**RHYTHM AND THE POSSIBLE: MOMENTS, ANTICIPATION AND DWELLING IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY.**

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**ABSTRACT:**

*Notes for Chapter Authors:*

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Inspired by Barnett’s claim about the ‘ineradicability of rhythm in university time’ (2015), this chapter examines the nature of time, place and possibility in contemporary academia. It does so by exploring the spatio-temporal and emotive connotations of teaching and learning in the contemporary university, revisiting the findings of an experimental project conducted in a post-1992 HEI of the West of Midlands. Methodologically and philosophically, the chapter follows a Lefebvrian-inspired characterization of rhythm (2004 [1992]), used to both diagnose rhythmic disruptions and to offer nuanced articulations of possibility, future agency (anticipation) and dwelling in the contemporary university. Drawing attention to the quotidian practices of teachers and learners, it reveals their struggles of production and appropriation of time-space in higher education, showcasing the ethical and political saliency of rhythm, alongside its methodological fecundity. The second part of the chapter delves deeper into the relationship between university, rhythm and forms of anticipation. Theorizing *universities* as *time-space shelters* and education as a time-space of suspension and incubation, it highlights, once more, the affordances of *rhythm thinking* (Crespi, Manghani 2020) for alternative, imaginative modes of existence in and for higher education.

**KEYWORDS:**

(Please supply up to 6 keywords for your Chapter)

1. Rhythm
2. Possible
3. University
4. Time-space shelter
5. Anticipatory presence
6. Dwelling

**Introduction**

But then to speak of time being quick and slow reminds us of the presence, indeed the *ineradicability, of rhythm in university time*. And where there is rhythm so there are moments, as stated, of pause, even of stillness, and quietness amid the urgency, the acceleration and the insistent. And the fast movements gain their own meaning in part from the contrast with the slower movements.

(Ronald Barnett, 2015, p.198 emphasis added)

*Is the modern university the place to ask critical questions about the time that defines modernity*? This is a type of time specific to our epoch: a calculative, commoditised, empty time – or is there still a historical, immutable time? What is the nature of time itself? Does it pass, or is it an analogy for motion? Or for calibration? Is it change, and thus about unavoidable development such as a larva turning into a butterfly or preparing to make choices about one’s future? So, is it about the illusion of agency in some deterministic world of causal links, where choice would be irrelevant? Or is it about a personalised blend of activities functioning as time, or about time realised with and between others? Is it about splitting time into past, present future? Or is it about an irreflective, linear ordering in an eternal and constant present, as implied by contemporary thinkers in temporal logic?

(Paul Gibbs, 2015, p.47 emphasis added)

In a virtual dialogue with Barnett and Gibbs, this chapter attempts to theoretically and empirically ground claims about the ‘ineradicability of rhythm in university time’ and about the nature of time and change in contemporary academia.

Thomas Docherty’s remarks in the opening of *Universities at War* (2015) offer, in this respect, a good entry point to the following discussion. There, the author describes a university sector globally plunged in a state of permanent crisis. Capital, it is argued, has replaced ‘thought’ as the guiding principle of the institution. As a consequence, management and control of knowledge have colonized not only the quintessential activities of research and teaching, but also *thinking* and, significantly, ‘the “good life” together’ (Docherty, 2015, p. IX, preface). This, in turn, has occasioned a ‘stasis’, the etymology of which – we are reminded - harks back to ancient definitions of civil unrest. For Docherty the *arrhythmia* experienced in the contemporary Western university stems from an imposed regime of ‘continuous improvement’ and ‘change-management’ (Docherty, 2015, p. IX, preface) whereby the social and institutional accelerations experienced within -and without- the academy (Rosa, 2013; Vostal, 2015; Wajcman & Dodd, 2016) are not matched by *actual,* meaningful transformations: if anything, ‘Inequality and injustice persist, and ignorance retains all the seductive force of myth’ (Docherty, 2015, p. IX, preface). Docherty’s claims are profoundly and fundamentally political, especially when the ‘official’, managerial, capitalist, authoritarian, accelerated academy is contrasted with what he dubs the ‘clandestine’ university, that is the *quotidian activities* of most academics, engaged in collaborative or individual thinking, research and teaching.

This chapter aims to shed light on the contradictory temporalities that reverberate through, traverse and condition the activities and moods of the ‘clandestine’ university. It does so by unpacking and examining the production of time and space as it unfolds in the *everyday* life of the university: its shifting rhythms are instrumental in revealing the locus of *difference* and in signalling moments of educational disruption that need addressing. It draws on Lefebvre’s *Rhythmanalysis* (2004 [1992]) and *Critique of Everyday Life* (2014 [1947, 1961,1981]) as a starting point but, simultaneously, the analysis extends the scope of the discussion, exploring the uncharted territories of ‘rhythm thinking’ in a manner that resonates with Manghani and Crespi’s invitation to an open, radically expansive approach to this (re-)emerging field (Crespi, Manghani 2020).

Theoretically, the analysis addresses the relationship between anticipation and rhythm in education. Here, the philosophical roots of rhythm (theory of moments/the instant) are interpellated and exposed in effort to subvert, by way of argument, the linear conceptions of time that have produced and sustained impoverished versions of a future predicated upon ‘calculative, commoditised, empty time’ (Gibbs, 2015, p.47). The theoretical discussion is informed by examples drawn from an experimental project conducted in a modern English university in 2017-18. The project intended to capture the rhythms of teaching and learning at a teaching-intensive institution. It experimented with a combination of methods that included accompanied walking interviews where participants -teachers and students- wore a GoPro camera that captured their itineraries on campus; time-lapse photography of the sites (campuses) and classrooms/labs/workshops where the lectures took place; and semi-structured interviews that explored their relationship with time and space within the institution, with emphasis on embodiment, affect and attunement.

Elsewhere I have written about the affordances of rhythm-inspired *methodologies* as diagnostic tools to detect institutional and existential arrhythmias within the academy (Dakka and Smith, 2019), arguing that the symptom of the disorder should give way to a *politics* of disorder, in that living up to the transformative potential envisaged by Lefebvre in *Critique of Everyday Life* (2014 [1947, 1961, 1981]). This chapter revisits that project with an explicit focus on conflicting, nuanced temporalities, looking at the ethical and political – rather than ontological- implications that can be drawn from rhythmic analyses of ‘felt’ time (Wittman, 2017) in contemporary universities.

The crucial questions of change, agency and living with others bring to the fore the notion of an ‘ineradicability of rhythm’ in university time, requiring us to think about rhythm not just as the object of this inquiry into academic timescapes, but as a threshold concept (Meyer, Land, 2005), the liminality and elusiveness of which engenders epistemological and ontological re-borderings and re-orderings.

Finally, it argues that a more careful examination of the rhythmic quality intrinsic to zones of time-space suspension within contemporary universities presents at least two advantages: first, it allows us to move beyond the sterile dichotomy that reductively contrasts *fast* and *slow* as mutually exclusive signifiers of the modern academy. And second, by focusing on incubation, delay and spaciousness as categories of time, it lends strength to a critical reframing of universities as time-space shelters that encourage the ‘stubbornness of reason’ in relation to time described by Bachelard (Barnett, 2015, p.121) while illuminating what Barnett and Bengsten have called the ‘dark ontology’ of the university (Barnett and Bengsten, 2019, p.24).

1. **Rhythm and the Possible**

In describing the contemporary university, Docherty points to an irreducible temporal tension: the secular university is ‘caught between the preservation of truth (seen, however erroneously, as eternal and unchanging, as the facts of history and of its scientific and cultural artefacts or knowledge) and the inauguration of history (its contribution to making new and future possibilities for human being and their societies)’ (Docherty, 2015, p.16). If we conceive of the university as a metaphorical house of thought, we could read this perpetual temporal tension as the institutional equivalent of the Arendtian ‘gap between past and future’ (Arendt, 1971, p. 202), the timeless region where the thinking ego enacts her present by holding her ground between the *no-longer* (past) and the *not-yet* (future). This inextricably links debates around the life and transformation of the mind to the nature and purpose of education as an activity that is at once historic and future-facing. Yet we need to focus on the ‘gap’ where transformation, becoming and action *in potentia* reside and emerge, to fully appreciate their rhythmic essence and imbrication.

This introduces the notion of rhythm as an energy field that renders time and space conflictual (Lefebvre, 2004 [1992]) and, as such, conceptually productive. Even by adopting Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of rhythm as a coordination or communication between ‘heterogeneous space-times’ or a ‘transcoded passage from one milieu to another’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013 [1980], pp.364-65), change emerges as difference from periodic repetitions. Repetition harbours difference and eventually produces difference (Lefebvre, 2004 [1992]). But where does this leave the subject? If Deleuze and Guattari privilege ‘events’ as combinations of rhythm, at the expense of the subject, Lefebvre’s critique of the teleological aspects of dialectical materialism (in particular the linearity of historical change) takes us back to agency, offering an entry point to the analysis of the possible.

According to Elden (2004), in *La fin de l’histoire* (1970) Lefebvre leans toward a Nietzschean, non-linear vision of progress that ‘allows the dialectic to not simply be the resolution of two conflicting terms but a three-way process, where the synthesis is able to react upon the first two terms. The third term is not the result of the dialectic: it is there, but it is no longer seen as a culmination’ (Elden, 2004, p.37). This offers a much more *rhythmic* understanding of change, one that allows for the analysis of becoming as a movement whose tension incessantly animates the three elements of the Lefebvrian triad:

A triad can be brought in as an analytic framework of the becoming of thinking…It is no longer a matter of the thesis/antithesis/synthesis dialectic, nor of dialectics in nature, nor the affirmation/negation/negation-of-the-negation relationship. In this perspective, dialectics allows for the analysis of becoming…something that can only be conceived in three conflictual moments. (Lefebvre, cited in Elden, 2004, p.37)

As rhythm presupposes a movement characterised by different temporal elements (e.g. the contrasting of strong and weak times), it ontologically partakes in the ‘assembling’ of time, movement and becoming, and the attendant philosophical enigma of the relation between same and other, through repetition and difference (Lefebvre, 2004 [1992]).

In this respect, Lefebvre’s notion of *dépassement* bears more affinities with the Nietzschean *Überwinden* (overcoming, surmounting) than with the Hegelian *Aufhebung* (subsumption). This is a moot point among Lefebvrian scholars: Soja (1996) and Shields (1998) maintain that this understanding of dialectic signals a shift in emphasis from time to space within dialectical materialism, almost in anticipation of Lefebvre’s spatial dialectic. Elden, however, reverses this logic by reaffirming the centrality of his non-teleological approach, only later applied to the question of space. Lefebvre offers unequivocal clarification by stating that triadic analysis differentiates itself both from dual and from ‘banal’ analysis: ‘Thus the triad “time-space-energy” links three terms that it leaves distinct, without fusing them in a *synthesis* (which would be the third term)’ (Lefebvre, 2004, p.22), confirming a departure from the Hegelian schema. This summary overview of Lefebvre’s interpretation, however, is by no means intended to exhaust the historical debate surrounding the meanings and uses of dialectical materialism (see, for example Lefebvre, 2009 [1940]; Peterson and Woods, 2018). Rather, it is intended to contextualise Lefebvre’s open, humanist Marxism, as one begins to appreciate in this passage of *Right to the City* (1996 [1968]):

Now all systems tend to *close off* reflection, to block off horizon. This work wants to break up systems, not to substitute another system, but to *open up* through thought and action towards *possibilities* by showing the horizon and the road. Against a form of reflection which tends towards formalism, a thought which tends towards an opening leads the struggle. (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 65).

The act of ‘opening up through thought and action towards possibilities’ drives Lefebvre’s praxis and draws attention to the educational import of his writings. His battle against formalism and fragmentation in favour of excess and appropriation cast his pedagogical stance in fierce opposition to the multifarious forms of domination that characterise ‘modernity’s enchroachments (domination) of the conceived over the lived’ (Middleton, 2014, p.22). The sudden ‘opening that leads the struggle’ in Lefebvre’s open/humanist Marxism is adumbrated in the philosopher’s faith in the promise of ‘interstitial’, quotidian forms of resistance. For the ‘reasoned (rational, or better, rationalised) planning has never succeeded in penetrating the secret of qualitative appropriation of time-space, or of reproducing it to fit quantitative requirements’ (Lefebvre, cited in Middleton, 2014, p.22). Hence the importance attributed to moments of revelation, emotional clarity and appropriation that have the potential to liberate human beings from the claws of mystification and alienation, leading them toward the possibility of self-fulfilment.

Theoretically, analyses of the ‘possible’ are anchored to the development of the *regressive-progressive* method (1953) that the French philosopher applies to historical and sociological analyses, drawing inspiration from Marx and the tradition of French historians of the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries. The approach consists of three moments: a *descriptive* moment that includes participant, phenomenological observation, guided by a general theory; an *analytic-regressive* moment, in which the analysis and exact dating of the described reality is carried out. And, finally, a *historical-genetic* moment that consists in the study of the modifications occurred in the structures previously dated as a result of internal and/or external development and by its subordination to overall structures. It is therefore ‘an attempt to return to the contemporary as previously described, in order to rediscover the present, but elucidated, understood: *explained*’ (Elden, 2005, p.37). Stanek (2011) further reinforces the importance of this method in relation to the concept of possibility within a non-linear temporal framework: in *What is the Historical Past?* (1959) Lefebvre explains that the possible, as a concept adopted in every field of the social sciences, acquired a general methodological character, such that ‘the past becomes present (or is renewed) as a function of the realization of the possibilities objectively implied in this past’ (Stanek, 2011, p.160). The rhythmic, non-linear character of this *motion* is elucidated and compounded in Lefebvre’s description of the ‘regressive’ moment as one that proceeds ‘from the virtual to the actual, the actual to the past’, to be complemented by a progressive movement ‘from the obsolete and completed to the movement that anticipates that completeness, that presages and brings into being something new’ (Stanek, 2011, p.160-161). Understanding the regressive-progressive motion is fundamental as it conceptually grounds the following discussion, allowing us to intuit the relationship between rhythm and anticipation before delving deeper into the structure of the possible.

1. **Moments, Instants, Shelters.**

Lefebvre’s critique of the everyday life is premised on the idea that social research is performed and understood by investigating the tension between particular and universal at any given moment. Put it differently, through the study of rhythm we arrive at the ‘critique of the thing’ (Lefebvre, 2004 [1992]) by unpicking the making and remaking of social practice in time-space, in a way that unveils its relation with the repetition of routines and the emergence of difference from the incessant *refrain*. It is to this emergence that I would like to draw attention, in order to isolate the *moment* that actualizes the possible, *de facto* initiating change.

The theory of moments, firstly introduced in *La Somme et le Reste* (2008 [1959]) and subsequently explored in the second volume of *Critique* (2014 [1961]), can be considered as one of the philosophical undercurrents in Lefebvre’s theorization of rhythm (Chen, 2017). The Lefebvrian moment represents ‘the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility’ (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 642), elsewhere defined as ‘a higher form of repetition, renewal and reappearance, and of the recognition of certain determinable relations with otherness (or the other) and the self’ (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 638).

The relationality and temporality of the moment are of particular significance here, as they will recur in the following exploration of anticipation and change in the contemporary university. Lefebvre’s articulation of the matter is particularly incisive:

Through all the changes, ‘something remains’. We would say that ‘something’ is the *moment.* Psychological terms [..] do not adequately define it, since *it implies a twofold recognition, of otherness – or, rather, of the other – and of the self*. This re-cognition, which joins forces in an original dramatic situation with what is known and what is unknown, explains and justifies the use of the word. It presupposes in turn the (confused or clear) perception of an analogy and a difference in lived time, i.e., a specific modality of repetition. ‘Something’ – which is certainly not a thing – is encountered once again. Both an illusion and a reality, lived time appears once more through all the veils and distances. It vanishes, and at the same time it makes itself known.

(Lefebvre, 2013, p. 636, emphasis added)

Here, the ‘two-fold recognition’ emphasises the dialectic and relational aspect of change while introducing the notions of ‘lived’ time and renewal as essentially rhythmic categories. The emergence of moment as a choice that separates it out from the messiness and ambiguity of reality enacts its modality of presence and reveals its absolute and ‘excessive’ nature. The moment, be it metaphorical or actual, represents a chance waiting to be appropriated and invented. Here, Lefebvre’s political stance transpires in all clarity: he construes the moment -much like Guy Debord’s ‘situation’ - as the possibility of subversion that instantiates the struggle against the colonization and commodification of the everyday life. Therefore, the temporal dimension of moments acquires political saliency, especially when contemplated in light of the revolutionary praxis invoked by Lefebvre. Hence the exhortation to think it in connection with the non-linearity of his dialectic (*dépassement*) and – *a fortiori* - with the rhythmic undulations of the regressive-progressive method.

That time isn’t just about evolution, but involution, is manifest in the disruptive emergence of the moment. Against Bergson’s notion of *durée*, moments appear as discontinuities in time that produce flashes of insight *through* time (past and future). In other words, the fulfilment of a moment, as Chen explains, ‘is never an absolute present’, for ‘each moment is inscribed in its preceding form while simultaneously anticipating future returns and renewals’ (Chen, 2017, p. 26).

To add nuance to the argument advanced here, I suggest reading Lefebvre’s theory of moments alongside Gaston Bachelard’s theorization of the instant, found in *L’Intuition de l’Instant* (Bachelard, 2013 [1932]). It is perhaps opportune to point out that the latter was inscribed in a much wider debate, within philosophy and physics, concerning the nature of time, which I will not pursue in this analysis. Nevertheless, an edited collection of essays on this subject (Durie, 2000) offered a rediscovery and treatment of Bachelardian thinking of particular significance for the present discussion.

Bachelard disagreed with a conceptualisation of time framed as continuous and flowing independently of the events through which we can form a perception of it. In contrast, he claimed that ‘time in its concreteness teems with a multiplicity of discrete events, unpredictably “alive”’ (Webb, 2000). This means that the instant is real and foregrounds discontinuity, non-linearity and complexity in the explanation of change (thus producing the revision of the ‘continuity-of-time thesis’ in modern science). This understanding of time as developed together with, and conditioned by, our sensible experience, chimes with the Lefebvrian notion of a moment that comes alive in the re-cognition of otherness and self in lived time. This, in turn, highlights the relational, generative and quintessentially rhythmic qualities of the instant found in the Bachelardian text.

Furthermore, this finds a beautiful translation in Bachelard’s notion of ‘poetic instant’ wherein the poet, by unusually combining elements that elude ordinary attention and/or disrupt prosody, effectively undoes their linear temporal order. The complexity of the poetic instant is therefore disclosed in an instantaneous act by virtue of which we get to see and feel things in a certain way. Bachelard’s poetic instant is characterized by an ‘active, dynamic ambivalence’, in which ‘time no longer flows, it wells up’, called ‘*vertical time’* to underline its contrast with a horizontal, linear time (Webb, 2000, p. 197).

Having established a common ground between moments and instants in their non-linear, nuanced and relational temporality, I now turn to David Wood’s construction of a *poetics of time* to illustrate -theoretically- how moments and instants operate when they are organized in *temporal structures.* Prompted by Bachelard’s insightful and visionary study of intimate spaces (Bachelard, 1992[1958]), the philosopher asks himself what a poetics of time would look like and whether it could be of any use. Taking its cue from the cosmology of pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander, Wood concentrates his attention on processes of ‘emergence into presence, lingering persistence, and withdrawal’ (Wood, 2000, p. 225). The scholar considers in particular Anaximander’s claim of a radical heterogeneity *in* time, whereby time involves ‘a plurality of beings whose being is dramatized temporally’ (Wood, 2000, p. 225).

Based on these assumptions, Wood postulates the existence of *time shelters*, frameworks to understand the entering of time into the constitutions of beings. These beings include events, things, people, relationships or *institutions*. Described as semi-autonomous temporal organizations in and of time, they are connected with various ‘outsides’ through permeable boundaries. Wood’s examination of the boundaries and intrinsic qualities of the time shelter offers precious insights that complement and enrich the theoretical framework of this analysis:

*A boundary is not a thing, but a cluster of procedures for the management of otherness*. Crossing the boundary brings about a discontinuity of both spatial and temporal relationality. Such discontinuities provide what we could call shelters for the growth of more luxuriant forms of spatial and temporal organization. […]

Shelters are persistent forms of event-discontinuity in the world. They manage the boundaries of inside and outside by representing the outside within, by *translating, buffering, anticipating that with impinges, by resistance, accommodation, expansion and exchange, and by establishing for these purposes rhythms, rules and regularities*.

(Wood, 2000, p.227, emphasis added)

The management of otherness through an ‘inside-outside’ tension; the creation of rhythms, rules and regularities; and the translation, buffering and anticipation struck me as accurate and vivid signifiers of the contemporary university. In particular, Wood’s remark that the openness to the interweaving of conflicting temporal logics is a ‘powerful hermeneutic principle’ in thinking about people, texts or general phenomena, creates a striking contrast with Docherty’s grim depiction of the official university, therefore inviting a deeper scrutiny of such contradictory logics.

Building on Wood’s conceptualization of time shelters, I propose to look at universities as *time-space shelters* to highlight their intrinsic *rhythmic* attributes. Earlier I have theoretically demonstrated the co-constitutive nature of moments, anticipation and rhythm and posited non-linearity as key to understand change and transformation (emergence of difference from repetition). The idea of universities as time-space shelters, in other words, allows for an exploration of notions of anticipation, presence and appropriation emerging in the quotidian experience of teachers and learners, their spatio-temporal contradictions, their embodied character and educational-existential insight.

This chapter argues that, in order to counteract the ‘stasis’ of the contemporary university, we ought to interrogate the temporal logics of its inner ferment. The latter should be read as the substance of a *chronopolitics* visible both in the ‘escalatory logic of modernity’ and in the ensuing ‘de-synchronizations at the “interfaces”’ (Rosa, 2017, pp. 34-36) that agitate the clandestine university. Social and institutional acceleration pervade the institution by virtue of the permeability of the boundaries that defines the university *qua* time-space shelter. But is the logic of acceleration that produces the imperative of ‘continuous improvement’ the sole engine of anticipation? This chapter argues that *procedural anticipation* (akin to Müller’s ‘anticipatory acceleration’, 2014) and *anticipatory presence* ‘occupy’ the same time-space but respond to radically different rhythmic principles. The epistemic rift that they create urges further investigation: at stake is the very possibility of a critique that questions the nature and desirability of university *times,* framing rhythm as an ethics and a pedagogy.

The following section will empirically ground these claims by revisiting an experimental project conducted in a teaching-intensive university in the West Midlands of England in 2017-18. It will rely on extracts from the semi-structured and walking interviews with teachers and learners in an effort to bring to the surface their conflicting temporalities.

1. **Anticipation, Presence and Appropriation in the Rhythmic Institution**

*A Rhythmic Analysis of Teaching & Learning in HE: Time, Space and Affect* was an experimental pilot project that explored the affordances of rhythmanalysis as a methodology and as a potential orientation for cultural and social research. It embraced Lefebvre’s lesson on the centrality of the body as a ‘metronomic device’, deliberately crafting the research design around the participants’ embodied experiences, perceptions and (institutional) spatio-temporal entanglements. Yet, in agreement with Lyon (2018) it acknowledged the insufficiency of the body as a receptor-producer of rhythms.

The unusual combination of methods served the purpose of recreating – artificially- ‘a day in a life’ of teachers and students located in the three campuses of a teaching-intensive institution in the West Midlands of England.

In the following excerpts, particular attention is directed to questions of *anticipation, presence and appropriation in and of the time-space shelter*, to evidence and make sense of its plural temporalities.

In the first series of extracts, we hear the voice of a former undergraduate student of the institution, now doctoral student and part-time lecturer in Midwifery, based in City South, a campus located in the leafy and quiet suburban area of the city.

When asked to compare and contrast her daily routine on a typical day of teaching witha typical day of research, the participant observed:

So… it feels that my days of teaching start…twelve hours before…so the night before is about preparing, printing, double checking my room bookings, my lesson plans, which is where most of my work happens, as my teaching sessions are generally in the morning.

(**Rachel, lecturer and PhD student, Midwifery**)

Unsurprisingly, Rachel describes the hidden rhythms of preparation as the most time-consuming and dominant part of her the job, because she is new to teaching and needs to carefully prepare every lesson, for the first time. Significantly, she defines her *teaching time* as ‘linear and mostly predictable’. This is reassuring, as it makes her feel in control, especially when, at the end of her lessons, the consolidating activities planned for the students prove successful and Rachel can tangibly measure their progress. Conversely, her relationship with *research time* appears more problematic:

For me, personally, I think it’s much more stressful… it’s less linear and…I haven’t done a PhD before and I haven’t done research like it before, so for me, *I’m preparing for what feels like the unknown*. it’s very difficult to anticipate what will be coming in two weeks or four weeks or six weeks, so even though I’m the person running it…I think it’s more stressful because it’s more difficult to anticipate and you are not quite sure what you are preparing for, rather than the teaching where you know that the sessions will come and go, you know that essentially you will have similar modules and similar cohorts of students.

Reinforcing these feelings, her emotional attitude toward the doctoral journey is conditioned by the presence or absence of ‘measurable outputs’ that offer the certainty of linear progress:

I think some days I enjoy it, when there is a measurable output from it and I can see a definite progression between one stage and another, then I think that I’m definitely getting somewhere and I can, you know, ascertain where I’m going. And then other days *I feel like you are in too deep to really see…and I don’t enjoy that*, it feels like a PhD is a big responsibility for one person and certainly not a method of learning or working that I’ve ever worked in before…it’s totally different to my profession.

Anticipation for the unknown is a recurring theme both in her account of research and teaching, yet the feelings associated with it reveal a growing sense of unease, as it can be evinced from the underlying tone of the following excerpt:

I try and anticipate it, although I’m not sure whether that’s to my benefit or not. I think perhaps it may be better to decide to work eight hours every day as it comes…on what I need to do that day, and record what I’ve done, rather than *always try to anticipate what next month will be like or when I should book annual leave next year or how I can expect to feel next summer…*

[…] I think now retrospectively, when I look at the stages of this I really anticipated…I don’t think it’s particularly done me a favour..I don’t think the anticipation was very effective in leading me up to performing well or progressing smoothly…I think in some cases some anxiety is helpful and motivating but *I think it’s easier to be anticipating the next problem rather than just doing the work that I could just do now*.

The ambivalence towards constant anticipation is resolved as Rachel concludes that she needs to develop a ‘better professional resilience’ to avoid ‘aimless anticipation anxiety about what’s coming’.

Interestingly, Rachel seems to have been happily ‘conquered by project time’ (Ylijoki, 2015). As Oili-Helena Ylijoki claims, the project format/projectification of (research) time finds its root in clock time and therefore espouses a ‘linear, cumulative and progressive’ logic (Ylijoki, 2015, p. 95). By contrast, ‘process time’ denotes the often non-linear temporality intrinsic in the logic and practice of research.

In Rachel’s experience, it is precisely the non-linear, hard to anticipate trajectory of research - indeed, of thinking- that causes stress, anxiety and, ultimately, discomfort. Her ambivalence towards anticipation could be resolved by finding ways to ‘anticipate better’, such that a quantifiable progress could be ascertained, measured, and, crucially, *timed*.

This is, in essence, *procedural anticipation:* time becomes an ally when it can be parceled out smoothly and predictably according to task. Here, the rhythms of teaching and research become interchangeable, as they are both subject to the twin logic of control and closure. The future is temporally and spatially synonymous with, and bound to, the conceived grid of institutional timetables, schedules and deadlines. From an educational perspective, the uncertain, adventurous time of discovery is entirely replaced by delivery (Murphy, 2015). Within procedural anticipation, efficient cause, mechanics and outcomes are rooted in linear acceleration. The better one anticipates, the faster and more efficiently one delivers.

The second excerpt presents the experience of a Senior Lecturer and Teacher Trainer in Drama, based in the formerly City North campus. The dominant theme of the (walking) interview concerns *rhythmicity* and spatio-temporal adjustment. As a teacher trainer, this senior lecturer needs to constantly ‘work around’ his students’ timings and needs. The students undergo mandatory placements in schools at certain (fixed) times of the year. As a result, teaching time needs to be carefully calibrated between two poles: their placement and the final exam. This engenders a veritable symbiotic relation between trainer and trainees’ temporal horizons, one where rhythmic calibration becomes imperative (Sharma, 2014). It invites however questions about time scarcity and pace of activities:

Yes I do have enough time but I think I’m in that way of thinking because I worked in education before so, actually one of the first thing I noticed when I came here was the pace of universities is so slow…when you go to a secondary school it’s a million miles an hour and when I came here it was like…wow what’s going on?! And actually it took me a good three years to adjust to that pace and sort of get into that groove if you like.

(**Connor, Senior Lecturer/Teacher Trainer, Drama**)

Counter to the frequent accounts of overworked academics in contemporary Western institutions (Morrish, 2019; Loveday, 2018; Erikson, Walker, Hanna, 2020) that report time scarcity and acceleration as sources of endemic anxiety, Connor reveals that it took him three years to adapt to the incredibly *slow pace* of the university, after working in a secondary school. Casting irony aside, this example illustrates the intrinsic relational and differential nature of rhythms. As Lefebvre puts it, we perceive the quality of a certain rhythm only by stepping out of it (or if the rhythm gets abruptly disrupted). Connor, in fact, qualifies university rhythms as slow in relation to the faster timescape of the secondary school. Tellingly, this is also indicative of a certain temporal predisposition. Connor thrives in, and enjoys speed but sees the benefits of slowing down:

Actually coming here to work has enabled me to sort of step back, be more critical, really… theoretical and just really unpick what’s going on…whereas in a school you are more practical...it’s very intense.

The binary fast/slow is here upheld and reproduced without problematization. To the majority of the teachers interviewed in this institution (a teaching-intensive, non-elite university) the linear planning and accelerated tempo of the teaching sequence appear as distinctly appealing, soothing and ‘reassuring’. Predictability and projectification of time lurk in many accounts when they are not proudly presented as demonstration of excellent planning skills and savvy time-management in the face of increasing workloads. More often than not, the non-linear, process-oriented and potentially open-ended research time (with its irrational timings) proves disorientating and anxiety-inducing. Connor partially confirms it, when he claims that he enjoys the freer, slower time of speculation and inquiry, yet candidly admits that, *in practice*, he often struggles to ‘get into the rhythm’, thus ending up squandering some of the precious research time sparingly allocated.

The third interviewee is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology who works in the City Centre campus, a vibrant place located in very close proximity of the city centre and characterized by hectic institutional rhythms compounded by a growing student population. Here, the lecturer utters at the beginning of the tour, there is ‘*too much going on, very little time to think’*. This statement sets the tone of an interview focused on the difficult quest for an autonomous, quiet time-space for reflection within the institution:

In some sense I split my kind of…if there is any real thinking going on in an intellectual sense, it doesn’t happen here, for me. I mean, besides conversations with colleagues…[..] But for the most part I see it as…..I come here, I do admin, teaching, active stuff like that, but the intellectual space is at home where I get time to think, I’ve got my books and I can reflect…

(**Gavin, Senior Lecturer, Sociology**)

The search of a ‘room of his own’ leads Gavin to some peripheral, fire escape stairs, the importance of which is articulated by the lecturer as follows:

It’s not necessarily an intuitive space…but I will show you how this is important because what you do find...is that no one really uses these stairs or at least they don’t use these peripheral stairs, they use the central stairs. […] I think it is important sometimes to find your little space where people cannot find you…to actually get some concentrated work done….you need your own kind of private space.

Significantly, he finds shelter in the non-places (Augé, 1995) of the fire escape stairs, where his periodic returns signal a desire to avoid the ‘busyness’ of the modern building and the distractions of a shared office space.

Subsequently, the discussion shifts to a critique of the architecture and internal spatial organization of the ‘modern’ English university (typically the former polytechnics), that Gavin sees epitomized in the congregating space of the university’s first floor. Put it differently, the ethos of the building is signified by its (lack of) boundaries:

It does represent this new space, that it’s all about sociability, community and having a hub where everybody gets together and also sort of more open learning spaces…that kind of thing. I have my reservations about that but I think as a space that would be in many ways quite representative of a sort of new ethos of new buildings.

The importance of cloistered spaces for the flourishing of autonomous, private, intellectual reflection, emphasises the mutuality of time and space: in Lefebvrian terms, ‘each one makes itself and is made a measuring-measure’ (Lefebvre, 2004[1992], p.18). Relatedly, this casts light on the rhythmic substance of thinking: metaphorically, linguistically and practically, a time to think implies a space to think, and vice versa:

It’s the collapsing of boundaries for example in teaching spaces between staff and students, rather than that kind of…the *onus* is on you, you’ve got your own independent time for quiet reflection and study…so somewhere like the library I think would strike me as more iconic or symbolic of those sorts of institutions (elite, research intensive), compared to here…and I’ve worked at institutions like that. […] My use of the quiet reflective spaces are usually to get away from the busyness, so the reason I brought you to these stairs is that…[…] actually you feel like you can close that door…and there’s no one, and you can move up and down. I don’t stand around in here, although I do occasionally, which is quite interesting…*I’ll be wandering past and there would be a Muslim student praying here, using this as a space...which is quite interesting because again…there’s probably parallels there between the sort of reflective, sort of sacred space almost and what would be my reflective sacred space!*

Gavin’s *appropriation* of the peripheral stairs as a *sacred* space of suspension, incubation and disconnect does not simply offer a fascinating example of shelter-within-the-shelter. It’s an act of subversion whereby the *perceived and lived spaces* produced by the lecturer effectively disorientate the *conceived space* of the institution (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]): like the Muslim student who creates her own sacred space-time for prayer, the lecturer refuses to inhabit the homogeneous yet fragmented space of the capitalist institution (Stanek, 2011) by *dwelling* in the autonomous reflective space/time meticulously carved out in his everyday.

The final voice emerging from the ‘clandestine’ university belongs to a Senior Lecturer and Teacher Trainer in Computer, Design and Technology. She is located in City North, a campus no longer in existence. At the time of the interview, the Lecturer was preparing to relocate to City South campus.

If the previous series of extracts underlined the importance of reclaiming one’s individual and intellectual *presence* away from the quotidian spatio-temporal enmeshment, the following sequence presents relationality, timeless time and *anticipatory presence* as drivers of a meaningful educational and existential engagement.

The first passage sheds light on the emotional fabric of shelters as privileged time-spaces that host immersive teaching-learning experiences:

True designers, like I have been… I have my own company and I’ve worked through the night, many times…So, I think that’s because you have a passion and a love for what you are doing and I think I just transfer that into teaching. And the people that I teach are designers in their own right…so they are used to working long hours…so it’s a whole cultural, personal concept of what work means to us as designers. If you think of fashion designers, they just work until they drop if they’ve got a show on. And so do product designers. And so we grow up with that artistic view…it’s the adrenaline. *The boundaries go…and the space boundaries go. So as a designer you want to be in your workshop or your work space at any time of the day.*

(**Tilly, Senior Lecturer and Teacher Trainer, Computer Design & Technology**)

Here, the *timeless time* experienced by designers (the boundaries between teachers and learners disappear) is reminiscent of Cannizzo’s argument about the irrational pace of craft time (Cannizzo, 2018): against anticipatory acceleration (Müller, 2014) dictated and powered by ‘commerce’, the rhythmicity of craft time acknowledges stillness and pause as well as speed and haste (Vostal, 2015). It is governed by Kairos, rather than Chronos (Papastephanou, 2015). This is a time-space shelter that fosters a passionate attachment to the subject by embracing creativity, non-linear temporalities and enjoyment as pedagogical guiding principles.

In the following passage, Tilly leaps into the future, envisioning and anticipating the emergence of a new shelter:

The textiles room will now become this space where I am always around and they (the students) will always feel welcome…to recreate that intimacy (nostalgia for City North campus). So I feel the textiles room is gonna be THE room…And there is this big cutting table and I think this big cutting table will be the family space, like the family dining room where we’ll all sit and talk…

Tilly is here imagining future *dwelling* and recomposing, in her imagination, the eurhythmic, harmonious trait of the relationship with her students as a necessary condition for learning, teaching, and living together. This is, in essence, *anticipatory presence*. Unlike procedural anticipation, it is not rooted in linear acceleration but in the Lefebvrian-Bachelardian non-linear, relational, vertical time of imagination. It is a reciprocal, spacious time of incubation that incites renewal, rather than innovation; and collaboration, rather than competition.

In the final extract, enjoyment, dwelling and appropriation return in the guise of Tilly’s happiest professional moment:

Every year I have a happiest moment when all the trainees are in the room (old textiles room) and it’s the last day of their course and they’ve passed and we have a celebration just being together and they’ve got all of their folders out ‘cause the exam board is here and the external examiner is here…So their academic success is evidenced in the actual folders being there. So their academic achievement is there. They are excited and nervous about the job they are going to go on to, but they have passed and *we’ve passed together*. I’ve got them there. That’s got to be the best moment *every* year.

Once again, Tilly’s vivid portrait of academic ‘togetherness’ manages to blur the boundaries of the teacher-learner relation, offering a glimpse into a time-space shelter that rhythmically recomposes past and future in the mutual *presence* and re-cognition of self and other. Repeated, but *different*.

***Concluding remarks***

*This is a dark ecology as ‘the politics of co-existence are always contingent, brittle, and flawed, so that in the thinking of interdependence at least one being must be missing’. We simply cannot have a comprehensive overview of all active dimensions and actors at the same time – to maintain a belief in a holistic, rational view from nowhere is to assimilate otherness into one, dominating familiar rationale.*

*(Bengsten and Barnett, 2019, pp.18-19)*

There is an interesting parallel between Bengsten and Barnett’s invitation to explore the ‘ontological excess’ of contemporary universities – their hidden aspects, deeper and unknown voices – and Docherty’s portrayal of the ‘clandestine university’.

Both have been assimilated and reduced to what is now the familiar rationale of most contemporary universities: capitalist, accelerated, future-oriented institutions premised on individualistic, productivist, and competitive ethos. And both, in many ways, conjure up moments of quiet intensity and underground labouring that prelude and anticipate possible ‘loud’ resurgences. Crucially, both have signature rhythms that co-exist, re-cognize and adapt to one another in spite of their alterity. More than that, they create unique ‘third spaces’ within the time-space shelters.

In this chapter I have used rhythm to elicit a nuanced, multi-faceted understanding of the theoretical, practical and ethical implications of Barnett’s opening claim regarding an ‘ineradicability of rhythm in university time’. One that deliberately departs from and takes issue with partisan, reductive analyses that reproduce sterile dichotomous thinking by endorsing acceleration *or* slowing down and by reducing complex, embodied, entangled spatio-temporal experiences to a Darwinian tale of adaptation and survival.

Rhythm, I demonstrate, is not only ineradicable, but also inherently relational and differential, therefore ontologically resisting the ‘assimilation of otherness into one’. Bridging the gap between philosophy and sociology, in keeping with a true Lefebvrian spirit, I have philosophically and empirically approached the notion of possibility as a rhythmic, methodological category, thus inviting an explicitly ethical and political take on -and indeed use of- rhythm.

To this end I have developed Wood’s framework - time shelters- to posit universities as examples of *time-space shelters* endowed with permeable boundaries and denoted by intrinsic rhythmicity. The empirical exploration of anticipation, dwelling, appropriation and presence within the contemporary university has cast a powerful light not just on the irreducible co-presence of different rhythms of being, but on their ethical and political implications and imbrications. The analysis of the participants’ spatio-temporal experiences within the institution revealed, in particular, a plurality of contradictory academic rhythms that can be traced back to two opposing logics. The *accumulation logic* rooted in a temporal linearity that fetishizes procedural anticipation and equates quantification with educational progress. Within this context, the privileging of individual productivity and the obsession for time-management reduce the educational experience to a solipsistic effort of constant adaptation and compliance.

Conversely, the *poetic logic*, that translates Aristotle’s ‘poiesis’ as the human activity of bringing something new into the world, resonates with the ideas of transformation, appropriation and dwelling epitomized in the nearly mystical experience of anticipatory presence found in Tilly’s account. This, in sum, reaffirmed the centrality of imagination-relation-anticipation as *conditio sine qua non* for meaningful change.

In a bid to invigorate the ranks of the clandestine university and confront its ‘dark ontology’, this study advocates a deeper engagement with the politics of educational rhythms, alliances and refusals. This amounts to an exhortation to further explore the possibility of an *ethics* of rhythm conceived as a pedagogy of resistance, presence and anticipation in and for the university. One that, in spite of it all, believes in the possibility of a renewed co-existence that celebrates plurality, cherishes enjoyment and fiercely resists the ‘assimilation of otherness into one’.

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