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2 The history and development of rhythmanalysis: From Lefebvre to the present day

Introduction

A close reading of *Rhythmanalysis* offers inspiration and direction for researching (with) rhythm and the first aim of this chapter is to critically consider Lefebvre's thinking. If rhythmanalysis is a research strategy, how did he conceive of it? What did he have to say about the methods and research practices it implies? This chapter discusses the types of rhythm Lefebvre identified and how he advocated doing rhythmanalysis centred on the body. The second part of the chapter sets out areas where rhythmanalysis has been subsequently developed: in cultural history and studies of mobility, place, work and nature.

Foundations for rhythmanalysis: Lefebvre's 'moments'

Although not yet framed in the vocabulary he later develops, an important antecedent of rhythmanalysis is the final chapter of Volume 2 of Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* entitled 'The Theory of Moments', originally published in 1961 based on ideas he had previously introduced his 1959 two-volume autobiography, *La Somme et le Reste*.¹ Lefebvre was fascinated by moments of transcendence – what Griel Marcus calls 'tiny epiphanies' (1989: 144 in Shields 1998: 61) – in which it was possible to discern power and possibility. Moments are glimpses through time (past and future) unexpectedly illuminating 'a flash of the wider significance of some "thing"', writes Rob Shields. In the moment, there is sudden insight into the future which simultaneously recomposes the past (1998: 58, 59).

¹ *La Somme et le Reste* has not been translated into English.

This is fleeting: the moment 'vanishes, and at the same time it makes itself known' in a process of what Lefebvre calls *involution* as time 're-orientates itself like a curl of smoke' (Lefebvre 2014a: 636, 639; Lefebvre 1959: Tome I, 234 in Merrifield 2006: 28).

The moment is not the same as the 'instant' in philosopher Henri Bergson's terms (1859–1941). Indeed, Lefebvre was highly critical of Bergson's unbroken, linear and progressive time formulated as duration (*durée*) in which instants were points along a line. Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962) too had a more 'atomic' view of time and disagreed that Bergson's duration could be directly intuited. For Lefebvre, discontinuities open the way to revolution, and no more so than in the moment's rupture of the mundane. The moment is a 'primordial form of time' according to Shields, which breaks up the banality of the everyday (1998: 60–1). It is a 'higher form of repetition, renewal and reappearance' singled out or separated 'from a muddle or a confusion'; in short, it is 'the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility' (Lefebvre 2014a: 638, 642, emphasis in original).

For Lefebvre, moments offered important keys for understanding the everyday and for stimulating change. Among the many thinkers and movements in Europe he was engaged with across the twentieth century, Surrealism and especially the irreverence of Dadaism caught the attention of the young Lefebvre in the 1920s. He 'was transfixed by the potential of surprise, shock and humour for thinking of not only artistic images but of everyday life in new ways', writes Shields (1998: 54), although he was subsequently deeply critical of the nihilism of these movements. Some decades later in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he had a close connection to the Situationists – especially Guy Debord – and there are important parallels between Debord's 'situation' and Lefebvre's moment.²

Both Lefebvre and Debord were fascinated by the idea of the 'festival'.³ For Lefebvre, also inspired by François Rabelais' 'excess' and his own early experience of rural life, the festival offers a 'moment' of escape from the relentless and oppressive linearity of modernity when 'its brilliance lights up the sad hinterland of everyday dullness' (Merrifield 2006: 17; Lefebvre

² This similarity and associated accusations of plagiarism was one source of the rift between them. See Lefebvre's account in an interview with Kristin Ross (Ross 1997).

³ Rudolf Laban, a contemporary of Lefebvre's working in Germany known for his notation of choreography (as discussed in Chapter 1), was also interested in the festival for its intensification of the everyday (Laban 2014[1921]: 77). To the best of my knowledge, Lefebvre does not refer to him.

2014a: 650). In 'Notes Written One Sunday in the French Countryside' in the first volume of *Critique of Everyday Life* published in 1947, Lefebvre wrote: 'Festival differed from everyday life only in the explosion of forces which had been slowly accumulated in and via everyday life itself' (2014a: 222). So while festivals contrasted with the everyday, even 'violently', *'they were not separate from it'* (227, emphasis in original).⁴ (A man of strong appetites, he embraced the revelry and excess of the festival in practice as well as theory.) Historically, the energies of the festival had culminated in the 1871 Paris Commune when revolution was rowdily inserted into the fabric of the everyday. And in his own lifetime, Lefebvre is partly credited with fuelling the student unrest which started in March 1968 at Nanterre and which in May erupted more powerfully still at the Sorbonne and on the Left Bank leading to a general strike by millions of workers and the occupation of workplaces in Paris and elsewhere in France. Everything stopped as the spirit of the festival took hold (Alvarez 2007: 61, 64).

According to Yi Chen, the qualities of the moment make it a useful 'optic for cultural analysis' today. In practice, the rhythmanalyst must show 'sensitivity to moments', pay heed to their vitality and capacity 'to maintain and transform the temporal-spatial structure of experiences' and reveal relations which are normally veiled. Patterns of recurrent, if diverse, moments produce rhythms; in other words, rhythms may be composed of constellations of moments, intervals and repetition (Chen 2017: 20, 21, 24).

The development of rhythmanalysis

Lefebvre's 'extraordinary impact in the Anglo-American academy' emerged following the publication in English of *The Production of Space* in 1991 (Elden 2004a: 5), largely thanks to Anglo-American geographer David Harvey who has continued to be an important figure in disseminating his ideas. The notion/slogan of the 'right to the city'⁵ expressed in Lefebvre's 1968 book of the same name – published in English in *Writings on Cities* in 1995 (see also Butler 2012) – chimes with Harvey's own thinking in *Social Justice and the City* (1973) on the importance of a specifically urban revolution (Merrifield 2006: 102). Lefebvre's *Éléments de rythmanalyse: introduction*

⁴ Rituals of rebellion can be understood as reinforcing the existing social order.

⁵ Rather than an individual liberty, this right concerns collective power to change the process of urbanization, to remake the city and the self.

à la connaissance des rythmes was originally published in French in 1992, one year after his death. However, it was the publication of the English translation, *Rhythmanalysis*, in 2004 that reinvigorated interest in Lefebvre, giving him something of an 'afterlife', as Stuart Elden (2006) aptly puts it.⁶

The term 'rhythmanalysis' comes from Lúcio Alberto Pinheiro dos Santos (1889–1950), a Portuguese philosopher who was concerned with material, biological and psychological rhythms in a short work, *Ritmanálise*, published in 1931, although the idea had little impact at the time. Ahead of Lefebvre, it was the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard who discussed the contribution of dos Santos.⁷ Lefebvre acknowledges both dos Santos and Bachelard's use of the term 'rhythmanalysis' despite their lack of development of its meaning. Through his own contribution he says, the rhythmanalytical project 'emerges bit by bit from the shadows' (Lefebvre 2004: 9).

Rhythmanalysis starts out boldly: 'This little book does not conceal its ambition. It proposes nothing less than to found a new science, a new field of knowledge: the analysis of rhythms.' This can happen in two ways, Lefebvre continues: we can either study and compare cases, in other words, focus on 'practice', or we can start with 'concepts', 'with full consciousness of the abstract in order to arrive at the concrete'. *Rhythmanalysis* follows the second 'more philosophical method', he clarifies, and it relies on broad interdisciplinary thinking which is characteristic of Lefebvre's work more generally (Lefebvre 2004: 3, 5).

The rhythmanalysis here defined as a method and a theory pursues this time-honoured labour [the discovery of rhythms] in a systematic and theoretical manner, by bringing together very diverse practices and very different types of knowledge: medicine, history, climatology, cosmology, poetry (the poetic), etc. Not forgetting, of course, sociology and psychology, which occupy the front line and supply the essentials. (Lefebvre 2004: 16)

⁶ Lefebvre's work has also been popular in Japan and South Korea. In France, there has been some resurgence of interest and the republication of some out-of-print books (Elden 2004a: 6; Revol 2012/3) but his standing is a long way from that accorded in the Anglo-American world.

⁷ In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* and more fully in a chapter in *The Dialectic of Duration* (2000), first published in French in 1936.

We might think of the rhythmanalyst as akin to the poet, Lefebvre suggests, insofar as both are concerned with the verbal and the aesthetic and both change what they observe. Indeed, Lefebvre previously suggested that rhythmanalysis could be effectively explored across the arts including poetry, music, dance and theatre (1991: 406). The rhythmanalyst is also similar to the psychoanalyst⁸ in terms of the quality of attentiveness both bring to their task. On the other hand, the rhythmanalyst is less associated with the statistician he states, at least not one who counts and describes things in their 'immobility'.

Central to the rhythmanalytical project is a concern with 'temporalities and their relations within wholes' (Lefebvre 2004: 23–5). In addition to the 'moments' discussed in the previous section, we can retrospectively read how in his earlier writings, Lefebvre paved the way for thinking spatio-temporal relations in *Rhythmanalysis*. In a chapter on 'Spatial Architectonics' in *The Production of Space* published in 1974,⁹ he suggests that 'it is possible to envision a sort of "rhythm analysis" which would address itself to the concrete reality of rhythms'. He highlights how 'rhythms in all their multiplicity interpenetrate one another' – in particular – in and around the body. Some rhythms 'operate on the surface', he notes, and are therefore easy to trace while others 'spring from hidden depths' and must be tracked 'through indirect effects' (1991: 205). Rhythmanalysis is further developed in a short section on 'Space and Time' in Volume 3 of *Critique of Everyday Life* published in 1981 – a full twenty years after the second volume in which 'The Theory of Moments' emerged.¹⁰ Here, Lefebvre critiques the poor understanding of his fellow Marxists for their failure to recognize the rhythms of labour. He proposes the elaboration of 'a new science' that 'studies these highly complex processes' and is situated 'at the juxtaposition of the physical, the physiological and the social, at the heart of daily life'.¹¹ His approach 'starts from empirical observations' and makes use of what he calls 'spectral analysis' in which something apparently simple is refracted through a prism to reveal, however incompletely, its elements and history (2014a: 802, 804).

⁸ Lefebvre previously stated that 'rhythm analysis might eventually even displace psychoanalysis' (1991: 205), or 'complement or supplant' it (2014: 802).

⁹ Dates refer to the original publications in French.

¹⁰ The second volume of his *Critique of Everyday Life* was originally published in 1961.

¹¹ Lefebvre is clearly indebted to dos Santos in this lack of separation between material, living and social bodies (McCormack 2013: 42).

Having outlined some key aspects of *Rhythmanalysis* in this introduction, the following sections now go into more depth. The first aim is to clarify Lefebvre's distinctions between rhythm and repetition, the linear and the cyclical, and to consider further terms in his vocabulary of rhythm; and the second is to critically consider the role of the body in rhythmanalysis.

Rhythm and repetition: The linear and the cyclical

For Lefebvre, the expenditure of energy that produces rhythm happens through repetition, interferences (across the linear and cyclical) and 'birth, growth, peak, decline and end' (2004: 15). Rhythms vary in their amplitude, energies and frequency producing different intensities of anticipation, tension and action (1991: 206). But the conundrum of researching rhythm persists. Although rhythms are part of our lives, they are not part of what we know, Lefebvre argues, and conceptually, 'the meanings of the term [rhythm] remain obscure' (2004: 5). In this section, I discuss key terms in the conceptual repertoire put forward by Lefebvre to undertake rhythmanalysis (summarized in Table 2.1).

First, rhythm requires repetition, Lefebvre explains: 'But there is no identical absolute repetition indefinitely.' Difference is key as 'something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive' (2004: 6). This echoes his earlier formation in Volume 2 of *Critique of Everyday Life*: 'No return is absolutely exact. ... If it were otherwise, cycles would be vicious circles and the geometry of the circle would exhaust all that is possible' (2014a: 342). In *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre refers to two ways in which repetition and difference are linked. Repetition *includes* difference in the sense that each repeated element is different from the preceding or subsequent one quite simply because it is not that one. And repetition *produces* difference as difference emerges from the very act of repetition (2004: 7).

Lefebvre places *linear* and *cyclical* rhythms at the heart of rhythmanalysis and in tension and opposition to one another. In Volume 2 of the *Critique of Everyday Life*, he introduces this: 'We will look closely at results of interactions between cyclic rhythms and linear (discontinuous or continuous) time scales in the everyday. Therefore we will be proposing a rhythmology or a sociological "rhythmanalysis"' (2014a: 526). In his early work, he reserved the term rhythm for the cyclical, and the linear was discussed in terms of repetition. However, later on, both the linear and the cyclical are presented as different forms of rhythm. He uses musical terms here to evoke the differences between them: whereas measure and beat are linear, melody and harmony are cyclical (1991: 206).

Table 2.1 Lefebvre's vocabulary of rhythm – summary of key terms.

<i>Linear rhythm</i>	Quantified and fragmented time, imposed by technology, industry and consumption The time of the city and urban life Closer to repetition than rhythm per se, for example dripping of water, the beats of a hammer In musical terms, measure and beat
<i>Cyclical rhythm</i>	The time of nature, 'cosmic and vital', evident in seasons and day and night In biology and the body, for example heart beats and eye movements Characteristic of rural life – cyclical rhythm is destroyed by capitalism Includes repetition <i>and</i> difference In musical terms, melody and harmony
<i>Polyrhythmia</i>	A multitude of rhythms; the effects of different configurations of rhythm
<i>Eurhythmia</i>	When rhythms combine smoothly, for example in good health
<i>Arrhythmia</i>	Discordance between rhythms, being 'out of step'
<i>Isorhythmia</i>	An 'equality of rhythms' beyond <i>eurhythmia</i> , for example in the coordination of an orchestra
<i>Dressage</i>	Process of bodily entrainment and repetition through which rhythm is learnt and becomes evident in the body over time, for example in military drills

For Lefebvre, cyclical time scales are linked to nature which has long 'held sway' over everyday life (2014a: 341). They comprise rhythms that are 'present from molecules to galaxies, passing through the beatings of the heart, the blinking of the eyelids and breathing, the alternation of days and nights, months and seasons and so on' (Lefebvre and Régulier 2004a: 76). From his studies of rural village life, he writes: 'The house, the field, the tree, the sky, the mountain or the sea are not simply what they are. Cosmic and vital rhythms envelop them, subtle resonances accompany them, every "thing" is part of a song' (Lefebvre 2014a: 601–2).

In contrast, the 'quantified' linear time of capitalism is 'homogeneous' and 'fragmented', 'monotonous, tiring and even intolerable'. Linear time is imposed by technology and industrial labour and concerned with mechanical gestures of accumulation. It 'designates any series of identical facts separated by long or short periods of time: the fall of a drop of water,

the blows of a hammer, the noise of an engine, and so on' but these do not amount to rhythm since 'only a non-mechanical movement can have rhythm' (Lefebvre and Régulier 2004a: 76–8). It is Lefebvre's contention that the less-than-human linear time of modernity is taking over the natural cyclical rhythms of everyday life. Consumer capitalism commodifies and splits time and disregards what a lack of rhythm means for everyday life. It brings about 'lassitude, boredom and fatigue' – and perhaps burn out and breakdown.

The relationship between the linear and the cyclical is already made clear in the second volume of the *Critique of Everyday Life*: '*Critique of everyday life studies the persistence of rhythmic time scales within the linear time of modern industrial society*' and the '*defects and disquiet*' that arise from these interactions (2014a: 343, emphases in original). However, relations between linear and cyclical rhythms are not straightforward as they 'interfere with one another constantly' at times resulting in 'compromises' or 'disturbances' (Lefebvre 2004: 8). What Lefebvre describes as 'rational' rhythms impose themselves on the body's 'natural' rhythms and in so doing change them. These new rhythms become both rational and natural at the same time but cannot be reduced to one or the other (2004: 9, 12). Expressed more strongly: 'Rational and industrial techniques have "shattered cyclic time"'. They fragment time and produce repetitive gestures. Yet, 'cyclic time scales have not disappeared', he asserts. Indeed, they 'live on' in the biological and the social (2014a: 342). Institutionalized social rhythms from national holidays to television schedules and synchronized habits and patterns of work bring people together (Zerabuvél 1981). They are also intertwined with the rhythms of our bodies and those of the natural world, from light and day to the changes of the seasons (Edensor 2011: 189, 191). Lefebvre is often gloomy, but hope remains in the cracks and crevices in the everyday.

A vocabulary of rhythm

For Lefebvre, the world is composed of a multiplicity of rhythms and it is important to distinguish between the categories of 'polyrhythmia', 'arrhythmia', 'eurhythmia' and 'isorhythmia'.¹² 'The everyday reveals itself to be a polyrhythmia from the first listening,' he states, as we first attend to

¹² These terms overlap with those used by Laban and Bode discussed in Chapter 1 and *arrhythmia* is also present in medical vocabulary.

our own bodily multitude of rhythms (2004: 16). Yet these rhythms may coordinate or clash. When rhythms smoothly combine with one another which they often do, they produce a state of *eurhythmia* which he associates with the condition of good health. Conversely, *arrhythmia* arises when there is discordance between rhythms, such as occurs (biologically) in an unwell person. Finally, *isorhythmia* refers to the 'equality of rhythms' and these are rare, beyond *eurhythmia* – such as in the 'remarkable' coordination of an orchestra 'under the direction of the conductor's baton' (Lefebvre 2004: 68).

There is more to come still. *Dressage* is pivotal as a process of bodily entrainment which 'determines the majority of rhythms', writes Lefebvre (2004: 40), and the effect of rhythm as it constitutes the body in a particular way achieved through repetition over time. For instance, there are deemed to be 'proper' ways to walk and to hold the body in movement and at rest. Entering into the social means 'to bend oneself (to be bent) to its ways', and humans must 'break themselves in like animals' (Lefebvre 2004: 39) – presumably within processes of socialization which make this happen. While this is clearly relevant in military instruction, he says (see also McNeill 1997), it is equally present in everyday learning. This idea has much in common with Marcel Mauss' and later Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* for the ways in which the body is quite literally shaped in relation to the techniques, habits and practices of class, gender, ethnicity, nationality and so on. And it is echoed in the docile bodies produced by the disciplinary practices Michel Foucault identified.¹³ Indeed, the embodied character of dressage means that we do not have to think how to act: 'Dressage fills the place of the unforeseen' for Lefebvre (Lefebvre 2004: 40). However, he also recognizes the contingent nature of this regulation. As he gazes from his balcony in the rue Rambuteau in Paris, he perceives the rhythms of tourists and city workers at odds with one another and with this the immanent possibility of their resistance.

Doing rhythmanalysis with and beyond the body

In his work on rhythmanalysis with his (last) wife and collaborator, Catherine Régulier, Lefebvre made it clear that in order to grasp rhythm

¹³ Foucault and Lefebvre disagreed on the operation of power: for Foucault it is part of everyday practices which may or may not enhance the capacity to act, for Lefebvre it is always repressive (Kullman and Palludan 2011: 351). Lefebvre was also critical of Foucault's emphasis on 'systematized knowledge (*savoir*) at the expense of the experiential (*connaissance*)' as exemplified in their respective understandings of discipline and dressage (Stratford 2015: 10).

Image 2.1 Rue Rambuteau 30 and 24, Paris 3^e, and view towards Centre Pompidou, 23 September 2017 (Author's own images).

a detailed description of the deployment of time is 'inadequate' since 'it captures the accidental but misses the essential'. The message is clear: it is insufficient to attend to the timetables of everyday life as to do so would mean being caught in a solely linear conception of time. 'The everyday does not consist in a series of time lapses, but in the concatenation of these time lapses: not their sum but their rhythm' (Lefebvre, Régulier and Zayani 1999; Lefebvre and Régulier 2004a: 8).¹⁴ There are further challenges: 'Rhythm

¹⁴ This phrasing comes from an earlier translation of 'The Rhythmanalytical Project' (Lefebvre, Régulier and Zayani 1999).

enters into the lived; though that does not mean it enters into the known' (Lefebvre 2004: 77). How then does one do rhythmanalysis? In this section, I discuss Lefebvre's understanding of rhythmanalysis as an embodied phenomenological practice.

Lefebvre lived for more than thirty years at two addresses, numbers 24 and 30 on the rue Rambuteau in the third *arrondissement* of Paris (see Image 2.1). Here he witnessed and lamented the destruction of the former *Les Halles* markets and the building of the Pompidou centre within spitting distance of his apartment close to the corner of rue Beaubourg (Merrifield 2006: 22). It is where he wrote 'Seen from the Window', the third chapter of *Rhythmanalysis* and arguably the centrepiece of the book, from which we can draw out his 'instructions' for doing rhythmanalysis.

From the window opening onto rue R. facing the famous P.Centre, there is no need to lean much to see into the distance. ... He [*sic*]¹⁵ who walks down the street, over there, is immersed in the multiplicity of noises, murmurs, rhythms (including those of the body, but does he pay attention, except at the moment of crossing the street, when he has to calculate roughly the number of his steps?). By contrast, from the window, the noises distinguish themselves, the flows separate out, rhythms respond to one another. Towards the right, below, a traffic light. On red, cars at a standstill, the pedestrians cross, feeble murmurings, footsteps, confused voices. One does not chatter while crossing a dangerous junction under the threat of wild cats and elephants ready to charge forward, taxis, buses, lorries, various cars. Hence the relative silence in this crowd. A kind of soft murmuring, sometimes a cry, a call. (Lefebvre 2004: 28)

Reading this passage, it is possible to imagine Lefebvre at his window and gather a sense of him listening and looking into the street. While the chaos of noise alone 'has no rhythm', 'the attentive ear begins to separate out, to distinguish the sources, to bring them back together to perceive interactions' (2004: 27). Earlier, Lefebvre has instructed that the rhythmanalyst 'will listen to the world, and above all to what are disdainfully called noises, which are said without meaning, and to *murmurs* [*rumeurs*], full of meaning – and finally he will listen to silences' (19). In the first instance then, the body

¹⁵ Lefebvre's language is not gender-neutral. I don't draw attention to this in later quotes.

is the central tool to apprehend rhythm. Indeed: 'The theory of rhythms is founded on the experience and knowledge [*connaissance*] of the body' (67). The body 'consists of a bundle of rhythms, different but in tune', a polyrhythmic and eurhythmic ensemble. The rhythmanalyst 'listens – and first to his body; he learns rhythm from it, in order consequently to appreciate external rhythms'. The rhythmanalyst attends to the entirety of a situation in an integrated way 'taking his own rhythms as a reference' such that the body serves as a 'metronome' in relation to broader patterns and interactions (19–20).

So to practice rhythmanalysis, we feel new rhythms in relation to existing ones, related to the heart beating, breathing or normal patterns of work, rest, waking and sleep. For Lefebvre, 'Rhythms always need a reference: the initial moment persists through other perceived givens' (2004: 36) which informs how we describe them, as plodding, lively, intense and so on. However, Lefebvre also recognizes rhythm as having a calculable 'speed, frequency [and] consistency' which make up the measure of each rhythm (10). Although he emphasizes rhythmanalysis as embodied, he does not disregard methods which document some aspects of rhythm quantitatively (Delyser and Sui 2012).

For the most part, Lefebvre focuses on rhythmanalysis as immersive, requiring phenomenological tools: 'The rhythmanalyst calls on all his senses. ... He thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but in lived temporality' (Lefebvre 2004: 21). Indeed, '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' (27, emphasis in original). This implies 'the cultivation of a peculiar style of attentiveness' to become susceptible to rhythm (McCormack 2013: 42, 50) as 'the effort to discern and note this one [rhythm] or that one imposes itself perpetually' (Lefebvre 2004: 21). While Lefebvre talks about the body and all the senses, he highlights the aural: 'The discriminatory capacity of the auditory and cerebral apparatus plays the primary role – practical and spontaneous – in the grasping of rhythm' (Lefebvre 2004: 69).

If the rhythmanalyst 'must simultaneously catch a rhythm and perceive it within the whole' and 'arrive at the **concrete** through experience' (2004: 21, emphasis in original), this may be insufficient. 'In order to grasp and analyse rhythms, it is necessary to get outside them, but not completely,' Lefebvre writes, since rhythm is at the same time linked to 'logical categories and mathematical calculations' and to 'the visceral and vital body' (17, 14). We therefore need 'critical

distance' (Elden 2004a: 113) as well as immersion to do rhythmanalysis. Rhythmanalysis is both a 'practico-sensory and intellectual' practice, corporeal and conceptual (McCormack 2013: 42).

Second, if rhythmanalysis is 'a sort of meditation on time, the city, people' (Lefebvre 2004: 30), timing, in the sense of both scheduling and duration, matters for the perception of rhythm. Lefebvre provides an instance of the imperceptibility of rhythm within certain viewpoints and time frames: 'Overlooking the gardens, the differences between habitual (daily, therefore linked to night and day) rhythms blur; they seem to disappear into a structural immobility.' We cannot get beyond the apparent stillness of the scene. It is light that literally makes the difference here, sun and shadows. And the form of attention which the rhythmanalyst brings to bear on the setting: 'Look harder and longer,' Lefebvre entreats us, 'go deeper ... listen attentively instead of simply looking.' 'Continue and you will see this garden and the *objects* ... **polyrhythmically**, or if you prefer *symphonically*, each 'having its own time above the whole' (30, emphases in original). After all, there is 'nothing inert in the *world*' just 'the apparent immobility [of the garden] that contains one thousand and one movements' (17). The *release* of rhythms 'demands attention and a certain time' (32).

Third, positioning in space is crucial. In terms of doing rhythmanalysis, if we accept that the body is central, where should the rhythmanalyst locate his or her body in time and space? When trying to grasp the rhythm of the street, 'a balcony does the job admirably', asserts Lefebvre, allowing the rhythmanalyst to achieve an inside–outside ideal – to 'situate oneself simultaneously inside and outside' – as in the spirit of ethnography more generally. Failing access to this 'marvellous invention', a window will have to do he says so long as the view is appropriate. In contrast to the immersion of the street, the balcony/window permits the disentangling of the flow of sounds and movements and the clarity of interaction the rhythmanalyst seeks to identify. From here, he notices how 'people produce completely different noises when the cars stop: feet and words'; there's 'a second of silence and then it's the rush'. And, using a metaphor from nature, how when cars stall in the road, 'pedestrians move around them like waves around a rock'. Colour and density are also important for reading the scene: 'Amongst the flurry of cars, pedestrians cluster together, a clot here, a lump over there; grey dominates, with multicoloured flecks, and these heaps break apart for the race ahead' (2004: 27–9).

If 'being there' is important for undertaking rhythmanalysis, Lefebvre also recognizes the absent presence of what we do not directly encounter, what in effect lies beyond the 'sensible and visible order'. The State is not seen from the window he remarks, but it 'looms over this present, this omnipresent State' (2004: 32) – and, he argues, is incidentally doing the work of capital. In an earlier passage, he explicitly asks: 'Might there be hidden, **secret**, rhythms hence inaccessible movements and temporalities?' 'No' he replies. For him secret rhythms are only rhythms that are obscured (in physiology or settled in memory but unspoken) but they are not unknown (2004: 17–18, emphasis in original). Lefebvre contends that different presents are alive in 'the present', for instance, on economo-political society, he comments: 'The visible moving parts hide the machinery' (15). The challenge is to uncover it.

In the instance of rhythmanalysis from the window discussed above, the body is immobile in space and the attention of eyes and ears is largely directed outwards, albeit in relation to the body's inner rhythms. However, rhythmanalysis mostly happens on the move and in 'Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities' originally published with Régulier in 1986, Lefebvre offers a broader account of rhythm from the street. This work takes its starting point from Fernand Braudel and the *Annales* school of historical research which emphasized the *longue durée* of historical time rather than specific events in social change. Instead of focusing on particular cities, the Mediterranean large town or city of this essay is therefore considered as one through its shared features of the presence of waves, climate and commercial relations (Lefebvre and Régulier 2004b: 91).

At the outset, this feels at odds with Lefebvre's detailed attention to the body and the deployment of the senses in social space. It is not clear in this essay when or where Lefebvre – or Régulier – is located in time or place and how or in relation to which rhythmic elements of the everyday they deploy their bodies and senses. It's slightly disappointing after the earlier excitement of what rhythmanalysis might offer. That said, there are wonderful segments which evoke the intertwining of time and space, architecture and movement. The discussion of the role of steps and stairs in Mediterranean architecture in particular in Venice and at the Gare de Saint Charles in Marseille exposes the time spaces of the built environment:¹⁶ 'a link between spaces, the stairway also ensures a link between times'. The authors spell out what this means for people to move around urban space.

¹⁶ See Stanek (2011) for a discussion of Lefebvre's thinking on architecture.

Steps 'rhythm the walk through the city' in Venice; and in Marseille, 'their screaming monumentality imposes on the body and on consciousness the requirement of passing from one rhythm to another, as yet unknown – to be discovered' (2004b: 97).

Rhythmanalysis: A provisional assessment

Having closely reviewed Lefebvre's concepts and practices of rhythmanalysis, where does this leave a present-day researcher preparing to do rhythmanalysis? This section briefly considers some critiques of Lefebvre before the next part of the chapter shows how researchers have subsequently worked with rhythmanalysis across different fields.

Scholars broadly agree that Lefebvre offers a useful conceptual repertoire of rhythm and some indications for doing rhythmanalysis. These are important and valuable contributions to the social sciences, if not to the extent that Lefebvre claimed in his remarks on founding 'a new science'. There are other reservations. First, Simpson (2008) critiques Lefebvre's elision of linear time with the temporality of capitalism, pointing out that this leaves little room for other practices and perspectives. In his own research he shows how street performers in Covent Garden in London play with different rhythms, mobilizing them in their performances with more fluidity than Lefebvre suggests is possible. Furthermore, although rhythmanalysis is interested in jarring in the everyday for its potential to generate creative differences – or moments – McCormack argues that Lefebvre nevertheless pathologizes arrhythmia (2013: 52–3). Blue also nuances the relations between some of Lefebvre's concepts: eurhythmia and arrhythmia are not to be understood in opposition to one another, he argues since eurhythmia 'already contains arrhythmia, pauses, breaks and off-beats' (2017: 20).

Second, the body of Lefebvre's rhythmanalyst is an ambiguous one on the threshold between social and biological, public and private. According to Merrifield (who is rather dismissive of *Rhythmanalysis*) the book was a provocation against those 'who document only what they see and not what they feel or hear' (2006: 75). In *Rhythmanalysis* and more generally Lefebvre's methodology is a form of 'participant observation' (Merrifield 2006: 4) but one that is corporeally and sensorially attuned (Potts 2015: 550). For Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* never loses sight of the body (2004: 67).

However, Simpson argues that the body Lefebvre presents is 'acted upon' (2008: 233) or in the words of Borch, Bondo Hansen and Lange, it is 'an effect of society' (2015: 1083). Furthermore, Burgin argues that Lefebvre has a 'passive understanding of perception' which might lead him to miss the 'creative dynamics of rhythm' (1996 in Revill 2013: 58). In contrast, Simonsen contends that Lefebvre transcends the division between the active body and the body that is acted upon although she points out that 'a tension between biological and social processes remains unsolved' and calls for a more attuned understanding of the body in relation to gender and sexuality (2005: 9–10).

Famously for Lefebvre, it is bodies which produce or generate space as they move such that bodies and spaces are not discrete. Bodies themselves are understood as 'spacetimes generated through the constructive entrainment and interference of a multiplicity of rhythms' (McCormack 2013: 42) – 'traversed by rhythms as the "ether" is traversed by waves', as Lefebvre puts it (1991: 206). Lefebvre is very clear about the capacities of his own body but also surprisingly firm in his refusal to deepen his understanding of his own body through rhythmanalysis: 'For reasons I am unaware of, I have always preserved a very strong sense of my own body. ... My body knows what it wants, what it needs. ... It is to my fortunate bodily make-up that I owe my unshakable health and vitality' (2014b: 34–5).

Working with rhythmanalysis

The idea of rhythmanalysis has intrigued a growing number of scholars in recent years and there is now a significant body of work which has taken it in different directions in fields from health and education to cultural theory and sound art. Geographers figure prominently in its recent history. From a position which privileged space and spatial relations, geographers have been attuned to relationships between space and time. In contrast, while historians, sociologists and other social scientists have long been attentive to temporality, only recently have they come to recognize space as constitutive of the social rather than as a backdrop to social relations. But the internal dynamics of disciplines is only part of the story here. The appeal of rhythmanalysis as a way of researching space and time together in the twenty-first century is for how it chimes with the way that the world seems to be changing. Lefebvre's cyclical and linear rhythms are relevant

for making sense of the fragmented routines of fast-food service workers on zero hours contracts, the challenges of childcare and its synchronization with other commitments, and the pace and pressures of academic life. Rhythm is relevant beyond the patterns of everyday lives too at the scale of broader social change. 'There is a case', write Henriques, Tianen and Väliaho, 'to think about rhythm as a pervasive force and a critical concept when it comes to mapping larger socio-political developments in [and perhaps beyond] modernity' (2014: 14).

In this part of the chapter I have selected areas where empirical research using rhythmanalysis has been strongest: cultural and historical rhythmanalysis; rhythm and mobility; the rhythms of place and place-making; working rhythms; and the rhythms of nature. This selection leaves aside other contributions, for instance rhythmanalyses of television (Obert 2008), sleep (Meadows, Nettleton and Neale 2017), identity (Edensor 2006; O'Connor 2017), digital spaces (Davies 2018), institutional practices (Blue 2017; Southerton 2013; Mylan and Southerton 2017) relations to the non-human (Evans and Franklin 2010) and the life-course (Stratford 2015). I would just make readers aware of two recent books which open other fields to rhythmanalysis. Michael Alhadeff-Jones' *Time and the Rhythms of Emancipatory Education* (2017) explores rhythm as formation, reconsidering the way time might be envisaged in and beyond education and Tom Apperley's *Gaming Rhythms* (2010) uses rhythmanalysis to examine the interconnected rhythms of digital game play that cut across local and global scales.

Cultural historical rhythmanalysis

In an instance of cultural historical rhythmanalysis, Ben Highmore (2002) offers a rhythmanalytical reading of photographs from Thomson and Smith's *Street Life in London* published from February 1877 to January 1878. He explores the 'politics of pace' he identifies in Lefebvre's work in these images to release 'captured rhythms' and different tempos of social life, teasing out 'something of the actuality of urban life' that remains in them (176–7). Yi Chen's book *Practising Rhythmanalysis* is also an important engagement with rhythmanalysis as an instance of cultural historical analysis. Her subject is the 'orchestrated rhythmic relationships' and 'temporal-spatial entanglements' of the British postal system in the 1970s as a moment of rhythmic disruption and broader political change. This was a time of the decline of the social practice of writing and sending letters, and the rise of

Direct Mail and home shopping. She traces rhythm as the 'effects' of time space practices in the discourses of archived materials (2017: 61, emphasis in original).

Rhythm and mobility

Lefebvre warned: 'We easily confuse *rhythm* with *movement*' (2004: 5, emphasis in original). He suggests that a sequence of movements alone do not necessarily produce rhythm. It may be that recent interest in the field of mobilities (Urry 2007) and the sociology of speed (Wacjman and Dodd 2017) have sidelined the recognition of rhythm. Indeed, Edensor (2011) has argued that there has been limited attention to the relation between mobility and temporality (although his own work makes an important contribution here, see Chapter 3). In this section, I highlight research which explores rhythm on the move.

There has been a surge of interest in walking in the social sciences in recent years, both as a subject of study and as a method of conducting research (Ingold and Vergunst 2008; Middleton 2009, 2010; Pierce and Lawhon 2015; Wunderlich 2008, 2010, 2013), for instance in mobile interviews (Clark and Emmel 2010; Evans and Jones 2011) and 'go-along' ethnography (Kusenbach 2003; Pink et al. 2010). Recognized as a 'muscular consciousness' (Bachelard 1964: 11 in Chen 2013: 531) and a means of 'creating new embodied ways of knowing' (Pink et al. 2010: 1), walking has recently been developed as a multi-sensory research practice.¹⁷ This involves observation and interaction according to the 'places and paces' of participants' lives which enable 'an understanding of the social world evermore congruent with people's lived experiences of it' (Bates and Rhys-Taylor 2017). With a particular focus on rhythm, Jennie Middleton (2009, 2010) analyses the multiple forms of rhythm, temporality and spatiality that walking encompasses. Through interviews and diary entries (including photographs) she considers people's awareness of 'experiential time' and the embodied, technological and material practices and relations of walking. Similarly, Filipa Wunderlich (2008, 2010, 2013) undertakes detailed studies of the rhythms of walking through attention to small movements in specific places across short stretches of time. She highlights walking as haptic – feet touching the ground alongside other bodily connections

¹⁷ See, for example, WalkingLab projects: <https://walkinglab.org/>

to the environment. She argues that this gives rise to different place-temporalities and place-rhythms.

If walking has had a notable appeal for mobilities scholars, studies of rhythm and mobility also include running (Edensor, Kärrholm and Wirdelöv 2017; Edensor and Larsen 2017), cycling (Cook and Edensor 2017; Spinney 2010), commuting (Edensor 2011), steamship rhythms (Anim-Addo 2014), rail travel (Revill 2013), coach travel (Edensor and Holloway 2008) and ferry travel (Vannini 2012a) as well as the relations of movement and stillness (Bissell and Fuller 2011). I briefly discuss two examples of ferry travel and children's school journeys which highlight the use of rhythmanalysis in some interesting ways.

Rhythmanalysis has the capacity to make visible the relationship between individual and social rhythms. We see this in the constellations of rhythms of the various 'rush hours' in towns and cities across the world. Philip Vannini's (2012a) account of everyday ferry travel in the watery world of Canada's west coast and islands is particularly powerful in juxtaposing individual and social rhythms as ferry-users move 'in' and 'out of time' between urban space and the slower modes of island life. He uses rhythmanalysis to attend to the pace of life of the places the ferries serve as connecting 'lifelines' (243). However, he argues that rhythm needs to be supplemented by both *speed* and *duration* to better understand temporality and mobility (245) although I would suggest that speed and duration might equally be read as properties of rhythm.

Kim Kullman and Charlotte Palludan's (2011) study of children's mobility in Denmark and Finland shows how rhythmanalysis can be used – following Elden (2004b) – as a *tool* of analysis, not just an object of attention, and one that has implications for education and social policy as well as urban planning. The authors demonstrate how children's everyday life takes place across different rhythmic registers and they stress the diversity of the embodied routines children learn on their journeys to and from school. This refines Lefebvre's emphasis on spatial and corporeal regulation through dressage as children are seen to 'shift flexibly between different rhythms, varying them as they go along' (354). The notion of 'dancing' with its emphasis on improvisation within or alongside choreographed sequences might better describe children's mobile agencies than Lefebvre's dressage alone, they argue, pointing out resonances with Nigel Thrift's (2007) emphasis on dancing to capture how people skilfully navigate the city.

The rhythms of place and place-making

'The interaction of diverse, repetitive and different rhythms animates, as one says, the street and the neighbourhood,' Lefebvre writes (2004: 30). Rhythm shapes a mobile sense or experience of place, and places might be characterized by the 'ensemble of rhythms' that permeate them (Edensor 2010b: 69). Rhythm analysts conceive of place as arising from the intersection of multiple mobile rhythms in the built environment which means that studies of mobility often contribute to an understanding of place and place-making. Rhythm analysis shows how places are made: through mobile flows of capital, people, objects, energy or matter 'which course through and around them'. It 'emphasizes the dynamic and processual qualities of place' identifying the 'rhythms through which spatial order is sustained'. Places then are sites in which multiple temporalities come together, in harmony or at odds with one another to produce an 'ever changing polyrhythmic constellation' (Edensor 2011: 190–1), and less chaos than might be expected as rhythm orders time and space (Amin and Thrift 2002).

Rhythm analysis has been widely used to study place, especially city space including in historical accounts of urban street life (e.g. Highmore 2002 as discussed earlier), everyday routines in contemporary urban spaces (Chen 2013; Degen 2010; Hall 2010; Smith and Hall 2013; Sgibnev 2015), gentrification (Degen 2008; Kern 2016), gender and ethnic inequalities in the night-time economy (Schwanen et al. 2012), absence (Gibas 2013), consumption (Cronin 2006; Kärrholm 2009), street performance (Simpson 2008, 2012), festival spaces (Duffy et al. 2011), domestic space (Nansen et al. 2009), imagined space (Weizman 2000), the sounds (Bull 2000; Labelle 2008, 2010) and senses (Degen 2008) of the city. In their introduction to a special issue of *The Sociological Review* on 'Urban Rhythms', Rob Smith and Kevin Hetherington argue that 'a critical consideration of rhythm allows for an understanding of the contemporary urban era that distinguishes it from those of the past' (2013: 5). In other words, different times and places are characterized by different rhythms. Below, I discuss two examples of place-rhythms to highlight different possibilities of rhythm analysis.

First, rhythm analysis can uncover the sensory city as in Monica Degen's *Sensing Cities* (2008), a comparative sensory ethnography of gentrification in Manchester and Barcelona. Lefebvre informs Degen's research design and her attention to urban space is constituted through 'the sensory-practico body'. She makes a distinction between 'activity rhythms' which refer to daily movements and repetitive spatial practices and 'sensory

rhythms' through which 'the senses map a particular landscape' (51). In the practice of rhythmanalysis, she develops what she calls sensory maps of different areas based on the descriptions her interviewees offer. These allow her to characterize places beyond her own and any one of her interviewees' senses of them, for instance as a 'spectacular' or 'dwelling' space (174–5).

Second, sound is an important counter to the dominance of the visual in accounts of urban experience. Michael Bull's (2000) ethnography of the use of personal stereos in urban space contributes to an auditory understanding of the self in/and of the city. Personal stereo users listening to music sidestep the imposition of linear rhythms as they carve out 'segments' of time on the move with autonomy and privacy or 'concentrate on mood maintenance that overcomes the journey time' itself. Rhythmic moments emerge through repeated listening to the same song and time is reclaimed as the cyclical reasserts itself, temporarily at least. In Brandon LaBelle's (2008, 2010) work, sound and music are further explored as a means of ordering the self within urban environments. As rhythm is embodied and experienced in sound, so in turn music and sound shape the rhythms of the city.

Working rhythms

Rhythm has long informed norms, practices and understandings of work. The development of clock-time as a form of work-discipline in the industrial revolution parcelled the day and night into linear stretches of work and non-work time and set the pace for both (Thompson 1967). Time and motion studies were a further means of the regulation of workers' bodies in the name of efficiency in the early twentieth century (discussed in Chapter 1). Recent attention has focused on the loss of rhythm and skill in craft-based working (Ocejo 2017; Sennett 2009), the effects of industrialization on the body and voice of workers (Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson 2013; Korczynski 2014; Wolkowitz 2006), and the recognition of new temporal demands and modes of time-discipline imposed on the working body under flexible capitalism in the twenty-first century (Sharma 2014; Snyder 2016). Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis has much to offer this field and in recent years it has been explicitly used to study work, including the performance of work (Simpson 2008, 2012; Snyder 2016), the procrastinating body's refusal of work (Potts 2010), the rhythmic ordering of organizational life and the socio-economic relations of work (Borch, Bondo Hansen and Lange 2015; Lyon 2016).

An appeal to rhythm for different ways of living and working is important in studies which explore alternatives to the dominant pace and shape of capitalism (Crawford 2010; Dey et al. 2016; Pettinger 2017; Vannini and Taggart 2014). Below, two examples highlight the usefulness of Lefebvre's concepts and approach for this field in different ways. (Borch, Bondo Hansen and Lange 2015 and Lyon 2016 are discussed in depth in Chapter 3 so do not feature here.)

Ben Snyder's book *The Disrupted Workplace* is about work, time and rhythm under flexible capitalism and is based on ethnographies conducted in the United States of the temporal trends and pressures in the working practices of financial professionals, long-distance lorry drivers and job seekers. Among the financial traders Snyder interviews and observes, 'dealmakers' must be constantly available, always 'on' leading to 'chronic desynchronization from the normative clock and calendar rhythms' (2016: 58). In a striking account of especially intense deal-making, one trader, Chuck, tells Snyder of the tensions that accrue in his neck and back and how 'I'll wrap my legs around the legs of my chair' when his mind is running at 'hyper-speed' but his body is still, eyes fixed to his screen (80–1). Chuck as well as Snyder are both rhythmanalysts here.

The site of Phil Jones and Saskia Warren's research (2016) is the so-called creative sector in which hopes of post-industrial economic success are often invested. The authors draw parallels between Sarah Sharma's (2014) notion of 'recalibration' and Lefebvre's concept of dressage. For Sharma, bodies must be realigned – or recalibrated – according to the times that serve the needs of capital (Jones and Warren 2016: 287). These new relations to time – and space – have come to be experienced and performed as normal in what Freeman (2010) calls *chrononormativity*. In the creative and cultural sector, however, it is rhythm rather than clock-time per se which 'is the key mechanism regulating the lives of its workers' (Jones and Warren 2016: 289). The approach and methods Jones and Warren use make it possible to reach this insight. They collected data from conventional and video interviews, activity diaries and focus groups, with a focus on the '*felt* experience of time' (289, emphasis in original) rather than time as quantity in which the details of the hours risk obscuring the rhythms of work. Patterns of work in the sector were shown to be at odds with the recognized intrinsic rhythms of creative production in an instance of profound arrhythmic disjuncture. In these cases, rhythmanalysis offers a critique of alienation and the possibility of imagining different rhythms of work.

Image 2.2 Tides, Isle of Sheppey, UK, 28 May 2017 (Author's own images).

The rhythms of nature

Lefebvre was clear, as we heard earlier, that when looking into the garden from his apartment, the rhythms of nature as well as the rhythms of the city could be equally apprehended through rhythmanalysis. Several scholars have explicitly used rhythmanalysis to study the natural world. Owain Jones has explored the natural rhythms of the tides (Jones 2011) and in collaboration with Michaela Palmer (Palmer and Jones 2014) has produced fascinating 'sonifications' of tidal and other non-human patterns that are not directly accessible to human senses. While we can see tides as they break on the shore and hear the movement of the waves directly (see Image 2.2), we cannot grasp the rhythms that lie under the surface of the water and move it in and out of an estuary or around the coast for instance, along with silt and other suspended elements. Palmer and Jones' sonifications make it possible to access these rhythms and so transcend the limits of bodily perception.¹⁸

Two further examples draw attention to different situations where the human world is subject to an unanticipated natural event: a snowstorm and an earthquake. Julia Bennett (2015) explores 'ontological belonging' as a rhythmic practice achieved through habit, repetition and synchronization. Her research is based on diaries which she contends are more effective than (researcher) observation as they can be completed on the participants' own terms – and rhythms – in their private spaces. They thereby offer the 'present-but-outside perspective that rhythmanalysis requires' (960–1). She discusses the diary of a research participant written over the course of a week when 'snowed in'. In John's accounts, mundane rhythms are made clear by the disruption of the weather; at the same time his diary reveals the collective 'off beats' that are created in these out-of-the-ordinary circumstances. In a more profound instance of arrhythmia, the Christchurch earthquake which shook New Zealand in February 2011 is the subject of Holly Thorpe's (2015) rhythmanalysis. She explores the impact on the bodies and mobilities of those affected, especially in relation to their sporting routines which took place in or around the city such as skateboarding, surfing, biking and climbing. Residents found creative ways of sustaining sport in the aftermath of the earthquake and these were a powerful tonic for reasserting familiar rhythms and connections to place as well as for forming a post-disaster spatial imaginary.

¹⁸ I discuss sonifications further in the final part of Chapter 4.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of the ways in which rhythmanalysis has been conceptualized, practised and developed by Lefebvre and others. It has shown how rhythmanalysis can be employed as a research strategy to reveal the workings of rhythm across a wide variety of fields. This requires methods that are sensitive to detecting rhythm and these will necessarily vary by context. Chapter 3 now considers three sets of examples in more depth to highlight differences in the formulation of rhythmanalysis and the range of techniques they imply.