As a viewer, we are denied any identification with

Fergus. The street he walked down (Bromley Street in the Borough of Tower Hamlets in London) took on a life of its own with the 'inanimate' things coming to the foreground clamouring for attention. The editing technique used by the film maker William Raban presents us complex rhythmic relations between things - street signs, house doors and windows, cars passing by and so on. By de-familiarising us to the process of watching someone (from a fixed stand point) walking past, I argue that what the film does to the viewer is to sensitise them to a phenomenological understanding of walking; that is to uncover the temporal-spatial arrangements of people and things. So that the bodily rhythms are emphatically pointed to a diverse range of materiality and their rhythmic orderings. The once inanimate objects (walls, street signs, house doors) are foregrounded and they become rhythmic clues to our perception of Fergus' walking experience.

While the film suggests that one's walking is composed of materialities that are beyond the bodily, a rhythmanalysis of walking undertakes the task of the uncovering the kind of rhythmic interactions that are orchestrated in the movement of pedestrians. This chapter then samples two case studies of walking rhythms in the East End of London. They facilitate an exploration of how bodily rhythms interrelate to the shifting material conditions of the 1970s' conjunctural shift. The rhythms of economic restructuring had quickened its pace and they had overshadowed the life of old communities which were organised around manufacturing based industries. Due to the geographical isolation and the poor provision of public transport in Wapping, the residents had mostly relied on walking to conduct daily routines which I argue had configured a pattern of social interaction and rhythmicity inherent to the community. Their decisions about the time and place to do one's shopping or meeting relatives for instance were delimited by walking practices as poor facilities and transport networks offered limited modes of mobility.

Edensor elucidated a phenomenological approach to the understanding of social rhythms when he notes that 'shops, bars, cafes, garages and so forth are meeting points at which individual path congregate, providing geographies of communality and continuity within which social activities are co-ordinated and synchronised' (Edensor, 2010: 8). As walking practices were integral to the living rhythms of Wapping, it is crucial to explore pedestrian experiences in relation to the building of roads and the development of segregated access to the river-front of Thames, to see how these experiences would testify to the fragmentation of social experiences and the Thatcherite ethos of 'roads to prosperity'. It is plausible to frame the ideological contradictions of the conjuncture through analysing the discordant and inhibited experiences of bodily rhythms. The struggle and anger of the residents of Wapping culminated in a series of campaigns for pedestrian safety and access to public transport. The East-West Road campaign took place in a climate of radical transformation of the Docklands' physical landscape. By exploring the mundane practice of walking, one inevitably shifts back and forth between bundles of rhythms which infiltrate and resist each other.

Taking the street of Brick Lane and the violence that occurred on a daily basis from the mid-1970s onwards, the method of rhythmanalysis puts forward the question of racial relations as one that investigates rhythmic relationships of different social groups. With the street being a critical and racialised venue in the 1970s, I suggest that walking practices enact polyrhythmic relations of people. The crisis of racism could be illustrated by what Lefebvre argues that 'when rhythms of "the other" make rhythm of "of the self" impossible, then total crisis breaks out' (Lefebvre, 2004: 99). There are aspects of walking practices that are of particular interest to my research in the archival materials of the local history. They reinforce certain attentions on bodily rhythms - of how pedestrians relate to things on the street (given that Brick Lane has layers of history which materialised in the use of buildings), the gestural rhythms of different social groups and the experiences of daily life that are organised around walking on the street

(for instance, Bangladeshi children and housewives did not feel free to leave the house for fears of being attacked). The focus on the number of sit-downs, squatting movements, occupation of National Front pitches and so on, offer an alternative frame of analysis to theorisations of racial relations centred around media representations. In a climate of mounting racial tension that escalated fear on the street, there was the tendency of bodies staying-put, of their rhythms being interrupted- the rhythms of stasis. The spiralling up of fear Hall points out, is substantiated by the power of rhythmic exertions; of policing strategies that stopped bodies when walking became hindered in the presence of others and the provocation of violence in ‘no-go’ areas which inhibited bodies entering. The conjunctural moment of racialised discourses and the concrete climate of fear and violence on the streets of British industrial cities in the 1970s, are embodied in the rhythmanalytical explorations of pedestrians in the East End of London.

¹ Ingold emphasises that we ‘inhabit’ the world rather than ‘occupy’ the world. By using the term ‘inhabiting’, he emphasises the inherent relatedness of being to the world and their ever evolving coexistence.

² Apart from the London Film Makers' Cooperative, there were parallel movements of structural film making in New York and in other European centres.

³ Formed in 1972, the local group was established as a united reaction against the running over of a ‘West Indian’ child by a speeding police car in Wapping Lane. Led by mostly women who were active in organising weekly meetings to initiate improvements of local facilities and qualities of life in Wapping, it was also about defending the rights of its residents in the face of unjust decisions. The Wapping Parents Action Group was later transformed to the History of Wapping Trust.

⁴ Margaret Thatcher, speech representing 1989 Better Environment Awards for Industry, 16 March 1990 (Collins ,1999).

⁵ cSpace: <http://www.cspace.org.uk/cspace/archive/docklands/campaigns.htm> (accessed 10th March 2012).

⁶ Hall explains and clarifies what he meant by ‘Black Politics’ or the identification of the ‘Black’ in the following sentences: ‘I will tell you something now about what has happened to that Black identity as a matter of cultural politics in Britain. That notion was extremely important in the anti-racist struggles of the 1970s: the notion that people of diverse societies and cultures would all come to Britain in the fifties and sixties as part of that huge wave of migration from the Caribbean, East Africa, the Asian subcontinent, Pakistan, Bangladesh, from different parts of India, and all identified themselves politically as Black’ (Hall, 2000: 150).

⁷ For the quote within, Procter cites from Sivanandan, A. (1982). ‘From Resistance to Rebellion’, in *A Different Hunger*, London: Pluto (p. 10 and p. 45).

⁸ There are detailed descriptions of the violence and physical abuse taken place in Brick Lane and the surrounding area in ‘Blood on the Streets- A Report by Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council on Racial Attacks in East London’ (1978).

⁹ Latham, A.
1978. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1978/aug/01/adjournment-summer> (accessed 5th May, 2012).

Chapter 4

Assembling Postal Rhythms: the Polyrhythmia of Communications

For this chapter, I intend to explore the changing operations of the postal network - the movement of its resources and the temporal-spatial alliances with those of other social agents which effectuate wider shifts of cultural experiences. If the previous chapter works to explore the method of rhythmanalysis in its mode of centripetal investigation; in other words, of how complex and laminated historical movements orchestrate as bodily rhythms, then this chapter starts with a particular rhythm of communication and it aims to bring out the forces of history in a way that is centrifugal. I shall address the question of how we are to make sense of the new postal services in relation to the changing cultural experiences in the late 1970s. Particularly, this chapter seeks to formulate the conjunctural shift in the prism of rhythmic alliances and interactions of mobility systems. As the effects of rhythmic ordering spread from one trajectory of movement to another, there arises the possibility of conducting conjunctural analysis on the basis of shifting temporal-spatial logic.

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the timing-spacing relationships of social agents produce rhythms. In the prism of rhythmanalysis, I shall demonstrate that the production of institutional rhythms such as that of the postal system, involves a myriad of cultural practices and agents which form interdependent rhythms. Therefore, it is a kind of study which begins with one trajectory of movement, distinguished by its functional roles and objectives, from which I shall weave a constellation of rhythms which produce and are produced by postal rhythms. It is a project of entangling rhythms, of one that works centrifugally to establish the multiple pleats of cultural processes at work. By looking at the various connections that postal rhythms are linked with, I aim to illustrate the diffused

nature of the conjunctural shift at the level of rhythmic changes. This chapter is structured in a way that addresses the different facets of postal operations and there are circular accounts of these changes which help to discern patterns of relating social agents. The sections within this chapter establish dialogues to each other as there are rhythmic underpinnings that piece them together.

Hall uses the term ‘new times’ to encapsulate the conjunctural changes of social, economic, political and cultural experiences. The idea of ‘new times’, according to him, captures a number of different facets of social change which were not necessarily connected with each other (Hall, 1996: 223). I aim to demonstrate that a rhythmanalytical approach to the study of the postal service offers a mode of analysis that focuses on the interweaving of social agents in their temporal-spatial organisations and connections; thus abandoning the compartmentalised conception of social reality. As an important medium of communication, the rhythms of the postal system open up inquiries of how material forces interact. It is once a singular attention to the institution’s changing practices and alliances. More importantly, my investigation is directed at those paths of movement that intersect with the postal operations.

The advent of direct mail and the burgeoning business of selling by post at the end of the 1970s, signified the changing orientation of the postal service from that of keeping people in touch to keeping business booming. It may establish immediate connections to the political discourse of Thatcherism or at least to provoke lines of inquiry that conveniently address the core themes of it (the nature of public institutions serving commercial interests). However, attentions of rhythmanalysis apprehend the shifting orientations of the postal service in a number of rhythmic assemblages which are not necessarily bound to its institutional identities. Given the modality of rhythmanalytical work on history, I

argue that this chapter is best organised around ‘rhythmic centres’, so that cultural history is told in its diverse experiential dimensions.

The empirical materials of this postal history are mainly drawn from archival materials.¹ Apart from noting the rhythmic changes of the postal operation, I also set up discussions with some of the established debates around that time. The postal system is a medium of communication and its rhythms are woven to the temporal-spatial organisations of transport, financial exchange and other communication assemblages such as TV and press (in this chapter, I use the plural of ‘mediums’ rather than ‘media’ in order to stress the technological and material characteristics of each medium). As each medium has its own trajectory of development, albeit they take place as attuning to each other, it is of interest to uncover whether their conjunctures converge, or as Hall suggests, that they fuse and condense in the late 1970s. The method of rhythmanalysis points to those realms of experiences, as I shall illustrate, of shopping practices, advertising, welfare distribution and so on, that infiltrate the ordering of each other via rhythms. As a case study which explores the 1970s’ conjunctural shift and the nature of that social change, a rhythmanalytical study of the postal rhythms and the wider communication rhythms aims to examine Hall’s claims in light of the organisations of cultural experiences, not least to complicate and to enrich his ideological conception of the conjuncture.

1. Testing Times for the Posts

The Post Office was once a government department until the introduction of the Post Office Act of 1969 which set it up as a public corporation. Although it had clearly defined commercial objective, its many aspects of public services, from letter posting to the distribution of state welfare emphasised its social motives. Sensitive and adaptive to the local needs, the variety of voluntary work carried out by the postmen in rural areas played an important role in the life of a community. The marketing director Nigel Walmsley

commented in 1982 - 'the post office touches everyone's life so that the ordinary consumer has come to regard it as some sort of barometer of the health of the country' (Walmsley, 1982: 34.). A 1981 survey shows how a diverse range of social activities were reliant on the postal operation ('The Reputation of the Post Office', 1981).² Apart from the general mail deliveries, the vast outreach of the postal infrastructure provided services related to pension, Giro banking, telegrams, TV licence, driving license application, savings certificates, premium bonds, rail cards/ senior travel cards, postal orders, passports, stamps/ stamp collection and so on. When the home delivery of newspapers was beset by a number of difficulties, one of which was the declining number of newsagents as they found it difficult to provide an economic service to the local residents, the post office undertook the role of distributing newspapers to rural addresses in 1978 (apart from retail distribution of newspapers, e.g. railway bookstalls and street vendors, the level of home delivery was still a key factor in the retention and development of newspapers).

Published by the National Consumer Council in 1979, a report on the Post Office's social service foregrounds its function as an agent for welfare distribution.³ 'The fact that postmen on their daily rounds pass nearly every address in the country has enormous potential values for those in need to receive welfare services' ('Post Office Special Agent', 1979: 32). One of the most important tasks the postman could perform for the housebound was to act as an agent for the payment of pensions and benefits. For example, the provision of aids for the physically handicapped was on the agenda of the local post office in Inverness (*ibid*). The post office was ready to take over the collection and delivery of such aids as part of its normal delivery rounds. It was also prepared to establish laundry delivery and collection services to help social workers with incontinent clients and to negotiate other forms of carriage for social work departments. The collection and delivery of library books for household residents had also been proposed as part of the postal service.

The running of the post bus in rural communities highlights the Post Office's welfare agenda. 'The Report of the Committee on Rural Bus Services' was published by the then Ministry of Transport in 1961 and it recommends the Post Office to consider the possibility of allowing fare paying passengers to travel on post office vans where there were no reasonably alternative services available ('The Report of the Committee on Rural Bus Services', 1975-1977). The first post bus was introduced experimentally in 1967 and it was not until 1972/3 when the central government increased subsidies that regional operations could spread in number (heavily weighted towards Scotland). Mail vans were replaced with minibuses. At a time when there were noticeable closures of village shops, doctors' surgeries, railways, bus services and the sub-post office places in rural areas, even greater dependence on the running of the post bus was forecasted in a paper published in 1975/1976 as many post buses offered the only means of transport ('Ten Years of Rural Postbuses - A Policy Review', 1982).

Although the post bus did not have the capacity to operate as a total substitution or compensation for the declining public transport, the service provided crucial public transport links in rural areas where this could be economically combined with essential postal services. It meant that the route and schedule of passengers' travelling and that of postal delivery had to coincide with the post bus service. This also meant that the scope of the Post Office's participation in the provision of rural public transport was limited because of the restrictive nature of the postal operation (e.g. the timing of postal service took priority over passenger requirements). As a valuable additional service to the community in rural areas, the report suggests that 'in a declining letter and parcel traffic situation, coupled with a spiralling cost of all services distributing in rural areas, it is possible that in the future a range of services will be concentrated on to common transport links to rural areas' (*ibid*, n.p.). The incursion of the Post Office into the passenger transport service had other public welfare dimensions. As well as carrying mail and passengers, the post bus service provided isolated villages and farmhouses with

a delivery service for such items as groceries, milk and even doctors prescriptions ('Riding with the Mails', 1977).

By the late 1970s, the National Bus Company announced its intention to cut many rural bus services throughout the country which led public attention to the problem of rural transport. The lack of public transport presented a serious problem to the elderly, housewives and the young in rural areas ('Postal Minibuses', 1975-1976). With the assistance of the Post Office, studies undertaken by the Department of Environment propose the importance of car ownership as major means of rural transport. For those who had cars to travel to town for grocery shopping, the diminishing work of the milkman may have had less impact on their daily supply of milk. The gradual erosion of public transport in rural communities spawned alternative rhythms of shopping, entertainment and social encounters.

Since the mid-1970s, the decline of social letter traffic is one of the changing conditions that redefined the post office's service agenda. Social letters are the kind of mail going through the postal system that were largely personal mail, postcards sent between friends and relatives who kept in touch. The Post Office had always been associated with the golden age syndrome which says 'my grandfather could post a letter at lunch time to tell my grandmother what time he would be home for dinner' (Walmsley, 1982: 35). Up until the mid-1970s, the majority of letter circulation served the purpose of interpersonal communication. A contraction of social lettering was forecasted in 1976 due to a sharp increase of mail service charge and the low cost of residential phone service as a substitutive communication method. The circulation of social letters had declined steadily since the invention of the telephone, the use of which did not penetrate widely in the domestic environment until the late 1970s (Chilvers and Lanford, 1982). Given the decline of social letter traffic, an operating environment that was worsened by

the withdrawal of the government's subsidy after the financial year 1975/1976 ('Report on Postal Service Cuts', 1976: 1), the Post Office was under financial pressure to kill its tired image. Several advertising campaigns were initiated by the Post Office to boost the personal letter traffic. In 1982, the 'Write Soon, Right Away' campaign highlighted the pleasure of receiving letters and the many occasions one could send a letter: thank you letters, letters to far-away friends, letters to children at college or school, letters to neighbours who had moved house, last, but not least, letters between sweethearts. The campaign emphasises that a letter is a much more preserved form of communication (as opposed to telephone) as it can be saved and read again in the future ('Write Soon, Right Away', 1982).

In May 1976, the Post Office decided to suspend Sunday postal collections and to restrict late collections on weekdays in London and provincial towns. It was an economy measure based on the Post Office's financial ground. With the rise of direct mail advertising accounting for a growing percentage of mail traffic in the UK, it became a strategic move for the Post Office's marketing department to promote its new services targeted mainly at the needs of the business community. The Post Office User's National Council (POUNC) claimed strong opposition to the cuts in services and it compiled evidence on the effects of users. Over a thousand letters were received from the public demonstrating the serious consequences of the postal service change to their social and trading rhythms. The user groups were divided into business users, local authorities, voluntary organisations and private users. POUNC also contended the decision by highlighting the adverse effects this may have on the economy as a whole - when 'industrial efficiency, export performance and meeting delivery dates are of particular vital importance to national recovery' ('Report on Postal Service Cuts', 1976: 3).

The influx of public response demonstrated how interrupted postal rhythms may affect individual, small businesses, public institutions and the overall economic condition on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. POUNC identified the recurring points raised by users, such as the re-ordering of the working week, problems with monetary flow and an imposed change to letter writing habits. To vividly demonstrate the immediate and disruptive effects felt by the mail users, the following responses are cited to illustrate the influence of restricted postal services on the patterns of work, monetary flow and social habits.

A great variety of businesses articulated the adverse impacts of the Post Office's decisions on the weekly working rhythms. They stated that the restricted services meant that mail deliveries were concentrated on fewer weekdays resulting in the shortening of a working week. For mail order companies that had long established patterns of ordering and supplying goods, the business cycle cannot be easily adjusted, resulting in financial loss and lower customer satisfaction. A building material exporter complained that,

As exporters, our staff works seven days per week and a considerable quantity of mail is generated on Saturday and Sunday. Anything produced after 11am on Saturday has to wait until first collection on Monday. Forty-eight hours can be a considerable delay for business overseas against considerable foreign competition ('Report on Postal Service Cuts', 1976: 6).

Cash flow. In these days of liquidity difficulties companies seek to get money in fast and pay it out late. The delays in weekend mails has only served to aggravate the problem. Many firms habitually send their cheques in payment of goods on Friday by second class mail. Payees are consequently having to wait longer for their money (*ibid*: 8).

The activities of the stockbrokers are time-critical and their trading practices rely heavily on postal communication. The disruptions were suggested to have a detrimental impact to the health of the business,

The last post out of Tunbridge Wells is now 6.45pm so that it becomes practically impossible to get a contract note, for which the booking was done after 4pm, prepared, printed and dispatched the same evening. The inconvenience to ourselves is matched by that to our clients. We also have a fairly important overseas business: here it is not a question of delivery next morning but missing an overnight air mail connection can mean even more than one day's delay ('Report on Postal Service Cuts', 1976: 23).

Private and business users, voluntary organisations in rural areas suffered the severe effects of limited weekend postal work. A sense of lagging behind urban rhythms prevailed in the letters sent in by local councils and residents. Since the working population in small towns commuted to higher populated areas in the weekdays, there was concentrated use of mail boxes in the weekend. Overloading of post boxes during weekend days put a large quantity of mail at the risk of theft and vandalism.

Depopulation, with the added effect of inflation, has been causing a run-down in services generally in rural areas. This is especially noticeable with the closing of village shops, doctor's surgeries, business and sub-post offices. The closure of many railways and bus services as well, and the very high cost of those public transport services that remain, only highlight the need for an efficient postal communication service for the use of rural people (*ibid*: 11.).

In rural communities, it is the weekend when people catch up on their personal correspondence and the little post boxes attached to the telephone poles gets filled up. The situation is likely to occur more often with no collection at our busier times' (*ibid*: 13).

After a union vote in 1977, the post office decided not to restore the Sunday service. An official letter announced that 'against this background, the present circumstances of the Postal Business do not leave us room to restore a service which catered for a relatively small amount of postal traffic and which could only be provided at a disproportionately high cost' (Bartlett, 1977, n.p.). As a medium of communication which underpins the ebb and flow of material exchange, the rhythms of the postal system are imbricated with those of other means of transmitting and distributing goods, money, information and people. Resulting from the cancellation of Sunday services, the arrhythmic orchestration of public life ordering brought into focus the intermediary functions of the postal medium in the arterial flow of information, money, goods and human encounters. If the postal rhythms are mutilated, that is when alternative timing-spacing practices are introduced, the subsequent disruptions on the interrelations of social agents establish a state of arrhythmia. The archived statements from the respondents are informative of the effects of cutting public expenditure, a trend which had continued into the Thatcher years. I argue that the contracted public services are orchestrated as an alternative set of rhythms and their discordant relationships are characterised by arrhythmia.

There had been a gradual shift of focus on the Post Office's service agenda, from that of a public facing and servicing institution to one that instrumentally bears commercial interests (Pitt, 1978). Written in 1981, the Chairman of the Post Office Ron Dearing reviewed the changing orientations of postal services over the past thirty years.

Our trading environment has changed significantly over the years, our demand is now more business intensive than consumer intensive. The emphasis was placed on the industrial markets which bring the growth of postal volume. Public utility bills (including water, gas and electricity) were prepared by computer which can quite readily and economically present the bills in street and house order. Great sectors of our income derive from markets which have developed over the past 30 years, e.g., financial transactions, including credit, direct mail advertising and express mail, mail order, subscriptions periodicals. Direct mail alone has increased by about 60% since 1975/ 1976. All the signs are that, given we can

offer good value for money, these and other markets will mature even further during the 1980s. We now have a steadily increasing range of new service to support our customers in these and other sectors...Innovation underlines the broadening range of special premium services which have been developed to meet new needs...Since late 1979, over twenty new services and facilities have been introduced or expanded (Dearing, 1981: 1).

Drawing on further archival materials of this postal history (particularly around the time of changing orientations of service), I shall elaborate on the new orientations and alliances that were set up by the post office. By focusing on the temporal-spatial implications of these changes and more importantly to show how the shift of cultural experiences were conveyed in the rhythmic ordering of social agents, I aim to map out a polyrhythmic bundle of communications. In the following sections, I intend to use Rhythmanalysis to foreground the questioning of agency in conjunctural analysis and to demonstrate the process of change.

2. The Postal Network /Meshwork

Mobility studies should identify and analyse the 'contact zones' where cultural goods are exchanged...a specialised group of 'mobilisers' - agents, go-betweens, translators, or intermediaries - often emerges to facilitate contact, and this group, along with the institutions that they serve, should form a key part of the analysis (Greenblatt, 2010: 251).

In the American scholar Stephen Greenblatt's article 'A Mobility Studies Manifesto', he lucidly states why 'movement' in the literal sense, and the material conditions of movement deserve cultural observation and analysis. Greenblatt suggests that we need to look at how things get transferred by examining the 'available routes, the maps, the vehicles, the relative speed, the control and costs, the limitations on what can be

transported, the authorisations required, the inns, relay stations and transfer points; the travel facilitators' (*ibid*: 250). I argue that the exploration of cultural history is also a process of animating social agents in their dynamic movement, with which one could suture snapshots of social reality (often conveyed by ideological modes of analysis). The imperative to explore contact zones picks up those agents and their capacity to distribute materiality, through the kind of temporal-spatial alliances established between themselves. It means that the mobile conditions which catalyse cultural interactions are given primary attention. For example, the postal system, the broadcasting network, various modes of transportation, computerised transactions of credits fall into the field of inquiry. While each medium bears distinct timing-spacing practices, the linking together of their rhythmic interactions brought cultural conditions alive.

Postal rhythms are discernible as they are configured by their routines, extensiveness and the capacity of operations. The success of its service is often measured by the strict adherence to an unswerving set of rhythms. Instead of exercising an enclosed institutional analysis which designates 'it' as a fixed entity, with its many staff, machines, post boxes, vans, sorting machines abstracted at a single stroke, a rhythmanalysis of the postal operation draws attention to their rhythmic engendering qualities (how the distances between post boxes may rhythmise the letter collections for instance). I argue that in the prism of a temporal-spatial analysis of an institution, the post office is seen as an assemblage of material agents which circulate, interface and establish rhythmic alliances. Regularity of letter exchanges and the extensiveness of postal service rely on the provision of posting facilities such as the vehicles used for collection and delivery, post boxes, sorting offices and staff.

These agents align with each other to produce discernible patterns and routines for the postal network, a distanced and retrospective standpoint that Ingold (2011a) suggests as

the 'zooming out' perspective on these entities. This perspective envisages the postal system as a network of connected objects. 'We can represent these connections as networks in which every object, or class of objects, is a node' (Ingold, 2011a: 5). The counterpart of such a vantage point is that of the 'zooming in', following material agents in their dynamic movement, hence a weaving of 'entangled lines of life, growth and movement' (Ingold, 2011b: 63). I claim that a rhythmanalysis of the Post Office subscribes to both views, though the former establishes a possibility for the study of institutional rhythms. Postal rhythms are then connected to and restored to the meshed lines of social communications (while postal rhythms can be distinguished, they shall be restored to the meshwork of communication rhythms). In other words, the centre of attention is placed on the polyrhythmia of distribution with which the postal medium assumes an array of rhythmic interconnections.

Take the post box as an example of performing the network/ meshwork of the postal service. Their physical presence serves as transitory depositors of letters. The siting of each one and their spatial arrangements are closely related to the flow of people, traffic and other amenities. The number of post boxes and their proximities to households, shops, collection and delivery points, facilitate various interrelating movements and a constellation of rhythmic interactions. Letter boxes (their design, provision and siting of post boxes, relationships with the locals and councils) are not short of attention in the British Postal Museum Archive documents of the 1970s and 1980s. Formal regulations apply to the provision of letter boxes in town areas. In town areas a new letter box should not normally be provided within a quarter of a mile of an existing box nor where more than a quarter of a mile of additional travelling would be involved. The demand for the facility is generally the deciding factor ('Public Posting Boxes - Correspondence with the Public', 1978-1985). A letter written by a rural administrator in 1981 addresses the concerns of the local residents over the removal of post boxes in villages. In the downsizing trend of the postal network whereby sub-offices and telephone kiosks were

reduced in number, the administrator questions whether 'there are any general moves afoot to "rationalise" rural post boxes' (*ibid*: n.p.). Faced with a series of letter bomb threats that took place in the early 1980s, the post office's internal letter correspondences discussed the preventive measures in terms of letter box design ('Fire in Post Office Boxes', 1978-1985). The narrowing of the letter box aperture to limit the size of item posted is a partial solution to deter terrorists. Public complaints were raised regarding the inconvenience of having to use the counter service to post thick letters and small packets across counter services. The siting of posting facilities such as the letter box was not always easy. A shop owner made a series of complaints that the Post Office would not pay rent for a posting box built into the wall of his property as he states 'the post office is using part of my premise for its business and will not recognise any responsibility for paying rent or contributing to the cost of redecorating' ('Public Posting Boxes - Correspondence with the Public', 1978-1985).

A rhythmanalysis of the postal system is not an exercise of ideological debates, though it is interesting to testify in what ways (a spatial-temporal pursuit) the savage policies introduced in the Thatcher years may have had an impact on the way things moved (the effects of discourse). The ideological analysis of Thatcherite values, moralities, national identity and power relations, I argue, fail to convey the complexities of cultural processes that unfold at the conjuncture. Hall suggests to explore the interactions of different levels of society (the economy, politics, ideology, common sense, etc.) and that they should 'fuse' at the conjunctural moment; and he states that the consequence of exploring the conjuncture unilaterally is that 'you could get an unresolved ideological crisis which does not have immediate political connotations, or which you cannot see as being directly related to a change in the economy' (Hall and Massey, 2010: 59). I argue that rhythmanalysis is a productive methodology which does not abstract cultural experiences into categories (after all one does not live through the day categorising his or her experience as political, ideological, social and so on), but one that foregrounds those

circulations of materiality which do not necessarily follow any premeditated discourse of the onset ideological shift. The archival materials of this postal history is rife with narrative and thematic concerns on the issues of industrial democracy (Post Office trade unions), internal divisions (the separation of BT, letter service and counter work in 1981), the imminent threat of privatisation under the imperatives of Thatcherite policies, and so on. I shall arrive at ‘the fusion’ of cultural experiences that Hall proposes (and to testify it), by bundling the multiplicity of temporal-spatial relations that interconnect with the postal operations. It is the convergent and divergent alliances of rhythmic centres that constitute the analytical attentions.

On the other hand, a rhythmanalysis of this postal history attempts to complicate any unifying and overarching explanations of the historic conjuncture. As I discussed in Chapter 2, rhythms are negotiated and assimilated not in a conclusive manner but they are suggestive of changing relationships of social agents. There is no objective position that one can take to categorise and prescribe causal relations from a distanced view; rhythmanalysis works ‘from’ and ‘within’ the lived phenomena. Instead of conducting atomised cultural-historical analysis, for instance, of urban planning, transportation and entrepreneurship, and to eschew a hierarchical view of political history - that of the centralised against the localised; I suggest that a rhythmanalysis of postal operations follows history in its becoming by attending to the evolving contours of time-space rendered by the movement of things. What were the temporal-spatial practices of interpersonal communication and in what ways were they if at all, transformed in the years of the conjunctural shift? What are the other rhythmic assemblages that are symbiotic to the postal rhythms? How do we configure the changes of postal operation in relation to those of other contact zones and vice versa? The method maps out a polyrhythmia of communications within which the postal medium form rhythmic alliances and refusals to other mediums.

By thinking about postal history as bundles of rhythms at work, I aim to unravel the 'accumulation of different things coming together' through the phenomena and theories of polyrhythmia and arrhythmia. In particular, this is done in relation to Hall's theory of interruptions, that is his attempts to explain 'how the new right interrupted a very well-established political consensus' (Hall, 1983: 6). Instead of analysing the interruptions of political consensus through ideological discourse, I shall investigate what kinds of phenomena exemplify the interruptions and the kind of rhythmic relations that characterise such a shift. Arrhythmia often points to the fatal de-synchronisation of rhythmic interconnections as social rhythms always work in multiplicities. The notion of arrhythmia can be used as an analytical tool to unpick the dense and opaque experience of historic rupture.

Fernand Braudel, the French historian and historiographer advocates multiple historical temporalities. He invites us to discern and differentiate the pace of change which requires formulations of varied time spans appropriate to historical analysis.

The problem for anyone tackling the world scene is to define a hierarchy of forces, of currents, of particular movements, and then tackle them as an entire constellation. At each moment of this research, one has to distinguish between long-lasting movements and short bursts, the latter detected from the moment they originate, the former over the course of a distant time...Each 'current event' brings together movements of different origins, of a 'different rhythm': today's time dates from yesterday, the day before yesterday, and all former times (Braudel, 1980: 34).

I suggest that Braudel's attention informs conjunctural analysis (if not re-defines the concept) in crucial ways. Instead of focusing on the morbidity and crisis of events that marked out a conjuncture, rhythmanalysis explores the origins of a crisis of a much longer timespan, a method that helps to illuminate the ways in which social forces set up diverse paces of change. The unevenness of change, that there are those quieter

disturbances as well as the heat of the moment, constitutes a multiplicity of tonalities, rhythms and intensities of a conjunctural shift. A rhythmanalysis of the postal system subscribes to, and enables us to carry out analysis of complex social changes. By singling out postal rhythms and to restore them to the larger networks of communications, we are dealing with the dynamism of a conjuncture: 'whether we are dealing with a movement in the full flush of its youth, or at the end of its run, with the beginning of a resurgence or a monotonous repetition' (*ibid*: 38). There are abrupt rhythmic changes which concur and congregate at the conjuncture and also those which mutate over a longer time span, that belong to the 'history of the longer durée' (*ibid*: 74). Therefore, the method of rhythmanalysis attempts to disassemble the overarching analysis of historic rupture by looking at the multiple timespan which are interlocked.

Conjunctural analysis undertaken through the lens of rhythmanalysis hones in the forms of rhythmic alliances which maintain or disrupt communication rhythms. In the late 1970s, there were new services designed by the Post Office to facilitate new patterns of production, distribution and consumption, as postal rhythms re-aligned to social agents and networks. These emerging phenomena may easily allude to the popular discourse that frames the Thatcher years - enterprise culture, the rise of retail industry, self-reliance of the public sector, and so on. I shall look at those short bursts of events which coincided with the conjunctural moment: the phenomena of direct mail and selling by post, the closing down of sub-post office counter work, the integration of various means of transport to support postal delivery and the surging number of financial statements that made up the postal traffic. Shot through these 'explosive' events were the tenacious social practices which deserve analytical attention of the '*longue durée*' (Braudel, 1980). For instance, the animated history of interpersonal communication, shopping habits, the interdependence of mail and transport and the social role of the Post Office, need to be explored in longer time frame. I argue that rhythmanalysis enriches conjunctural analysis by laminating its underlying inseparable realities- to realise a 'total of all possible

histories' (Braudel, 1980: 34).

3. Bundling Financial and Transport Rhythms

3.1. Mail in Financial Practices

The sociologist Manuel Castells (1989) argues that a triangular interaction of capitalistic organisation, the innovation of information processing technology and the change of political regimes, was at the crux of the late 1970s' social transformation that swept Western developed countries. He sees the restructuring process of capitalism as a response to the expansionary logic of a given system at a particular historic conjuncture.

There is a historically articulated complex of transformations which concerns, simultaneously, capitalism as a social system, informationalism as a mode of development, and information technology as a powerful working instrument...By adopting a comprehensive research perspective that embraces both structural transformation and socio-economic restructuring, certain social effects could be attributed to new technologies, or to the informational mode of development, which are in fact linked to historical circumstance of a given regime, for example the Reagan administration in the US or the Thatcher government in the UK (Castells, 1989: 3).

Castells seeks to locate and link technological revolutions, in this case the 'new informational technological paradigm' (*ibid*: 13), to the changing modes of production and consumption, one that is characterised by Castells as 'a transition from industrialism to informationalism' (*ibid*: 17).⁴ The emergence of new models of capitalistic organisation and state intervention marks the conjuncture. In the book *Money/Space*, Thrift and Leyshon outline the decade of the 1970s as a new phase in the development of international financial system. According to them, it is characterised by 'a radical change in the nature and direction of international capital flows' (Thrift and Leyshon, 1997: 117).

Information processing technologies reached a crucial point of maturation in the decade of the 1970s and the increasing computer application of data production and distribution is seen as conducive to the emergence of a New International Financial System (NIFS) by the early 1980s (*ibid*).⁵ At the heart of the technological change is the automation of dealing and settlement systems and the electronic links that connected markets, institutions and individuals (Thrift and Leyshon, 1997). By the mid-1970s, ‘Reuter Monitor Money Rates’ is one of the computerised monitor services that was widely utilised in the City of London,

The system enabled subscribers to receive the latest foreign exchange and deposit rates on television terminals, providing a significant quicker way, in a world where seconds counted, of transmitting market information...it was a development brilliantly in tune with the much more fluid, much more international post-Bretton Woods financial world (Kynaston, 2011: 511-512).

Noting the novelty of financial instruments and practices that concurred with the late 1970s’ conjuncture, I argue that the singular focus on the increased computer application of data processing and transmission (the approach taken by Castells for example), places the emphasis of communication on ‘informationalism as a mode of development’ (‘technology’ in its abstracted sense), as opposed to the integrated forms and premises of the communicative process (Castells, 1989: 3). While Castells’ discussion on ‘informationalism’ sees technology as abstracted entity performing social actions, David Edgerton is a British historian who illustrates how the abstract idea of technology should be unpicked in experiential terms. I argue that Edgerton’s take on technological culture can be useful for a rhythmanalytical attention to communication processes in general. He notes that ‘if we stop thinking about “technology”, but instead think of “things”. Thinking about the use of things, rather than of technology, connects us directly with the world we know...’ (Edgerton, 2008: xvii). The use of technological devices and mediums create processes which engender alternative forms of agent-alliances which then produce

patterns of rhythmic relationships. Therefore, we are not abstracting the adoption of new technological inventions as ways of overcoming space; instead, the focus is on the re-aligning of social agents which establish temporal-spatial logics and experiences.

Instead, the rhythmanalytical mode of attention analyses financial communication in their phenomenological mode of transmitting and organising information. In other words, the concern of rhythmanalysis is about how communication assemblages are integral to financial practices and produce rhythms of social life (the plurality of mediums is emphasised). I suggest an exploration of the communication assemblages, and particularly of their agential role in the producing of social rhythms, that is how they form rhythmic entanglements in the making and inventing of financial practices. With the accent placed on the rhythms of financial communication, the timing-spacing of a multiplicity of financial mediums are subsumed in the transformation of capital flow- the relays of a letter, the instantaneous connection of the telegraph and the telephone, the real time interactions of financial analysts through computerised dealing and so on.

Rather than claiming a sweeping change of financial practices brought about by computerised dealing, the radicalism of the ‘new’ (as pointed out by Castells in his discussion of ‘new informationalism’ in the late 1970s) shall be re-examined in the history of communication practices (or at least a more nuanced and situated analysis is helpful to specify the particular alignment of agents in the advent of computerised dealing). For instance, the parallel between the technological underpinning of the telegraph and the Internet in the transmission of messages are illustrated by the scientist Tom Standage. The telegraph is essentially a group of interconnected networks and the way it enables people to communicate across great distances was not dissimilar in principle to how computers exchange information with each other (Standage, 1999). ‘Internet sites routinely offer stock prices and news headlines - both of which were available over a hundred years ago

via stock tickers and news wires' (*ibid*: 197). Thrift and Leyshon in their writing on the geographies of monetary transformation show that as early as the 1920s, the use of telegraph and telephone had already been integrated with forms of electronic telecommunication such as wireless telegraphy in the City of London. Also worthy of noting is the hybrid technological forms of financial communication as they render a polyrhythmia of financial operations.

There was the pneumatic tube, used to communicate the short distances between terminals (e.g. linking the floor of the Stock Exchange with the Telegraph office pre-telephone). Then there was the tickertape, a teleprinter with an operator and a staff of reporters collecting prices from the Stock Exchange floor which provided a record of prices - at six words a minute (Thrift and Leyshon, 1997: 335).

The dialectic of continuity and rupture of the 1970s' conjunctural shift, I argue, is best examined through the optic of postal rhythms and their continuous interaction and integration with various communication assemblages, those of the 'old' and the 'new'. These circuits of movement were not only seen in their competing status for being at the edge of technological innovation, but they should be explored in the eurhythmic or arrhythmic relationships achieved through ways of aligning the various mediums. In the discursive context of modernisations and the restructuring of capitalistic production and consumption, this mode of analysis could then facilitate a discussion on the rhythmic relationships set up by the changing accents and orientations of the postal operation.

The postal service became predominantly a medium of financial communication and commercial dealings by the late 1970s. The letter traffic of financial statements (of bank and building society accounts and particularly credit card accounts) had surged drastically. Far from being obvious to the general public in whose minds the post still meant social mail, by the mid-1980s 'the letters from the banks had long since overwhelmed the letters of thanks: social mail accounted for only around fifteen percent

of the whole inland letters market and the other eighty-five percent was business correspondence' (with financial mail accounting for fifty percent of the total traffic) (Campbell-Smith, 2012: 570). The move away from focusing on providing social letter service in the mid-1970s, which proved to no longer sustain the cost of maintaining the post office network, was also reflected in a 1982 research undertaken by the Post Office's marketing department (Chilvers and Lanford, 1982). The research highlights the sharp transfer away from private to business mail as businesses were much more significant originators of mail; whereas private individuals were more significant as recipients.

Nigel Walmsley, the Marketing Director of the Post Office, points out the potential offered by computer technology as the basis of a new postal system.

The Post Office is offering reduced rates to companies who mail in large quantities. Businesses' computer output is transmitted to terminals in Post Office Electronic Post centres, where laser printers convert it into pre-sorted hard copy for automatic enveloping and delivery by the postman...it could be particularly attractive for customers with large-scale invoicing and financial statement mailings, and for direct mail advertising (Walmsley, 1982: 37).

Since commercial mailing consists the majority of mail circulation, the rhythms of postal operations and those of business activities were closely interconnected to each other. The use of computers streamlined cycles of sorting and delivery, yet the pre-sorted mail would still need to go on a journey of transmission before they reached the doors of its recipients. Letter post as an age old form of financial communication was indeed very much integral to the inventions of new financial practices and the polyrhythmia of financial communication were not to be unified by the rhythms of computerised informational exchange.

Apart from the normal delivery of financial letters, there was a new postal method which facilitated the dispatching and collecting of messages. In 1976, the Post Office launched a new scheme for the transfer of correspondence within the City of London ('ExchangePost', 1975-1976). The service was known as ExchangePost. It was designed for London based businesses which had regular two-way correspondences with a limited number of similar companies in the same geographical location. An ExchangePost bureau containing a series of locked boxes was installed in the Stock Exchange post office building in the City of London. Mail could be deposited in and collected from private boxes, thus saving money on messenger activity. Bypassing the intermediary agents of the postal system, ExchangePost establishes an exclusive channel of communication for companies in adjacent locations. The operation of the service is further explained in the following instructions.

The transfer will be at the Stock Exchange Branch Office, where suites of lockable boxes will be provided in accommodation away from the public office. Access will be at the street level. Those businesses who participate in the scheme will be provided with a key to the box allocated to them together with a pass card. They can then 'post' items for all other participants and at the same time collect items from their own box. This procedure can be repeated, throughout the hours of the business, as often as required (*ibid: n.p.*).

Thrift and Leyshon argue that historically, what is more important than the invention of financial instruments is the integration of these new practices to the improvements in communication and transport (transport is also a form of communication in the sense of enabling the circulation of materials) (Thrift and Leyshon, 1997). In other words, monetary flow is subsisted by the temporal-spatial ordering of other communication processes. Indeed, the historical development of various forms of monetary instruments - the bartering objects, the circulation of tallies and the bills of exchange and so on, articulate the temporal-spatial logics of commodity exchange. For instance, the circulation

of tallies was a form of credit money which obliterated the need to travel and to track down commodity money as their counterpart (*ibid*). The evolution of credit money which is often considered as abstract form of money, indeed rhythmises economic life since ‘a period of the future is reserved or ‘colonised’ as a stream of obligations’ (*ibid*: 287). In turn, financial practices generate rhythms that directly or indirectly configure the circulation of commodities and social encounters. These practices give rise to rhythmic bundles which interrelate and attune to each other. What we can extrapolate from the rise of new financial instruments is a myriad of rhythmic changes that intersect with the flow of capital. In order to testify what Hall sensed to be a different rhythm at the conjunctural turn, a rhythmanalysis of the postal system also needs to explore the mobile conditions of how mail, as a medium of financial communication, were being circulated. The bundling of financial and postal rhythms thus calls for a lamination of transport rhythms.

3.2. Moving Mail

From using horse carriages and mail coaches in the 18th century, to the integrated use of rail and road network in the 19th century, and that of the air freight in the subsequent decades, the relay of a letter trails a multiplicity of pathways and the reticular formation of rhythms illustrate the polyrhythmia of postal communications. Mail were first being carried by rail on the new Liverpool and Manchester railway in 1830. The emergence of railways provided a regular, efficient transport of mail. Nonetheless the conveyance of an ever increasing volume of mail between provincial towns, the transfer to and from the railway stations, were still dependent upon an efficient road service (Stray, 2006). Nationwide coverage of rail had grown by the mid-nineteenth century, the ratio of road to rail transport steadily altered as more mail were being transported by rail than by road (Stray, 2012).

Colin Rose, a senior official of the Post Office emphatically addresses the reciprocal

relationship of the postal and the transport infrastructure. His remarks suggest the rhythmic bundlings and interdependencies of the postal network, to the means of transferring mail and to those industries that are heavy users of postal service.

Historically rail, road, sea and air links have been fostered by the award of contracts to carry mails which provide a regular and secure income. In turn, the existence of these links facilitates the carriage of freight which in turn encourages the creation or improvement of roads, railways, ports and airports etc.... and the Post is an important customer for buildings, motor transport, furniture etc, supporting the development of a wide range of allied industries (Rose, 1982: 3).

Collecting, sorting and delivering letters and goods are at the heart of postal operations and their rhythmic orderings are intertwined with the temporal-spatial organisation of the transport network. When there are changes to the rhythmic alliance of mail transfer with road or rail, this new assemblage of rhythms could re-negotiate the capacities and regularities for the kind of services offered by the post office. Conversely, if there are changes to postal rhythms (e.g. reducing the scope of service or expanding a new area of service), they command adjustments of rhythmic connections which could initiate changes to transport rhythms. Therefore, if we look at the shifting orientation and operation of the postal service, from a medium of social communication to one that facilitates business correspondences, it is necessary to explore rhythmic making agents, and the process of their alliance formation, that brought about the changes.

The invention of the Travelling Post Office (TPO) was an example showing how the rhythms of rail network intersected with those of mail sorting and delivery. They are essentially trains which allowed the process of sorting and dispatching mail are combined. Mail were sorted on the move as the vehicles travelled. By the time a TPO reaches its destination, the sorted mail were tied into bundles and waiting to be transferred to individual post offices. In 1840, the service grew rapidly with the

establishment of new rail routes and the heavy increase of mail circulation following the postal reform. The decline and eventual cessation of its operations were connected to the introduction of mechanised sorting methods and the increasing use of road delivery. In the late 1960s, mechanised sorting equipments were introduced to concentrate the national postal flow into large letter and parcel sorting offices. To accommodate the mechanised parcel sorting, British Rail introduced dedicated express parcel trains to link all the parcel concentration offices (however, it was an arrangement that did not suit the new network of concentration offices). After 1974, the major methods of parcel delivery were made up of contract road services, Freightliner trains and conventional trains. Waves of mechanisation at the land-based sorting offices had played a role of steadily reducing the use of TPOs.⁶ With the sorting process made more efficient than manual sorting on the train (which is what the TPOs were primarily designed for), the Post Office decided to use TPOs only for sorting first class mail when the two tier system of having first and second class delivery, was introduced in 1968. For second class and bulk postal traffic, there was the need for a separate supplementary network which ran ahead of the TPO network to reduce the effects of peaks of activity at major centres.

In October 1981, Ron Clinton who was a board member for the Mails Network Development, presented to the Secretary of State for Industry on the revised pattern of letter deliveries (and in the following month to the post office's internal committee) (Clinton, 1981). He argues that the operational pattern of the postal service was anachronistic to the significant changes of its working environment. The word 'anachronistic' is suggestive of rhythmic discordances. Clinton's remarks direct us to explore the processes of how certain rhythmic assemblages were negotiating with the postal rhythms. The shifting conditions included the contraction of the rail network under Beeching's cuts, the changing nature of housing (rather than terraced houses, it is the high-rise blocks or new estates in large towns and cities) which increased delivery points hence imposing heavier workload on delivering each letter (bearing cost

implications for the institution), and a projected decline of the letter traffic which made the two-delivery-a-day system less sustainable. In his presentation, Clinton particularly emphasised the integral role of transport to the letter service and the ways in which improved postal operations could be achieved through a detailed review of the collaboration.

The contractual relationship of ‘mail by rail’ underwent wide changes under the 1963 Beeching report ‘The Reshaping of British Railways’. The rhythms of road delivery of letters and parcels were becoming more prevalent. Historian Duncan Campbell-Smith notes the re-balancing of rail and road mail carriage: ‘the contraction of the national rail network after the Beeching Report of 1963 had prompted a steady increase in the use of road transport in the 1970s’ (Campbell- Smith, 2012: 568). The Beeching cuts of rail network were just coming to an end by the early 1970s, leaving the Thatcher administration with a rail system which was seeing decreasing passenger numbers. The year 1982 saw the lowest number of railway journeys since the start of the twentieth-century. The conservative government elected in 1979 issued its first statement on trunk road policies in England in the following year.⁷ In contrast, public spending on roads, motorways and highways increased significantly as they were seen as central to economic growth. In the ten years to 1982, the proportion of postal traffic carried by rail had dropped in half as roads and motorways had gradually taken over as the major means of transporting mail around the country.

The shift to favouring roads as the means of transferring mail had taken place before the ethos and policies of the Thatcher years. In an interview conducted with Jim Cotton-Betteridge, who was the Controller of Operation for the Scottish mail service, he talked at length about the changing balance of distributing mail across road, rail and air. He recalls that ‘road transport was the ‘in’ thing under the Thatcher government in the

1980s.⁸ Transporting mail by road underwent negotiations with other rhythmic assemblages. A 1977 document titled 'The Marshall Inquiry on Greater London' records the general points raised by the Post Office before the Inquiry. There was a real concern regarding the impact of increased 'on the road' mail transfer on the Greater London Council planning schemes ('The Marshall Inquiry on Greater London', 1977).⁹ For example, the Post Office requested adequate opportunities to comment on bus lane provisions as buses were seen as causing problems by limiting access to premises and curtail the delivery of bulk letter mail and parcels. As a major and increasing user of heavy vehicles, the Post Office also requested the planning council's permission to be exempt from the restrictions on the use of heavy vehicles (since any proposal that restricts such vehicles to designated routes and access could give rise to operational difficulties). The increasing use of road transport also meant that the city council's pedestrianisation scheme must allow postal vehicles proper access to premises and permit secure vehicular access to Branch Office and Town Sub-Offices for delivery purposes.

In the wake of the rapid development of the road network, innovative postal services were developed by the late 1970s to target businesses and industries competing on the grounds of speed, efficiency and reliability. The rhythms of new postal services were enabled by and entangled with those developments of transport and trade. Transport links are at the core of promising next day delivery. Two arms of the Post Office's fast delivery service were under the spotlight - Datapost and Expresspost. Datapost was a guaranteed overnight service to any part of the country. It is a business targeted service that provides 'regular transmission of batch consignments; for rapid contacts between the head office and the branches, between manufacturers, retailers and customers, they longed to cross frontiers freely and fast and to be sure of meticulous and accuracy of delivery'.¹⁰ Datapost delivers fast, time-tabled and door to door mail to international trade centres and the contents of which include not just paper documents but a whole

array of industrial goods. The highway was an obvious option for the 25,000 Royal Mail fleets while there were entire trains and special vans being allocated to Datapost. From Luton airport, Datapost operated its own domestic air routes linking major cities. The delivery of each item required connections of various modes of transport and having alternative logistical options which allow flexibility at times of unexpected interruptions.

The introduction of premium service schemes such as Expresspost was entirely dependent on securing the permission to use motorbikes without which the introduction of the radio-controlled system could not function ('Paper for Executive Committee - Premium Services', 1980). Expresspost was enabled by a same-day delivery network competing directly with motorcycle and minicab operators in major cities (Walmsley, 1982). The premium service met real business needs by saving its time and the costly and inconvenient expense of using company staff to deliver messages and goods (Edwards, 1982). In the article 'The Fast Favourite', the description of the service vividly maps out the close connections of postal rhythms, transport rhythms and those of business transactions.

For one-off or regular items that need same-day delivery. It offers a same-day door-to-door collection and delivery service in more than sixty towns and cities, and many inter-city routes are available. Road vehicles or inter-city trains are used to speed items between centres throughout the country, most of which operate their own in-town messenger service using distinctive red and yellow radio controlled motor-cycles or vans (*ibid*: 3-4).

A major Transport Study was commissioned by the Post office in the late 1970s to analyse mail circulation in conjunction with the transport network (Clinton, 1981). Depending on the urgency (1st class or 2nd class mail), the cost of operation, and the distance of mail distribution (short haul or overseas exchanges), the report emphasises the need for flexibility which 'enable us to use the most effective method of conveyance

for each flow and type of mail including, where appropriate, an interchange between different modes' (Clinton, 1981: 17). The flexibility of interchanging modes of transport are characteristic of rhythmic connections with which the speed of delivering mail are dependent upon. The advent of premium service schemes put this emphasis to operations. They marked a segment of the postal operations that targeted at business demands. The offering of premium services were reliant on the interlinking of modes of transport for mail transfer. Facilitated by the expanding road networks and the integration of modes of transport, the flexibility of choosing and combining delivery method was premised on a new bundling of postal and transport rhythms. For instance, the Post Office launched the 'Super Service' which is designed to bring all 'go-fast' services under one umbrella. It is an operation based on a customer service centre where clients can telephone and an on-line computer directs vehicles and works out the fastest way to handle whatever he wants to send (Walmsley, 1982).

While moving mail by road and rail had long established history of negotiating temporal-spatial organisations, it was not until the late 1970s that the Post Office introduced the first interchange point for airborne mail at Liverpool's Speke Airport (Clinton, 1981). The burgeoning of air companies led to a reduction in air freight charges, offering the post office and its customers attractive rates for bulk movement of mail. Aircrafts carrying mail from various points around the country and they exchange bags of mail before returning to their respective points of origin, loaded with mail for delivery. Transporting mail by air provided the opportunity for first delivery connections which were not available through the use of the rail network at the time. For instance, the transport studies conducted by the Post Office propose a new Night Air Service from Derby to Aberdeen that is scheduled to arrive in the early morning which connects with first wave delivery (*ibid*). Since the air network had been overlaid without any interchange or integration with the rail network, the East Midlands Airport near Derby was proposed to be used as the interchange centre for air, road and rail. The TPOs arrive

at Derby to collect mail which then interconnects with a system of van service ferrying the mail between each centre. Mail arriving by road can easily connect to either aircraft or TPOs via the junction on the M1 motorway. From 1982, the air mail in and out of Liverpool's Speke Airport were fitted into a national air network that incorporated the East Midlands Airport (Campbell-Smith, 2011). The emphasis on flexibility and speed of postal services, (especially of the premium services designed for commercial users), were responses and incentives of new rhythmic alliances whereby the regularity, extensiveness and capacity of both transport and postal systems were re-negotiated.

This section tentatively entangles the transport and financial rhythms to those of the postal services and such an approach to historical research intersects with some of the theoretical debates of the mid-1970s. The cultural theorist Raymond Williams writes about TV as a cultural form in 1974. On the broad theme of communication and social change, he argues that,

What is interesting throughout is that in a number of complex and related fields, these systems of mobility and transfer in production and communication, whether in mechanical and electric transport, or in telegraphy, photography, motion pictures, radio and television, were at once incentives and responses within a phase of general social transformation (1974: 11).

My empirical research reflects the arguments put forward by Williams. I suggest two points which are crucial for exploring this history of communication rhythms. One is to think about mediums in terms of how they are embedded in the rhythmic structuring of communications and how they form temporal-spatial organisations of life. In this respect, we are not solely dazzled by the ‘new’ in its technical innovations. When we explore the rhythms of communication as enmeshed with other rhythmic bundles of experiences, the ‘novelties’ of technological mediums lies in the extent to which these ‘new’ communication method orders our rhythmic relationships in different ways (as

initiatives and responses to re-aligning social agents). Implied in this remark is the imperative of conducting cultural history beyond the breakthroughs of new technological forms of communication. I illustrate this point by using the example of how the functioning of computerised information system in financial communication had run in parallel to the network of agents which made up the telegraph network a century ago. The other argument is connected to the focus on the timing-spacing functions of communication assemblages, as we are led to explore the phenomena of polyrhythmia in financial communications of the late 1970s (so there are the rhythms of information technologies as well as those of postal rhythms).

Williams' theories of social transformation stress the symbiotic interactions of mediums and I conclude from it that the rhythmic entanglements of these mediums materialise the diffused and diverse experiences of social changes. The entangling of communication rhythms is central to conjunctural analysis and this way of historical investigation does not proceed from any assumed causal relations of social agents. Therefore conjunctural analysis needs to look at the meshwork of communication networks which are orchestrated as a polyrhythmia. It shall include the interactions and relations of various communication medium and to explore the ways in which social life are rhythmised by the effects that these trajectories of movement produce.

In light of what Hall observes to be the defining social experiences of the conjunctural turn - the rapid development of de-industrialisation, the rise of the financial industry, the Thatcherite dogma of consumerism and so on, a rhythmanalytical approach to communication systems excavates the mobile conditions that gave rise to these phenomena. By doing so, I offer a view on the conjunctural shift which gathers its pace in an uneven timing-spacing development of social practices. For instance, the Beeching cuts came to effect in the 1960s and the reduction of rail network had already worked on

the postal rhythms before Thatcher came to power. Hall's theorisation of the conjunctural shift based on Thatcherism, and his claim that it is a force that is brutally abrupt and concise, shall be re-evaluated in the prism of rhythmanalysis. I argue that the changes of cultural experiences have multiple origins and the tracing of these rhythmic bundles of communications, allows us to locate the agency of change in a network of materialities which are often overlooked or eclipsed by abstractions of causal relationships.

4. From Social Mail to Direct Mail

The phenomena of direct mail advertising marked the postal history of the late 1970s and 1980s. From the mid-1970s, transmission of advertising material via the postal medium formed a unique segment of the letter market as it also constituted the majority of postal traffic. Direct Mail is a method of sending unsolicited advertising or promotional material through the post to customers or potential customers at specific named addresses (Publicity Leaflets and Publications Relating to Direct Mail Services, 1974-1991).¹¹ There was an ever increasing degree of interdependency of the Post Office's financial position upon direct mail order business and the latter's exploitation of the postal network's competitiveness against other means of parcel delivery (some companies used their own vans or other delivery agents). The postal service repositioned itself in the letter market as an agent for advertising, hence they set up rhythms of communication that connected to those of commodity circulation. By looking at the Direct Mail segments of the postal traffic, I intend to animate the bundles of communication rhythms illustrated in previous discussions - those of financial practices, the transport network and commodity circulation, as they intersect and negotiate with each other. The proliferation of new rhythmic connections, especially the unprecedented penetration of advertising materials in the postal medium, allude to Hall's comments on one of the key features of the conjunctural turn.

Leading role for consumption reflected in such things as greater emphasis on choice and product differentiation, on marketing, packaging and design, on the targeting of consumers by lifestyle, taste and culture rather than by the Registrar General's categories of social class (Hall, 1996: 224).

How did the postal service in its liaison with the mail order business render a sense of liberalised way of living, when individuals were given the freedom of making purchases in the very comfort of his or her own home? And in what ways could we then tentatively propose that direct mail order purchasing had set the tone for a Thatcherist discourse that equates consuming power with individual freedom?

In the opening scenes of Margaret Drabble's novel *The Middle Ground*, the protagonist Kate displayed her selections of morning posts to the disinterested friend Hugo.

I meant, don't you get any nice personal post?

Well, no, not today, actually. She leaned forward, widening her pale bright blue give-away impenetrable eyes at him. They were full of the hard glitter of deep sympathy, deep interest, deep devouring self.

And you, Hugo, how much personal post do you get?

Oh, not so much these days, said Hugo. But then, I realised I'd finally grown up when all I was interested in getting through the letter box was cheques.

Kate Laughed.

Anyway, Kate, said Hugo, you ought not to complain about a post like that. It's a tribute to your Social Class B Economic Status (Drabble, 1981: 10).

The items received in the post are then carefully described by Drabble. It consists of a letter from American Express (inquiring why her ex-husband didn't give his wife the freedom of an Express Card), an advertisement for a fire extinguisher, a life insurance

leaflet, an invitation to attend a fashion show, a letter from the post office about her application for a new telephone extension, an invitation from a women's group, a letter from a BBC producer asking whether she would write a play about the liberated women of today, a letter announcing the birth of a daughter from a militant American feminist, a brochure for expensive Italian shoes, offering a Try-at-Home service for professional women, and finally a request that she should appear in an advertisement for fake fur. It is not entirely true to consider these letters as impersonal for at least they are addressed to Kate, to her profession and immediate social circles. But one can sense from the cynical remarks made by Hugo that there was an assumed distinction between these letters and those 'nice personal post'.

In a climate of declining social mail, the Post Office faced the challenge to maintain its network of resources financially. Britain's public services in the post-war years were seen to be less responsive to consumers. Public services were segregated into profit centres and loss making units as each received differentiated pricing policies and resource allocation (Peters, 1986 and Horton, 2006). It was a trend that exemplified the social realities of Thatcherism: 'an immense process of liberation has fragmented social milieus' (Hall, 1988: 89). Historian of the British postal history Duncan Campbell-Smith saw the marketing orientated approach to public service as 'a campaign to sell tailored wares to separate kinds of "customer" (a novel concept in itself)' (Campbell-Smith, 2012: 569-570). He elaborates on the point further.

Walmsley and his team were able to identify the biggest-spending customer groups - utility companies, banks, direct mail advertisers and so on- and set out to offer them attractive accounts for higher volumes, in return for bulk-mailing arrangements that would reduce costs for the Post Office. 'Industrial pricing' of this kind sparked a series of lively discussions with the Treasury and the Department of Industry. The postal monopoly had always been understood in Whitehall to imply a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to pricing. By the end of 1981, the new business model had been ushered in. At the same time, the Chairman authorised a substantial boost to Walmsley's budget for the promotion of mail

services - lifting it to almost £50m a year - and the post office became one of the top ten advertisers by spend in the country (*ibid*).

The changing orientation of the postal service by the late 1970s and early 1980s embraced the rhetoric of 'good customer relations' and 'meeting customers' needs. Specialist management was introduced to create roles such as the finance manager and sales director who worked under incentive schemes to bring in commercial contracts. Between 1979 and 1982, the Post Office brought in external marketing consultants to set up Direct Mail Seminars which offered training to mail order houses (Cotton-Betteridge, 2003). Publicity materials such as brochures and booklets on direct mail services were widely distributed to instruct the public on using the new service. The Post Office conducted marketing research which aimed to discover 'who posted what to whom'. The result shows that between 1975 and 1980, the growth rate of advertising materials circulating via the postal medium had outstripped that of national press and TV. The postal service had become, what Nigel Walmsley described as 'the fastest growing advertising medium in Britain by a very wide margin' (Walmsley, 1982: 36).

Traffics of direct mail advertising and other direct marketing related mail service had compensated for the drop of social letters since 1976. Much of the mail by then was generated by businesses, whereas private individuals were more significant as recipients. Having recognised the potential of using the postal medium as an agent for advertising and business correspondence, the post office set up a number of incentive schemes to stimulate the postal traffic (the Direct Mail introductory offer gave first time users one thousand mail shot for free). For instance, 'Rebate Mail' offered discounts for postage to those commercial users who pre-sort bulk mailings and did not require premium services. The Post Office claims that the benefits for businesses to set up frequent correspondences with their customers is that it saves the industrial salesmen from fruitless visits to potential clients because a well designed mail shot to customers at their place of work

could extend the reach of the sales force.

A number of unique operations were associated with Direct Mail and they made it a distinct medium in its ability to reach a targeted audience and to facilitate the communication between the sellers and the buyers. Firstly, advertising bodies formed an ever stronger relationship with the Post Office in order to locate potential customers. There was the increasing adoption of the postcode systems in the late 1970s, especially in the departments of businesses such as customer record coding, sales planning and warehouse systems. The postcode system could also be used for the classification of addresses into various social demographics as they are important for effective advertising operations (Postcode Address File updates the classification of all addresses in the UK and it can be purchased by businesses) (Walmsley, 1981a). For instance, 'A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods' (ACORN) is a system developed in Britain which categorises small geographic areas into one of the thirty-six neighbourhood types (e.g. inner city terraced, retirement areas, affluent areas, etc. (ibid)). The Post Office produced brochures that instruct businesses on the important features of direct mail advertising and they also addressed how these features may inform options of marketing strategies. Direct Mail is selective.

Broad examples of breakdowns are by industrial classification, leisure interests, geographical locations and socio-economic grouping. But much finer breakdowns were available, enabling sellers to reach, for example, collectors of books, gardening enthusiasts or poultry farmers of a certain size in a particular region of the country ('What Direct Mail does that other Media can't do', 1974-1991).

Secondly, Direct Mail are sent through people's house doors and the personal character of medium (addressing to the receiver by name, mentioning peculiar features or circumstances of lifestyle) ensures that they are opened and read. Ranging from a simple letter to brochure, videotape or product sample, the formats of adverts are versatile compared to the other public media which impose severe restrictions on the

creative format employed. Thirdly, the operation of Direct Mail allows commercial bodies flexibility in terms of doing forward planning, so that advertising may coincide with seasonal event and special occasions (whereas with press and TV, advertising space needs to be booked far in advance and even the restrictions on newsprint and air-time can make it extremely difficult to achieve topicality) (*ibid*).

I argue that the ever closer alliances of postal rhythms (embedded in a network of communication experiences) and those of the commercial bodies in the 1970s, commands an understanding of its significance in the *longue durée* of advertising history; so that one can see a continuation of long-term trends as well as a ruptural formation in wider communication systems. The cultural theorist Raymond Williams explores the history of advertising in an essay titled ‘Advertising: The Magic System’ (1993). From that of fly-posting, leaflets, advertising vans and vehicles to the placards carried by people, the mediums used for advertising is of primary interests to Williams. In the essay, he conducted detailed historical analysis of their forms of existence - their tones of persuasion, size of fonts, the advertising jingles of commercial radios and TVs, and type of illustrations used to gain the attentions of potential consumers (Williams, 1993).

The poster industry, with its organized hoardings, was able from 1867 to use large lithographs, and Pears introduced the ‘Bubbles’ poster in 1887. A mail-order catalogue used the first colour advertisement, of a rug. Slowly, a familiar world was forming, and in the first years of the new century came the coloured electric signs. The newspapers, with Northcliffe’s *Daily Mail* in the lead, dropped their columns rule, and allowed large type and illustrations (Williams, 1993: 416).

The history of advertising practices, more specifically, the transition of them from being a minor mode of communication to that of a major one, is of cultural concern to Williams. He notes a general trend of advertising, developed from simple

announcements of shopkeepers to those more complex forms of advertising that became integral to the capitalistic organisations (though he does not imply the latter substituting the former, rather it is the coexistence of a range of practices). Direct Mail is a distinct form of advertising that exemplified if not deepens a feature of advertising practice that Williams suggests as an 'organised and extending system' at the centre of British national life (*ibid*: 421). The organised nature of Direct Mail is manifested in its fine breakdown of potential customer groups, individually targeted distribution, and the contractual relationship set up between business and the post office which implies a regularity of advertising exposure to the ordinary household.

Writing about the cultural form of technological inventions such as television, Raymond Williams explores the history of broadcasting (1974). He points out the extension and development of broadcasting programmes which were characterised by further degrees of specialisation and rationalisation: 'Problems of mix and proportion, formerly considered within a single service, were then basically transferred to a range of alternative programmes, corresponding to assumed social and educational levels' (Williams, 1974: 90). This tendency of segmentation and specialisation within a unified service was taken further by radio services (the division of musical programmes according to its genre). By the mid-1970s, the fragmentation and specialisation of the communication medium had arguably contextualised the popularity of Direct Mail, a medium of advertising which facilitated the segmentation of the consumer market. As for TV, there were two commercial channels and the imminent arrival of cable TV. In the print media, there had been the rapid growth of 'freesheets' alongside traditional 'paid for press'. The proliferation of new special interest magazines was also identifiable (Publicity leaflets and publications relating to Direct Mail Services, 1974-1991).

There was an increasing specialisation of each medium in reaching certain segments of the consumer market. It was in the interest of advertising agencies to assess the selectivity of conventional mediums such as TV, radio, posters, cinema, press and publications. Television is the least selective medium because it is still largely a family viewing activity. However, the forecast growth of cable and satellite TV at the end of the 1980s promised further degrees of segmenting the audience (*ibid*). Press is the most varied of all conventional media and its range of selectivity is therefore vast. On the other hand, specialist publications may reach our core target of pop enthusiasts, new car buyers, clothes conscious women or marketing executives ('Where should Direct Mail fit in my media mix and how would the Media Department be re-organised?' 1974-1991: 3). At the same time, it was often the interaction of multiple media forms that characterised the experience of communication. Walmsley explains how the synergy of mixed media promotion may incorporate Direct Mail, giving sellers the advantages of promotion and selling. For instance, for those products that are best advertised through demonstrating their functions on television, audiences could be followed up more intensively with Direct Mail (*ibid*). When a good mailing list for a particular market segment was not readily available, trade and national press advertising could then be used to establish customer contact.

The establishment of a 'total' communication' was what distinguished the advancement of Direct Mail in the early 1980s (Birchall, 1974-1991: 16). In other words, the agency of advertising was diffused in the coordination of multiple channels of circulating adverts. Although direct mail advertising essentially competed with other communication network such as TV and press, the Marketing Director of the Post Office Nigel Walmsley also stressed the ways in which Direct Mail could be used in conjunction with other mediums.¹² By the late 1970s, the decision about how to integrate various advertising practices depended on the cost, but equally important is the degree of segmentation each medium provides. The selectivity of each medium in

targeting a segment of the market is a measure of its potential to induce further communication between the sellers and the buyers (*ibid*: 2).

Whether businesses were selling through press advertising, directly off the TV screen, by radio, the Post Office saw the opportunity to provide the physical means of obtaining response from customers as a way of achieving ‘total communication’. Admail was a response facility designed by the Post Office to keep up with the growing field of direct response marketing (Publicity leaflets and publications relating to Direct Mail Services, 1974-1991). Admail enabled those viewing the advertisement to send in a written response with an address that was local to the area, even though the seller may be located elsewhere (The local address for response was provided in a short and simplified way and it was allocated with an Admail number. Then the post office serving the local address will forward the responses to the sellers). Admail encourages response to advertising especially when the medium of promotion is of a transient nature. For instance, a TV advert does not give the viewer a coupon or voucher to fill in, whereas this can be done through postal correspondence between the advertiser and the consumer.

Williams argues that the formation of advertising practices needs to be related to particular characteristics of capitalistic relations (Williams, 1993). He illustrates that advertising are instrumental in providing some indications of demand which reduces risks of the expensive processes of capitalisation. For instance, the growing fear of productive capacity after the Great Depression set out the tendency to organise and where possible to control the market. There was the emergence of advertising on a new scale which applied to an increasing range of products (*ibid*). Beside the timed nature of Direct Mail, that businesses can capitalise on the flexibility of the postal medium to reach customers (as opposed to the rigid time frame of TV and newspapers), the Post Office was also providing response facilities that brought businesses closer to customers, hence enabling

degrees of control over production and consumption.

In a paper titled ‘Effective Use of Postal Service by Industry’, Walmsley reviews the Post Office's current and expanding portfolio of services for industries (Walmsley 1981a). It was identified that industrial advertisers often failed to provide any kind of response facility. Once contacts are established between seller and potential customers, sustained follow-ups were crucial to the maintaining of the relationship. A well-constructed response facility could enhance the database and establishes an exclusive list of sales prospect. The role of a response item was to bridge the gap between the initial inquiry and the final sale. A well prepared response item could sustain interest, provide extra information and set up the basis for a sales call (*ibid*). The alliances of the postal rhythms and those of commercial transactions were then established through a number of incentive schemes that boosted letter traffic. For instance, Free Post was a new service designed to work to the advantage of boosting mail traffic as well as bringing businesses closer to their customers (the cost of postage was born by the sellers so that customers might be more willing to inquire about the products which was an essential step to purchase decisions). Similarly, visits to and by a potential client were substituted by mail response. Contractual based service such as Special Business Reply supplied the seller's agent or customer with first class business reply envelopes. It saved large firms from reimbursing the senders' postage which were costly procedures (*ibid*).

Williams proposes that forms of advertising and their close and long-established relationship with broader communication systems (the press and TV) should be discussed beyond commercial connections, that they are also important realms of cultural experiences. While the immediate observation suggests that modern practices of advertising had increasingly become a source of finance for general communication systems such as television services and newspapers, and the Post Office's financial

position became dependent upon the circulation of advertising materials, Direct Mail exemplified and exacerbated this trend in the late 1970s. Williams emphasises that the cultural relevance of advertising practices lies in the way they organise our attention through communicating temporal relationships. In other words, the focus of exploring advertising history is directed at how various advertising practices command and consume forms of attention in relation to other communication experiences. With the emphasis placed on communication systems as configuring rhythms of individuals and the public, he argues that social experiences had become increasingly complex, when a singular occasion or an event had become fragmented in the diverse relations of communication rhythms, a trend he summarised as ‘towards an increasing variability and miscellaneousness of public communications’ (Williams, 1974: 88).

Using an example to illustrate the rhythms of communication as intersecting and interdependent, Williams looks at a significant shift of how TV programmes were organised, from a sequence to one that of ‘flow’ (though the transition is less of a clean cut) (*ibid*: 89). He argues that we speak of the general experience of ‘watching TV’ or ‘listening to the radio’, rather than talking about the specific contents of programmed units. What brought about this shifting sense of engagement with TV, he argues, is attributable to the advertising ‘intervals’ which were inserted to TV programmes at any moment of convenience; so that news programmes, plays, films were interrupted because of these commercials (the financing of British commercial televisions by advertising played a decisive role). The phenomena of interrupted experiences in broadcasting are evident in configuring a shift of communication practices, and more importantly, rendering new types of temporal-spatial relations.

The rise of Direct Mail as a form of advertising had infiltrated communication networks such as the postal systems which had wide outreach of audiences. This phenomenon

exemplified the shifting orientation and operation of the postal service from the mid-1970s. In relation to the 1970s' conjuncture that Hall marks, the pertinence and importance of analysing the medium of mail advertising is that a rhythmanalytical attention points to the polyrhythmic organisation of a communication system (the ordering of broadcasting programmes needs to be coordinated with advertising, or the conjoining of mail response with the marketing of products on TV and radio). The increasing tendency of using channels of communications to segment the audience into categories of consumer groups, may also have implications for the re-alliance of social agents which render new rhythmic assemblages (e.g. the tuning-in to specific radio programmes, the loyalty to particular products that promote regular consumptions). In addition, postal correspondences customised for business to customer enabled commercial-customer communications which could indicate patterns of production and consumption. More crucially, a diverse range of advertising practices and the purchase decisions that ensued, were realised by the postal operations and the wider rhythmic networks of communication associated with it. Parallel to the broadcasting of commercials, the significant rise of direct mail advertising can be seen as a new kind of social input, which characterised two connected tendencies of modern lives that are identified by Williams - mobility and the sufficiency of the family home (Williams, 1974). The following discussions focus on how the Post Office became an agent of facilitating retail purchase, through looking at the ways in which the 1970s' mail order phenomena reached a distinct phase of development. I aim to weave the constellation of rhythmic shifts that underlie the double tendencies noted by Williams.

5. Selling by Post

The institutionalisation of advertising in the form of Direct Mail had animated chains of commercial operations, and the phenomena of mail order purchase naturally came to attention. At a time when mail order purchase in its distinct forms of organisation marked a break from previous ways of operating, I shall explore the conjunctural shift

through this facet of the postal history. It is of particular interest to map out the rhythmic bundles which galvanised such a transition. I argue that the changing alliances of the postal medium, that the re-ordering of its rhythmic interconnections had become an agent of social transformation (that has prevalence of cultural concerns to the present day: commodities shopped over the internet and posted to one's home). They direct to a whole range of cultural experiences that are made vivid through rhythmanalysis.

Selling and buying via the postal medium is not a late twentieth century retailing invention. Ever since the late nineteenth century, the Post Office developed two essential conditions for the subsequent expansion of mail order and home shopping - that of postal orders which provided a secure way of paying for goods supplied by post and the parcel delivery service. Communication infrastructures such as the railway and the postal network subsidised the expansion of the mail order business. Historians of mail order business highlight the 'distributive machinery' which underpins various configurations of mail order retailing over the last three decades of the twentieth century.

Bulk purchase facilities and pre-packaged goods have helped to reduce handling costs; a more flexible delivery network, based on roads rather than rail, has helped to contain transport costs; national advertising campaigns have familiarised customers with the branded goods on offer in the catalogue while simultaneously breaking down residual loyalty to the local store; and almost universal access to the telephone has made it possible for the customer to place an order with the minimum of convenience (Coopey *et al.*, 2005: 9).

When we look at the transport network as one of the distributive machineries for mail order shopping, it is noted that intermittent industrial actions in the early 1970s on the railways, and the postal workers' strikes propelled mail order firms to establish their own delivery methods. Coopey *et al.* (2005) argue that the developing network of

motorways in Britain at the time was a clear factor that offered firms advantages of using their own fleets and having direct control of delivery outreach and standards. This trend had also compensated for a declining operation of Royal Mail delivery in remote or sparsely populated areas by the early 1970s, when parcel handling had been moved from one urban centre to another. The Post Office was also using its vans to deliver goods ordered via mail order and their presence on roads signified the shifting of preference for road transport over railway network.

I intend to map out the changing forms of mail order shopping over the long timespan of history. I argue that such a distinct phase of shopping by post is of a polyrhythmia assumed by an alternative set of rhythmic connections. From the organisation of the ‘turn clubs’ (mail order in its earliest form) to the neighbourliness agency-based mail order, to that of Direct Mail home shopping, the various forms of mail order purchase had evolved over means of obtaining credit and the kind of social interactions set up between the agents of mail order houses and the consumers. By the mid-1970s, as great number of advertising materials and mail order catalogues were pushed through the doors of millions of homes, the burgeoning phenomena of home shopping marked a shift of shopping habits that resonated to a number of rhythmic changes that were characteristic of the 1970s’ conjuncture. There are two features of the 1970s’ mail order phenomena that illustrate the changing operations of mail order shopping. One is the increasing use of credit as payment method. The postal service was becoming integral to financial transactions and it had played the agential role of shaping the rhythms of production and consumption. Secondly, the employment of spare-time agents was phasing out and it signified a transition of mail order shopping from an agent-based activity to a self-reliant shopping practice. Both new features of mail order shopping form a distinct conjuncture in the long history of shopping by post.

5.1. A History of Hire Purchase

Mail order retailers appropriated and adopted the tradition of club systems that went as far back as the nineteenth century (Coopey *et al.*, 2005). As a means of boosting the consuming power of those on low income, the club system is based on a collective purchasing arrangements whereby members contribute payments regularly and purchase goods in turns. The clubs offered a form of shopping on credit which later evolved into general mail order agencies. Club organisers took on the roles of spare-time agents who were paid a commission when sales were made. Credit was initially acquired by those who organised the ‘turns clubs’ (also called the ‘shilling club’). The Littlewoods catalogue was firstly published in 1932 and it records the organisation of the ‘turns clubs’ and the weekly bulk orders made by them.

With twenty members overwhelmingly women - each taking one or more shares in the club, the organiser collected enough for £1-£2 worth of goods each week. Members then drew lots to decide the order in which they would receive their goods and it was this feature that gave rise to the name of ‘turns clubs’. Organisers sent their cash to Littlewoods, and each of the 20 members got her goods before she had finished paying for them except the one with [the] last turn on the list. The organiser was rewarded with a discount off her own purchases, paid by Littlewoods. The cost of postage, carriage and packing was normally included in the price of the goods.¹³

It was a communal way of saving and spending to purchase items through mail order, and this was particularly the case in the economies of working class families. Obtaining credits from ‘turn clubs’ became the most important means of affording commodities that were otherwise unattainable (*ibid*). Consumer credit was based on a cycle depending on the number of club members. Buying on credit was supported by other members as opposed to by the sellers.

The weekly collection of members' contributions to make purchases created a rhythm of consumption that characterised mail order shopping until the mid-1950s as the industry enjoyed steady but limited growth (Edgeley, 1979). The collective credit accumulation in the form of 'turns clubs' were gradually dying out, though the cycles of repayment (20 weeks at 1 shilling in the pound per week) had been adopted by the companies until the early 1960s. Retailers tapped into the weekly budgeting needs of the families and developed credit systems based on such patterns (Coopey *et al.*, 2005). Although mail order was still operating through agents, customers could receive goods immediately and credit was financed by the sellers. The rapid expansion of mail order retailing in the late 1950s was premised upon a wave of credit provision by the mail order houses, marking a shift from cash to credit transactions; a trend that was sustained by the increasing use of credit and store cards. Mail order credit helped to finance a wide range of consumer goods - TV sets and washing machines for example. The method of credit payment played an instrumental role in the emerging consumer society in the late 1950s and early 1960s Britain (*ibid*). A 1979 report 'Consumer Credit in the Mail Order Field' notes that as travelling costs escalated and parking restrictions became more of a nuisance in town and city centres, the option of making purchases through mail order catalogues became popular (McVitie, 1979). Amongst the growing areas of credit card usage were advertisers in national newspapers (e.g. *Telegraph*, *Observer*) who were selling products of a general nature, specialist retail companies selling in periodicals, and high street shops seeking to widen its markets by advertising to customers who then use credit card mail or telephone order systems to pay for their purchase.

As financial services became increasingly sophisticated, the alliances of consumers, mail order companies and credit agencies took on new forms.¹⁴ The rhythms of credit transfer via postal communications, and of the dispatching and delivering of goods were increasingly intertwined with that of the postal service. The advent of mail order industry in its new form was fuelled by a high increase of credit card usage since the

mid-1970s (McVitie, 1979). With the help of direct mail advertising, the advantage of increasing credit card usage was the fast purchasing reactions received by mail order companies. The report 'Consumer Credit in the Mail Order Field' (1979) outlines the process of mail order shopping by credit card. Telephoned authorisation requests usually received replies immediately. In the case of postal applications, they are dealt with by first class mail (If mail is used, the credit card company requires the customer to sign and authorise the transaction in writing. In the case of telephone response, the order is taken over the phone). Mail order companies then had to communicate with the credit card companies to complete the final transfer of funds (*ibid*).

Other than the mediums of mail and telephone, the Post Office also adapted its existing 'Viewdata' service to facilitate the growth of mail order companies. As well as providing information on commodities, one can also make purchase over it. The service can be seen as a precursor to shopping over the internet. Essentially an information-on-demand system, 'Viewdata' is a 'complete, simple to operate, push-button communications system providing instant access to millions of items of information - and all in your own home' (trials of the service were set up in 1977 and made available to customers throughout the UK during the 1980s) ('Information on Demand', 1977).

Viewdata operates by linking the telephone and television (to use Viewdata, customers simply switch on their TV set, call up the Viewdata centre by phone and then select whatever information they want from an index appearing on the screen), and users, at the touch of a button on a control pad- call up pages of information which are displayed on their TV screens. The wealth of information available is virtually limitless- anything from sports results to stock market prices, household hints to train timetables, and holidays to welfare services- and, in addition, Viewdata can also store and pass on messages to other users of the service (*ibid*: n.p.)

Goods and services advertised at the time of viewing could be purchased by inputting

credit card and authorisation details. These details were then being directed back to the TV stations before being forwarded to the mail order companies.

5.2. Agencies of Mail Order Purchase

The employment of spare-time agents was a significant feature of mail order retailing up till the late 1970s. Millions of agents held catalogues and showed them to relatives, friends and neighbours. They collected orders and payments and received a commission when sales were made. The congeniality of their operations relied on pre-existing social networks based on the family, the neighbourhood, the workplace or the pub, supplying commercial and social links between the company and their customer (Coopey *et al.*, 2005). The close-knit community that the agent worked with, enabled them to assess the financial abilities of their customers and hence the level of credit that one could have access to. 'Until the late twentieth century, when companies bought into computer-generated credit referencing systems, they relied heavily on agents making on-the-spot decisions about the creditworthiness of individual customers' (*ibid*: 78). The active communal lives of the working class in the 1950s and 1960s contextualised the spare-time agents system, for which the sociable dimension of mail order purchasing added to its appeal. Apart from factors such as the access to credit and the congeniality of agency-based mail order purchase, there were a number of social conditions that popularised this form of retailing. The convenience brought about by catalogue ordering gave its edge against traipsing around shops, when 'traffic congestion, parking problems and the relatively high cost of public transport, along with the inconvenience of conventional shop opening hours for women at work were cited as major factors in the shift of shopping practices' (*ibid*: 58).

Mail order purchase continued to expand against other forms of retailing until the end of the 1970s (*ibid*). Since 1980, the conditions that allowed agency mail order to exist in

its traditional form, that is the use of spare time agents through whom credit relationship is established between the firm and the customer, had been undermined. Some important new trends in mail order shopping became increasingly evident towards the end of the twentieth century.¹⁵ The nature of agency was changing as distinctions were made between the traditional agents who placed orders on behalf of customers outside his or her immediate household and the individual shopper who only used the catalogues to buy for oneself. Since the early 1980s, when ordering by mail gave way to ordering by telephone, there was a clear tendency that the number of customers served per agent declined as mail order companies introduced telephone ordering system which cut out the agent (eventually the individual is the agent for making purchases). However the industry remained reliant on operations of postal services such as collections and deliveries, and its Direct Mail schemes.

The self-sufficiency of making mail order purchase stamped a new character to the industry. The flexibility and freedom rendered by this form of shopping, that one becomes the agent of making consumer choices (facilitated by the targeted and personalised advertisement of direct mail) and to make purchases at home without having to conciliate with other daily rhythms, are features of consumption experiences that suggest a plethora of wider rhythmic interconnections. Through the postal system, the kind of rhythms set up between individuals as consumers and the sellers, render an experiential accounts of history that echo with discourses on individualism and personal freedom that Thatcher defined through consumer choices (Hall, 1989). There were other facets of social changes and their rhythmic effects had changed the agency of mail order companies. For instance, the increasing number of women being employed in full time jobs meant that they were unable to coordinate the home run agency work with their employment as they had less time to seek customers. The decline of community based mail order shopping was also attributable to the dismantling of many close-knit urban communities in the early 1980s (Cooper *et al.* 2005). I suggest that the transition of mail

order purchase from that of collective based activity to one that is self-reliant, is symptomatic of greater rhythmic assemblages at work: those of de-industrialisation, economic recession and inner-city decay.

6. The Contraction of the Postal Network

The most tangible aspect of the postal operation is the presence of Post Office counters in both urban and rural areas. There are the Crown Offices run by people directly employed by the Post Office, and the Sub-post offices managed by private business people who are often referred to as ‘Sub-postmasters’ (sub-postmasters receive a fixed payment from the Post Office and a variable payment based on the number of transactions they carry out). The sub-post offices covered the majority of the counter service throughout the country. They were often the vital hubs of activities in many villages, serving a large number of small communities and some of which were isolated from the centre of the town because of the inadequacy or expense of public transport. Most sub-postmasters carried out their post office business in conjunction with another retail business. In urban areas they often ran a newsagent or stationery business. In rural areas it was typically a village shop. The dense network of post office counters was an important medium of communication that organised the temporal-spatial relations of its neighbourhoods. Within one mile of distance between each office, the network of sub-office counter service essentially consists of a multiplicity of rhythms as they were the nodal points which enabled the exchanges, encounters and interactions of social agents. An article published in 1982 entitled ‘The Industry that Touches Everyone’ illustrates the wide range of activities performed by the post office's counter work.

A key element of the post office is its nationwide chain of 22,000 main and sub-offices which offer more than eighty services over the counter, ranging from Citizen's Band Radio licences to Disabled Person's railcard applications, from postage stamps to premium bonds...many people simply under-use their post office. In a single visit, it is often possible to pay rent; TV licence, water and

electricity bills, post letters and parcels, collect pensions and child benefits, unemployment or sickness benefit; tax the car, buy a dog license. There are also a variety of saving stamps issued by companies to help customers spread the payment of large bills. The variety of saving stamps on sale included telephone stamps, TV license and motor vehicle licence stamps. Utility companies also had saving stamps arrangements with the post office. Council tenants can usually pay both rents and rates through local post offices. More than half of all counter work at local post offices is done on an agency basis for government bodies such as the Department of Health and Social Security and nationalised industries. This not only includes the provision of facilities to collect pensions, child benefits, unemployment benefits etc., but also basic information in the form of leaflets on how to claim supplementary benefits, buy government stock and bonds ('The Industry that Touches Everyone', 1982, n.p.).

From the mid-1970s onwards, the contraction of the sub-office networks shook things out of their habitual alliances. By the end of 1978, it was generally agreed that the system of sub-offices operated on an agency basis (taken up by the sub-postmasters), and in most number of cases in conjunction with a small business so that a far more comprehensive network offices can be maintained on economic grounds. One of the main reasons for retaining such a large network was the amount of transactions carried out, the social value of which were not entirely related to postal matter. In particular, the work undertaken on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) and other governmental departments took up significant proportion of total counter time at sub-post offices. It was noted in the Carter Report (1977) that:

The Postal Business by itself would not justify so elaborate a system...but the pensioner and those who draw benefits and allowances commonly require to be able to get their money every week, and this group of users includes old and handicapped people, and mothers with small children, who find it difficult to travel long distances (Carter Report, 1977 : 34).

In September 1979, the National Consumer Council (NCC) published the 'Post Office

Special Agent -Report of a Working Party on the Social Service Brief of the Post Office'.

The focus of this report is on the postal service's social role. Questions were raised regarding how well the Post Office could facilitate the delivering of social welfare and whether the welfare services provided by the counter works could be improved or extended. The tension of social service and commercial objectives are also being addressed.

Although the Post Office had been clearly defined by its commercial objectives since the public no longer funded its operation, the institution was considered to be at the front-line of distributing social security payments (pensions, supplementary benefits and child benefits), providing information about welfare and collecting rent for the local councils.

In the report, it was noted that with its wide cross-section of customers visiting offices so frequently, the well established infrastructural network was admirably suited to the role of promoting public awareness of facilities and benefits available. The public was often unaware of the scale of the counter work. Over half of the Post Office's counter service was 'agency work' carried out on behalf of governmental departments. Most social security benefits were cashed at post office counters. For example, virtually all the pensioners used the post office each week to cash their retirement pensions. In response to the Carter Report published in 1977, the White Paper recognised that 'the post office counters play an important part in the life of local communities and the government attaches the greatest importance to the Post Office's efforts to respond sensitively and flexibly to local needs' ('Post Office Special Agent', 1979: 3).

Towards the end of 1977, the Welfare Rights Officers' Group asked the National Consumer Council (NCC) to look at the Post Office's counter services as they were particularly concerned with the large number of people failing to claim welfare benefits of which they were entitled to. NCC set up meetings to scrutinise and report on the activities

that the Post Office could have undertaken to facilitate access to welfare benefits and other caring services for needy groups. The Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) had the responsibility of producing literature that informed the public of their rights to welfare benefits and services. It was the network of sub-post offices that enabled the dissemination of such materials. Apart from the display of leaflets and posters, the NCC was particularly interested in the letters sent to first-time recipients (the Council further recommended that such letter should be sent at appropriate intervals to all first-time recipients of main benefits). Enclosed in the mail were materials that explain the supplementary benefits and also a claim form. The NCC highlighted the potential of the postal medium in the wide distribution of information such as useful addresses, existing benefits, as well as supplying forms or leaflets and referring those with problems to suitable agencies. The report argues that the Post Office was in a good position to extend its capacities of information distribution and to become the focal points of welfare services because 'it had a far more extensive network of offices than any other information outlet and it was an established point of contact for a large proportion of the population' (ibid: 14).

While the NCC proposed ways of utilising the post office network to improve the uptake of welfare and other social care service, the report also expressed anxiety about the contraction of the network. The number of sub-post offices had declined steadily since 1970 and nearly half of the closure took place between 1975 to 1978 (ibid: 34). There were various factors which contributed to the trend and an analysis of which unravels the bundles of rhythms that pulsate the provision of the counter service -the decision to (re)site sub-offices has to take into account the amount of business transacted at the particular office, the likely future needs of the area, the ability of neighbouring offices to cope with additional workload if other offices in the area are closed, and any transport difficulties the residents may have to reach the nearest office. When a sub-office is removed from a community, the closure may have an immediate impact on the living

rhythms of the local residents, of those who get their social benefits, paying for their bills, and users of the variety of services offered. The effects of changing a rhythmic centre would then impose further changes to rhythmic alliances. The hub of activities in adjacent neighbourhoods can take on a different kind of rhythm (prolonged waiting times at the post office counter for example) when residents attune their daily life to the new interrelationships set up between communities.

It was easier to justify the closing down of sub-offices based on the distance standard. In evidence to the Carter Report , the Post Office stated that the criterion for the provision of counter services was that 'generally offices should not be less than one mile apart in urban areas and not less than two miles apart in populated rural areas, with certain exception' (*ibid*: 35). In practice, the provision of sub-offices exceeded the standard which if strictly applied could reduce the number of offices by as many as two thousand. By the late 1970s, the post office had slimmed down the network to move closer to the stated distance standards. The Post Office Review Committee notes the economic imperative as the main factor for consideration: 'No pressure has been exerted by the Department of Health and Social security to maintain a given size network; on the contrary the Department is constantly pressing for costs to be contained wherever possible' ('Post Office Review Committee - Summary of the main points made by the Post Office at the Oral Session on the Postal Business on 5th November', 1976: 12). A report produced by the Committee claimed that if it was not for the pressure to ensure the level of social service transactions performed by sub-offices on an agency basis, the post office was even considering to discontinue more sub-offices (*ibid*).

By undertaking agency work for the government, the financial viability of sub-offices was largely dependent upon the regular cash received from the government. Changes of welfare policy could potentially affect the operational capacity and survival of the

sub-offices. The NCC report in 1977 raises the concern that the Post Office had already lost its agency work in areas such as National Savings stamps and most National Insurance stamps. A further blow came from the Department of Employment, switching the payment of unemployment benefits from weekly to fortnightly in September 1978. There was a controversy regarding the future of welfare delivery and the associated fate of sub-office networks. To save administration cost, the government planned to offer cash inducements to benefits recipients who are willing to switch to receiving money from their bank account as opposed to getting cash from the post office counter.

This is thought to be an inferior alternative as most recipients wanted to obtain their benefits in the form of weekly cash at a place near their home, and the post office network provides much better access for people who live in the suburbs and rural areas. This initiative was drafted in 1976 when joint working party of DHSS officials, the banks and National Giro were set up to consider the possibility of automatic credit transfer of social security benefits into banks and other accounts in which case the existence of counter service was threatened ('Benefit Payments [Sub-Post Offices]', 1980).¹⁶ The DHSS doubted the future viability of small rural post offices if major agency work is taken away ('Post Office Special Agent', 1979). If this trend were to spread to other pensions and benefits, it could mean a complete restructuring of contracted counter work leading to a substantial reduction of business. The subsequent effect could be that the vacant positions for Sub-postmaster jobs could be less attractive when the prospect of maintaining the sub-post office is being threatened (*ibid*).

The prolonged cycles of payment (the main proposals were to change the payment of social security benefits from a weekly basis to every fortnightly) and the transition from cash to bank account payment of welfare suggest a tendency of benefits distribution that attuned to the rhythms of the occupational classes. To support the change, Mr. Patrick

Jenkin, the Secretary of State for Social Services, argued in a parliament debate in 1980 that there was already a growing trend in moving away from weekly payments as the cycles of paying out salaries and occupational pensions were changed to monthly payment ('Benefit Payments [Sub-Post Offices]', 1980). He evidenced the fact that sickness benefit was already paid fortnightly in twenty percent of cases. Mobility allowance was paid four-weekly and substantial proportions of pensioners were paid monthly or less frequently. Nearly half the mothers already cash their child benefit less frequently than once a week. The pending decision about the method and frequency of welfare distribution caused much public anxiety about the likely effects of any such changes on the future of the sub-post office network (*ibid*). Since the majority of the rural post office's income came from social security payment work, this change would have adverse effect on the sub-post offices immediately.

Sub-post offices were often shared premises with village shops and the income from post office counter work supported the running of the shops. The imminent closure of local offices not only removed the number of services offered by the post office, but also it affected shopping activities and other social interactions in the community. In the parliament debate that centres around issues of benefit payments and the future of sub-post offices, the MP Mr Robert Kilroy-Silk drew out the consequences of changing welfare distribution policy: 'if the sub-post office is threatened by the payment of benefits other than at weekly intervals, the shop is threatened and with it the rapport, the ethos and the atmosphere of that area' (Kilroy-Silk, 1980: n.p.). He also pointed out that the proposed changes to benefit payment demands an alternative consumption pattern - 'the extraordinary British habit of weekly budgeting and the use of cash needs to be adjusted to new payment intervals' (*ibid*). Mr Walker, a Scottish MP stressed that the weekly budgeting habit was for many working-class families a way of life, and it will take time for it to change. It could cause inconvenience and great difficulties for those who relied on benefit payment to sustain the running of the household. He raised the issue further: 'many

pensioners in my constituency could not manage on other than a weekly budget' (Walker, 1980: n.p.). Mr Stanley Orme made a more nuanced argument to the debate of fortnightly or monthly payments,

I am talking not about people with bank accounts who can have benefits paid into those accounts but about a large percentage of the people who live in rural and urban areas who need their benefits weekly, who spend the money weekly and do not have bank accounts. I am talking about a service. If that service were transferred, great inconvenience and expense would be caused...We are not dealing with the mother who can afford to leave the money in the bank for six or eight weeks and perhaps use it in some other way. We are dealing with the working-class mother who has to go to the post office weekly to collect her child benefit. In many instances child benefit is a lifeline to a family (Orme, 1980: n.p.).

Mr. David Penhaligon, a MP of Truro remarked on the impact of welfare changes to those who live in rural parts of the country,

I can assure the Secretary of State that the one-third of the country receiving supplementary benefit, consisting of the people who wish to budget weekly - the percentage was higher in my village - draw their money weekly automatically. It would not occur to them to do anything else. Indeed, a queue forms outside the sub-post office before it opens at the appointed hour (Penhaligon, 1980: n.p.).

The decline of counter business had taken place in the years after 1970. Since the majority of sub-offices were run in conjunction with shops or newsagencies, one of the problems in attracting Sub-postmasters to manage rural offices is that the income from village shops could no longer cover the cost of maintaining their presences. A village which loses its only shop often loses with it its sub-post office and the diverse range of services offered by counters. To alleviate this problem, local post office managers had the discretion to consider the provision of a limited service in village halls or to use staff from nearby Crown Office for example. Head-postmasters also had a certain amount of

discretion to restrict the hours of business at small offices when there was serious difficulty in obtaining a candidate to provide normal post office hours for businesses.

Where rural offices remained in service, the relationship between sub-offices and Head offices was in the spotlight as there was a tendency of centralising service into urban areas, often to the detriment and at the expense of rural communities. It was cheaper and more efficient to centralise the sorting and control of the delivery staff to Crown sorting offices than to have a large number of small rural delivery offices. In a case of withdrawing 'delivery office status' from certain rural sub-offices in 1977, the Warwickshire Association (National Association of Local Councils) wrote to POUNC (who later wrote to the Post Office to raise the issue) to suggest a reversal of the Post Office's decision to withdrawal 'delivery office status' from rural sub-post offices (Keegan, 1977). The loss of the 'delivery office status' in rural sub-post offices meant that undelivered parcels and registered mail (when there was no one at home to receive them at the time of delivery) are held at and they can only be collected by the recipients at the Head post offices which could be much further away from rural areas. The Council's letter shows concerns that this policy may generate greater problems of communication for communities in these areas. It further pointed out that 'these changes amount to much more than a simple closure; they threaten a further and qualitative postal denudation of rural areas' (*ibid*, n.p.). In reply, the post offices stated that the responsibility for rural services rests with individual Head Postmasters who give the best economic services they can within the constraints of each rural area.

Despite the internal rhythmic co-ordinations which were required of the postal network to maintain its service coverage, the rhythms of out-of-town shopping imposed restriction on the capacities of local offices hence re-configured the rhythms of rural communities (since the counter service are linked to many aspects of a person's daily

activities). To a large extent, the sub-post office closures were the victims of a continuing trend in retailing away from the small village shops to out-of-town shopping. The advent of supermarkets and the associated self-service shopping habits marked an important conjuncture of the 1950s' and 1960s' retail landscape of Britain. The growth of car ownerships and the building of road networks meant that, for those who owned cars, they could do their weekly shopping in the supermarkets and shopping centres at the edge of town. One could draw the apparent rhythmic connections between the contraction of the Post Office's counter services and the new shopping habits emerged out of the re-ordering of social agents. The interdependent existence of the sub-post offices and the shops sparked debates over the subsequent impact of shop closures on the well-being of the public (especially the elderly and the socially disadvantaged). Mr Stanley Orme, an MP from Salford, gave a parallel example of the closure of pharmacies as they were being transformed into supermarkets and multiple stores. 'The supermarkets and multiple stores are excellent for many things, but they are not capable of being turned into part-chemists' shops or part-sub-post offices. They would not be able to give the type of service that one receives at present' (Orme, 1980, n.p.). Mr John Maxton, a Scottish MP whose constituency had one of the largest council house schemes in Europe, warned parliament about the repercussions of sub-post office closures that may threaten the existence of other shops in the area.

My correspondent made the point that he is one shop in a row of ten. He said that if his shop, as a sub-post office, closed because it was no longer viable, the people who received benefit from him would no longer be able to shop in the other nine shops. They would have to go elsewhere, outside Castlemilk altogether, in order to obtain their money. As a result, they would also do their shopping elsewhere. Therefore, not only the sub-post office but a large number of the other shops would close. A major social benefit would be taken away if sub-post offices in such areas were to close (Maxton, 1980: n.p.).

In addition, the rhythms of travelling to places were also undergoing transformations

which propelled changes of rural living patterns in relation to nearby towns. The car owners in rural areas fit into the rhythms of road travelling, whereas those who relied on public transport were arrhythmic to the decline of social provisions in rural areas. With the reduction of rural bus service, it was not an easy option for those who were bounded to what are offered by the local services. The debates in the parliament reflected a wider climate of anxiety about the quality of village life at a period of inadequate public service provision. Mr Paul Dean, a MP from Somerset cited from one of the local newspapers - 'We have lost too much from our villages already, with children being transported to distant schools: lost bus services; even closed churches and inns. The survival of the post office is the best hope for the revival of other amenities'. The contracting post office network was seen as exacerbating the trend of 'a continued transfer from the small to the large' (Dean, 1980, n.p.). The MP Mr Orme explained how the local provision of facilities and retail shops could shape the rhythms of getting to places,

There is a reduction of facilities and offices as they were being moved into the next town, which can be ten or more miles away. There is a need to travel, and therefore the cost of that travel must be taken into account if a person does not have personal transport. All that adds up to making life more complicated and more expensive. (Orme, 1980, n.p.)

There was a consistent concern over the conditions of rural transport in NCC's report. If rural sub-offices were unable to distribute welfare information, referral to the nearest DHSS office could mean a journey of fifteen miles or so for the enquirer. The observations made in the report assembled the rhythmic relationship of travelling and welfare distribution: 'this would be expensive and time consuming, especially so for the elderly, the disabled or mothers with young children, and would be aggravated by the poor public transport in rural areas' ('Post Office Special Agent', 1979: 18). The closure of rural sub-offices added to the problems faced by those least able to cope with extra stress when 'infrequent public transport, high fares and long waits can turn a weekly trip

for essentials such as pensions and benefits into an exhausting and worrying expedition' (ibid: 24).

By the mid-1970s, the rationalisation of public services, notably of postal services and out-patient facilities had led to serious decline in the standard of service made available to the general public (McElroy, 1975). The erosion of civic life is characteristic of the changing climate of welfare provision. Writing about the public policy of delivering welfare, Tony Butcher argues that a new system of welfare delivery of the early 1980s was very different from the system that emerged in the late 1940s which was later consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s (Butcher, 2002). The practices and values of the public administration model were being replaced by a new language and process of welfare delivery under the Thatcher government's administration - a managerial mode of 'cost and profit centre' approach towards public services.

There had been radical changes in the organisation management and culture of delivery agencies of the welfare state. The traditional role of local authorities had been seriously challenged, and shifted towards an 'enabling role'... Privitisation, marketisation and the search for efficiency had become important features of the system of welfare delivery (ibid: 183).

These discussions may very well exemplify theorisations of Thatcherism. In order to make vivid the transition of the public service model by tracing the process of welfare distribution, I suggest to explore temporal-spatial dimensions of its mediums (in this case the post office counters are being examined). It is an approach that explores whether the ethos of a welfare state (or its oppositions) manifest a particular set of rhythmic connections. Therefore it is a mode of analysis that concretises and sensitises historical work to the complexities of state-citizen relationship at the conjunctural turn. The method of rhythmanalysis traces the multiplicities of rhythmic bundles which endow the welfare system a materiality in its temporal-spatial organisations (a materiality that punctuates

daily experiences). The diverse services offered by the sub-post offices created a polyrhythmic network whereby the alliances and refusals of social agents were set up through rhythmic entanglements. Sub-office counter works were at the front line of social care and a scrutiny of their closures unveils the manifold changes of different origins, unfolding at various pace, which nevertheless culminated in the disruption of community lives in the villages and beyond.

This chapter began by highlighting one of the immediate shift of the postal service which dovetailed into the broader change in the cultural-political landscape of the late 1970s. It was signified by the drastic decline of social mail and the surging circulation of business correspondences. The changing orientations of the postal service were manifested as re-organisations of social alliances, measured by the regularity, extensiveness and capacity of temporal-spatial co-ordinations. In the prism of rhythmanalysis, the transformation of postal services, as a distinct turning point of British postal history, needs to be explored in the multiple trajectories of communication systems that interconnected with its operations. It is about distinguishing those mobility systems and to explore the polyrhythmic interactions of different assemblages. Their negotiations and laminations are of particular interests in the animation of history as cultural processes.

This kind of attention draws out the rhythmic assemblages that weave and are weaved by postal rhythms. For example, the circulation of financial documents in the post point to the rhythms of financial practices and other communication systems such as transportation. A conjunctural analysis of postal operations require explorations of those interconnected rhythmic assemblages. The phenomenon of Direct Mail, was also enmeshed in a polyrhythmia of media forms (e.g. TV and press). Mail order purchase took on a rhythm that was facilitated by financial practices, and this form of retailing had been forming experiential connections to the changing shopping habits, the diminishing number of local

shops and the decline of public transport. Therefore, the agencies of change were diffused across wider cultural experiences. Rhythmanalysis shows that the changing fabric of cultural experiences took on uneven development, in the sense that certain rhythmic assemblages are affected immediately (cycles of welfare distribution are closely linked to budgeting and consuming habits) whereas others may not be orchestrated to the same pace and intensity (e.g when the sub-post offices are closed, the rhythmic connections of life in towns and rural areas may take time to attune to each other). It is an effective method of practising conjunctural analysis to demonstrate the involutions and pleats of social shifts. The residual forces of ‘pre-conjuncture’ times may continue to be active, thus the question of marking a period as a ‘conjuncture’ is also made more complex and ambiguous. For instance, the contraction of the Post Office network which had taken place before the election of the Conservative government, preludes the interruptions of civic life that characterised the Thatcher period. We also need further investigations of the rhythmic ordering of village life (in relation to the towns and cities) after sub-offices were closed down. As those changes could necessarily lag behind other rhythmic adjustments, so that historical attention may stretch to the years after the conjunctural moment.

This chapter is a case study of the postal services as they had performed as important communication systems in the cultural history of Britain. The purpose of doing so is to facilitate a discussion of the relationship of an ideological account of history, one that gravitates to discourses and political allegiances, and a history of concrete social relationships that are established through rhythmic connections. In the lens of arrhythmia and polyrhythmia, there are those empirical discoveries which made the dispositions and disruptions of the Thatcher years particularly vivid. This is achieved because rhythmanalysis accentuates and highlights the manifold of cultural processes at work. The theorisations of Thatcherism are explored from the concrete realities of social life. For instance, in relation to the proposition that the rise of financial industries were essentially a Thatcherite project, my focus on the innovative services developed by the Post Office

suggests that the communication rhythms of the postal system had galvanised the restructuring of the economy at a time of ruptural formations. I argue that the emergent phenomena of using the postal medium to advertise, and to facilitate commodity circulation in the form of home shopping, produced temporal-spatial logic that were in tune with those of new financial practices (the rise of credit usage), the burgeoning of entrepreneurs, the decline of public transport services, and so on. In the sense of achieving eurhythmic alliances of social agents, they do form a kind of ‘fusion’ that Hall uses as a defining feature of the 1970s’ conjunctural shift.

However, there are other forces at work and their momentum worked in relation to the emerging events at the conjunctural turn. For instance, the contraction of the railway network which set up the material conditions for the preferred method of transferring mail by road, and the subsequent changes on shopping practices and public transport provision, complicate the claiming of a conjuncture based on political discourses (which are decisively marked by ideological constructions). The rhythmanalytical study of a history does not necessarily follow chronological orders of events. I have demonstrated in this chapter that the concept of polyrhythmia poses a method of exploring history which requires works of discerning rhythmic bundles and to see how they form alliances and refusals. Each rhythmic bundle has a trajectory of development that interconnects with those of others and the pace of their changes requires various historical attentions (e.g. Braudel’s idea of the ‘Longue Durée’, or Lefebvre’s connections of different ‘moments’ in history). The critical task of rhythmanalysis in its potential of exploring ‘hegemony’, I argue, lies in precisely such mode of practising material history.

¹ For the research on postal history, I mainly looked at and drew on archival materials from the British Postal Museum Archive, London and the Oral History Archive of the Post Office, London. The archival materials are organised into thematic categories which are reflected in their system of coding. The first number indicates the area of interest and the second number refers to a specific subject within that area (e.g. 28/60). Wherever possible author names and exact dates of publication are given in the text. When there is no author for the document referenced, I use the title of the document so that they can be traced in the bibliography. As the archive material is thematically organized and collected in folders that often span

across decades, it was not always possible to determine the exact publication date. Full references for all archive materials are provided in the archival bibliography.

² ‘The Reputation of the Post Office’ is a report on the public perceptions of the Post Office. It was conducted by Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) on behalf of the Post Office Public Relations Department.

³ ‘The Report of a Working Party on the Social Service Brief of the Post Office’ was published by the National Consumer Council in September 1979.

⁴ Castells gives some examples of the new technological inventions: ‘microprocessor was invented in 1971; gene-slicing techniques were discovered in 1973; the microcomputer was introduced in 1975 and so on’ (Castells, 1989: 2).

⁵ The ‘New International Financial System’ (NIFS) is defined as ‘the restructuring process has served to break down the closely regulated international financial regime which was dominated by the United States for the bulk of the postwar period. This first phase of this process hinged upon the decline of the value of the dollar in the late 1960s and the emergence of differential national rates of inflation...The catalyst for the second phase of restructuring and the formation of the NIFS was the developing country debt crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s which dramatically altered the provision of international debt, and had far-reaching consequences for borrowers and financial institutions alike’ (Thrift and Leyshon, 1997: 117).

⁶ Clinton emphasises the need to switch from the manual system of mail delivery to a mechanised system. The 'Letter Post Plan' refers to the mechanisation of letter sorting. With the entire of the UK addressed coded into postcodes, automatic sorting was realised by the introduction of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) in 1979. ‘OCR reads printed addresses and the machine converts the postcode into a series of phosphor dots which it prints onto the envelope. This allows the sorting machine to 'read' each address automatically from the phosphor dots’ (<http://www.postalheritage.org.uk/page/mountpleasant-mechanisation> [accessed 01.10.2013]).

⁷ Butcher, L. 2010. ‘Roads: Highway Infrastructure’. www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01448.pdf (Accessed 10.02.2013).

⁸ Interview with Jim Cotton-Betteridge, conducted by Fulton, Rorie. F13065-F13066 (6 Mar - 28 Apr 2003). Oral History Archive held at the National Sound Archive, British Library London.

⁹ The Marshall Inquiry on Greater London (1978) was a commissioned investigation by Sir Frank Marshall to examine the relationship between central government, the Greater London Council, other local authorities and statutory bodies. The report was written based on the evidence submitted by Londoners and organisations serving London on the issues of city planning, transportation, business and employments, housing, education and social services etc.

¹⁰ *Datapost and All That* was a film produced by the Post Office's film unit in 1983.

¹¹ Although the postal service network subsidised Direct Mail advertising, it did not claim exclusive ownership of the operation. The establishment of direct mail as an advertising channel relied primarily on the interaction of three groups of agents - the list owners and brokers who provided access to segment markets, the servicing or producer houses and the postal service (Walmsley 1981a).

¹² In a report he presented at the World Industrial Advertising Congress in 1981, Nigel Walmsley pointed out that such a status should be seen with the perspective that 'it is competing with other medium of information'. He identified competition from other advertising media for a share of advertising budget - newspaper and magazines (the retail network as dissemination of information), data transfer technology such as facsimile and so on (Walmsley, 1981b).

¹³ <http://www.thecatalogshop.co.uk/catalogue-history/littlewoods-introduction2.php> (accessed 01.03.2012).

¹⁴ At this stage of development, mail order companies are the large agency catalogue companies and any retail organisations which advertise its products through various media and obtain response by either mail or telephone.

¹⁵ The share of agency mail order in the retail market started to decline around 1980-1. It was partly attributed to rising unemployment in the industrial areas where it had a strong customers base (Coopey *et al.*, 2005).

¹⁶ Benefit Payments (Sub-Post Offices). Hansard Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons, UK, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1980/feb/19/benefit-payments-sub-post-offices>, (accessed 05.03.2012).

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Rethinking Rhythmanalysis and History

The concept of ‘rhythm’ is the thematic concern of this thesis. ‘Rhythm’ is not an invariant, tangible object that can be analysed as such (the term ‘rhythmanalysis’ may be misleading here). The word ‘rhythm’ is often used to describe a kind of sensing that unites all the sensual registers. It is a meta-sense or a gestalt sense which at times surfaces in our attention. This is particularly palpable when the undulation of movements is repetitive and cyclic. Recurrences of moments and the intervals configure a rhythm - the alternation of tension and relaxation, of separation and re-union; the cycles of light and dark, order and chaos, stagnation and growth; the retention and protention of memories (memories as anticipations); the protraction and contraction of attention and so on. Thus the contrasts of experiences presuppose a rhythmic consciousness. Or more likely, the oscillations of moments are non-systematic and they are not made apparent, in which case the sensing of rhythms takes the form of a sensory experience that is latent, implicit and beyond the threshold of capture. The sensing of rhythms is not easily attributable to a particular source. Quite often they are perceived as a hum, buzz, background noise and murmurs. They operate at the periphery of experiences and yet are defining features of the modes of being. In light of Michel Serre’s evocation of the word, rhythm as a meta-sense is a ‘noise’ (Serres, 1995). The philosopher grounds our perceptual experience at the level of ‘noise’- ‘We breathe background noise, the taut and tenuous agitation at the bottom of the world, through all our pores and papillae, we collect within us the noise of organization, a hot flame and a dance of integers’ (*ibid*: 7).

Senses of rhythms are not derived from or generated solely for the human consciousness,

as this assumes that only the human can sense. They are also the fundamental organising principle that orders the life of non-human entities. The rhythmic phenomena are by no means a mere interiority. The rotation of the sun produces light and heat that regulates the animals' ordering of the day in relation to their prey. Plants and vegetations have their hours and seasons of growth. Each being has its living rhythms and they are always enacted in relation to those of others. In his writing on the subject of rhythmanalysis, Bachelard claims that the study of rhythms is a primordial science - 'we must never lose sight of the fact that all exchanges take place through rhythms' (Bachelard, 2000: 142). The inquiry on the process of rhythmic enactments and interrelationships defies any enclosed disciplinary boundaries. From physics to chemistry and geography, rhythmanalysis traverses all disciplines of research. Delving into the world of corpuscular activities, physicists are intrigued by the reversibility of 'matter' and 'wave' as equally legitimate forms of existence (therefore rhythmic characteristics apply to both forms of 'matter' and 'wave'). The process of assimilation and dis-association is not only the exchange of substance but of energy in its vibratory form. Bachelard deploys the pertinence of rhythmanalysis to the field of biology as he directs our attention to the temporal character of substance in relation to the digestion system: the ultraviolet radiation from the sun produces photons with the same frequency as those vitamin D can emit (*ibid*). Rhythmanalysis is a kind of endeavour that unites all the possible perspectives on the experience of things, a new field of knowledge that 'brings together very diverse practices and very different types of knowledge: medicine, history, climatology, cosmology, poetry (*the poetic*), etc.' (Lefebvre, 2004: 16).

To reiterate, explorations of rhythmic phenomena formulate the concern of my project. Where and how does one begin? In this concluding chapter, I argue that there is an interplay between on the one hand, the nature of phenomena - its organising principles and process of becoming that call for particular modes of analysis; and on the other hand, the analytical method that animates such phenomena and brings them alive. This

conclusion sets out to rethink rhythmanalysis as a method of conducting cultural historical research. The notion of ‘conjunctural shift’ is revisited via a philosophical reflection of history and the discoveries of my research on the 1970s’ conjuncture. I argue that the poetic and political dimensions of rhythmanalytical research derive from the way it generates and accentuates certain kinds of realities.

I shall position various theorists’ writing in relation to my discussion of rhythmanalysis as a method of exploring history. They come from different intellectual heritage, for instance Lefebvre works within a humanist Marxist tradition while Deleuze and Guattari’s writing are preoccupied with creating philosophical concepts that deal with the concrete interrelationships of subjects (and the nature of those relationships).

Although these theories do not necessarily address the theme of rhythmanalysis directly and their pursuits place accents on different aspects of experiences, I argue that their mode of analysing cultural phenomena resonate to the underlying philosophy of rhythmanalysis (it is similar to the approach I used for Chapter 2 whereby dialogues of different scholars are set up). There are ways of thinking and sensing that are shared by these theorists. They are concerned with accounting for the experience of cultural phenomena, of their complex and emergent nature of interrelating, and a kind of affective experiencing which foregrounds the dynamic of senses. It is important to recognise their philosophical perspectives and the synergy of their viewpoints which facilitate an understanding of what a rhythmanalytical attention might be. For example, by using Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of ‘planes of consistency/composition’ and ‘planes of organisation/development’, I emphatically address the underlying philosophical presuppositions of rhythmanalysis, that is the non-essentialist notion of identification and individuation (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 266). They are in some ways elucidating the agency of rhythmic enactment. Or in the case of explaining ‘changes’ as a process of actualisation, John Dewey’s theory of rhythms as ‘ordered variation of change’ and Michel Serres’ notion of ‘multiple pleats’ both illuminate a

non-linear progression of history (Serres and Latour, 1995: 60). The concept of rhythm is apt for following the emergent nature of phenomena. Finally, the multiplicity of forces and currents of social change directs us to an alternative historiography that is suggested by the French historian Fernand Braudel.

1. The Non-Essentialist Method

The rhythmanalyst studies the way things happen and the agents of social action. What animates rhythms and how are rhythmic agents related in the orchestration of rhythms? In what ways are agents re-conceptualised in the prism of rhythmanalysis? Habits of thoughts are partially formulated by syntactic constructions (the subject acts on the object through a verb) which generate conventional category of agency and their associated intentions - the mind wills, the body effectuates, the flora and fauna environs a situation, the consumer object lures and passively performs its power, and so on. Discourses also configure the ways we think about relations of agents, though often social relationships are discussed in abstract forms. For instance, the logic of capitalism is deeply entrenched in the categorisation of ownership, of private properties, labour and so on. The very idea of 'ownership' posits a power hierarchy; the owner as an agent has at his or her own discretion to manipulate and deploy those agents that are possessed. Certain types of agents are quantifiable as additions or subtractions which create desire of accumulation. 'Time' is conceived as abstracted entities that 'allow' someone to do things and 'space' is the invisible container that 'holds' humankind and objects.

I argue that rhythmanalysis, orientated at uncovering social relationships through rhythmic interactions, de-stabilises such conception of agents. The philosophical concept of 'haecceity' was initially conceived by the medieval philosopher John Duns Scotus who assigns ontological weight to the question of individuation and identity (Vos, 2006). Deleuze and Guattari take on their ways of thinking and use 'haecceity' to

account for ways of individuation that are premised on affects and speed. According to them, ‘A degree, an intensity, is an individual, a haecceity that enters into composition with other degrees, other intensities, to form another individual’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 253). I suggest that it is a way of attending to cultural reality that helps rhythmanalysis to identify trajectories of movement and affects which engender rhythms. For example, the human body functions as a multiplicity of biological and social rhythms of a polyrhythmia which are open to re-compositions. It is a mode of identification and attention that illustrates organisations of materiality which accords with that of rhythmanalysis. The boundaries and hierarchies of agential performances are effaced. Instead, alliances of entities in their capacity to generate timing-spacing, mark them as an assemblage that is useful for the work of the rhythmanalyst. In this mode of individuation, the agent of action is the assemblage of materialities which cohere around their rhythmic orchestrations. It is the process of materiality coalescing and organising in their power to produce experiences that are of interest to the rhythmanalyst.

Degrees of heat enter into the composition. A body that becomes hot or cold manifests and is constituted by different rhythms. Thus they are perceived as two assemblages. The relaxation of muscles and the warmth of the skin form one such assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical concepts of ‘haecceities’ and ‘nonsubjectified powers’ are informative of the mode of individuation taken on by rhythmanalysis (*ibid*: 266). To envisage a mode of individuation that is very different from that of bounded entities (person, subject, thing, substance), Deleuze and Guattari explicate what they meant by ‘haecceities’ - a mode of identifying subjects which ‘only knows speeds and affects’ (*ibid*: 262). The philosophers suggest that ‘an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life’ may be inseparable from the assemblage construction (*ibid*). In this mode of thinking, they see that ‘the face becomes a curious mixture that simply do with time, weather and other people’ (*ibid*). Rhythmic phenomena are affective experiences and

the analysis of which is to compose subjects as assemblages. In this case, the face, weather and the rhythm of other people, are of an assemblage.

The walking body initiates complex assemblage constructions when a constellation of materiality conciliates to produce a multiplicity of temporal-spatial effects. The trees, pavement, building and so on are not appendages that environ one's walks; instead one walks *with* them and becomes the aggregate of rhythms produced. For Deleuze and Guattari, the philosophy of haecceities is informative here: 'Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things, animals, or people that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken within them' (ibid: 263). It is a mode of individuation that creates perceptual possibilities. Rather than focusing on the transcendental identities and functions of entities, the material effects that initiate, maintain or disrupt rhythmic assemblages are of central concerns. The rhythmanalytical method configures things as gatherings in their rhythmic manifestations. This envisioning of social agents as clusters, as becoming of each other in their changing alliances and refusals, is a radical re-thinking and redeeming of materiality. Rhythmanalysis composes rhythmic assemblages that operate on the 'plane of composition/consistency'. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that with such a plane of analysis,

[T]here are no longer any forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects. There is no structure, any more than there is genesis. There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds. There are only haecceities, affects, subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages (ibid: 266).

Rhythmanalysis liberates a conception of agential actions that are innate and transcendental. It redeems the power of implicit materialities such as 'affect'. I argue

that the sensing and distribution of rhythms are powerful affective processes. The interactions of rhythms are forms of materiality. Analysis may be too austere a word for the work of weaving rhythms as such an exercise ‘inject a note of wonder back into social sciences’ (Thrift, 2008: 12). Thrift alerts us to the imaginative input of cultural research that is akin to the writing of poetry and playful experiments.

Once it is understood how many entities there are in the world, of which we are able to name but a few, then capturing the traces of these entities, even for a brief moment, will clearly involve unconventional means, a kind of poetics of the release of energy that might be thought to resemble play (*ibid*).

To traverse the assumed boundary of subjects and to explore their symbiotic mode of existence is the poetic work of rhythmanalysis. It is also a phenomenological mode of inquiry that insists on a throwness of being, of being as inhabiting in the world; and an opening of the self to the composition of things aligning to a rhythm. The annulling of an antithesis between the self and the non-self yields a rhythmanalytical attention on par with those of the poet. Jorge Louis Borges, the poet and essayist suggests the emergent nature of sense compositions as he takes the non-essentialist stance on the ‘subject’.

The sensation of cold, of spacious and pleasurable suppleness, that is in me as I open the front door and go out along the half-darkness of the street is neither a supplement to a pre-existing self nor an event that comes coupled to the other event of a continuing and rigorous self (Borges, 2001: 4).

Does not this consciousness of living and being call for another language of writing that is apt to capture and intensify this ‘pleasurable suppleness’, that concretises sensations in the forming of haecceities, that does not always start with ‘I’, ‘He’ or ‘She’, that through the arrangement of words and sentences in writing and conversing, evoke a liveliness to which the rhythmic organisation of experiences are given full priority? This is the work of the poet but also of the rhythmanalyst who are seized by the rhythms of

others in order to compose a plurality of rhythmic assemblages. The poetry of rhythmanalysis lies in the creation of assemblages. There are infinite possibilities of becoming. It calls for a kind of reading, writing or thinking ‘without a pause’, to which Deleuze and Guattari exclaim ‘the becoming-night of an animal’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 263). ‘It makes the rat become a thought, a feverish thought in the man, at the same time as the man becomes a rat gnashing its teeth in its death throes’ (*ibid*: 258).

In the book *A Thousand Plateaux*, there are two ways of entering the complexity of social relationships which Deleuze and Guattari name the ‘plane of consistency/composition’ and the ‘plane of organisation/development’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 266). I argue that they are prisms of analysis which are useful to clarify the concerns and ways of operating that a rhythmanalyst subscribes to. The rhythmanalytical attention accords with the ‘plane of composition/ consistency’ (*ibid*). Its mode of individuation is informative of marking out an assemblage. Sensitive to a ‘becoming’ of rhythmic formations, the method of rhythmanalysis is premised on a non-essentialist account of ‘things’, in the annulling of their marked functions and allocated forms. It is their rhythmic making capacities that are the focal points of analysis. Conversely, there is an altogether different plane of analysis that Deleuze and Guattari call the ‘plane of organisation/development’ which attends to the formations and functions of subjects, structures and strata (*ibid*). Performed on the plane of organisation/development, the agency of action is always inscribed in a multitude of rhythmic making subjects. The plane of organisation/development acknowledges that repetitive forces of alliances compose assemblages, creating patterns, structures and stratifications. I argue that forms and order are realised through performing a rhythm, or as Serres puts it, ‘the element became a crossroads or nexus of relations’ (Serres, 1995: 3).

Such kind of attention is the counterpart of ‘the plane of composition’ as it allows the identification of rhythmic agents in their subject forms; in which case constellation of entities are regulated by a pattern of relating, to create an orderly function that sustains the network of utilities, communication, logistics and so on. Through repetition and the derived ordering of subjects in time-space, there are rhythms that mark out an institution, a city and a society. Thus the subjects of rhythmanalysis are the effects of their rhythmic enacting capacities in relation to other subjects. Although forms and functions can be located on this plane of analysis, the centre of action is rather diffused. This ordering of materials in their generation of institutional rhythms is best understood in line with Law’s envisioning of a network ordering- ‘that this is better seen as a verb - a somewhat uncertain process of overcoming resistance - rather than as the *fait accompli* of a noun’ (Law, 2003). Chapter 4 configures the changing operations of the Post Office in the prism of rhythmanalysis. It is an approach that animates postal operations. As a communication medium, the institution *is* of the temporal-spatial ordering of social agents. The rhythms of communication enacted are the forces that shape cultural experiences. Rhythmanalysis follows those social agents which cohere as inter-institutional assemblages in their social patterning (as a process rather than a causal relationship). In other words, one can characterise a postal system, a transport network, or any other institutional agents via their rhythmic orchestrations, those of letter collections, scheduling of the trains and so on. The entities that make up such an assemblage - letter boxes, postal workers, the vehicular carrier of mail and numerous participants which directly or indirectly construct the postal systems, are the agents of action which in their temporal-spatial organisation maintains or disrupts an institutional operation.

Instead of positing the two planes of analysis as precluding each other, Deleuze and Guattari point out the dialectic of form and non-form. The dialogic relationship of the two planes of analysis is summarised in the following remarks.

The plane of consistency is constantly extricating itself from the plane of organization, causing particles to spin off the strata, scrambling forms by dint of speed or slowness, breaking down functions by means of assemblages or microassemblages. Is it not necessary to retain a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimal subject from which to extract materials, affects, and assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 266)?

This interplay of cultural attentions can also be translated to the operations of rhythmanalysis. On the plane of organisation/development which is predicated on the working of orderly or disruptive forces, the rhythmanalyst follows the precariousness of assemblage constructions. It is foremost a sensitivity to the emergent alliances and refusals of subjects, to those forces of interactions that strengthen or weaken the structural rhythms of a system. An interruption to the development of forms, strata and structures can also operate at the plane of consistency where new haecceities scramble the formations of subjects. Then there is a mutilation to the structure which enacts new rhythmic interrelationships. The vitality and intractability of material affects create ceaselessly forming haecceities. They are the unruly elements that are murmurs, gnawing away at the expectancy of encounters and relations. Thus structural development can metamorphose on the plane of consistency/composition when singular rhythms ripple out to disturb the harmonies and contradictions of polyrhythmia of social experiences. Chapter 3 provided a case study of bodily rhythms and it showed how walking and other forms of bodily practices resonate to urban rhythms such as road traffic, hence they are haecceities that bear the potentials to suspend and mutilate the structural rhythms of a city. On the other hand, changes to structural rhythms may effectively alter haecceities. The effects of shifting ecosystems for instance, provoke new affects and thus modes of individuation that put forward a new sense of rhythm (the many compositions of haecceities that constitute a season for example). The two planes of analysis created by Deleuze and Guattari (the plane of consistency/composition and the plane of organisation/development) are united in the

work of the rhythmanalyst when one attempts to trace and explicate the power of effectuation.

On both planes of analysis, the orientation of rhythmanalysis renders a sensitivity to cultural experiences in their formation. The complex fabric of social experiences can be perceived as the convergence and divergence of rhythmic alliances. It uncovers the organisation and distribution of experiences in the process of actualisation. Here, ‘organisation’ is best understood as reconciliation of rhythmic assemblages. The phenomena of how entities associate, connect, repel, perturb in relation to each other interest the rhythmanalyst. The concept of eurhythmia portrays the interrelating of rhythmic assemblages as harmonious and concordant. In a state of eurhythmia, each assemblage can maintain its rhythm in relation to the other without being interrupted or better still, its rhythms are being facilitated and reinforced by agents of another assemblage (e.g. the body paces up to a melody thus forming an individuation that unites the two entities through rhythms). Eurhythmia suggests the interdependency of rhythmic assemblages when the temporal-spatial organisations of agents sustain an order, a functioning or growth. The state of arrhythmia throws out of order the timing-spacing practices of subjects on the plane of organisation/development when institutional rhythms become discordant; or of the formation of haecceities on the plane of composition/consistency, when hindered or halted circulation of affects that previously hold an individuation meaningful can no longer be maintained. The arrhythmic plane of composition/consistency is one that dispels things coming together. For instance, the property of food does not agree with the metabolism of the body. It is manifested as the breaking up of a symbiosis, or a prevention of becoming - that the country foxes do not form a haecceity with the evening time of the city and all the rhythmic phenomena that constitute that hour of the day for instance.

When rhythmanalysis operates on the plane of organisation/development, the concept of polyrhythmia offers a productive angle of analysis which focuses on the orchestration of structural rhythms. Polyrhythmia describes the differential relationships of rhythmic assemblages.

Polyrhythmia always results from a contradiction, but also from resistance to this contradiction - resistance to a relation of force and an eventual conflict. Such a contradictory relation can be defined as the struggle between two tendencies: the tendency towards homogenisation and that towards diversity (Lefebvre, 2004: 99).

The notion of polyrhythmia acknowledges a multiplicity of rhythmic assemblages. That while a constellation of subjects enact a rhythm of organisation, with its distinct tempos, intervals, ways of communication, form of exchanges and so on, there are a multiplicity of such orderings. Often perceived as disparate networks, the postal system, transport network and financial communication (and other medium of material exchange) are defined by their own institutional agents and functionality. Yet the porosity of rhythmic assemblages within the polyrhythmia of communication is foregrounded in rhythmanalysis. They are the differentiated units that form a polyrhythmic ensemble. Institutional rhythms can only be temporarily distinguished as an assemblage before being restored to a larger constellation of movements. Since letters and goods circulate in the transport network, postal rhythms and transport rhythms are intertwined; though the degrees of intervention vary according to their ways of interrelating. Roads, train carriages and sorting offices are the rhythmic agents of the postal system as well as of those intersecting trajectories of movements. The work of a rhythmanalyst is to weave such planes of organisations by identifying distinct rhythmic assemblage while mapping out forces of movement that compose such an assemblage in relation to those of the other.

Rhythm is a haecceity that individuates. It has a degree of intensity and cultural reality that generate further experiences. At times of crisis, a state of arrhythmia is shown as a morbidity that interrupts the senses and the organisation of agents. Whereas other times, their enactments and operations actualise experience in more subtle ways. The rhythmic power of effectuation can also be understood in light of the concept ‘power of the false’ which is interpreted by Bennett and Connolly as, ‘on this ontological register, the powers of the false consist of energetic remainders (noise) that do not fit a particular regime of cultural equalization but nonetheless enter into novel vibrations at key moments in nature culture’ (Bennett and Connolly, 2012 :161). Rhythmanalysis seeks to map out possible forms of the power of effectuation. The method heightens and heeds with the rhythmic generating potential of materiality - the assemblages of entities that map out time-space and the multiplicities of such; the intensification and tampering of certain rhythms within the polyrhythmia. It provides a port of interest and tools of exploring social life that are quite different from theorists of social contestation with keen interests on the issues of identity, power, equality and so on.

How can we formulate political theories of hegemony and the colonisation of everyday life in the framework of rhythmanalysis? And how does it matter to account for senses of rhythms and to foreground lived experiences as organised through rhythmic interrelationships in the studies of cultural politics and poetics? Perhaps the fervour of protests is made contagious and effective through the assimilation of a tempo, an atmosphere and a collective non-conscious or unconsciousness that resonate to a powerful rhythm. Or the kind of tenacious everyday rhythms that drift us towards alienation and apathy and the analysis of which may illuminate ways of living that enchant? How does rhythmanalysis enrich and expand the horizon of cultural research that starts with abstract notions such as ‘ethics’? Starting with the general or with the concrete, Lefebvre outlines two ways of proceeding with the study of rhythms,

The scientific and/or philosophical spirit should arrive at general conclusions.

Not without risks: the leap from particular to general is not without the danger or errors, of illusions, in a word, of ideology...Instead of going from concrete to abstract, one starts with full consciousness of the abstract in order to arrive at the concrete (Lefebvre, 2004: 5).

I argue that rhythmanalysis contributes to the explorations of cultural phenomena in its sensitivity to those forms of experiences which elude and resist generalisations. As rhythmanalysis map out recurrent routines, habits and ways of interrelating material entities, it may affirm the validity of constructing certain categories of analysis. For example, the study of ‘class’ being a classic concern of Cultural Studies, aims to arrest the dispositions of various social subjects into stratifications. Nonetheless, rhythmanalysis directs our attention to the organisation of social agents (the emphasis placed on the capacity of non-human subjects is a key proposition) which may subvert preformed intentions and ideas, and to acknowledge that rhythms are unclassifiable yet they render shape and weight to the way lives are lived. On the other hand, if we start with the concrete and the particular, analysis of cultural rhythms may work towards testifying or enriching a claim of broad relevance and significance. The experimental nature of the pursuit can lead us to discoveries which converge with the general claims and assertions, but also to those deviances and divergences that allows one to rethink the theorisations proposed at the more abstract level. The uncovering of social relationships in the prism of rhythmic interconnections could substantiate, negate or expand the attentions of cultural and political studies. This working towards a level of signification, yet not claiming the final and unified stance of cultural analysis characterise the ways of how rhythmanalysis operates.

Lefebvre did not conceal the ambition of creating the concept of rhythms and of how rhythmanalysis as a new field of knowledge brings practical consequences (Lefebvre: 2004). The relevance of the method to the research of cultural politics is inherent in its

angle of analysis as it affords specific attention to the *formation* of experiences (the haecceities/strata that actualise experiences). Rhythmanalysis proposes how certain forms of experience may constitute the political. Therefore, it is a pragmatic science that does not study political issues and institutions but one that seeks to address cultural experiences *politically*. Its operation does not aim to interpret phenomena in the extraction of meanings in relation to a set of value judgements or categories of critique (class, gender, race, the dialectic of the global and local and so on); rather it practices a kind of empiricism that acknowledges the complex and emergent nature of phenomena. Empowered by a sensitivity to the connection of materialities and attentive descriptions of cultural phenomena, the prism of rhythmanalysis not only captures forms of political realities but it actively participates in the making of them. As polyrhythmia suggests a constellation rather than a hierarchical definition of times and places, rhythmanalysis collapses categories such as ‘the local’ and ‘the global’. ‘Politics’ as an abstract realm of discussion, therefore, descends onto the senses, to the timing-spacings of things and the organisation of rhythmic assemblages and networks.

Rhythmanalysis complicates agencies of actions and direction of power and it follows the intricacies of how power is relayed (as the discussions on the planes of consistency and organisation had already shown). Issues of power relations are explored by analysing the alliances and refusals of rhythms, the struggles of achieving eurhythmia in a state of disruption or disequilibrium, and the reconciliation of rhythms of the Self and Other. The practicality of the method as Lefebvre asserts, resides in the capacities and potentialities of making and intervening rhythmic relationships. The dressage of bodies, (not just of the human body but of haecceities or networks in general) is an example of rhythmic interventions. To have them broken into a socially accepted rhythm is convenient for institutions such as the armies, religious and educational establishments, for offices and monasteries. Although the rhythmanalyst can take those institutionally initiated rhythms as convenient points of departure, the dressage of bodies is never resolute. The working

and interactions of materiality do not always adhere to policies, laws and other decisions made by institutional decision makers. The philosophical underpinnings of rhythmanalysis hone in the process and possibilities of becoming and it is apt in capturing those unruly elements of events that complicate cultural politics.

2. Murmurs and Clamours at the Conjuncture

Instead of inhabiting the heart or the middle of the world, we are sojourning (today) at the summit, the height, the best of truth (Serres and Latour, 1995: 48-49).

Change itself should be the object of study, rather than an event construed as a text, read as a symptom of a ‘condition’ to be diagnosed by cultural critics (Morris, 1998: 19).

The American philosopher John Dewey defines the concept ‘rhythm’ as ‘ordered variation of change’, a vital energy that underlies and organises experiences. The study of rhythmic phenomena therefore, illuminates an ontology of ‘becoming’ and ‘change’ within a state of repetition. The singularity of a rhythm always already suggests the plurality of timing-spacing practices, and that rhythmic assemblage hints at a re-assemblage. From potentialities to forms, compositions to organisations, the oscillation of how rhythmic assemblage congeals and transforms interest the rhythmanalyst. As rhythmanalysis addresses the emergent nature of phenomena, its focus is not only to uncover ‘what is changing’ but the nature of that change - its tempo, the conducting rhythms as forms of affects that catalyse change and so on. I argue that explorations of how social phenomena are brought forth, enriches and thickens our perceptions of cultural phenomena (which need to be explored with historical perspectives). My rhythmanalytical project is particularly concerned with the idea of the

‘conjuncture’ and a conjunctural view of history. On a broad level of understanding, the thesis attempts to uncover those pivotal moments of veering and swerving that brought the state of things to a different direction in the historical life of Britain. Since the concept of rhythm is predicated on the phenomena of change and that the orientation and operation of rhythmanalysis captures changes in its own unique ways, I argue that the notion of conjunctural shift can be rethought through the method of rhythmanalysis.

Echoing Dewey’s characterisation of experience through his definition of ‘rhythm’ as ‘ordered variation of changes’, the writings of Michel Serres in *Genesis* (1995) look at the involutions of experiences. Serres illustrates the composite and folded nature of phenomena in their generative state of becoming. His emphasis on ‘multiplicity’, a concept that addresses the organising principle of phenomena, can be grasped and perceived in the polyrhythmic dimensions of being. The philosopher delineates the ‘various phases of formativity’ and it is useful for clarifying ‘a kind of structural skeleton of Becoming’ (Bennett and Connolly, 2012: 156). ‘Noise’, a poetic concept created by Serres, offers an account of how things potentiate and it follows ‘change’ and ‘becoming’ in their phenomenological state. Here ‘noise’ is not only being referred to in the auditory sense, but it is also used metaphorically to incorporate those murmurs, causes without consequences, submerged turbulence, ‘welter of aborted beginnings’, and the initial pulses and symptoms (Serres, 1995: 69).

Noise is a turbulence, it is order and disorder at the same time, order revolving on itself through repetition and redundancy, disorder through chance occurrences, through the drawing of lots at the crossroads, and through the global meandering, unpredictable and crazy (*ibid*: 59).

Reflecting on a philosophy of the contingency of cultural phenomena and the implications it has on historical research, Jane Bennett and William Connolly map out Serres’ phasal nature of becoming and change. The fury of history arise from noise and

stirrings which through repetition and redundancy become ‘surges’ that they then either fizz out or they resonate to an intensity that thickens into a cadence or rhythm. Such a rhythm may persist to exert a stronger force of turbulence whereby repetitive forces consolidate to a certain synchrony, then the initial ‘noise’ reaches its full capacity to wrest up and burst into a new ordering (Bennett and Connolly, 2012). It is worth stressing that this structure of becoming is not of a linear development but of a meandering (‘the path of noise is a meandering’ [Serres, 1995: 59]), that is intricate and unpredictable. This kind of meandering consists of ‘the sometimes brief, sometimes middling, and sometimes very long series of those chances’ (Serres, 1995: 59). The structure is not to account for the development of cultural phenomena as propagating from ‘noise’ to ‘fury’. Instead, what is being emphasised is the contemporaneous existence of states and how they fluctuate and involute. Bennett and Connolly explicate on the point: ‘a phase is a style that persists beyond its heyday and bleeds over into its before and after; the demise of a phase is not a definitive death but a fading that overlaps with what emerges out of it’ (Bennett and Connolly, 2012: 158).

Thus Serres’ account of becoming accentuates the multiplicity of rhythms that are concurring around any moment of change and he highlights the nature of the process as embodying heterogeneous and variegated tonalities as those waves of the sea: murmurs, rumblings, growling, moans and so on. The French historian Fernand Braudel’s attention to the manifolds of change accords with that of Serres’ as he claims the importance of knowing ‘whether you are dealing with a movement in the full flush of its youth, or at the end of its run, with the beginnings of a resurgence or a monotonous repetition’ (Braudel, 1980: 38). Serres’ phasal structure of becoming is useful for radically rethinking about history and conjunctural analysis in particular. His philosophy invites a conception of history as ‘multiple pleats’.

[A] historical era is likewise multi-temporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic. An object, a circumstance, is thus

polychronic, multi-temporal, and reveals a time that is gathered together, with multiple pleats (Serres and Latour, 1995: 60).

There is no fixed vantage point that the historians stand upon. Braudel questions the idea of marking out historical periods and ways of doing history accordingly. Historiography calls for a re-thinking of the notion of ‘conjunctural shift’. He is reflexive of angles of historical analysis - ‘to draw a boundary around anything is to define, analyse and reconstruct it, in this case select, indeed adopt, a philosophy of history (Braudel, 1980: 18). He opposes to the type of epochal analysis, a point that is also taken up by Raymond Williams, who advocates historical analysis shall recognise the complex relationships of tendencies within and beyond specific historical events. Williams explains the ‘epochal’ operation of historiography as ‘exerting its pressure as a static type against which all real cultural process is measured, either to show ‘stages’ or ‘variations of the type’ (Williams, 1977: 121).

If the notion of the ‘multiple pleats’ proselytises against any stable periodisation as such, when dreams seep into the waking times or danger looms on the horizon of peace, then how do historians orientate themselves to reconcile the unity and the multiplicity of historical rhythms? One needs to have the modesty of doing history at least. Braudel proposes that there could be a unity of history:

One must try if possible, to rediscover, beyond all the details, life itself: how its forces combine, how they knit or conflict, how too, frequently, their rushing waters mingle. Everything must be recaptured and relocated in the general framework of history, so that despite the difficulties, the fundamental paradoxes and contradictions, we may respect the unity of history which is also the unity of life. (Braudel, 1980: 16)

The unity and multiplicity of life need to be captured by the rhythmanalyst. One way of

proceeding is to knit together forces of conflict and harmony, order and disorder, to create the polyrhythmic ensemble so that a unity of rhythm assemblages emerges. It is to gather an aggregate of pleats and see how they work against each other. The rhythmanalyst gains access to cultural phenomena in their orchestration of rhythms. If the conjunctural moment is defined by Hall as when different trajectories of life and their rhythms are convened in the unity of a moment or a historical period. Serres' philosophy of 'becoming' offers the optic of perceiving historical change as a fusing of the noise, fluctuations and fury. The notion of a conjunctural shift could be interpreted as when 'multiplicity shoves its noise onto the one. It crystallizes the noise. No longer a multiplicity, no longer noisy, it is one, globally, it is a single chorus...the eye of the storm' (Serres, 1995: 60).

The other way of proceeding is to take the most condensed moment of history, the upheavals and crisis of a rupture for instance, and to start with the leading edge of change, of those morbid manifestation of arrhythmia. It is through how one disentangles the dominant rhythm that a historical moment can explode, exposing the various rhythmic assemblages. Raymond Williams points out the importance of understanding cultural conditions of the dominant, the emergent and the residual. He claims an attention to the layering of cultural phenomena to which he states: 'Again and again what we have to observe is in effect a pre-emergence, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the evident emergence which could be more confidently named' (Williams, 1977: 126). That while a conjuncture is primarily marked out as the vortex of social change (those brutal and abrupt forces), one also needs to attend to those moments of 'noise' which are of deeper and gentler tendencies, and how they overlap and vibrate in sync or out of sync to the dominant rhythms of transformations. Those dominant rhythms of the conjuncture are orchestrated as arrhythmia where the ordering of materialities and networks are intervened and disrupted. Yet there are those rhythms that affiliate and interact with the dominant rhythm, but they are only tangential to the uprising of the

major event. The rhythmanalyst listens to the murmurs as well as to the cries. From the whirlwind of a conjuncture, we hear noise from another time that steers its fate. Intersecting and interdependent, cycles of economy, technology, articulation, and a whole constellation of rhythmic making events has their own pace of development and their contribution towards the dominant process of historic rupture can be uneven and incomplete.

The problem of conceiving a conjuncture becomes increasingly complex when the investigation hinges on uncovering new rhythmic entanglements. Braudel comments on the infinitely extensible nature of conjunctural analysis. He suggests that we need to consider those movements more or less distant in time, especially of those extremely distant which may direct the moment of a conjuncture. Rather than distinguishing historical periods as those in proximity or distant in the chronological sense, what Braudel means is that a phenomenon has its own rhythms of growth and deterioration. To fully explain the nature of its change, one needs to locate its trajectories of movement over appropriate time frames. He claims that ‘resounding events are often only momentary outbursts, surface manifestations of these larger movements and explicable only in terms of them’ (Braudel, 1995: 21). In contrast to the timespan of the events (which are often relatively short), Braudel emphasises a historiography that attends to the constant repetition and an almost imperceptible rhythm of change. For example, the rhythms of geological change are much slower than the eruption of a political unrest, thus the formation of its conjuncture demands one to observe their workings over greater spans of time. He asks ‘should we dare to contemplate those insidious, almost invisible cracks which become deep rifts within a century or two, beyond which the whole life and character of man is changed’ (Braudel, 1980: 16).

Historical conjuncture is not only centred on the dramas of great events. Braudel

proposes ways of doing history that deals with its murky depth which meant that historiography is a field of study that requires patience and knowledge of an entire rhythms of life. I argue that such a proposition is crucially important to the rhythmanalyst who undertakes conjunctural analysis. In relation to previous discussions on the appropriate methodology used for the analysis of conjuncture, I pose the question that if conjunctural shift is not merely conceived and determined by the surface disturbances of events, and that there are a multiplicity of conjunctures showing as polyrhythmic entanglements, some of which may or may not coincide with the distinguished one, how can the method of rhythmanalysis enrich and contribute to the analysis of conjunctural shift of the 1970s Britain? Using case studies of bodily and communication rhythms, my thesis addresses this question of how rhythmanalysis may unravel the concrete experience of cultural history.

As a scholar of the Marxist tradition, Hall applies Gramsci's general framework of conjunctural analysis to explore the specificity of an epoch in its changing material and cultural condition of existence. He frames this particular conjuncture of the 1970s through discourses and critiques of Thatcherism. It manifested as a condensed moment of rupture that confronted post-war settlements and which gave birth to new settlement in the realm of the political, economic, common attitude, shifting terrain of public debates and media representations. Most relevant to the investigation of this thesis is how he defines the conjuncture by sensing it as a different rhythm (Hall, 2009). Hall eloquently portrays an intense and interesting period of cultural experiences. His contribution to conjunctural analysis also lies in his reflexivity of historical analysis in general which has direct implications for the methods of investigation. For instance, he took the perspective of the *longue durée* to argue that Thatcherism 'does not necessarily have a "New Right" political agenda inscribed in them' (Hall, 1996: 222). The material circumstances of the long timespan show that Thatcherism is 'operating on the ground of longer, deeper, more profound movements of change which *appear* to be going its way,

but of which, in reality, it has been only occasionally, and fleetingly, in command over the past decade' (*ibid*: 231). Of the general trends on the political and economy front, Hall notes on the contradictions and pressures of delivering welfare under the preceding Labour government, that the postwar consensus had already been broken before the election of Margaret Thatcher. These currents of political life were pressing and active, if not they galvanised the 1970s' conjunctural shift. He argues that it is rather difficult to find when the 'cracks' began to show. Hall recounts the events that signified a change of social climate:

Yes, but they certainly are beginning to show in 1964, yes, they are even more on board in 1966, that is the point when the Prime Minister has to mobilize his political clout in order to end the seamen's strike and when he is driven into talking about status-quo; a small group of politically motivated mean, which some people thought ought to describe the Cabinet rather than the leadership of the seamen's union. Or the point when the weight of the party is mobilized against the labour movement. Or the point when the weight of the government, a Labour government, is mobilized in order to discipline and restrain the push for wages in the mid '60s and '70s. Or the point when, after the visit, the gentle visit of the IMF, and the oil hike in 1975 (Hall, 1983: 14).

These 'points' in history bring together movements of different origins and rhythms and the way they come together calls for attention in my research. I felt further investigative work is required to demonstrate the 'multiple pleats' of the decade. Instead of carving out events and points of crisis to produce cultural history in its 'theatre' (a valid procedure in itself but Braudel exclaims that 'the historian is naturally only too willing to act as theatrical producer' [1980: 30]), I am driven to recuperate and restore those fabric of social reality that are mediators of events, and to make sense of them in the very literal meaning of the term 'sensing' - to listen to the background noises. Guided by Hall's theorisation of this conjuncture, my journey of exploration is heuristic. 'In a series of readjustments and patiently renewed trips', as Braudel summarises the process of historical research, concepts of the rhythmanalytical model designate a level of reality

which directs me to source and sample cultural experiences (Braudel, 1980: 45). They then refine the model of rhythmanalysis.

The polyrhythmic notion of a conjuncture emphasises a constellation of rhythms and the nature of that interlacing. Arrhythmic phenomena display a morbidity resulting from interruptions and contradictions of rhythmic bundles (the bodily and industrial rhythms for example). To practise conjunctural analysis requires conducting case studies which test out rhythmanalysis in its concrete operations, especially to explore the capacity of the method in shedding light on the changes and the processes of change. In this thesis there are two derivative case studies that substantiate this rhythmanalytical approach. By no means do I attempt to exhaust and demonstrate the orchestration of rhythms that conjure up a sweeping change of cultural historical conditions. Instead, the two cases aim to make a constellation of moments, be they exploring the physical conditions of the city, or the cessation of Sunday postal services. They open up a rhythmanalytical field of inquiry to explore the kind of disruptive effects they produce on the alliances and refusals of social relationships.

One of the chapters focuses on bodily rhythms, of walking rhythms in particular, whereas the other chapter maps out the rhythms of communication (referring to the movement of things as opposed to mere informational exchange) in its multiplicity of rhythmic entanglements. Walking is a mode of movement and the relaying of goods and information is also made up of trajectories of movement. Together they portray experiences of rhythms that reverberate with each other. The interest in walking rhythms or the broad categories of gestural rhythms forms a molecular locus of analysis that allows one to start from the sensory experience of inhabiting. The body walks ‘with’ as it attunes and environs to the world of rhythm. The walking movement initiates a process of individuation that unites a whole range of material affects. It constitutes assemblages

that are composed of the pavement, air, architecture, and so on. There is a muscular consciousness of history that imprints the murky and deep currents of social change. The history of gestural rhythms (a kind of study of the physiognomy) differentiates in nuances and they may only be transformed ever so slightly in the long timespan.

Analysed on the plane of consistency and composition, the walking body assembles itself into rhythmic assemblages which are susceptible to re-composition. Bodily orientations and gestural rhythms are the ‘noise’ of Serres’ philosophy and history. He remarks that ‘background noise is the first object of metaphysics, the noise of the crowd is the first object of anthropology. The background noise made by the crowd is the first object of history’ (Serres, 1995: 54). These emergent relations of movement produce timing-spacing practices that make and express rhythmic assemblages of different origins. The study of the singular walking rhythm is not equated to that of the ‘local’; what needs to be examined is a topology of walking practices. Therefore, a rhythmanalysis of walking allows the singular rhythm, the background noise of history to be restored to larger rhythmic network; hence it unveils some of the dominant, residual and emergent rhythmic assemblages that are at the centre of ‘events’.

The structural film *Fergus Walking* was produced in the East End of London in the late 1970s. My curiosity of pedestrian experiences was evoked by the film’s working on the viewers’ perceptual sensibilities. I then began my archival research in the Tower Hamlets Local History Library in the East End of London. Instead of finding archival materials that most directly describe walking experiences, I was inundated by reports, newspaper articles and meeting notes that touch on the subject of road building and campaigns against it. As part of the rapidly declining Docklands, the area of Wapping came to my attention. The residents of Wapping had always relied on walking. The tidal waves of redeveloping the area into a district that serves the interest of financial and service

industry had exerted tensions between the wealthy newcomers and the native residents whose life had already been blighted by the trend of de-industrialisation. Life in the Docklands was outpaced not only by the domestic economic cycles but also by those of international economic restructuring. The number of sit-in protests against poor provisions of pedestrian and public transport facilities escalated in the years of Thatcher's planning of a new Docklands. As the corrugated iron walls were being pulled down and the old dockers' access to the river front was yet again blocked by the rise of expensive offices, apartments and hotels, the jarring living rhythms of a stagnant and desperate community and those newly arrived, orchestrated a moment of crisis. Bodies were denied of access as they were being stopped or interrupted, hence a stasis of bodily rhythms were remarkable signs of arrhythmia. The sitting-ins and road blocking were tactics of the Wapping residents who demonstrated that power struggles lie in the wrestling of rhythms. The disrupted bodily pulses have the capacity to jolt movements of other kinds. These phenomena convened in the 'ruptural fusion' which characterised the 1970s' conjunctural shift when the gestural rhythms of one's walking (which deserves long periods of observation) could no longer be sustained as they were confronted with the brutal and bursting rhythms of urban redevelopment.

If walking rhythms and other bodily orientations were perceived as substantial constructions of cultural mood, the street of Brick Lane and its surrounding areas in the East End of London staged some of the most intense racial conflicts in the history of immigration. Hosting a number of communities over the past two centuries, their settlement and departure epitomise the multiple pleats of historical life in Brick Lane. Resounding on the pavements and street corners were recurring patterns of anti-alien confrontations that haunt the imaginations of the new arrivals. An area known for its tradition of furniture and clothes making, there are patterns to the trading lives that cut across generations of immigrants of different origins. Since the 1960s, large number of immigrants from former colonies of the British Empire arrived in Brick Lane and other

districts within industrial towns which were suffering from the economic downturn. As simmering tension of racial conflicts peaked in the mid-1970s, there was an abundance of political discourse on the issues of immigration. Crime and violence were often at the centre of discussion as racialised problems were tied in with the broader climate of tightened policing and enforcement of law and order (e.g. the introduction of Sus law and forms of intrusive policing). Yet the ensemble of gestures is, according to Lefebvre, the most eloquent in the depiction of neighbourhood relations in the polyrhythmic weaving of cultural history. So my interest in walking practices as part of the rich mixing of rhythms in Brick Lane directed my attention to those phenomena of bodily movements and the material conditions which enacted those movements in various ways (the streets leading into Brick Lane had rubbish everywhere because of a refuse collection strike early in 1979). Pedestrians were at the risk of physical attack so they walked in groups and recoiled from ‘danger zones’. Sunday confrontations between the anti-racist groups who stayed overnight to occupy the street and the National Front members’ incitement of racism in Brick Lane (stopping the crowd and distributing leaflets of racist’ literature), had also orchestrated bodily rhythms of stasis and interruption.

The focus on the walking movement is guided by the dense interplay of polyrhythmic forces of urban decline and regeneration (infrastructural redevelopment), economic restructuring, of migration and so on, as one gravitates to see how they were condensed on the bodily movement. It is a kind of proceeding that disentangles polyrhythmia which temporarily singles out a particular rhythm to see how it may have changed in the particular conjuncture of a short timespan. The analysis demonstrates that the consciousness of a broader climate of social change are mediated in the concrete experience of bodily rhythms and that they are critical referential points to make sense of what Hall felt a different kind of rhythm taking place at the conjunctural shift. In contrast, Chapter 4 is framed around communication rhythms, of the postal system in particular. I

took the approach of what Braudel calls taking ‘event’ as they are ‘infinitely extensible’ - ‘it becomes wedded, either freely or not, to a whole chain of events, of underlying realities which are then, it seems, impossible to separate’ (Braudel, 1980: 28). In a similar vein, Hall reminds us to look at the totality of social experience of a conjuncture, when he claims that only when the ‘autonomous sites’ of economy, culture, common sense, the polity and so on, are brought to fuse that there is a ‘ruptural fusion’ (Massey and Hall, 2010: 59-60). Bearing these kinds of concerns, rhythmanalysis defies segmentation or categorisation of cultural history as it multiplies accounts of cultural experience by attending to how things affect and move each other; that is to get into the very fabric of their organisations.

I work towards an interconnecting of rhythms through researching on the postal system because it works in symbiosis to the polyrhythmia of communicating and distributing material realities. Its operations are not only co-ordinations of its own rhythms but a bundling of diverse trajectories of movements. A narrative history of the post office does convey a sense that there was a general shift of focus on the purpose of postal services, which can be crudely summarised as a transition from an agent of personal communication to that of facilitating commercial communication and transactions.

These discoveries do echo some of the prevalent discourses of Thatcherism (e.g. the rise of the private sector and declining public service). After the financial year of 1975, the withdrawal of government’s subsidy for the Post Office preluded the deep cuts in the whole structure of the welfare state that Hall points out as part of the programme of the new Right. The cessation of Sunday services and restricted late collections imposed interruptions to the rhythms of interpersonal communication and trading practices. As an agent of welfare distribution over its counter work, the closing down of sub-post offices undermined the establishment of the post-war settlement. From the mid-1970s onward, the re-composition of an institution that once had its paternalistic public front to one that prioritises its commercial interest had quickened its pace.

However, a rhythmanalytical mode of conjunctural analysis seeks to trace the postal system's changing rhythmic organisation in its capacity of converging and diverging with other locus of movements which were also undergoing transformations. In this process of exploration, there are a number of discoveries that complicate accounts of the 1970s' conjuncture in Britain. Working through a large number of archival materials on this postal history, I tentatively weave a larger rhythmic network, such as that of the transport, retail shopping and financial exchange to which postal rhythms are closely associated with at the conjunctural shift. They are brought to attention in the changing nature of their alliances and refusals. For instance, the significant increased circulation of bank statements and financial documents suggest a closer connection of postal rhythms to that of financial exchange. Or that the reduction of public transport in rural areas of Britain had foregrounded the roles of the post bus, suggesting conciliation of rhythms that integrate picking up mail and passengers. The newly emergent relationships did not necessarily have fixed origins of development. In the case of shopping by post, the new purchasing habits concurred with the launch of premium postal services that were supported by the integration of transport links (which incorporated a number of changes on its own - road building, sending first class mail via air), the emergence of credit shopping in its own specific conjunctural moment (from turn clubs to credit card transactions), the rise of Direct Mail as a form of advertising targeted at individual circumstances, and a whole myriad of interrelated communications.

The analysis of postal rhythms is situated in relation to those strands of transport rhythms and financial rhythms for example. Or one can begin with exploring transport or financial rhythms and then being led back to the history of postal communication and so on. With this method of practising history, the boundaries of institutions begin to bleed into each other and what remains are organisation of agents in their trajectories of movement. The initial field of inquiry then spun out to incorporate much more extensive

systems of mobility and the kind of cultural experience embedded. Some areas of interest may include: the use of the telephone and the telegraph, the kind of products that were purchased in the mail order, the rhythms of transferring payment in credits, the female mail order agents who went to have full time jobs, the dismantling of close-knit working class communities and so on. The weight of a rhythmanalytical attention to historical life is reflected in the structure of my chapter. Instead of organising the chapter chronologically which emphasises the ‘overturning’ feature of a conjuncture, I used sub-sections to sculpt the conjunctural moment (which is not delimited to the historical period) in its variegated forms of rhythmic assemblages of the postal system.

Rhythmanalytical studies of social change are not conducted within a linear logic of cause and effect. One of main discoveries that I obtained through the bundling of rhythms is that social phenomena (which are always historical and emergent) are to be perceived in their state of imbrication - the involutionary development of rhythmic assemblage are entangled with each other and they affect the polyrhythmic ensemble in unexpected ways. In this manner of historical research, one is positioned in the *longue durée*. For instance, when there was a shifting focus on the provision of infrastructure, as railway network contracted and road transport expanded, it had a momentum of change that was not dovetailed to the conjuncture of the 1970s. In fact, the contraction of the railway network and other infrastructural facilities for public transport had been set in place a decade before the election of the Conservative government led by Thatcher. To depict these realities in their structural state of existence implies the repetition of subject organisations which are consolidated over long timespan, thus they deem attentions of the *longue durée*. Braudel addresses the pertinence of following social structures for long periods of time - ‘some structures, because of their long life, become stable elements for an infinite number of generations: they get in the way of history, hinder its flow, and in hindering it shape it’ (Braudel, 1980: 31). Not only does the *longue durée* of transport network require a study on its own account, the interrelating of postal and transport

rhythms also had their own phasal structure of development that opens up new vistas of research (e.g. the changing mail sorting methods on the Travelling Post Offices and the cessation of their use).

Research of postal rhythms works centrifugally to activate a whole array of cultural experiences pertinent to conjunctural analysis. There are those dominant events which had been explored and recounted for, yet the noise of history is as telling as its fury. Beneath the eruptions of crisis which justify the taking place of a conjuncture, there are those currents of transformations that are more resistant to be incorporated to the dominant rhythms of change. Perhaps the bodily gestures of picking up morning post and the newspaper had continued despite the kind of materials that went through the letter box. Thus a rhythmanalysis of the postal system unveils a set of conjunctures which did not always fuse and condense around the same time. There is a constellation of historical rhythms which interlink but they may or may not synchronise with each other - those of road building schemes, car ownership, out of town shopping, cycles of income payment, usage of credit cards, the closing of local post offices that distribute welfare and sell everyday essentials , which are also local shops selling daily goods and so on. While attention is undoubtedly directed to the mapping out of the changing rhythms of communication, I suggest that equally important is a focus on the momentum, a pace of development (as discussed earlier in Serres' phasal structure of becoming) to these changing rhythms. That there are rhythms to the emergent timing-spacing practices and they are illuminating for a pleating notion of conjuncture. It is not in the scope of the thesis to provide historical analysis on all the rhythms that interlace with postal rhythms. What I hope to have achieved is to demonstrate the way history breathes in the polyrhythmic bundling of the 1970s conjuncture.

Though I demonstrate the somewhat extremities of attention in the two case studies of

the 1970s' conjunctural shift , and as I show how rhythmanalysis can work centripetally from polyrhythmic forces to the singularity of bodily rhythms, as well as the centrifugal entangling of social rhythms, my rhythmanalytical project is necessarily incomplete. It needs to be re-examined and reformulated as it unfurls continuously. For the making of history, the freedom of a historian is granted by the method of rhythmanalysis as it allows one to explore diverse experiences of lives in all their depth and dimensions. Nothing may elude the attention of a historian and this all encompassing attitude of historical research is summed up in Braduel's comments on the claims made by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce:

It was by adding things together like this that Benedetto Croce could claim that within any event all history, all of man is embodied, to be rediscovered at will. Though this, of course, is on condition of adding to that fragment whatever it did not at first sight appear to contain, which in turn entails knowing what is appropriate - or not appropriate - to add (Braudel, 1980: 28).

I argue that rhythmanalysis is heuristic in its ways of operation. Though the idea of 'rediscovering all men and events at will' may appear to be overpowering, one is led to find those 'fragments', as trajectories of movements that can be used for the work of entangling and disentangling of rhythms. It is in the interconnection of rhythms and their nature of relationships that one make sense of these fragments. As to the appropriateness, which may be critical to the marking of a conjuncture and conjunctural analysis, I suggest that there is a multiplicity of realities which shall not be excluded from historical research, though the different tonalities and noises pertain to the object of investigation in various intensities. The philosophy of rhythmanalysis renders one a sensitivity to those minutiae movements and fluctuations of historic experiences, those drops of the ocean and its murmurs, and also to the roars of tidal structuring of experiences. By offering an alternative prism of analysis, my rhythmanalytical project of the 1970s' conjuncture is modest in its ambition as it invites a multiplication of accounts that produce infinite interest and investigation of cultural experiences.

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